HARBORSTONE SYSTEMS

THE EXECUTIVE CLONE

April 2026

CREATED BY COTINGENCY FOR HARBORSTONE SYSTEMS

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KIEPER STAFF MATRIX

Key Internal & External Personnel

KEY PERSONNEL OVERVIEW

Type	Name	Title / Company (If External)	Email	Phone
Internal	Dale Wexler	Owner/CEO	dale@harborstonesystems.com	(317) 684-4821
Internal	Jose Martinez	Senior Field Technician	jose@harborstonesystems.com	(219) 742-4039
Internal	Luke Fenner	Junior Engineer	luke@harborstonesystems.com	(463) 207-1184
Internal	Mike Halperin	Senior Project Manager	mike@harborstonesystems.com	(765) 432-9347
Internal	Rob Kinley	Technician	rob@harborstonesystems.com	(260) 318-7925
Internal	Sara Vaughn	Head of Engineering	sara@harborstonesystems.com	(812) 233-2763
Internal	Tammy Reed	Administrative Lead	tammy@harborstonesystems.com	(574) 296-6182
External	Amy Sebastian	Legal Counsel - Millwright Legal	asebastian@milwrightplc.com	(219) 723-1632
External	Andrew Landow	Account Manager - Velocity Digital Group	andrew@velocitydigital.com	(219) 742-1059
External	Ellie Tran	Account Manager - First Industrial Bank	ellie.tran@firstindustrial.com	(219) 755-8755
External	Jeff Langston	CPA - Langston & Lee	jlangston@llcpa.com	(219) 533-1836
External	Rebecca Morgan	Insurance Broker - IronPeak Risk Solutions	rebecca.morgan@ironpeakrisk.com	(312) 555-7482

OWNERSHIP & LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Ownership & Leadership Overview

Harborstone Systems is registered as an S Corporation in the state of Indiana. The company incorporated in 2007 and has maintained good standing since inception, completing annual filings and maintaining a registered agent. The FEIN is on file with the company's CPA firm, Langston & Lee. The company holds a state contractor's license for electrical work and maintains low-voltage systems certifications for jurisdictions that require them. Harborstone Systems is an approved vendor with several municipalities and mid-size manufacturers; corresponding vendor-specific compliance documents are maintained in the administrative folder. There are no unusual registrations or regulatory exposures; ongoing compliance requires maintaining filings and ensuring that insurance and contractor certifications do not lapse.

Current Owner

The sole owner is Dale Wexler. Dale owns 100% of the business. There are no silent partners, no equity splits, and no outside investors. Ownership has remained unchanged since inception. All clients, systems, and the company's reputation have been developed under this single ownership structure. The ownership structure is intentionally simple.

Current CEO

There is no CEO outside of Dale. Dale has performed that role in practice, though not formally titled. Mike Halperin, the GM, handles operational decision-making, staffing, vendor coordination, internal scheduling, and maintaining cash flow. Sara Vaughn, the Head of Engineering, owns technical delivery and leads the project teams. They both make day-to-day decisions within their respective areas, but anything strategic, financial, or client-facing at the senior level has historically flowed through Dale. The team operates with trust and autonomy, while Dale remains the final authority on risk, pricing, and overall direction.

Leadership Team

The current leadership team consists of three key individuals responsible for core operational, technical, and administrative functions:

Mike Halperin (General Manager)	Mike oversees daily operations, including vendor management, billing, and scheduling. He plays a central role in maintaining operational continuity and organizational stability. His strengths lie in attention to detail, consistency, and managing essential but often overlooked aspects of the business. While he is highly reliable and effective in execution, there is an opportunity for further development in strategic vision and proactive leadership.
Sara Vaughn (Head of Engineering)	Sara leads the engineering function. She is responsible for project management, technical execution, and mentorship of junior technical staff. Her leadership is defined by a focus on technical rigor and high performance standards. She is direct in communication

	and provides critical feedback when necessary, which supports a culture of accountability. While her communication style is efficient internally, it occasionally requires adaptation for certain client-facing scenarios.
Tammy Reed (Administrative Lead)	Tammy manages administrative operations, including payroll preparation, client communications, and internal organizational support. With significant institutional knowledge, she ensures smooth coordination across functions and maintains strong internal processes. While she is not seeking expanded responsibilities, she demonstrates consistent ownership of her role and is a dependable point of continuity for both staff and clients.

Key Internal Personnel

Beyond the formal leadership team, several individuals maintain operational continuity in roles that do not appear on the organizational chart.

Jose Martinez (Senior Field Technician)	Jose is the senior field technician and has been with the company for nearly a decade. When a project encounters complications or a system requires attention that others prefer not to handle, Jose is assigned. He is calm, focused, and projects a quiet authority that clients respect. He does not seek people-management responsibilities but establishes the standard for field performance. New technicians observe his work practices. He is critical to both field quality and team morale.
Rob Kinley (Technician)	Rob is another long-tenured technician. He is highly dependable, arrives early, performs meticulous work, and does not generate interpersonal issues. He is not positioned as a leader and is not oriented toward high-velocity situations or strategic decision-making. He is entrusted with repeat clients and solo assignments but is not assigned escalation or strategy responsibilities.
Luke Fenner (Junior Engineer)	Luke is a junior engineer with demonstrated potential. Employed just under two years, he is already executing medium-complexity projects and posing insightful questions. He demonstrates a growth mindset and seeks mentorship from Sara. If he remains with the company, he represents a candidate for long-term development.

These individuals are integral to the day-to-day integrity and cultural continuity of the operation. Their retention and integration into any future ownership or operational structure is critical to preserving service quality and team performance during transition.

Key External Personnel

There are several external partners the company relies on regularly who are not employees but provide critical operational support.

Jeff Langston *(CPA)* *Langston & Lee*	Langston & Lee serves as the company's CPA firm and has worked with the company for over 12 years. They handle tax filings, quarterly reviews, and financial compliance inquiries. Langston & Lee monitors issues before they escalate and is familiar with the company's project-based revenue, recurring support, and equipment costs. They would prepare the company's books for a buyer or financing and serve as the primary point of contact for those activities.
Amy Sebastian *(Attorney)* *Millwright Legal*	Millwright Legal functions as the company's primary legal counsel for contracts, vendor disputes, and employment agreements. They are familiar with the company's organizational structure and risk profile. Millwright Legal has been engaged for NDA reviews, service contract language, and a customer dispute that was resolved without litigation.
Martin Bowe *(Account Manager)* *Velocity Digital Group*	Velocity Digital Group manages the company's IT infrastructure and cloud systems and is also responsible for building and maintaining the SaaS product. Martin Bowe is the main contact at Velocity Digital Group. They manage the AWS environment and system monitoring tools and are the first external contact for technology outages or client dashboard failures.
Ellie Tran *(Account Manager)* *First Industrial Bank*	Ellie Tran at First Industrial Bank has maintained a long-term banking relationship with the company. She has assisted with equipment financing, working capital lines, and letters of credit, and is familiar with the company's cash cycles. She provides priority service when timing is critical.

These external partners are not replaceable overnight; they are acquainted with the company's operational rhythms and have established trust through consistent performance.

CLIENT & CUSTOMER OVERVIEW

Landscape & Risks

RELATIONSHIP TYPES OVERVIEW

	Priority	High-Risk	High-Touch	Owner-Dependent	Loyalty-Based
Atlas Processing		✓			
Bray Controls	✓				
Cobalt Refining	✓			✓	
Delta Cold Storage		✓			
Evergreen Plastics			✓		
Ridgefield Packaging					✓
Sterling Food			✓		
Thermadyne Systems	✓			✓	

Relationship Landscape

Thermadyne Systems and Bray Controls are primary clients; they have contracted with the company for years and consistently provide high-value, repeat work. Thermadyne, in particular, entrusts the company with complex retrofit projects that most integrators avoid, and this client is likely to maintain the relationship when continuity is preserved. Bray provides consistent panel work, with the relationship founded on responsiveness and clean execution. A problematic handoff with either client would create immediate concerns.

Unique Relationships

Priority Relationships

The top three clients requiring a personal handoff during the transition are Thermadyne Systems, Bray Controls, and Cobalt Refining.

Thermadyne Systems	A client for over a decade, Termadyne provide high-complexity work that few firms can handle, and Dale has scoped and managed most of their retrofits. They prioritize speed, technical depth, and direct communication. If Dale is absent without context, they are likely to evaluate other vendors. A face-to-face introduction with the new owner is required.

Bray Controls	Bray Controls provides regular panel and system work and relies on the company for installations that integrate into broader automation setups. They demonstrate loyalty but expect consistent communication and technical clarity. Mike and Sara maintain rapport with Bray Controls, but Dale remains the primary point of contact for changes or problem resolution. A transition without a proper relationship handoff will undermine their confidence.
Cobalt Refining	Cobalt Refining is a newer client experiencing rapid growth, and Harborstone is in the early stages of becoming their integrator of choice. They value the company's hands-on approach and direct access to Dale when technical issues arise. Removing that direct line without a strong replacement would diminish their confidence and impede future opportunities.

These three clients represent both revenue and long-term trust. They require a clear introduction, continuity measures, and explicit assurance that the new owner will respect existing relationships and will not implement immediate, sweeping changes.

High-Risk Relationships

Atlas Processing	Atlas Processing experienced a scope misalignment approximately six months ago, which led to a series of change order disputes and project delays. While the situation did not result in a failed engagement, it created operational friction. The issue originated when a newly assigned project manager at Atlas Processing introduced last-minute requests that were not included in the previously approved scope of work. Dale's team proceeded without formally documenting these scope changes, which subsequently led to billing disputes. Although the account was eventually settled, the interaction became transactional rather than collaborative by the conclusion of the engagement. Atlas Processing has remained quiet since, but any future engagement, particularly by a new owner lacking historical context, may prompt immediate scrutiny or demands for additional clarity from their team.
Delta Cold Storage	Delta Cold Storage presents a similar sensitivity. The client previously worked with a provider that delivered continuous, white-glove support, and entered the relationship with Dale's company expecting comparable service levels. Early in the engagement, the client made several high-demand requests, including a same-day panel rewiring during a holiday weekend. Although the request was fulfilled, it placed strain on the relationship. Since then, team members Sara and Mike

have been working to rebuild trust, though the relationship remains fragile.

Neither Atlas Processing nor Delta Cold Storage is considered a lost account, but neither relationship operates on goodwill alone. Without an understanding of the historical dynamics, a change in ownership or approach that treats these clients as standard accounts may result in resistance or disengagement. These accounts require proactive communication, deliberate relationship management, and assurance that existing expectations will not be altered unilaterally.

High-Touch Relationships

Sterling Food Group	Sterling Food Group entered into a multi-site controls upgrade with Harborstone Systems last year. Early in the engagement, the client's VP of Operations requested a customized reporting dashboard to integrate with their legacy ERP, a feature that was not included in the original proposal. Dale's team attempted to accommodate the request mid-project without adjusting timelines or cost estimates, which led to overruns and frustration on both sides. While the system was ultimately delivered and is functioning well, Sterling's leadership has since expressed hesitancy about engaging in another large-scale initiative. A future owner unfamiliar with the historical nuance may encounter pushback or increased contract scrutiny.
Evergreen Plastics	Evergreen Plastics is a long-standing client with significant recurring maintenance agreements. The relationship was tested two years ago when their plant manager insisted on a full weekend turnaround for a complex controls migration to minimize downtime. Dale personally authorized overtime and pulled senior engineers from other projects to meet the deadline. While the effort preserved the account, it also reinforced expectations of white-glove, high-flexibility service. Since then, Evergreen has consistently escalated even minor issues directly to senior staff, bypassing standard support channels. The relationship remains revenue-positive but is highly dependent on maintaining a personal touch. A transition to new ownership without careful context transfer could lead Evergreen to feel underserved, risking erosion of both trust and contract renewal.

Owner-Dependent Relationships

Several clients continue to rely directly on Dale rather than engaging with the company as a whole. This dynamic presents both an operational strength and a transition risk.

Thermadyne Systems	Dale has served as their primary point of contact for over a decade, during which time they have come to depend on his ability to scope complex projects, proactively identify issues, and expedite work under tight deadlines. Although team members such as Mike and Sara have participated in the account, the client relationship remains centered on Dale. Any delay in his response, whether via email or phone, creates noticeable concern for the client.
Cobalt Refining	Although this relationship is more recent, Dale has been directly responsible for managing all aspects of the engagement. This includes providing technical clarification, explaining pricing structures, and supporting the client in justifying decisions internally. The client perceives Dale as a strategic partner and problem solver rather than a transactional vendor. While this level of involvement is not scalable over time, it is currently critical to maintaining the relationship.

