TEAM ROADMAP: FROM WAITING TO OWNERSHIP

BY: SCOTT WATSON
FOUNDER
SUMMIT CONSULTING AND TRAINING LIMITED

This roadmap is designed to help the team replace ambiguity, delay and "someone else will deal with it" thinking with clear ownership, timely action, intelligent problem-solving and meetings that produce visible progress.

The central shift is simple:

If you see an issue, a risk, a dependency or an unclear commitment, do not merely observe or describe it. Take proportionate action to clarify, progress, mitigate or escalate it.

This is not about expecting every person to solve every problem alone. It is about ensuring people actively move work forward, communicate early and seek support with considered options; not simply pass problems upward or leave them unresolved.

Clear action records are a practical foundation: each item should have one named owner, a specific action, the expected result, and a realistic deadline. Meetings should revisit outstanding items and surface blockers well before, not after, deadlines are missed.

Use this roadmap as a guide, add your own ideas in agreement with your team and notice how much more proactive communication becomes and how smoother your team's journey becomes.

Scott Watson

Scott Watson
Founder & Managing Director
Summit Consulting & Training Limited

Call: 0845 052 3701 (UK)
Email: info@summittraining.co.uk
Web: SummitTraining.co.uk

High-Value Working Principles

1 Own the outcome

Ownership means taking responsibility for progressing and/or completing work to an agreed standard; not waiting passively for a reminder, a response or a rescue.

A commitment is more than saying “I’ll do it.” It means being confident that you can deliver:

- The agreed outcome
- By the agreed date and time
- To the required standard or quality
- While communicating early if anything threatens delivery

Before making a commitment, pause and ask:

1. What exactly am I agreeing to deliver?
2. What does “a good outcome” actually look like?
3. What information, decisions or support do I need, and when?
4. What could prevent me delivering on time?
5. Is the deadline realistic?
6. What other priority/ies may require delegating or rescheduling?
7. Who needs to be kept informed, when and how?

If the deadline is not realistic, say so before accepting it. Renegotiating early is responsible; announcing a missed deadline late is the opposite.

2 Make work clear enough to act on

People should not need to guess what matters, what “done” means, who is responsible, or what happens next.

Every significant task, decision or handover should make five things visible:

CLARIFY	QUESTION TO ANSWER
Outcome	What are we trying to achieve or deliver?
Owner	Who has personal responsibility for moving this forward?
Deadline	By exactly when will it be complete or reviewed?
Standard	What does a successful result look like?
Dependencies	What do we need from others, and when?

A team can collaborate widely, but each action should have one accountable owner. Shared ownership too often becomes unclear ownership.

3 Raise risks early - and present options

Escalation is not failure. It is a responsible act when a matter exceeds someone's authority, expertise, capacity or risk tolerance.

However, escalation should be purposeful. Rather than arriving with, "What do you think I should do?", arrive prepared:

- Here is the issue.
- Here is the impact if we do nothing.
- Here is what I have checked or tried.
- Here are two sensible options.
- Here is my recommendation.
- Here is the decision or support I need from you.
- Here is the latest point by which we need to act.

This approach reflects a sound escalation discipline: identify the concern, assess the risk, take proportionate local action where possible, and be specific about the outcome required when escalating.resolution.

4 Current vs New Ways of Working

Use these examples as a practical team language guide.

SITUATION	CURRENT WAY OF WORKING	NEW WAY OF WORKING
Waiting for a response	“I can’t progress with my task until Jane responds to my email. It’s been a week already.”	“Jane’s input is holding up the next stage. I will call her today to clarify what is needed and agree a response time. I will then send a short confirmation email.”
Making commitments	“Yes, I’ll get that done by Friday.”	“I can deliver the completed version by 3pm Friday. I will need the final figures by midday Wednesday; if they are delayed, I will let you know immediately and propose a revised plan.”
Vague instructions	“I thought you knew what I meant.”	“To make sure we are aligned, the priority is X. The output needed is Y. You will lead it, and we will review progress on Thursday.”
Unclear ownership	“I assumed somebody in the team was dealing with it.”	“Before we finish, let’s name one owner. Alex, are you happy to own this and update us by 10am Tuesday?”
Raising a problem	“There is a problem with the client request. What should I do?”	“The client request conflicts with our agreed scope and could delay delivery. I have identified two options. My recommendation is option one because it protects the deadline. I need approval today.”
A missed deadline	“I haven’t had time to do it.”	“I am at risk of missing Friday’s deadline because the data has not been validated. I raised this today rather than waiting. My proposal is to complete the validated sections by Friday and deliver the final report on Monday.”

