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Zest HR

Building a Zest HR That Runs, and Sells, Without You at the Centre

A phased delivery and systemisation plan to reclaim your time, grow advisory revenue, and shape a saleable business ahead of your exit

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WHERE THIS IS GOING

Executive Summary

You have been clear about the destination. Over the next decade you want Zest HR systemised and grown to the point where it becomes an attractive, saleable asset, one that funds the gap to your pension and lets you step back from the four-day PA role on your own terms rather than out of necessity. That ambition sits behind every decision in this proposal.

After fifteen years, the business itself is in good health. There is a dependable retained base, a steady flow of ad hoc work, and credible clients across creative agencies, professional services, IT, care, children's homes, manufacturing and engineering. The constraint is not demand. It is capacity. Almost everything, proposals, invoicing, client email, delivery oversight, routes through you personally, and the PA job that gives you financial comfort has quietly become the ceiling on how far the consultancy can grow.

This plan sets out a phased path to lift that ceiling. It begins by reclaiming your time from the administration that crowds out advisory work, then systemises delivery so it no longer depends solely on you, and builds towards the monthly revenue you have set as the target for a comfortable exit. The investment table and roadmap that follow show how each stage lands.

The aim is straightforward: a business that runs without you at its centre, so that stepping back from the PA job, and eventually selling, becomes a choice you make from strength.

WHERE YOUR TIME GOES

Diagnostic and Current State

The picture from our discovery is consistent and specific. Your working day does not end when the PA role does. Most evenings run to at least nine, with the occasional Saturday starting at six. As you described it, your husband is cooking while you manage emails, and the children are trying to talk to you while you work. The stress, as you put it, is real even though the work does get done once you tackle it.

When we trace where the hours go, they cluster in low-value administration rather than the advisory work that is genuinely yours to do. Invoicing through Better Proposals you described as quite difficult. Proposal preparation, the constant churn of quick emails that never get tracked, and the general context switching between family, the PA job and the business all pull against the high-value client work that pays best and that only you can deliver.

A healthy business carrying an outdated setup

None of this reflects poor time management. It is what happens when a solo model outgrows the way it was originally set up. Seven retained clients, roughly twenty ad hoc clients, two associate consultancies you can call on and a freelance VA is a sound foundation. The issue is structural: the setup routes almost every task through one person, and that person is also holding down a separate four-day role.

That gives us a clear and fast first move. Invoicing and proposal handling are visibly yours to reclaim, and they are among the most friction-heavy tasks you carry. Streamlining and absorbing them early returns time you can feel within weeks, and the improvement attributes cleanly to the work we do together.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Strategic Context

Your ten-year horizon changes what good looks like. A business that depends entirely on its founder is difficult to systemise and harder still to sell. A buyer values what continues to run when the current owner steps away. So the single most valuable move you can make towards a saleable Zest HR is also the one that gives you your evenings back: shifting from a model where you do everything to one where delivery is systemised and transferable.

The same shift serves the pension goal. Replacing PA income through the consultancy alone, and building towards the pension contributions your exit plan needs, both depend on advisory revenue growing beyond what your personal hours can produce. That only happens once delivery no longer sits solely on your desk.

> **Every hour of delivery that can run without you does two jobs at once: it frees your time today, and it adds to the transferable value a future buyer is willing to pay for.**

Framing the work this way also builds resilience. A business with systemised delivery and diversified capacity is steadier through whatever conditions it meets, and steadier businesses command stronger valuations. Future-proofing and enterprise value are two sides of the same coin here.

WHAT THE PLAN RESPECTS

Constraints and Realities

Any credible plan has to work within the realities you have described, not against them. This one does.

- Your current comfort rests on the dual setup of PA income plus the business. As you put it, you cannot simply jack in the PA job while you are feeling comfortable financially. The plan treats that as a sound decision, and its job is to build the headroom that lets you let go of the PA role when the numbers make it comfortable to do so.
- Marketing is already resourced through your existing content contractor. There is no case for duplicating it, so it stays out of scope and the plan keeps its focus on delivery and systemisation.
- The team is deliberately lean and freelance-based, with two associate consultancies and a VA you draw on as needed. The approach builds on that model rather than replacing it.
- The retained base of £5,390 a month underpins everything. Nothing in the plan destabilises it; advisory growth is built on top of it, not at its expense.

In short, the plan is designed as a series of steady, respected steps rather than a leap. The choice of when to reduce and ultimately replace PA income always stays with you.

THE EXIT CLOCK

The Cost of Standing Still

If nothing changes, the most likely outcome is not a crisis. It is more of the same, indefinitely. The administrative ceiling holds. The evenings and Saturday mornings continue. Advisory growth stays capped at whatever your personal hours allow, which means the revenue you need for a comfortable exit stays out of reach for as long as you are the only engine.

The sharper cost is time. You are working towards an exit at fifty-seven, and the value of a business is built, not switched on at the end. A firm that still depends entirely on its founder in the final years before sale is hard to systemise in a hurry and hard to sell for what it should be worth. Every year spent at the current ceiling is a year not spent building the transferable value a buyer will pay for.