There are also several smaller industrial accounts, including local machine shops and packaging facilities, where client interaction remains informal but personal. Dale frequently visits these clients without prior notice, performs system checks, and troubleshoots in real time. These clients rely on the expectation that he will be present when needed, even in cases where the company may not offer the lowest-cost solution.

Overall, there remains a significant dependency on Dale as an individual rather than solely on the organization. While this approach has contributed to the company's success, it also represents a key risk during any ownership or leadership transition. These client relationships require more than a standard email introduction, they demand a structured handoff process that includes in-person engagement and assurances regarding continuity of service.

Loyalty-Based Relationships

Ridgefield Packaging	As one of the company's first major accounts, early work for Ridgefield was substantive and helped establish the business. However, in recent years, their projects have become low-margin and resource-intensive, exacerbated by frequent turnover within their internal team. Dale has continued to accept work from Ridgefield due to the longstanding relationship and the early support provided by the owner, Dave. Despite this history, the current return on investment is minimal, and these

projects often divert time and attention from higher-value opportunities.

Joint Transition Touchpoints

There are several client relationships where a joint transition call or in-person meeting is necessary to ensure continuity and maintain trust. At the top of this list is Thermadyne Systems. The company has worked closely with Dale for years and, while they respect the broader team, they have consistently viewed Dale as the primary decision-maker and problem-solver. A joint call in which Dale introduces the new owner, explains the rationale behind the transition, and provides a personal endorsement is expected to facilitate a smooth handoff and sustain client confidence.

Cobalt Refining is another priority. As a newer relationship still in the trust-building phase, the client has relied heavily on Dale's guidance and reassurance. A leadership change without direct communication could prompt uncertainty about the partnership. A transition meeting led by Dale, allowing for direct introduction and framing of the ownership change, is considered essential to preserving the relationship.

The Rockwell Automation representative should also be included in a joint meeting. That relationship has delivered consistent value through favorable terms on parts, lead times, and pricing, all grounded in mutual respect and direct communication. An in-person introduction to the new owner is important to maintaining that rapport and ensuring continued prioritization of the account.

Client/Customer Communications

Dale's approach with clients is direct, responsive, and built on transparency. He does not leave messages unanswered—urgent issues receive a call, and all other matters get a prompt reply. Clients know they will never be ignored, transferred around, or left in the dark. If a deliverable is delayed or a project runs into complications, Dale provides a clear explanation of what happened, how it is being resolved, and when the next update will come.

He emphasizes proactive engagement, checking in with clients like Thermadyne and Cobalt ahead of milestones, even when no problems are visible. This steady cadence reassures clients without overwhelming them. Dale's reliability, honesty, and willingness to own mistakes foster deep trust, especially on high-stakes projects.

Client/Customer Communication Leads

Day-to-day communication with top customers is distributed across the team, but Dale handles the majority of direct contact, particularly for complex projects, high-touch clients, or legacy relationships. For clients such as Thermadyne Systems and Cobalt Refining, Dale typically scopes the work, responds to their questions, and provides progress updates at key moments. These clients expect timely, concise responses directly from Dale.

Mike manages many mid-project updates, scheduling confirmations, and issue tracking once work is underway. He manages logistics and client expectations and flags items requiring escalation. Sara addresses technical questions and design clarifications, particularly when alignment with a client's engineering team on specifications or timelines is required. Dale is often included for final review or to provide client reassurance.

Although communication responsibilities are shared, top-tier clients continue to view Dale as the primary point of contact. This approach has supported trust-building but requires a structured transition. If Dale were to transfer responsibility without contextual introduction, client trust could diminish. A new owner should be visible, responsive, and ideally introduced by Dale to preserve and expand the existing relationship.

Client/Customer Exclusion Criteria

Dale is deliberate about the clients he accepts, guided by principles that go beyond financial return. He avoids engagements in extractive industries, such as mining and petroleum, because they conflict with Harborstone's values around sustainability and long-term community impact. He also turns down work with undercapitalized startups or those seeking cut-rate automation prototypes, as these projects often collapse mid-stream and undervalue professional expertise.

In evaluating prospective clients, Dale pays close attention to mindset. If the discussion focuses narrowly on hourly rates rather than solution quality, he views that as a sign of incompatibility. Similarly, he avoids private equity groups whose main objective is rapid margin extraction instead of continuity and service. Unless a counterparty demonstrates alignment with Harborstone's long-term orientation, Dale chooses not to proceed.

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIP OVERVIEW

Landscape & Risks

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIP OVERVIEW

	Priority	High-Touch	High-Risk	Loyalty-Based	Owner-Dependent
Allied Electronics			✓		
Graybar			✓		
Harrison & Wicks				✓	
Precision Industrial Supply		✓			
Rockwell Automation	✓				
Summit Controls					✓
Velocity Digital	✓				

Relationship Landscape

Among external stakeholders, two relationships stand out as critical to Harborstone's success. On the vendor side, the Rockwell Automation representative is indispensable. This relationship ensures expedited quotes, rush orders, and help navigating the long lead times that come with specialty components. On multiple occasions, Rockwell's responsiveness has kept major projects on schedule. While Graybar and Allied Electronics are reliable suppliers, Rockwell is the relationship that cannot be compromised.

On the partner side, Velocity Digital plays a uniquely strategic role. Though formally a vendor, Velocity functions as an extension of Harborstone's team by developing and maintaining the SaaS platform. They are the go-to contact for software defects, feature requests, and roadmap adjustments. Without Velocity, Harborstone's SaaS strategy would stall, making this partnership essential for long-term growth and competitiveness.

Unique Relationships

Priority Relationships

Rockwell Automation Representative	The company's most critical vendor relationship, Rockwell provides expedited quotes, rush orders, and guidance on specialty components with long lead times. Dale has built this trust personally, and it has saved project schedules on multiple occasions. Any disruption to this relationship would have immediate operational consequences. A direct introduction with the new owner is required to reinforce continuity and ensure Rockwell remains responsive.
Velocity Digital	As Harborstone's SaaS development partner, Velocity is more than a vendor — they manage the software backbone of the business. They are the point of contact for defect resolution, feature requests, and roadmap changes. Dale maintains a collaborative, strategic rapport with their team that ensures Harborstone's SaaS vision progresses. The successor must establish a working relationship early and demonstrate commitment to the roadmap; without this partnership, the SaaS initiative will stall.

High-Risk Relationships

Graybar	While not as strategically central as Rockwell, Graybar plays a high-risk role in supply chain continuity. They provide critical electrical components that support day-to-day integration work. Delays, allocation issues, or a weakened relationship could disrupt schedules across multiple client projects at once. Dale's consistent engagement has ensured priority service; the successor must reinforce this relationship to preserve dependable material flow and avoid cascading project delays.
Allied Electronics	Allied provides specialty electrical components that are not easily sourced elsewhere. While not always the primary supplier, their role becomes critical when Rockwell or Graybar cannot fulfill orders within required timelines. Losing responsiveness or credit terms with Allied could create bottlenecks that stall active projects. The successor must maintain open lines of communication and ensure Harborstone remains a priority account during periods of high demand.

High-Touch Relationships

Precision Industrial Supply	Precision Industrial Supply provides specialized control components that are difficult to source from larger distributors. While their products are critical, the relationship has been inconsistent. Orders have occasionally arrived late, lead times have shifted without warning, and communication around shortages has been limited. Dale has managed these issues through personal follow-up calls and repeated reinforcement of expectations, but the relationship remains fragile. The successor will need to handle this supplier with extra care—maintaining close contact, confirming availability in advance, and building rapport with account representatives—to ensure Harborstone avoids costly project delays.

Owner-Dependent Relationships

Summit Controls	Summit Controls supplies specialty automation hardware and has maintained a reliable relationship with Harborstone largely because of Dale's personal connection with their regional manager. The two have a long-standing rapport built on shared industry experience and informal trust rather than formal agreements. Dale's direct involvement has secured favorable pricing, priority allocations during shortages, and occasional exceptions on credit terms. This relationship is strongly tied to Dale himself; without a personal bridge from the successor, there is risk that Summit may revert to standard terms or deprioritize Harborstone in favor of other accounts. A warm handoff is essential, ideally through a joint meeting where Dale personally introduces the successor and underscores continuity.

Loyalty-Based Relationships

Harrison & Wicks	H&W is a small integrator for whom the company occasionally performs subcontracted panel work. The partnership dates back to the company's early stages and has provided periodic overflow business. However, their inconsistent timelines and misalignment with the company's quality standards present ongoing challenges. While the relationship is not problematic in a critical sense, it does not scale effectively or align with the company's strategic trajectory, particularly as the SaaS business continues to grow.

Relationship-Based Vendor Advantages

Summit Controls	Summit has been more than just a parts supplier — Dale's long-standing personal relationship with their regional manager has secured Harborstone early access to constrained inventory, faster turnaround on rush orders, and occasional exceptions on payment terms. These perks are not part of any written agreement but flow directly from Dale's personal credibility. Without active successor engagement, Summit is likely to shift Harborstone back to standard processing.
Allied Electronics	Allied has provided specialty electrical components under favorable conditions because of Dale's persistent relationship with their account team. In the past, Dale's direct calls have pushed through expedited shipments when projects were on the verge of slipping schedule. The risk is clear: without Dale's involvement, Allied may no longer treat Harborstone's needs as top priority, forcing projects to absorb costly delays.

Joint Transition Touchpoints

Graybar	As one of Harborstone's backbone suppliers for electrical and control hardware, Graybar has consistently met expectations, but Dale has been the one maintaining direct contact with their senior rep. To ensure continuity, Dale must introduce the successor in a formal handoff meeting. This joint transition will confirm that Harborstone remains a priority account and prevent the perception that the relationship strength left with Dale.
MetroTech Engineering Consultants	MetroTech provides specialized engineering reviews and compliance certifications for Harborstone's automation projects. Dale has been the single point of contact, personally coordinating schedules and negotiating around tight deadlines. Because of this, MetroTech's trust rests with Dale more than the company. A joint transition meeting is necessary to establish the successor's authority and maintain Harborstone's preferred access to their consultants.

Vendor, Advisor, and Partner Communications

Communication expectations vary by role but follow consistent principles of clarity, respect, and timeliness. Vendors respond best to direct, concise updates with advance notice of upcoming needs. Advisors expect context-rich communication, particularly around risks, compliance, and financial implications, where delayed or incomplete information can slow decision-making. Strategic partners value regular check-ins that combine operational updates with forward-looking discussions about growth and innovation. Across all categories, the successor must balance frequency—enough to sustain confidence but not so frequent that it burdens stakeholders.

Exclusion Criteria

Harborstone avoids external relationships that compromise ethics, stability, or reliability. Vendors who cut corners on quality, fail to honor delivery commitments, or treat Harborstone as a transactional account are not retained. Advisors who demonstrate conflicts of interest, prioritize extraction of fees over long-term outcomes, or lack the capacity to provide timely guidance are not engaged. Partners who cannot demonstrate shared values—particularly around continuity, transparency, and service quality—are excluded. Dale's philosophy is that relationships must reinforce Harborstone's reputation and resilience; those that undermine either are not pursued.

Internal Support & Continuity

Mike has the closest experience with relationship management shadowing Dale. He has participated in most key vendor and partner meetings, particularly with mid-sized suppliers, and has joined several calls with strategic partners. He understands the nuances of negotiating terms, managing expectations, and applying calibrated pushback without damaging trust. While he does not yet have Dale's depth of historical context or instinctive read of stakeholders, he has observed Dale's handling of difficult conversations and is beginning to build his own rapport with external contacts.

Sara's exposure has been primarily on the technical side. She is effective in working with engineers and project managers at supplier and partner organizations, and her clarity and professionalism are well respected. However, she has not extensively shadowed Dale during early-stage relationship activities such as introductions, conflict resolution, or strategic positioning with key stakeholders.

Tammy engages with vendors and partners on administrative matters including billing, scheduling, and paperwork, but she has not been deeply involved in relationship-building activities. Her tone is professional and well-received, yet her interactions remain transactional rather than focused on navigating stakeholder dynamics or establishing long-term trust.