4 Current vs New Ways of Working cont.

Use these examples as a practical team language guide.

SITUATION	CURRENT WAY OF WORKING	NEW WAY OF WORKING
Ambiguous priorities	“I have a lot on. What should I work on first?”	“I have three competing priorities: A, B and C. Based on client impact and deadline, I propose A first, then B. Please confirm or reprioritise.”
Meetings	“We had a useful discussion.”	“We made two decisions and agreed three actions. Each action has an owner, deadline, expected outcome and checkpoint.”
Risk management	“Let’s deal with it if it happens.”	“This could happen and would affect the deadline. Let’s remove the risk now where possible, or put a contingency in place and alert the people who may be affected.”
Reporting progress	“It’s in hand.”	“The work is 70% complete. The remaining task is X. I am on track for Thursday, with one risk: approval from Finance. I have requested it and will escalate by Tuesday if needed.”

A helpful replacement for “I thought…”

“I thought…” often signals an untested assumption. Replace it with language that creates clarity:

- “Can I check that I have understood correctly…?”
- “My understanding is that the priority is…”
- “Before I proceed, can we agree what good looks like?”
- “Who is accountable for the next step?”
- “What is the deadline, and what is driving it?”
- “What should we agree to do if this dependency is delayed?”
- “I will summarise the agreement in writing so we have a shared record.”

5 Practical Tools for Daily Accountability

The ownership check

Before leaving a conversation, sending an email or closing a meeting, ask:

What is the next agreed action, who owns it, and by when?

If any part is unclear, the work is not yet properly agreed.

The quality commitment

Before accepting a task, use this sentence:

"I can commit to delivering [specific outcome] by [date/time], to the agreed standard of [quality measure]. The main dependency is [dependency], and I will raise any risk by [earlier date/time]."

Example:
"I can commit to sending the revised customer proposal by 4pm Thursday, with all pricing checked and the implementation timeline included. I need final legal wording by Tuesday; if that is not available, I will update the account lead on Wednesday morning by 10am with options."

The early-warning rule

Raise a concern as soon as you reasonably believe that:

- A deadline may be missed
- Quality may be compromised
- A customer, colleague or project is exposed to avoidable risk
- A decision is needed outside your authority
- A dependency is not being met
- There is a material conflict in priorities
- The issue may become more difficult, expensive & damaging if left unresolved

Do not wait until the deadline has passed. A warning is most valuable while the team still has choices.

5 Practical Tools for Daily Accountability cont.

The problem-solving sequence

Use this six-step method for everyday issues:

1 DEFINE THE PROBLEM

Describe the gap between what should be happening and what is actually happening. Use facts and evidence, not blame.

2 UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT

Who is affected? What happens if nothing changes? Is there a deadline, cost, operational, customer, compliance or reputational risk?

3 FIND THE LIKELY CAUSE

What is creating or contributing to the problem? Avoid jumping straight to the first explanation.

4 GENERATE OPTIONS

Identify at least two realistic responses where possible. Include prevention, mitigation and contingency options.

5 CHOOSE AND ACT

Select the proportionate response, name an owner, set a deadline and inform the relevant people.

6 REVIEW AND LEARN

Did the action work? What should we do differently from today to prevent recurrence?

The escalation brief

When escalation is needed, use this structure:

CLARIFY	QUESTION TO ANSWER
Outcome	What are we trying to achieve or deliver?

5 Practical Tools for Daily Accountability cont.

The escalation brief

When escalation is needed, use this structure:

ELEMENT	WHAT TO SAY
Situation	"The issue is..."
Impact	"If we do not act, the likely impact is..."
Action taken	"So far, I have checked/tried..."
Options	"The realistic options are..."
Recommendation	"My recommended option is..."
Decision needed	"I need your approval/support/decision on..."
Timing	"A decision on how to proceed is required by..."

