SMARTer Entrepreneurs

FREE QUICK CARD

DIRECTION I QUICK CARD DL-03

The monthly hour that runs the business



Fifteen minutes, one monthly hour, and the questions a good coach would ask you.

The practice

In a small business the owner is the management system. That works until the business outgrows you, at which point it stops working without telling you.

The practice: one hour a month, on the same day all year, in the five parts below. In an illustrative 22-person consultancy, the second meeting showed lock-up (work done but not yet paid for) up from 55 to 68 days, about £68,000 of cash.

Your monthly hour

Your monthly hour	Your answer
The date and who comes (for example, second Tuesday, 9 to 10)	
Part 1. Last month's actions: done or not	
Part 2. The numbers off track (fees, cash, lock-up, work booked, hours billed)	
Part 3. The goals (or the one or two things that must happen this quarter)	
Part 4. One or two decisions	
Part 5. New actions: one name and a date each	
Who keeps the action list, and who chairs when you are away	

The hour is never cancelled, only shortened.

Try this this week

Choose one day and time each month for the next twelve months and put it in the diaries of whoever owns a number. Fifteen minutes.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CARD

Coach yourself

Fill in the front first. Then take fifteen minutes with these, in writing.

1. Read your five parts back. Which would you be tempted to skip, and what would that cost?
2. When did a problem last reach you by surprise, and which part of the hour would have caught it?
3. Which of your numbers could someone other than you explain?
4. Who would you trust to chair it, and what could they decide without you?
5. What would you stop checking yourself if this hour ran properly?
6. Who would notice first if the hour quietly stopped happening?

If you catch yourself saying...

You hear yourself say	Try asking instead
"We talk every day, we don't need a meeting"	If the business had to tell someone else how it was doing, what would it say?
"We're too busy this month"	When would a less busy month be?
"We tried it, it fizzled out"	What is the smallest version you would actually keep every month?

ONE HARDER QUESTION

If you wanted to step back, what would need to be reviewed without you for that to feel safe?

Keep it going

Decide who keeps the action list. Put three dates in the diary: 3, 6 and 12 months from today. If it slips, make it thirty minutes.

When to get help

Ask your accountant what they need to get the numbers to you sooner. Before targets feed into pay, take employment advice. If the numbers show cash running short, talk to your accountant this week.

What a coach adds

This card gives you the questions. What it cannot do is notice which one you avoided. It is one of the SMARTer practice cards, covering the ten key areas of a business that sells expertise.

> Talk yours through with your SMARTer coach and mentor: book a Discovery Call at smarterentrepreneurs.co.uk

Quick card DL-03 v1, November 2026. Sources: Office for National Statistics, Management practices in the UK: 2016 to 2023 (2024); Bloom and Van Reenen, Quarterly Journal of Economics (2007); Bloom, Mahajan, McKenzie and Roberts, American Economic Journal: Applied Economics (2020). © 2026 SMARTer Entrepreneurs. Free to share with other business owners, unchanged and with this notice.