CORE OPERATIONS & INFRASTRUCTURE

WEEKLY ROUTINE OVERVIEW

Day of Week	Task	Time	Attendees
Monday	Operations Huddle	08:00-08:45	Dale, Mike, Sara, Tammy
	Quote Review	09:00-10:00	Dale, Sara (for complex quotes)
	Client Check-Ins	11:00-11:45	Dale
	Job Site Visit	14:00-15:30	Dale, Field Crews
	Vendor & Admin Coordination	16:00-17:30	Dale, Tammy, Vendor Reps (by phone)
Tuesday	Job Costing & Labour Review	07:30-08:30	Dale, Mike & Sara (if needed)
	Technical & Project Support	10:00-11:00	Dale, Sara, Eng. Staff, Velocity SaaS Devs.
	Escalation & Support Window	12:00-14:00	Dale, Project Leads/Techs (as needed)
	Supplier & Field Visits	15:00-16:30	Dale, Vendor Partners, Field Staff
	Strategic & Ad Hoc Work	16:30-18:00	Dale, Mike & Sara (informal/ad hoc)
Wednesday	Job Site Visit	14:00-15:30	Dale, Field Crews
Thursday	Job Costing & Labour Review	07:30-08:30	Dale, Mike & Sara (if needed)
	Technical & Project Support	10:00-11:00	Dale, Sara, Eng. Staff, Velocity SaaS Devs.
	Escalation & Support Window	12:00-14:00	Dale, Project Leads/Techs (as needed)
	Supplier & Field Visits	15:00-16:30	Dale, Vendor Partners, Field Staff
	Strategic & Ad Hoc Work	16:30-18:00	Dale, Mike & Sara (informal/ad hoc)
Friday	Weekly Wrap-Up	09:00-10:30	Dale, Mike, Sara (Ops); Dale & Mike (Financial)
	Informal Presence & Staff Engagement	14:00-16:30	Dale, Various Staff/Techs (Informal)

Daily Operations

Dale’s weekly routine follows a consistent rhythm that the team has organized around.

Operations Huddle

Frequency	Weekly (Mondays, 8:00 – 8:45 AM)
Location	Dale’s Office
Attendees	Dale, Mike, Sara, Tammy
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ 8:00 – 8:10 AM: Review active jobs and assignments. ☐ 8:10 – 8:20 AM: Identify field issues and delivery delays. ☐ 8:20 – 8:35 AM: Discuss scheduling gaps and resource conflicts. ☐ 8:35 – 8:45 AM: Surface immediate priorities and risks for the week.

This huddle sets the tone for the week. It prevents drifting priorities by ensuring everyone starts aligned on jobs, schedules, and risks. Dale's role as facilitator is central, when he's not present, tasks slip quickly and issues compound.

Quote Review

Frequency	Weekly (Mondays, 9:00 – 10:00 AM; ad hoc throughout week)
Location	Dale's Office
Attendees	Dale, Sara (for complex quotes)
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Review quotes submitted late the prior week or over the weekend. ☐ Collaborate with Sara on complex quotes (risk assessment, past client work). ☐ Adjust labor hours for omissions and unique client requirements. ☐ Approve or revise final versions before release.

Quotes are the lifeblood of future revenue. Dale's oversight ensures accuracy and profitability, drawing on years of experience with client quirks and technical requirements. Without his adjustments, the company risks underbidding, overcommitting, or missing details only he recalls.

Client Check-Ins

Frequency	Weekly (Mondays, 11:00 - 11:45 AM)
Location	Dale's Office
Attendees	Dale
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Proactive calls/meetings with priority clients. ☐ Confirm system performance and identify potential issues. ☐ Reinforce continuity and trust.

These touchpoints maintain the trust that underpins recurring business. While informal, they are highly relational, a critical part of why clients stick through transitions. Dale's personal involvement keeps loyalty strong and ensures potential issues surface early.

Unannounced Job Site Visits

Frequency	Twice Weekly (Mondays & Wednesdays, 2:00 - 3:30 PM)
Location	Project Sites
Attendees	Dale, Field crews (varies by project)
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Observe crew performance. ☐ Spot-check wiring, panel design, or install quality. ☐ Engage with technicians to boost morale. ☐ Confirm milestones and address risks.

These visits reinforce Dale's presence without creating a culture of surveillance. His on-site involvement boosts morale and ensures quality standards are upheld. Crews know their work is noticed, which strengthens accountability and team pride.

Vendor & Admin Coordination

Frequency	Weekly (Mondays, 4:00 - 5:30 PM)
Location	Dale's Office
Attendees	Dale, Tammy, Vendor Representatives (phone)

Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Confirm equipment orders and resolve shipment issues. ☐ Review overdue invoices and accounts payable. ☐ Discuss license renewals and compliance deadlines. ☐ Clear outstanding voicemails and client emails.

This block ties up operational loose ends. Vendor calls, administrative updates, and financial housekeeping prevent bottlenecks from carrying into the next week. Tammy provides structure, but Dale's involvement is essential for vendor negotiations and final decisions.

Job Costing & Labor Review

Frequency	Twice Weekly (Tuesdays & Thursdays, 7:30 – 8:30 AM)
Location	Dale's Office
Attendees	Dale; Mike and Sara occasionally join for flagged issues
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Update costing spreadsheet. ☐ Compare actual vs. quoted labor/material. ☐ Flag discrepancies for project lead follow-up. ☐ Identify recurring margin gaps.

This is Dale's personal system for financial oversight. By reviewing quotes against actuals, he identifies cost creep and hidden risks. It's highly manual and relies on his eye for detail, creating a single point of dependency for job-level profitability analysis.

Technical & Project Support

Frequency	Twice Weekly (Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:00 – 11:00 AM)
Location	Dale's Office
Attendees	Dale, Sara, engineering staff; Velocity SaaS developers
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Weekly standing call with Velocity. ☐ Panel design reviews. ☐ Hands-on troubleshooting for technical challenges.

This session anchors technical quality. Dale's dual role as engineer and owner allows him to bridge leadership with technical problem-solving. It's where design, execution, and external vendors intersect, and where Dale's input carries unique weight.

Escalation & Support Window

Frequency	Twice Weekly (Tuesday–Thursday, 12:00 – 2:00 PM)
Location	Dale's Office
Attendees	Dale, project leads or technicians (as needed)
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Available for escalations, urgent client issues, or last-minute quote revisions. ☐ Immediate decision-making to keep projects moving.

The team relies on Dale being reachable during this window. It's not formally scheduled, but everyone knows he will pick up issues here. This expectation ensures problems don't stall, but it also centralizes resolution on Dale's availability.

Supplier & Field Relationship Visits

Frequency	Twice Weekly (Tuesday–Thursday, 3:00 – 4:30 PM)
Location	Dale's Office
Attendees	Dale, vendor partners, field staff
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Visit vendors to reinforce relationships and resolve supply chain issues. ☐ Conduct informal crew check-ins. ☐ Provide morale support (e.g., food/drinks for after-hours crews).

These visits strengthen the informal networks that keep operations running smoothly. Vendor relationships reduce parts delays and supply disruptions, while field drop-ins boost culture. Dale's presence is the thread connecting both worlds.

Strategic & Ad Hoc Work

Frequency	Twice Weekly (Tuesday–Thursday, 4:30 – 6:00 PM)
Location	Dale's Office
Attendees	Dale, Mike and Sara (informal/ad hoc)
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Sketch new system concepts. ☐ Adjust quotes. ☐ Analyze bottlenecks and workflow issues. ☐ Ad hoc problem-solving with leadership.

This is Dale's creative and strategic time, though often interrupted. It's where ideas for growth emerge, but also where urgent problems get solved. The balance between innovation and firefighting reflects both Dale's value, and his vulnerability as the company's bottleneck.

Weekly Wrap-Up

Frequency	Weekly (Fridays, 9:00 – 10:30 AM)
Location	Dale's Office
Attendees	Dale, Mike, Sara (operational review); Dale & Mike (financial review)
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ 9:00 – 9:30 AM: Review completed projects, carryovers, and resource balance. ☐ 9:30 – 10:30 AM: Review P&L, cash flow, receivables, and payables.

This meeting provides operational and financial closure before the weekend. It ensures both people and projects are balanced, while also giving Dale and Mike a firm grasp of the financial picture. Without it, financial blind spots accumulate quickly.

Informal Presence & Staff Engagement

Frequency	Weekly (Fridays, 2:00 – 4:30 PM)
Location	Dale's Office
Attendees	Dale, various staff/technicians (informal)

Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ One-on-ones with key staff. ☐ Informal check-ins with team members needing support. ☐ Casual presence in shop/breakroom for culture-building.

These unstructured moments are deceptively important. Dale's informal engagement boosts morale, diffuses tension, and reinforces a culture of approachability. For many employees, this is where they feel most connected to leadership.

MONTHLY, QUARTERLY & ANNUAL EVENTS OVERVIEW

Period	Task	Frequency
Monthly	All Team Meeting	Final Friday
	Contract & Client Review	Mid-Month
	Financial Review	First Tuesday
	Leadership Check-Ins	First & Third Wednesday
Quarterly	All Hands	Once, 1.5 hrs
	Insurance & Risk Review	Once, 1 hr
	Strategic Review	Once, early in quarter
	Vendor Meetings	Once, 1-2 hrs
Annual	Annual Business Planning Session	Once, Q4 or early January
	Client Appreciation Event	Once, December
	Holiday Party & Employee Appreciation	Once, December
	State Filings & Licensing Renewal	Rolling windows
	Year-End Financials & Tax Planning	Once, December or January

Monthly Events

Financial Review

Frequency	Monthly (First Tuesday)
Location	Dale's home office or Zoom
Attendees	Dale, Jeff Langston (Accountant)
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ 9:00 – 9:20 AM: P&L walk-through and variance highlights. ☐ 9:20 – 9:40 AM: Cash flow position, 30/60/90 receivables, aging risk. ☐ 9:40 – 10:05 AM: Actuals vs budget; unexpected expenses or billing delays. ☐ 10:05 – 10:30 AM: Forecasting upcoming large payments and cash buffers. ☐ 10:30 – 11:00 AM: Approve payroll and large vendor invoices; capture follow-ups.

This meeting creates a clean financial pulse for the month. Dale leaves with decisions made, approvals completed, and a short list of actions to protect cash and margins.

Leadership Check-Ins

Frequency	Twice monthly (Wednesdays, Weeks 1 and 3, 2:00 - 3:00 PM)
Location	Conference Room
Attendees	Dale, Mike, Sara
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ 2:00 – 2:15 PM: Project status headlines and schedule risks. ☐ 2:15 – 2:30 PM: Staffing challenges, capacity pinch points, upcoming PTO. ☐ 2:30 – 2:45 PM: Client issues and escalations; who owns what by when. ☐ 2:45 – 3:00 PM: Top three priorities until next check-in; remove blockers.

These sessions align leadership on what must move now. Decisions, ownership, and due dates are documented so momentum is obvious and trackable.

Contract & Client Review

Frequency	Monthly (Mid-month)
Location	Dale's office; legal counsel on call as needed
Attendees	Dale, Amy Sebastian (Attorney)
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Review key client contracts and renewal dates. ☐ Identify negotiation points, repricing opportunities, and scope clarifications. ☐ Flag nonstandard terms and risk exposures for counsel input. ☐ Prepare talking points and renewal timelines for account owners.

This block protects gross margin and reduces contract risk. It also equips the team with clear next steps before renewals sneak up.

All Team Meeting

Frequency	Monthly (Last Friday, 3:00 - 3:40 PM)
Location	Shop Conference Room
Attendees	Entire team; led by Dale with Mike and Sara reporting

Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ 3:00 – 3:10 PM: Company performance snapshot and safety update. ☐ 3:10 – 3:20 PM: Shout-outs and notable wins across projects and support. ☐ 3:20 – 3:30 PM: Open Q&A on priorities, schedule, and upcoming changes. ☐ 3:30 – 3:40 PM: Next-month focus areas and how success will be measured.

This meeting keeps everyone rowing in the same direction. It celebrates progress, surfaces concerns early, and sets a crisp focus for the month ahead.

Quarterly Events

Strategic Review

Frequency	Quarterly (2-3 hours scheduled early in the quarter)
Location	Local co-working space or Zoom
Attendees	Dale, Tom Reynolds (Business Advisor)
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Review prior quarter's goals and results. ☐ Analyze financials, margins, and cost structures.B ☐ Identify growth opportunities and assess competitive positioning. ☐ Surface operational bottlenecks and set new quarterly priorities.

These sessions create a rhythm for reflection and forward planning. By stepping out of day-to-day operations, Dale gains clarity on strategy, risks, and opportunities. It also locks in priorities before the quarter accelerates.

Vendor Meetings

Frequency	Quarterly (1-2 hours per session)
Location	Vendor offices (Rick's Panels, Rockwell Automation) or Harborstone conference room
Attendees	Dale, vendor account representatives
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Review supply forecasts and order pipelines. ☐ Revisit contract terms, pricing, and payment schedules. ☐ Address delivery delays and logistics challenges. ☐ Preview new product developments or technologies.

These meetings protect the supply chain and reinforce vendor partnerships. They allow Dale to negotiate favorable terms, anticipate delays, and ensure Harborstone stays aligned with upcoming product shifts.

Insurance & Risk Review

Frequency	Quarterly (1 hour)
Location	Dale's home office (phone or Zoom with broker)
Attendees	Dale, Rebecca Morgan (Insurance Broker)
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Verify active policies and coverage adequacy. ☐ Review open claims, renewals, and premiums.

	☐ Assess emerging risks and regulatory exposures. ☐ Plan for policy adjustments ahead of renewal deadlines.