Example:

"The supplier is unlikely to meet the agreed delivery date, which could delay the client launch by one week. I have spoken to the supplier and checked internal stock. We can either approve an alternative supplier at a higher cost or phase the launch using existing stock. I recommend the phased launch because it protects the customer deadline while limiting cost. I need your approval no later than 2pm today if you are happy to proceed."

6 Ten Meeting Practices That Create Value

Meetings are valuable only when they help people make decisions, solve problems, coordinate work or develop shared understanding. A meeting without a clear purpose, decisions or ownership is usually better handled through a short update.

1 START WITH A CLEAR PURPOSE.
Decide whether the meeting is for a decision, problem-solving, planning, coordination, learning or information-sharing.

2 SEND A FOCUSED AGENDA IN ADVANCE.
Include the topic, intended outcome, meeting lead and preparation required. Label items as “decision,” “discussion” or “information.”

3 INVITE ONLY PEOPLE WHO ARE NEEDED.
Protect time. Attendees should either contribute to the decision, own an action, provide critical expertise or need the outcome.

4 BEGIN BY REVIEWING PREVIOUS ACTIONS.
Confirm what has been completed, what is still open, what is at risk and what needs support. Unfinished actions should not quietly disappear. They require discussion and progress to completion.

5 KEEP DISCUSSION LINKED TO THE DESIRED OUTCOME.
Notice when the group is drifting into detail, repetition or issues that should be dealt with elsewhere. Keep everyone focused on the agenda items.

6 SEPARATE FACTS, ASSUMPTIONS AND OPINIONS.
Ask: “What do we know?” “What are we assuming?” “What information do we still need?” This reduces avoidable misunderstanding.

7 MAKE DECISIONS EXPLICIT.
Do not end with “I think we are broadly agreed.” State the actual decision, why it was made and any implications.

8 RECORD ACTIONS LIVE, NOT AFTERWARDS.
Capture the action while everyone is present. A useful action specifies one owner, a verb-led task, scope, deadline and what completion looks like. Be precise, not vague.

9 REQUIRE EARLY REPORTING OF RISKS AND BLOCKERS.
The owner is responsible for raising issues before the due date, together with a proposed solution or a clear request for help.

10 CLOSE WITH A READ-BACK AND PROMPT SUMMARY.
Read decisions and actions aloud before ending. Send the notes promptly so people have a reliable shared record. Meeting notes should record attendees, agenda, decisions and action items with owners and deadlines.

6 Ten Meeting Practices That Create Value cont.

The meeting action template

ACTION	OWNER	COMPLETION STANDARD	DUE DATE	DEPENDENCIES / RISKS	STATUS
Confirm final client requirements	Priya Shah	Written requirements agreed with client and shared with delivery team	By 14 October, 12pm	Client availability	On track
Draft implementation plan	Tom Evans	Plan includes milestones, roles, risks and contingency	By 16 October, 4pm	Requires confirmed requirements	Not started
Escalate resource gap	Megan Jones	Manager receives options and recommendation	By 13 October, 3pm	Risk to project timeline	At risk

Use real names, specific dates and visible standards. “Team to look at it” is not an action. “Megan to submit two resourcing options to the manager by 3pm Tuesday” is an action.

7 Team Commitments

Adopt the following as working agreements after the event:

1. We will take responsibility for progressing work, rather than waiting passively for others.
2. We will clarify outcome, owner, deadline, standard and dependencies before starting significant work.
3. We will make commitments only when we understand what is required and have agreed a plan to deliver the outcome.
4. We will flag risks, blockers and likely delays early enough for others to act.
5. We will escalate appropriately, with facts, options and a recommendation.
6. We will not rely on mind reading, vague wording or assumptions.
7. We will distinguish between discussion, decision and action.
8. We will ensure every meeting action has one named owner and a due date.
9. We will report progress honestly, including issues as well as achievements.
10. We will use setbacks to improve the process, not to allocate blame.

A team promise

We will create clarity where there is ambiguity, take action where there is delay, raise risk before it becomes damage, and own our commitments from agreement through to completion.

The purpose is not perfection. The purpose is a team that is easier to work with: more dependable, more proactive, clearer in its communication and better able to solve problems before they become urgent.

GET IN TOUCH TODAY

www.summittraining.co.uk

info@summittraining.co.uk

0845 052 3701 (UK)

LinkedIn