The runway to your target exit age is finite. The work of making Zest HR saleable is best started while there is time for it to compound, not compressed into the years when you most want to be stepping back.

HOW WE GET THERE

Phased Roadmap

The engagement is a done-with-you Growth Empire programme, sequenced so that each phase offloads more from you and adds more transferable value to the business. It works entirely within your existing toolset, Clockify, Capsule, Xero, Breathe HR, Better Proposals and your applicant tracking system, rather than imposing anything new to learn.

Phase one: reclaim the highest-friction admin

We start where the friction is most visible and most yours to reclaim. Invoicing, proposals and the churn of client email are absorbed and streamlined first, including the Better Proposals invoicing process you flagged as difficult. This is the phase you feel quickly: reclaimed evenings, fewer untracked small tasks, and a first improvement that attributes cleanly to the work.

Phase two: systemise repeatable delivery

Next we systemise the delivery work that currently routes through you, from investigations and absence management to performance work and onboarding, so tasks follow a documented, repeatable path across the tools you already use. The point is not to fix a bottleneck personally but to build a business where work no longer waits on one person. This is where transferable value starts to accumulate in earnest.

Phase three: build capacity for advisory growth

With delivery systemised, we build the capacity that lets advisory revenue climb towards your stated ambition of twenty to twenty-five thousand pounds a month. That growth, sitting on top of a protected retained base, is what creates the headroom to reduce and ultimately replace PA income, and what makes the business demonstrably able to operate beyond your personal hours.

Phase	Focus	What it frees or builds
One	Absorb and streamline invoicing, proposals and email	Immediate reclaimed time; visible early win

Phase	Focus	What it frees or builds
Two	Systemise repeatable delivery across the existing toolset	Work no longer routes solely through you; transferable value
Three	Build delivery capacity for advisory growth	Revenue towards target; headroom to replace PA income

Marketing stays with your existing contractor throughout. The roadmap is deliberately focused on delivery and systemisation, the two levers that most directly free your time and build a saleable asset.

THE RIGHT FIT

Why Empowrd AI

Zest HR does not need a scale-at-all-costs growth shop. It needs a steady, hands-on partner who understands a boutique, founder-led firm and builds capacity in a way that respects how you already work.

- We build within your existing tools rather than imposing new systems, so the change is additive and low-disruption.
- We work with lean, freelance-based models, strengthening the associate and VA structure you already trust rather than replacing it.
- We keep the retained income base protected while advisory revenue is built on top of it, so growth never comes at the cost of your current comfort.
- We orient the whole engagement to your long-term goal: a systemised, saleable business that funds your exit and pension, delivered at a pace you set.

Our role is practical and grounded. We do the work with you, hand it over as it becomes systemised, and leave you with a business that runs on process rather than on your personal hours. That is the difference between a consultancy that keeps you tied to it and an asset you can one day sell.

INVESTMENT

Investment

The engagement is structured as a done-with-you Growth Empire programme, phased so that value arrives early and compounds. Rather than a single large commitment, the work is sequenced into stages that each free a defined slice of your time and build transferable capability into the business. The first phase concentrates on the highest-friction administration to deliver a visible, attributable win quickly; later phases systemise repeatable delivery and build the capacity that lets advisory revenue climb. Investment is scoped to a lean, founder-led firm and paced to protect your retained income base as advisory work grows. All figures shown are indicative, pending Aman's confirmation before issue.

Engagement	GBP	USD
Signature Blueprint *First step · 2–4 weeks*	**£4k**	**$5k**

Engagement	GBP	USD
Growth Empire (marketing + delivery, DWY)	£5.6–6.2k/mo	$7.5–8.2k/mo

Indicative pricing, pending Aman's confirmation before issue. Marketing activity is deliberately excluded from scope, since your existing content contractor already covers it; the plan stays focused on delivery and systemisation rather than duplicating spend.

THE TEAM

Your founders

EMPOWRD AI | CO-FOUNDER

Aman Singh

Technology, Marketing, Systems & Commercial Discipline

Aman leads technology and automation architecture and commercial discipline at Empowrd AI. He brings deep experience in revenue operations, architecture and commercial cadence, and is focused on building the operational backbone that supports optimisation, process discipline and organisational efficiency.

EMPOWRD AI | CO-FOUNDER

Zoë Walters

Strategy, Transformation & Client Insight

Zoë leads strategy, change management and client insight at Empowrd AI. With a background in HR, organisational design and commercial leadership, she translates business complexity into clear people, process and transformation roadmaps.

The Next Step

You have already done the hard part: fifteen years of building a healthy, well-regarded consultancy and a clear-eyed view of where you want it to take you. What is left is the deliberate work of turning a business that depends on you into one that runs, grows and eventually sells without you at its centre. This plan sets out how to do that in steady phases, starting with the time you reclaim in the first few weeks and building towards the revenue and the freedom your exit plan needs. When we meet on 4 August, we can walk through the roadmap together, confirm the sequencing, and agree where the first phase begins.

Let us use the 4 August session to confirm phase one and set the first reclaimed-time win in motion.