This call ensures Harborstone is shielded from avoidable risk. By addressing gaps quarterly, Dale reduces surprises and keeps coverage aligned with changing operations.

All Hands

Frequency	Quarterly (1.5 hours)
Location	Shop conference room (occasionally offsite)
Attendees	Entire Harborstone team; led by Dale with leadership reports
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Company performance and financial health review. ☐ Preview major upcoming projects and initiatives. ☐ Team Q&A to surface concerns and opportunities. ☐ Recognition of standout employees and cultural wins.

The all-hands strengthens transparency and culture. It connects employees to the company's direction, highlights achievements, and reinforces values while giving everyone a voice in the conversation.

Annual Events

Annual Business Planning Session

Frequency	Annual (Q4 or early January; full day)
Location	Offsite retreat center or conference venue
Attendees	Dale, Mike Sara, Jeff Langston (Accountant), Tom Reynolds (Business Advisor), Amy Sebastian (Attorney, as needed)
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ 8:30 – 9:00 AM: Welcome, prior-year highlights, context setting. ☐ 9:00 – 10:30 AM: Prior-year performance review (ops, finance, client outcomes). ☐ 10:45 – 12:00 PM: Strategic goal setting (12–18 months), success metrics. ☐ 1:00 – 2:30 PM: Budget finalization and capital plan. ☐ 2:30 – 3:30 PM: Market expansion/new service line discussion and gating criteria. ☐ 3:30 – 4:30 PM: Risk register and top 5 initiatives with owners/dates. ☐ 4:30 – 5:00 PM: Communications plan and next steps.

This session locks the company's annual direction, goals, budgets, and big bets, so execution starts strong on Day 1.

State Filings & Licensing Renewals

Frequency	Annual (rolling windows; clustered in a 3–4 week period)
Location	Dale's office; virtual with Legal Counsel
Attendees	Dale, Tammy, Amy Sebastian (Attorney)
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Compile renewal calendar and document checklist (by state/agency). ☐ Complete forms, submit fees, track confirmations. ☐ Resolve exceptions or missing documentation. ☐ Update compliance tracker and archive receipts/certificates.

Treating renewals as a project prevents lapses that could halt jobs or delay shipments.

Year-End Financials & Tax Planning

Frequency	Annual (December or January, 3–4 meetings)
Location	Dale’s office or Zoom
Attendees	Dale, Jeff Langston (Accountant), Mike (select sessions)
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Close books: reconcile accounts, confirm accruals/deferrals. ☐ Tax strategy: depreciation, elections, credits, owner distributions. ☐ Forecast: next-year revenue, margin, cash flow scenarios. ☐ Action items: 1099s/W-2s deadlines, banking/tax payments calendar.

This series minimizes tax exposure and ensures a clean financial start to the new year.

Client Appreciation Event

Frequency	Annual (December)
Location	Local restaurant or Harborstone shop (weather permitting)
Attendees	Dale and leadership team; top clients and key vendors
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Welcome reception and informal networking. ☐ Brief remarks from Dale (year-in-review, gratitude, outlook). ☐ Recognition of standout partners and projects. ☐ Light program: raffle/thank-you gifts; photo moments.

Designed to deepen relationships and renew goodwill before planning and procurement cycles kick off.

Holiday Party & Employee Appreciation

Frequency	Annual (December)
Location	Banquet hall or rented event space
Attendees	Entire team; plus leadership and invited guests
Agenda/ Responsibility	☐ Holiday Party: food, music, awards, gift exchange; safety message and year-ahead teaser. ☐ Quarterly Lunches: shout-outs, milestone recognition, mini “state of ops” update. ☐ Capture photos and internal comms recap to reinforce culture.

These touchpoints boost morale, retention, and shared identity, closing out the year on a spirited note.

Systems & Workflows

Day to day, the business operates on a set of core workflows that are primarily functional rather than flashy.

First is job scheduling and field coordination, which Tammy owns. She maintains a live schedule in a shared spreadsheet, updated from the Monday operations huddle and midweek check-ins. The schedule indicates who is assigned to each job, site access notes, install dates, and gear deliveries. The spreadsheet is simple but critical; without it, field operations become disorganized.

Second is the quoting and scoping workflow. Quotes are received via client email or phone and are logged by Mike into the “Quote Tracker” sheet. From there, Sara or Dale scopes the work depending on complexity. The team retrieves past project folders from Drive, reuses base templates, and adjusts labor and risk assumptions based on client-specific information. Dale continues to review or build most complex quotes because the quoting logic is not fully systematized.

Third is project execution and handoff. Once a job is approved, Sara assigns it to a lead technician and Tammy creates the job folder, which contains drawings, the scope document, install notes, and client contacts. Field technicians are expected to follow that folder and update job status at least once per week, typically via field reports or text messages that Tammy logs.

Fourth is support and monitoring for contracted clients. Mike or the on-call technician monitors tickets submitted through email or support calls. There is no formal ticketing system; the team uses shared inboxes and a master “Support Tracker.” Issues are prioritized by client tier and routed accordingly. The process functions but remains manual and dependent on personnel.

Last is finance and administration. Tammy sends invoices through QuickBooks after Dale or Mike approve the job wrap. Tammy tracks accounts receivable manually in a spreadsheet linked to QuickBooks reports. Weekly, she prepares summaries for Mike, who updates Dale on cash flow and outstanding balances.

The company does not use an ERP or dashboards. The majority of processes are spreadsheet-driven and reliant on established routines and institutional knowledge. The current systems are functional but could be modernized without disrupting existing operations.

TECH STACK OVERVIEW

Tech Stack	Underutilized or Non-Adopted Tools	Critical Data Repositories
Google Drive/Sheets/Docs	ServiceTrade	Google Drive
Quickbooks Desktop (Local Install)	Zoho CRM	Quickbooks Desktop
AutoCad	Slack (via Velocity Digital)	AutoCAD
FactoryTalk View Studio	GitHub	AWS (Velocity Digital Managed)
Email & Text Messaging	Microsoft Teams	Local Admin Computer (Legacy Files)
Brady Workstation		

Systems, Data & Access

Tech Stack

Google Drive/Sheets/Doc

Primary Users	Entire team
Purpose	Operational system of record
Notes	Project folders, quote templates, job trackers, and field notes are all stored here. While the structure is informal, it is fast, universally adopted, and serves as the backbone for day-to-day documentation.

This cloud suite acts as the “filing cabinet” and collaboration hub. Everyone relies on it to find information quickly, even though it lacks rigid organization.

QuickBooks Desktop (Local Install)

Primary Users	Tammy (Admin), Mike (GM), Dale (reports/review)
Purpose	Invoicing, bill payments, and payroll
Notes	Core financial platform; Dale relies on summary reports, while Tammy and Mike handle daily transactions.

Although dated compared to cloud-based options, this system is deeply embedded in Harborstone's processes, making it both familiar and dependable for managing money flow.

AutoCAD

Primary Users	Sara (Head of Engineering), Field Technicians (via PDFs)
Purpose	Panel drawings and layouts
Notes	Essential for design; Sara builds and maintains files. Technicians interact primarily with exported drawings.

AutoCAD underpins Harborstone's technical credibility. It ensures precision in designs, though dependence on Sara limits broader team access and fluency.

FactoryTalk View Studio

Primary Users	Sara, select technicians
Purpose	HMI programming for Allen-Bradley projects
Notes	Specialized tool, not universal across staff, but essential for certain project types.

While niche, this software is mission-critical for automation projects. Lack of widespread expertise creates vulnerability if Sara or other trained users are unavailable.

Email & Text Messaging

Primary Users	Entire team
Purpose	Client communication and field coordination
Notes	Email is the client-facing standard, while SMS threads keep technicians aligned day-to-day. Informal, but effective.

This lightweight system keeps communication flowing, though its informality means important details are sometimes harder to track and archive.

Brady Workstation

Primary Users	Technicians

Purpose	Wire labeling for installations
Notes	Ensures standardization, clarity, and safety in wiring.

This is a small but essential tool. Standardized labeling prevents errors, improves inspection outcomes, and maintains professional quality across projects.

Underutilized or Non-Adopted Tools

ServiceTrade

Primary Users	Trialed by technicians (briefly)
Purpose	Job tracking and field service management
Notes	Adoption failed due to usability friction; never became part of daily workflow.

Despite its potential, the tool didn't align with Harborstone's culture of quick, informal coordination. Staff defaulted back to spreadsheets and texts.

Zoho CRM

Primary Users	Dale (light setup), admin staff (rare use)
Purpose	Client tracking and pipeline management
Notes	Partially configured but rarely accessed; quoting remains spreadsheet-driven.

Without leadership buy-in or team adoption, Zoho never displaced existing habits. It shows the tension between scaling systems and sticking with "what works."

Slack (via Velocity Digital)

Primary Users	SaaS development team only
Purpose	Communication channel for SaaS updates
Notes	Not used by operations staff; email and SMS remain primary communication modes.

While valuable for developers, Slack never crossed over into Harborstone's core business. The split creates silos between development and day-to-day operations.

GitHub

Primary Users	SaaS development team
Purpose	Code repository and version control
Notes	Essential for SaaS but irrelevant for operations staff.

Like Slack, GitHub is critical for the software arm but invisible to technicians and managers. It highlights Harborstone's dual identity: part industrial services, part SaaS builder.

Microsoft Teams

Primary Users	None (included with license, unused)
Purpose	Collaboration and communication
Notes	The team prefers Zoom for meetings and SMS/email for coordination.

Although bundled with Office, Teams was never adopted. Existing habits and simpler tools proved more appealing, leaving this platform dormant.

Summary

The team prioritizes tools that are fast, familiar, and visible. Workarounds, personal spreadsheets, shared text threads, and handwritten job notes persist because they are faster than logging into systems that are not aligned with existing workflows. Tools that do not reduce operational friction are disregarded despite active subscriptions. This indicates an opportunity to improve adoption if new tools are introduced through collaborative implementation with the team rather than through top-down mandates.

Critical Data Repositories

Google Drive

Primary Use	Operational repository
Content	Project folders, quotes, job scopes, panel drawings, site photos, client notes, support history
Notes	Organized by client and project; also houses 10 years of historical records.

This is the company's central reference point. While informal and not automated, it's the daily system everyone relies on for work visibility and continuity.

QuickBooks Desktop

Primary Use	Financial system of record
Content	Financial records, invoice history, vendor payments, payroll, P&L reports
Notes	Maintained by Tammy and Mike; captures revenue, expenses, and client payment behavior.

QuickBooks anchors the financial backbone. It is accurate and current, but also creates concentration risk since only a few people manage it.

AutoCAD

Primary Use	Design platform
Content	Panel design files; working files backed up manually to Google Drive
Notes	If Sara's laptop fails without recent backups, critical files are at risk.

This system produces core deliverables for clients. Its reliance on Sara and manual backups leaves a clear vulnerability that continuity planning should address.

AWS (Velocity Digital Managed)

Primary Use	SaaS infrastructure
Content	Uptime logs, client dashboards, sensor data backups
Notes	Managed externally by Velocity Digital; access limited to a small group.

AWS houses Harborstone's future growth engine. Because it is tightly managed by a partner, visibility and redundancy inside the company remain limited.

Local Admin Computer (Legacy Files)

Primary Use	Archival storage
Content	Vendor contracts, license keys, scanned NDAs, HR forms
Notes	Not mission-critical but unbacked; could be lost if the machine fails.

This is a catchall for older records. While not central to operations, ensuring backups would remove a lingering weak spot in the company's information systems.

Project Management Tracking

Project documentation and communication are managed primarily through spreadsheets, shared folders, and direct conversations. Each project is assigned a dedicated folder in Google Drive containing a scope document, installation schedule, and any relevant drawings or photos. Progress is tracked manually; technicians provide updates via email or text, which Tammy records in a running job sheet.

Formal project management software is not currently in use, although Dale has evaluated various options. Dale and Sara typically remain informed on project status through weekly operations meetings or direct communication with the job's technical lead.

For longer-term initiatives, such as the SaaS product development or internal process improvements, information is maintained using handwritten notes, whiteboard lists, and monthly check-ins. While this system functions effectively due to the small, closely coordinated team, it lacks scalability. Dale has acknowledged that the current setup would present challenges in the event of rapid team expansion or increased onboarding activity. System improvements have been discussed but deprioritized in light of existing workload demands.

Access & Security

Currently, access management is a combination of shared tools and undocumented institutional knowledge. The company uses 1Password to store and share key credentials, including AWS logins, QuickBooks admin, VPN access, and support portal credentials. Sara, Mike, Tammy, and Dale all have access, and shared vaults are configured for engineering, administrative, and leadership-level access.

For day-to-day tools such as Google Drive and AutoCAD licenses, Tammy manages user permissions manually, typically by duplicating access from an existing team member. This process is not automated or subject to regular audit.

When an employee departs, access is revoked manually across systems; there is no formal offboarding checklist that is linked to permissions. Some long-tenured field technicians retain saved passwords on their devices, which requires remediation. Overall, the company has appropriate tooling in place but currently relies on memory and interpersonal trust rather than formalized processes, representing a mitigable operational risk.

Recurring Licenses

Dale reports a portfolio of auto-renewing subscriptions that require active oversight. QuickBooks Desktop payroll renews annually; Tammy typically receives the reminder email, and a missed reminder could disrupt payroll processing. 1Password is on an annual subscription tied to a company card and stores critical credentials, so lapse prevention is essential. Google Workspace is billed monthly and provides Drive and email access; it is also linked to a card and lacks proactive notifications unless a failure occurs.

Licenses for AutoCAD, FactoryTalk View Studio, and legacy Modicon and Siemens software are mostly annual and associated with either Sara's workstation or the primary engineering laptop. These licenses are susceptible to being overlooked unless Sara proactively flags upcoming renewals. AWS billing for the SaaS platform is monthly and managed by Velocity Digital; invoices are received by the company and require review to identify unexpected charges.

Smaller subscriptions, such as Brady Workstation for labeling, auto-renew unless canceled. Individually none of these items constitutes a crisis, but concurrent renewals, particularly on the card managed by Tammy, could create operational disruption. Renewal dates are currently maintained in a shared Google Sheet; the process is manual and not consistently up to date. This tracking method represents an early opportunity for a new owner to implement tighter controls.

Internal Response to Tech Disruptions

Most technical issues are resolved informally and quickly, without the use of a ticketing system or helpdesk. For straightforward problems such as printer jams, email outages, or login failures, employees typically contact Tammy first. She either resolves the issue directly or escalates it to the local IT vendor in cases involving more complex matters like network disruptions or hardware malfunctions.

Engineering-related technical issues, including AutoCAD crashes, FactoryTalk malfunctions, or HMI file errors, are handled by Sara. She conducts direct troubleshooting, maintains a repository of historical fixes, and leverages vendor support contacts stored locally to resolve issues efficiently.

Velocity Digital is responsible for all cloud infrastructure and SaaS platform support. In the event of AWS outages or client dashboard bugs, the internal team contacts them via Slack. Velocity Digital typically responds within a few hours and occasionally provides proactive notifications regarding outages or version conflicts.

Field-related technical issues, such as frozen tablets, wireless configuration errors, or label printer malfunctions, are usually addressed by Mike or Sara, who provide remote troubleshooting support. If hardware replacement or vendor coordination is required, Tammy takes over. Although there is no formal policy for spare devices, one or two backups are generally available on-site.

Currently, there is no centralized system for logging or tracking recurring technical issues. While most problems are resolved quickly, the absence of documentation can lead to repeated troubleshooting efforts or a lack of context regarding delays in tool deployment or updates. This reflects a broader operational tendency to prioritize rapid, experience-based problem-solving over formalized processes.

Vendor & System Failure Triage Plan

If a key vendor or system fails, initial triage depends on the specific failure, but the first step is always to quickly assess impact and notify the appropriate personnel. For supplier delays (for example, Rockwell cannot deliver), the response is to pivot rapidly: Tammy contacts secondary vendors by phone, Dale contacts the company representative directly rather than customer service, and the team evaluates substitution or rework options. For critical components, Dale contacts peer shops to arrange borrowing or purchasing available inventory.

For system failures (for example, QuickBooks crashes or AWS becomes unavailable), the team contacts the designated owner immediately. Tammy manages QuickBooks recovery and contacts the IT vendor when necessary. For AWS or other SaaS outages, the team contacts Velocity Digital directly under an existing arrangement for priority fixes.

For internal coordination, Mike serves as the primary point of contact for triage: he notifies impacted team members, pauses dependent jobs, and provides updates to Dale. If clients are affected, Dale communicates with clients to explain the situation, set expectations, and provide additional time as needed.

The company does not maintain a written runbook for these scenarios; responses are based on institutional experience and established informal roles. The process emphasizes rapid action, clear assignment of responsibilities, and early communication. Roles are well understood despite the absence of documentation, though Dale acknowledges that formalizing these procedures would be a critical step for a new owner.

Process, Documentation & Workflow Health

Dale scopes jobs based on a combination of prior experience, risk assessment, professional judgment, and reference to past installations. While historical quotes stored in Google Drive may be reviewed, the underlying logic, such as how labor is adjusted for challenging clients, when to allocate buffer hours, or what to discount strategically to secure a deal, resides solely with Dale. Without this contextual knowledge, others attempting to generate quotes may risk underpricing or overpricing, potentially leading to lost revenue or missed opportunities.

Another key area is job scheduling and field coordination. Although Tammy maintains the scheduling spreadsheet, the operational cadence, how client requirements are balanced against crew availability, site access constraints, and equipment lead times, is not documented. Tammy manages this intuitively based on experience. In her absence, the process could be continued, but important nuances would likely be overlooked.

Customer support response is also handled informally. There is no defined service-level agreement or procedural playbook. Incoming support calls are evaluated and prioritized by Mike or the on-call technician based on their judgment. Long-term clients are typically given priority; however, this prioritization logic is not documented and relies on team members' historical knowledge and professional relationships.

Responsibility allocation in unplanned scenarios, such as when Sara is unavailable or Dale is occupied, has not been formalized. The team operates effectively due to a shared understanding of roles and mutual trust, but this informal structure presents a knowledge gap for any new personnel or transition team. For effective continuity, these undocumented workflows will need to be identified, articulated, and systematized.

SOP Change Management

Currently, there is no standardized process in place for documenting updates to standard operating procedures (SOPs). When procedures change, such as modifications to the install checklist or updates to wiring conventions, the individual responsible typically revises the relevant

Google Document within the shared Drive folder. However, there is no version control or formal change log, and unless the update is mentioned during a meeting or communicated via email, most team members may remain unaware of the change. Sara consistently updates technical SOPs when adjusting programming sequences or panel standards, but those updates are only visible to individuals who know to check her specific folder.

In terms of operational procedures, including quoting workflows or client intake processes, knowledge transfer is informal. When Tammy modifies a form or Mike alters job tracking methods, they typically communicate the changes directly to Dale or raise them during team huddles. There is no centralized index or designated process owner to define the current standard workflow. While this informal approach has been functional for a small, long-standing team, it presents challenges for onboarding new personnel and maintaining procedural consistency during organizational growth. This area has been identified as a clear opportunity for process improvement.

Standardized vs. Improvised Workflows

The install process is the most standardized operational procedure. Once a job is approved, the workflow follows a consistent sequence: panel build, field install, wiring, commissioning, and handoff. The crew adheres to a repeatable pattern, and Sara's drawings specify many of the detailed requirements. The company also employs standard labeling, tool checklists, and jobsite preparation steps that technicians execute without direct instruction. Panel design is largely repeatable as well; Sara uses templates and reusable design logic to avoid re-creating designs for each job.

Quoting remains highly improvised. There is no pricing engine or quoting software. Dale adjusts for risk, client-specific considerations, and timing based on professional judgment and prior experience. Labor buffers are not documented; they are determined by intuitive assessment. Client communication is adapted to individual preferences, some clients receive weekly updates while others are contacted only for issues, rather than following a fixed schedule.

Job scheduling is moderately standardized. Tammy manages scheduling using a spreadsheet and follows an established rhythm to balance resources and deadlines; however, staffing absences or shipment delays require real-time problem solving.

Overall, field work is repeatable, administrative processes are semi-standardized, and quoting and client relationship management remain owner-driven, creating a transition risk because critical knowledge and practices are retained in personnel rather than documented procedures.

Workflow Automation Potential

Several recurring operational tasks have been identified as candidates for straightforward automation, with the potential to improve efficiency, reduce manual errors, and streamline internal handoffs.

Quoting is a primary area for improvement. Currently, quotes are created manually using spreadsheets, often referencing elements from previous projects. Implementing a quoting tool, or even a structured form with embedded logic to account for standard labor hours by system type, material markups, and risk factors, would allow approximately 80% of the quoting process to be standardized. Dale's involvement could then be limited to final review, resulting in significant weekly time savings.

Job scheduling represents another opportunity. While Tammy manages scheduling effectively using a shared spreadsheet, transitioning to a dedicated scheduling platform with features such as drag-and-drop job boards, resource allocation, and automated conflict alerts would enhance field coordination. This would become increasingly valuable as the company scales and would allow field technicians to access their assignments without requiring direct communication or group messages.

Client status updates could also be partially automated. A system that generates templated weekly emails based on job progress notes would ensure consistent client communication without requiring manual input each time. This approach would help maintain transparency and reduce the likelihood of communication gaps.

Invoicing and accounts receivable follow-ups remain manual within QuickBooks. By enabling more automated reminders and establishing predefined escalation thresholds for overdue invoices, the process could be made more efficient. Similarly, syncing expense data from corporate cards and automating categorization would simplify financial reporting for Mike.

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) updates and version control could be managed through a centralized knowledge base tool. This would ensure that all changes are logged, accessible by role, and eliminate ambiguity regarding the most current version of any document.

These improvements do not require enterprise-level solutions; a selection of appropriately scoped tools would meaningfully reduce operational friction without adding complexity for the team.

Bottlenecks & Workarounds

Quoting is the most susceptible to delays, particularly during periods of high request volume or when Dale is required to address field-related issues. The quoting logic is not formally documented and resides primarily with Dale, and there is no standardized intake or pricing model in place. As a result, quoting processes can quickly become bottlenecked. If Dale is unable to address a quote within one to two days, it often remains unaddressed or is completed hastily, increasing the risk of errors.

Job scheduling presents similar risks. Tammy currently manages this function effectively using a manual spreadsheet, but the process lacks automation and redundancy. In Tammy's absence or in the event of oversight, such as a delayed shipment or missed inspection, operational disruptions can occur rapidly. The system does not include automated alerts for potential conflicts such as double-booking technicians or failing to account for site-specific constraints.

Support follow-up processes are also vulnerable. There is no formal ticketing system in place; instead, updates are tracked manually in a shared tracker. If a technician handles a customer inquiry but fails to record the resolution, the interaction may not be logged. This results in incomplete service histories and can lead to client dissatisfaction, particularly among customers accustomed to more structured support systems.

Documentation and standard operating procedure (SOP) maintenance are inconsistent. Updates are made on an ad hoc basis when team members have availability, with no established schedule or assigned owner. Over time, this leads to discrepancies in documentation, which pose challenges for training new employees and implementing process changes. Without timely updates, outdated practices may persist undetected.

Overall, quoting, scheduling, support, and documentation function adequately under normal conditions but become stressed under increased workload. Failures in these areas are typically linked to a reliance on manual processes and individual ownership rather than formalized systems.

Recurring Bottlenecks & Response Patterns

The most consistent bottleneck is quoting, either due to an influx of requests or Dale being redirected to field issues causing quotes to accumulate. In those instances, the team triages based on client priority and project complexity. Long-standing clients receive priority, and Mike or Sara prepare preliminary scopes for Dale to finalize. This approach maintains workflow continuity, although it is not optimal.

Scheduling conflicts occur at least once a week, caused by technician absences, part delays, or last-minute client schedule changes. Tammy resolves approximately 90% of these issues in real time by reassigning crews, contacting vendors, and adjusting installs. When conflicts escalate, Dale assumes decision-making responsibility. If there is a risk of client dissatisfaction, Dale contacts the client directly to address the situation.

Part shortages and delivery delays are another recurring issue, particularly for custom panels and specialty components. Sara proactively monitors lead times; when delays occur, the team either fast-tracks workarounds or adjusts schedules to allow additional time. Dale leverages vendor relationships to obtain better visibility and to expedite shipments when feasible.

Support request backlogs typically follow major installs or system upgrades. In the absence of a formal ticketing system, Mike and the technicians manage requests manually. If request volume becomes unmanageable, Dale manages high-touch clients personally and reassigns lower-priority tasks.

Issue resolution primarily relies on real-time decisions and interpersonal relationships. Team members are flexible and assume responsibilities as needed, which supports current operations but creates dependence on individual responsiveness rather than preventive processes.

Unofficial Solutions & Team Shortcuts

Several operational workarounds are currently in place that maintain workflow continuity, despite not being suitable for long-term scalability. One primary example involves the quoting process. Under time constraints, Dale duplicates a previous quote from a similar project, modifies the scope and dates, and renames the file within the shared drive. The logic behind the updates is not visible to others, but the approach allows for rapid turnaround. Mike and Sara use a similar method when Dale is unavailable.

Field technicians also follow an informal process for reporting time and job progress. While the formal expectation is to submit weekly updates via email or a shared job tracker, many instead send photos and brief notes via text to Tammy or Sara. Tammy then manually logs the information into the system. As a result, key data often resides in personal inboxes or mobile devices, making it difficult to access in a structured or searchable format.

Job scheduling adjustments are frequently made outside of the documented system. In cases of scheduling conflicts, Tammy may reassign jobs based on her knowledge of a technician's availability or rapport with specific clients. These decisions are not reflected in the official job tracking spreadsheet, and the rest of the team is not always informed. The approach relies heavily on Tammy's familiarity with team dynamics and client relationships.

Sara has developed a set of design efficiencies, such as custom AutoCAD templates and macros, that accelerate the creation of panel layouts. These tools are stored locally on her computer and are neither documented nor backed up, posing a risk if she becomes unavailable.

The support triage process also operates without formal structure. Mike identifies urgent issues in the shared inbox or communicates directly with a technician via text. While this method provides quick responses, it lacks consistency and leaves clients without a clear understanding of support expectations.

These informal practices function effectively due to the team's familiarity with one another and the business. However, they are not transparent to new personnel and present operational risks in the event of staff turnover. Documenting and formalizing these workarounds presents an opportunity to convert ad-hoc methods into standardized processes.

Unresolved Workflow Challenges

The quoting process is currently the primary operational bottleneck. It remains entirely manual, led by Dale, and varies significantly from one job to another. There is no standardized pricing logic or structured intake system in place, resulting in all quoting activity being funneled through Dale. This centralized dependency slows down response times and creates capacity constraints, particularly during periods when Dale is unavailable. While preliminary discussions have taken place regarding the development of templates or a lightweight CPQ (Configure, Price, Quote) tool, no implementation has occurred to date.

Job scheduling and field visibility present additional challenges. Although Tammy effectively manages day-to-day coordination, the team relies on a shared spreadsheet that lacks real-time visibility for field technicians. When schedule changes occur or when technicians need to confirm upcoming tasks while on site, updates are communicated via group texts or phone calls. This informal system functions under the current small-team structure but lacks scalability. Solutions such as ServiceTrade and similar platforms have been trialed, but they proved too complex or incompatible with the team's existing workflow.

Documentation is another operational gap. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) are dispersed, inconsistently updated, and lack version control or formal communication of changes. Much of the institutional knowledge remains undocumented, residing with key individuals. For example, Sara retains critical design methodology, Mike manages project handoff processes, and Tammy maintains vendor-specific knowledge. The absence of this information in a centralized system introduces risk, particularly if multiple team members are unavailable simultaneously.

Internal communication also lacks centralization. The team currently uses a mix of email, text messages, handwritten notes, and informal conversations. While functional, this fragmented approach increases the probability of miscommunication or missed tasks, especially across different roles. There is no unified platform for tracking project status, client communications, or administrative follow-ups. Although these issues are not currently obstructive, they represent friction points that could hinder scalability or complicate a business transition.

Key Operational Dependencies

Several personnel and external partners are essential to maintaining operational continuity. Tammy is responsible for scheduling, invoicing, and administrative functions. She manages the job calendar, ensures coordination across field crews, and oversees vendor payments and contract renewals. Her contributions are largely behind the scenes, but disruptions in her role have immediate and significant operational impacts.

On the engineering side, Sara leads panel design, CAD development, HMI programming, and the majority of technical documentation. She converts high-level project scopes into executable deliverables and currently holds specialized knowledge that is not readily transferable. Her absence would directly affect project quality and technical execution.

Mike, the General Manager, oversees quoting intake, project handoff, and job performance tracking. He serves as the primary liaison between Dale and the broader team, resolving mid-level issues before escalation. While he does not make all strategic decisions, his role is critical in maintaining day-to-day operational flow.

Among external partners, Velocity Digital is integral to the SaaS platform. They provide hosting, infrastructure maintenance, and DevOps support. They are the first point of contact for backend system issues or sensor communication failures.

On the hardware side, the company's Rockwell distributor representative plays a key role in supply chain management. This includes expediting part orders, providing advance notice of inventory constraints, and assisting with warranty resolutions.

Tammy, Sara, Mike, Velocity Digital, and the Rockwell representative collectively hold essential operational knowledge and responsibilities. While the broader team is capable, these individuals and partners represent core dependencies that require proactive transition planning.

Owner-Level Dependencies & Failure Points

Quoting is the primary operational function currently centralized under Dale. There is no formalized pricing system or automated engine in place; all pricing decisions are determined based on Dale's internal methodology. Pricing adjustments are made according to perceived project risk, historical interactions with the client, anticipated complexity, and other undocumented variables. Without Dale's direct oversight, quotes risk being mispriced, either too low, resulting in margin erosion, or too high, resulting in lost business. This pricing balance is the result of Dale's accumulated operational experience.

Client relationship management, particularly with high-value accounts, is another critical area of Dale's involvement. Trust with these clients has been established through consistent engagement, problem-solving, and availability during critical moments. In the absence of a structured transition or clear point of continuity, there is a risk that key clients may disengage without explicit notice. The trust built over time is not formally documented and is therefore susceptible to attrition if not proactively maintained.

Dale also oversees project scoping and quality assurance during the transition from sales to implementation. This includes identifying gaps such as incomplete quotes, unverified site conditions, or ambiguous scheduling expectations. Dale routinely flags overlooked details, for example, confirming coordination with general contractors or verifying electrical specifications. These interventions prevent downstream issues that could otherwise escalate into significant delivery problems.

In terms of team operations, while not serving as the day-to-day manager, Dale plays a pivotal role in monitoring team morale and interpersonal dynamics. Early indicators of burnout, disengagement, or internal friction are typically identified by Dale, who intervenes through informal adjustments such as reassigning tasks, initiating one-on-one discussions, or addressing resourcing imbalances. The absence of this informal oversight may not produce immediate disruptions, but over time, it could lead to declines in team cohesion and retention.

Quoting, client trust, job scoping, and cultural monitoring are the functions where Dale's absence would be most impactful, even if operational metrics appear satisfactory.

Owner-Retained Responsibilities

Dale continues to handle most complex quotations, particularly those involving custom panels, long-term service contracts, or specifications with tight tolerances. Mike and Sara are capable of managing quotations and have produced numerous appropriate proposals, but Dale's extensive experience enables early identification of potential issues. Dale can anticipate delayed client approvals and recognize scopes that require additional contingency because they frequently encounter complications. Dale also distinguishes which cost-saving measures are acceptable and which present unacceptable risk.

This approach is driven by the need to apply nuanced judgment rather than by a desire for control. Many of these discretionary decision rules are not yet documented. Dale is in the process of delegating this responsibility but has not transferred the complete decision logic. For high-stakes engagements, large clients or tight margins, Dale prefers to prepare the quotation personally to minimize the risk of rework or reputational impact. This remains one of the final processes pending full systematization.

Operational Weak Spots Tied to Owner

If Dale were unavailable without notice, quoting activity would be significantly disrupted. While team members such as Mike and Sara are capable of handling standard quotes, the underlying framework Dale uses to price jobs, factoring in risk assessment, scope adjustments, client history, and built-in contingencies, has not been formally documented. As a result, complex or high-stakes quotes continue to require Dale's direct involvement. In the absence of this input, the company would risk either halting quoting altogether or issuing inaccurate quotes that could negatively impact margin or damage client trust.

Client trust, particularly with long-standing accounts, would also be at risk. These clients are accustomed to direct communication from Dale on matters such as scope clarification, project updates, or general relationship maintenance. A sudden lack of engagement without a structured handoff protocol could lead to concern and gradual erosion of these relationships, even if clients do not immediately voice objections.

Operationally, field-level decisions, especially those involving unexpected issues or mid-project changes, are currently escalated to Dale. Although the team is competent, many employees rely on Dale for final judgment in complex or ambiguous situations. In Dale's absence, there is no established decision-making framework or escalation process to support these real-time calls.

Quoting, client relationship management, and live operational decision-making are the three functions that would be affected immediately. This is not due to a lack of capability among staff, but because Dale has not fully transferred the contextual knowledge that guides those decisions.

LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY
&
DECISION FRAMEWORK

Values, Beliefs & Philosophy

Dale founded Harborstone on core values that have remained constant as the business has grown: ownership, trust, and performing work correctly regardless of visibility. He prioritizes earning the company's reputation through actions rather than marketing. Commitments to clients are fulfilled; responsibility is assumed when failures occur. He rejects shortcuts, rapid growth driven by appearance, and addressing problems with excessive staffing. He prefers declining opportunities rather than securing work through overpromising or underbidding. Internally, he values loyalty, work ethic, and follow-through above formal credentials. Hiring decisions have been based on instinct, retaining employees who demonstrate consistent attendance, reliability, and commitment. These practices have resulted in long-term client relationships and a trusted team. Dale intended to build an organization that clients and stakeholders can rely on.

Cultural Non-Negotiables

Internally, Dale requires personal ownership: if an individual makes an error, they must acknowledge it, correct it, and apply lessons learned. The organization prohibits finger-pointing and concealment behind process. Arrogant behavior is not tolerated, including from high performers. The company operates as a team and requires equal respect for technicians, administrative staff, and field personnel.

Externally, Dale's non-negotiable is trust. If a client provides false information, delays payment without communication, or attempts to leverage competing vendors to force price concessions, the company disengages. The company prioritizes foregoing revenue rather than compromising operational standards. Harborstone was built on commitments being honored, and deterioration of that principle undermines other aspects of the business. The same expectations apply to all stakeholders: attend as required, communicate honestly, and fulfill commitments.

Hiring Philosophy

Dale hires based on cognitive approach and professional comportment rather than formal credentials. He seeks candidates who demonstrate problem-solving instinct, mechanical curiosity, and a willingness to assume responsibility for outcomes. Candidates who take initiative, remain composed under pressure, and determine solutions when answers are not immediately apparent are considered for roles. Dale places less emphasis on academic degrees or prior employment with prominent integrators and more emphasis on practical judgement, such as recognizing which components of a live panel should not be disturbed first. He observes candidate behavior during ride-alongs, interactions with the team, and the types of questions asked to assess genuine efforts to understand. Dale also prioritizes candidates who treat the work as important. Technical skill is considered trainable; integrity, judgment, and work ethic are regarded as non-teachable.

Leadership Style

Dale states that the team performs best under steady, hands-on leadership characterized by presence, practical problem solving, and support when required. The team prefers leadership that understands the work, sets clear expectations, and protects employees' time and focus rather than performative encouragement or micromanagement. Effective leaders demonstrate field presence, prioritize listening, and make decisions without unnecessary complexity. Technicians and engineers are technically competent and do not tolerate unnecessary language or corporate jargon. Leaders who are practical, direct, and consistent are effective. Leaders should lead by example, accept responsibility for decisions, and avoid interpersonal conflict to maintain team engagement. Leaders who act with excessive ego or treat front-line staff as subordinate cause rapid disengagement.

Dale does not retain individuals who introduce ego-driven behavior, political maneuvering, or passive-aggressive conduct into the organization. The company culture does not permit game-playing or hierarchical posturing; all staff undertake hands-on work and are held accountable, including leadership.

The company has previously experienced situations where individuals made extensive claims but did not deliver, or attempted to lead without first understanding operational realities; such situations generate tension rapidly.

Candidates with overly corporate expectations, those who require highly formalized systems, rigid role definitions, or extensive structure, have reported frustration. The organization operates at pace, adapts in real time, and relies on mutual trust. Individuals who require continuous guidance or react negatively to direct feedback are not considered a fit. The company applies direct communication and prioritizes execution over presentation.

Conflict Resolution Approach

Dale initiates one-on-one conversations as soon as he identifies interpersonal tension to prevent issues from persisting. He pulls individuals aside, presents his observations, and requests their perspective to clarify points of misalignment without requiring immediate agreement. With Mike and Sara in particular, sufficient trust exists to permit direct communication without escalation. Dale acknowledges that he does not consistently follow up when conversations remain unresolved and sometimes proceeds before the other party feels fully heard. He also reports instances in which he made unilateral decisions and advanced actions under deadline pressure; this approach is effective in the short term but may not be optimal for long-term team dynamics. His default approach is to address issues promptly and privately, though he recognizes that follow-through on unresolved conversations is an area for improvement.

Essential Successor Qualities

Dale expects candidates to remain steady under pressure, be grounded in the work, and be respected by the team through presence rather than title. Technical understanding is required; even if not performing wiring tasks, the candidate must be able to communicate technically and assess what is realistic. The candidate must build trust quickly with long-term clients and senior technicians. Clear communication, reliable follow-through, and willingness to work in the field are required. Interpersonal skills are necessary, including emotional intelligence, to determine when to assert, when to listen, and when to defer. Candidates should avoid leading with ego or corporate rhetoric, as that reduces team engagement. Dale does not expect perfection but requires accountability and consistency to maintain Harborstone's stability.

The most difficult aspect of Dale's leadership to replicate is a combination of interpersonal presence and instinct rather than a codified process or policy. Dale has developed deep, personal relationships with clients, vendors, and the team through consistent availability, including after hours, on weekends, and during complex situations. Stakeholders trust Dale not solely because he is the owner, but because he assumes personal responsibility for problems and ensures they are resolved.

This level of trust is built over time and through repeated face-to-face interactions, such as arriving at a jobsite without prior notice or responding to calls late in the evening during crises. It is accumulated through numerous small interactions over years. While Mike possesses comprehensive knowledge of the business, replicating that degree of personal commitment and credibility will be challenging, particularly in the early stages of transition.

Dale also holds substantial tacit knowledge, described as a "gut feel" for identifying when a project is encountering complications before formal reports indicate issues, and the ability to detect hidden risks within client conversations. These nuances of decision-making are not documented.

Strategy & Decision-Making

When weighing a major decision, such as a senior hire, altering the service model, or declining a significant contract, Dale consults three advisors:

Sara	Sara provides the technical assessment, identifying whether a solution is feasible, overengineered, or likely to create problems later.
Mike	Mike evaluates operational and financial impacts, including effects on cash flow, staffing, and scheduling.
Jose	Jose offers a field-level practicality assessment, indicating whether an initiative will be well received by the team or be difficult to implement.

Dale does not require consensus but seeks identification of blind spots. These three individuals participate in those discussions based on a track record of providing candid, pragmatic input focused on the best interests of the business.

Informal Rules

Dale also has a set of informal rules that he uses when evaluating opportunities. First, if an opportunity feels rushed or vague, Dale declines. Urgency without clarity is treated as an indication that the counterpart may be attempting to transfer risk to the company. Second, Dale evaluates whether the opportunity aligns with the company's strengths, such as custom work, critical systems, or trust-based relationships, or whether it falls outside the company's capabilities; Dale does not pursue primarily speculative opportunities. Third, Dale assesses the margin of error; engagements or clients that allow no tolerance for issues are treated as red flags regardless of apparent profitability. Favorable opportunities are those the company can execute with confidence rather than those that require stretching for revenue. If the question "Can we do this well, on time, and without causing team burnout?" cannot be answered affirmatively, Dale declines the opportunity.

Trusted Outside Advisor

Dale identifies this area as a gap. He has relied on several informal advisors over the years: his CPA at Langston & Lee for financial perspective and Martin at Velocity Digital for technical guidance. He has not engaged a formal advisor or mentor for regular consultation. He has typically depended on professional judgment, prior experience, and informal checks with Mike or Sara. This approach has been effective in many instances but has limited external perspective. There have been occasions in which he likely increased complexity by attempting to resolve issues independently.

Information Preparation

Dale expects a concise summary at the outset of any decision-making communication, specifically, the decision at hand, the associated stakes, and the recommended course of action. Supporting context should follow, focused solely on key facts, the options evaluated, and the current position of the team. Dale does not require extensive presentations or large data sets; the preference is for streamlined information delivery. For technical matters, risk must be clearly articulated; for operational issues, the downstream effects on cash flow, customers, and personnel must be addressed. Any proposal brought to Dale should include a focused, pre-vetted recommendation. The objective is not to revisit the problem but to validate the analysis and reach a clear decision. Additional value is placed on identifying the implications of inaction.

Strategic Decision-Making Framework

Dale maintains a clear decision framework: protect the team, protect the trust, and protect the margins. Decisions that compromise any of these criteria are rejected. He evaluates whether the company can execute with existing resources, whether the decision strengthens the company's long-term position, and whether it reinforces the company's established reputation. He does not pursue growth for growth's sake; every strategic initiative must improve the company's capabilities, not merely increase size. He also prioritizes clarity: plans that cannot be explained clearly to technical staff or clients are considered not ready. Finally, he assesses sustainability: whether the initiative can be maintained without his involvement and whether it will remain sensible one year later; if not, it is generally not considered strategic.

Acceptable Risks

Dale is comfortable with calculated technical risks, such as testing a new control method, integrating with unfamiliar equipment, or piloting a SaaS feature with a trusted client, provided the potential fallout can be contained if a project encounters complications. Dale accepts complexity when sufficient personnel and bandwidth are available to resolve it. Dale is also willing to accept short-term financial risk, including temporarily covering costs or extending payment terms for a long-standing client, when a strong trust relationship exists. Dale does not accept risks to personnel. He will not expose the team to burnout, compromise safety, or assign an individual to a role for which they are not prepared to pursue a deal. Dale will extend operational capacity but will not compromise organizational culture. If potential negative outcomes could harm staff or the company's reputation, the option is rejected.

Unacceptable Risks

Dale does not assume risks that jeopardize personnel safety, company reputation, or client trust. This policy excludes engagements with clients that are disorganized, dishonest, or evidently seeking a party to assign blame for project issues. Dale does not provide quotes for jobs that have not been scoped internally, issue blind estimates, or rely on guesses. New technology or automation is not deployed without an established fallback plan. The company does not conduct beta testing on live lines without explicit client acknowledgment of the implications and signed consent. Internally, Dale does not promote employees solely based on tenure; candidates must demonstrate readiness. Dale also does not pursue revenue opportunities that would compromise team well-being.

Red Flags

Dale slows decision-making when an individual speaks more than they listen; this applies to hires, clients, and partners. Overconfident individuals frequently overlook details, which creates operational risk in the company's environment. Dale evaluates how individuals treat support staff; if a prospect is curt with Tammy or dismissive toward a junior technician, Dale discontinues engagement. Such behavior has historically correlated with larger downstream issues. In pricing discussions, if a client emphasizes cost without inquiring about quality or process, Dale interprets that as an indicator of potential ongoing contractual disputes. If a project has passed through three prior vendors and the client is vague about previous failures, Dale treats that as a significant warning signal. While others may perceive opportunity, Dale identifies potential liability. Dale's intuitive assessments incorporate observable patterns even when financial metrics appear favorable.

Board & Investor Preparation

Dale does not maintain a formal board or external investors, so preparation is minimal by design. When presenting financials for financing, insurance reviews, or potential buyers, Dale obtains clean P&Ls from Langston & Lee, summarizes current project load, highlights support contract performance, and lists any major risks or wins. Dale focuses on cash position, upcoming deliverables, and factors affecting margins. The presentation is a direct assessment of strengths, resource constraints, and upcoming priorities. Dale prepares a one- to two-page summary document to succinctly present the narrative. If required to present on a monthly or quarterly basis, Dale would systematize the process; to date, a concise and transparent approach has been used.

Financial Decisions

Business Investment Criteria

Dale evaluates three factors: urgency, return, and readiness. Equipment or software that reduces rework, downtime, or delays is prioritized for investment, even if acquisition cost is high. Items that are discretionary or will not deliver efficiency or capability improvements are deferred. Dale also assesses whether the organization can absorb the operational impact immediately; when resources are constrained or a new team member is being onboarded, even investments with high ROI are postponed until stability is restored. Decisions are validated with the team by determining whether the investment will make tasks easier, faster, or safer. If the answer is affirmative and the budget can accommodate the expense without disrupting operations, Dale proceeds. If Dale hesitates, the decision is delayed until the underlying concern is resolved.

Executive-Level Financial Metrics

Dale maintains primary oversight of cash flow, including inflows, outflows, and amounts pending resolution. He monitors the project backlog, support contract renewals, and receivables aged beyond 30 days. He does not analyze detailed ratios or dashboards but consistently assesses gross margin, with particular attention to custom jobs. Dale reviews job costing after project close to compare actuals to quotes, focusing on patterns rather than individual line items. He monitors payroll as a percentage of revenue as a leading indicator; if labor costs increase while project volume does not, he considers the business to be deviating from target performance. Mike is responsible for identifying anomalies and maintaining the P&L, while Dale maintains independent mental calculations to corroborate financial positions.

Legal, Tax & Compliance

Dale delegates responsibilities to trusted advisors and staff to maintain operational and compliance oversight. Langston & Lee, the company's CPA firm, handles all tax filings, conducts quarterly reviews, and ensures compliance with state and federal reporting. They identify any anomalies and provide Dale with summary reports rather than raw forms. Millwright Legal provides legal support for contract reviews, client dispute resolution, and updates to employment agreements. Dale ensures appropriate advisors are engaged early rather than serving as the subject-matter expert. Internally, Tammy manages license renewals, insurance documentation, and vendor compliance forms using a master checklist on a quarterly basis to prevent oversight. Dale's role is to ensure that appropriate individuals are assigned to specific responsibilities rather than performing all tasks personally.

Expense Management & Strategic Balance

If profit declined, Dale would first eliminate non-essential expenditures, including unused contractors, inactive software subscriptions, delayed equipment upgrades, and any discretionary items not directly tied to service delivery. He would implement a hiring freeze and suspend travel or training that is not directly related to project execution. Dale would prioritize preserving payroll for the core team, particularly technicians, engineers, and administrative staff responsible for daily operations. He would also preserve service delivery and client support to prevent revenue issues from becoming reputational problems, noting that operational shortfalls can lead to staff attrition and loss of client trust.

Dale evaluates which decisions are reversible. If a decision ties up cash and cannot be unwound, such as a major equipment purchase or hiring before demand justifies it, he postpones the action unless the company is in a very stable financial position. For growth initiatives that preserve optionality, such as piloting a new service, testing a contractor, or investing in client development, he proceeds even if those actions temporarily tighten cash. He avoids sacrificing future growth to improve short-term cash comfort, while also avoiding taking undue risk with current operations. When cash is constrained, he reduces the scale of the growth initiative or staggers the expenditures. The key criterion he applies is timing: assessing when the business can support the investment without compromising financial balance.

Execution & Delegation

Dale becomes involved when trust is at risk, when client issues arise, for high-risk quotes, for team morale concerns, or for any matter that could affect the company's reputation. When a project encounters complications, when a long-term client raises a concern, or when there is confusion regarding scope or accountability, Dale participates in those discussions. Dale also participates in hiring for key roles and in decisions to promote personnel into leadership, as those decisions influence organizational culture. For quotes that fall outside the company's standard practice, Dale scopes them personally or reviews them prior to submission. The team manages routine day-to-day decisions; however, when matters involve risk, ambiguity, or long-term impact, Dale assumes responsibility.

Delegation Criteria

Dale delegates any task that is recurring, operational, or within another team member's functional responsibilities. Scheduling, purchasing, vendor follow-up, routine client check-ins, and internal reporting are assigned to Mike or Tammy. Field resourcing, job assignments, and technical reviews are assigned to Sara or Jose. Most support contract renewals and administrative paperwork are delegated unless a red flag is present. Requests that do not require Dale's judgment, relationship capital, or risk assessment are delegated. Dale determined that retaining routine decision-making reduced team efficiency and consumed time without adding proportional value. Delegation is practiced to entrust team members with ownership of their respective responsibilities.

Team Communication

Dale communicates in a direct and contextual manner. For operational matters, such as scheduling changes, new processes, or client expectations, he informs the affected personnel immediately, typically via a brief meeting or direct call. For strategic matters, such as shifting priorities, pausing a service, or changing quoting practices, he convenes the leadership team to obtain alignment and subsequently announces the change in the weekly operations huddle. He avoids long speeches and vague announcements, instead explaining what is changing, why it matters, and what he requires from the team, then allowing time for questions. He focuses on providing clarity and steady leadership.

Gauging Success

Dale considers a week successful when work is completed correctly, the team is not experiencing burnout, and no avoidable urgent issues require his attention. Timely job delivery, quiet or appreciative client communications, and the field team operating without frequent check-ins are indicators of success. He also evaluates progress on tasks such as closing a quote, resolving a persistent issue, providing coaching, or removing a bottleneck. A week spent entirely in reactive mode is treated as a warning. Conversely, proactive activity, demonstrable team support, and leaving for the weekend without unresolved operational disruption define a successful week.

Dale evaluates success using three criteria: completion of the task, strengthening of the business, and avoidance of team burnout. He does not measure success solely by whether a numeric target was met; he assesses whether the outcome was sustainable and whether it reduced founder dependency. If a new service launch generated confusion or stress, he considers that a partial success. He also evaluates whether the team learned useful insights and whether the result can be replicated. If the process was disorganized but the result was positive, he still flags the issue. Success for Dale encompasses not only output but also clarity, consistency, and improved capacity for the people performing the work.

Self-Awareness & Future View

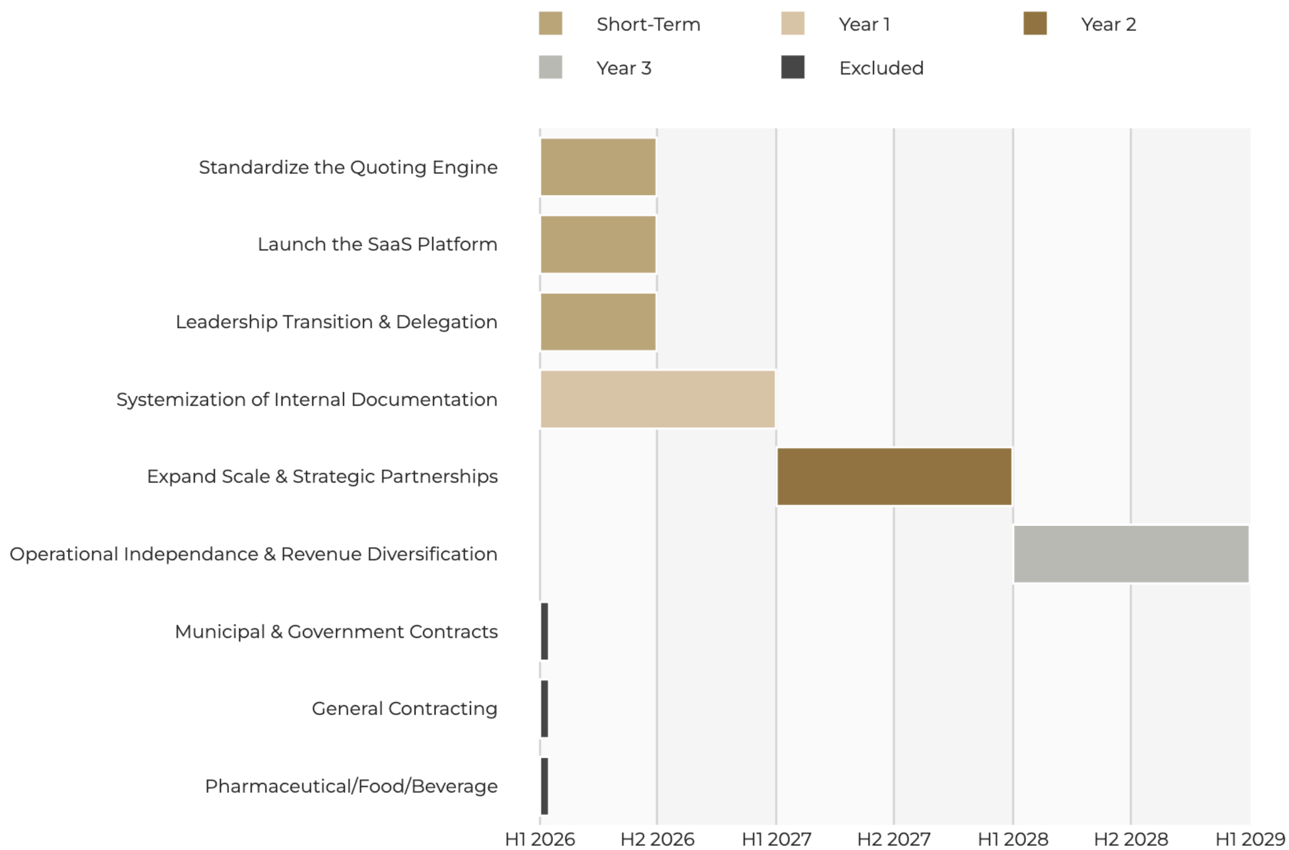
continuing to receive support, the team making decisions without second-guessing, and the company maintaining its reputation for quality and trust. Success is not measured by pursuing the largest possible revenue or scaling for its own sake; it is measured by building a durable, respected, and self-sufficient organization. If Dale can withdraw and the business continues to deliver with integrity, solve real problems, and care for its employees, he considers that success. Dale did not build Harborstone to sell; he built it to outlast him. If the company achieves that objective and performs well, he considers the role fulfilled.Dale defines success as Harborstone operating effectively in his absence, with clients

Post Transition Role

Dale intends to remain involved in a limited, strategic capacity, assisting with complex quotes, reviewing major design decisions, and potentially mentoring the next layer of leadership if requested. He does not intend to participate in day-to-day operations but also does not plan to depart immediately. He holds 18 years of contextual knowledge and is willing to remain part-time or on-call for the first 6–12 months to support the team and the new owner. After that period, he expects a clear handoff with no ambiguity regarding leadership responsibility. If operations are stable, he prefers to withdraw entirely and allow the organization to proceed without his ongoing involvement. He is open to serving as a resource provided that the engagement is structured and does not consist of ad hoc requests such as frequent, unplanned calls.

STRATEGIC GROWTH ROADMAP

GROWTH STRATEGIES & INTENTIONAL EXCLUSIONS OVERVIEW



Vision & Future Intent

Short-Term Vision for Growth

If given an additional 12 months, Dale's primary initiatives would be building a repeatable quoting engine and advancing the SaaS platform to revenue-ready status. These initiatives are intended to enable growth, reduce the owner's personal bottleneck, and progress toward a scalable operating model.

For the quoting function, Dale would collaborate with Mike and Sara to document pricing logic, develop standardized scope templates, and potentially create a lightweight internal CPQ tool. The tool would enable the team to generate accurate, margin-protected quotes without requiring Dale's direct involvement for each quote. The emphasis is on a solution that is fast, consistent, and aligned with delivery capacity rather than feature-rich complexity.

For the SaaS product, Dale would prioritize completing the client dashboard MVP with Velocity Digital, establishing early-adopter pricing, and launching the product with a selection of existing clients. The sensor technology and cloud infrastructure are in place; the next step is packaging and selling the offering as a recurring service rather than a one-off project. This approach is expected to establish a secondary revenue stream and increase customer retention among integration clients.

Additionally, Dale would begin developing Mike or another internal candidate for expanded front-facing leadership responsibilities, starting with participation in top client meetings, progressing to strategic discussions, and ultimately including financial reviews. Dale would not disengage abruptly but would use the 12-month period to transfer contextual knowledge. The objective is to minimize founder-dependent operations, increase organizational leverage, and enable the business to operate effectively without reliance on Dale as the sole integrator.

Three-Year Growth Plan

If Dale were remaining in the leadership role, his three-year growth plan would have focused on deepening the company's technical capabilities, expanding recurring revenue, and gradually reducing founder dependence without disrupting existing operations.

Year one would concentrate on strengthening internal systems, standardizing quoting, improving documentation, and recruiting one additional mid-level project lead to reduce workload pressures on Dale and Mike. He would also finalize and launch the initial full version of the company's SaaS platform with Velocity Digital, targeting existing industrial clients with monitoring and alerting tools as a value-add to integration services. This initiative would begin generating recurring revenue and provide an entry into new markets.

Year two would emphasize scaling: increasing the SaaS user base, potentially hiring a dedicated customer success or technical sales lead for that product line, and expanding the installation team to execute more projects concurrently without overextending field resources. Dale would pursue one strategic partnership, either with an OEM requiring integration support or with a larger integrator capable of supplying consistent design and panel work. The company would likely introduce new quoting tiers or bundled services to attract midsize clients that currently perceive the business as too small or too bespoke.

By year three, Dale would aim to be 70–80% removed from day-to-day quoting and delivery responsibilities, concentrating on strategy, key accounts, and refining the SaaS offering. The target revenue split would be approximately 70% integration revenue and 30% recurring/subscription income, supported by clarified roles, performance dashboards, and a general manager (likely Mike or a comparable candidate) overseeing daily operations. The approach prioritized steady, scalable growth and readiness for leadership transition, improving acquisition attractiveness or enabling an orderly handoff.

Intentional Strategic Exclusions

Dale elected not to pursue several strategic paths that were inconsistent with the company's capabilities or that would have diverted focus from core competencies.

Municipal & Government Contracts	Harborstone has declined low-bid municipal and government work despite frequent RFP invitations because the projects offered minimal margins, imposed unrealistic timelines, and required extensive administrative effort that would consume significant bandwidth. These opportunities did not incentivize the quality- and relationship-driven work the company provides.

General Contracting	Although opportunities for commodity installation work arose, particularly as overflow from integration clients, Dale avoided diluting the brand or overextending the team on work that lacked technical challenge and profitability. Maintaining focus on industrial automation and specialized control systems preserved the company's reputation and enabled deeper technical expertise.
Pharmaceutical /Food/Beverage	Harborstone deferred expansion into heavily regulated verticals such as pharmaceuticals and food & beverage because those markets require a level of compliance and process maturity that the company had not yet developed. Entering those sectors prematurely would have necessitated significant investment in training, documentation, and risk mitigation, and would have impeded other priorities.

Across all cases, municipal RFPs, general contracting, and regulated industries, the consistent strategic filter was whether an opportunity would support or distract from the company's ability to deliver high-quality, technically sound systems with a small, trusted team. Opportunities that compromised this focus were declined.

Missed or Deferred Opportunities

MISSED OR DEFERRED OPPORTUNITIES OVERVIEW

Type	Missed Opportunity
Deferred Partnership Opportunity	Co-marketing collaboration with Velocity Digital for SaaS platform
	Initial regional OEM preferred integration partnership (field deployments)
	Reactivation of regional OEM (industrial ovens/process equipment) integration partnership
	Retainer-based partnership with mid-sized engineering firm
Strategic Concepts Awaiting Capacity	Configurable “smart panel” product line (plug-and-play monitored panels)
	Internal mentorship and leadership development track
	Modular training and certification program (technicians & clients)
	“System Tune-Up” short-format consulting service
Unexplored Client Input	Controls documentation standardization service across client plants
	Formal tiered service/support agreement (monthly retainer)
	On-site maintenance training workshops for client staff
Untapped Growth Opportunity	Micro-automation pre-wired control panel/kits product line
	Productization of SaaS monitoring platform into recurring revenue offering
	Re-engagement of legacy clients with cloud/SaaS monitoring offerings
	Targeted expansion into underserved light manufacturing sector
Untried Pricing Models & Service Concepts	Fixed-price “starter automation bundle” for small projects
	Monitoring bundled with installations via “smart panel add-on” subscription
	Tiered Bronze/Silver/Gold service retainer model
	“Panel-as-a-Product” standardized build pricing model

One of the most significant growth opportunities identified by Dale, but not fully pursued, was the productization of the company’s SaaS monitoring platform. The foundational components were developed under Velocity Digital, including remote sensor integration, cloud-based dashboards, and alerting logic; however, these features were never packaged into a market-ready, sellable product. The objective was to establish a recurring revenue stream, particularly for clients requiring continuous visibility into system performance. This initiative was expected to increase client retention, expand market reach, and diversify revenue sources. However, ongoing demand for client-specific service delivery limited the ability to allocate sufficient focus to this effort.

Another opportunity involved the development of a mid-tier service plan, essentially a subscription model encompassing system maintenance, technical support, and minor upgrades for existing clients. This was conceptualized as a retainer-based model for services such as fast-turn panel revisions, firmware updates, and remote troubleshooting. While elements of this offering were delivered informally, Dale did not allocate the resources necessary to define pricing structures, establish service-level agreements, or implement a formal go-to-market strategy. This remains a viable initiative that could be operationalized with minimal ramp-up.

Additionally, Dale engaged in preliminary discussions with a regional OEM regarding a potential preferred integration partnership. The OEM expressed interest based on past project performance and required a dependable partner for ongoing field deployments. The proposed partnership had the potential to generate consistent project volume, enable co-branding opportunities, and provide access to new distribution channels. Progress stalled due to a lack of available capacity to formalize the agreement and execute the necessary operational build-out.

Untapped Growth Opportunities

There are several underexplored opportunities that Dale has identified but has not yet had the capacity to pursue. The first involves the light manufacturing sector, particularly smaller regional firms that operate between outdated legacy systems and prohibitively expensive enterprise automation platforms. This segment remains underserved, and the company's approach, characterized by technical depth, cost efficiency, and operational agility, is well-positioned to address their needs. While the company has completed a few one-off projects in this space with positive client response, it has not engaged in targeted marketing efforts to this segment.

The second opportunity centers on the development of a "micro-automation" product line consisting of compact, pre-wired, pre-programmed control panels or kits designed to address narrowly defined functions such as pump control, tank monitoring, and basic line sequencing. These solutions would require minimal customization and could be shipped directly to end users. The company has previously designed several such systems for clients, and preliminary design materials, including sketches and specification sheets, are already developed. Formalizing these into catalog products would enable the creation of a new sales channel without placing additional demands on engineering resources.

The third opportunity involves a segment of legacy clients who are not yet aware of the company's current capabilities in cloud and SaaS-based offerings. These clients continue to view the company primarily as on-site systems integrators. Re-engaging this group with a streamlined remote monitoring package, including features such as alerts, dashboards, and energy usage analytics, could generate strong interest. These clients have an established level of trust in the company and are not currently being targeted by larger technology providers. Outreach to this group has been limited due to resource constraints.

Each of these areas represents a viable growth opportunity that aligns with existing capabilities, requires minimal capital investment, and leverages established client trust. With appropriate leadership and operational support, these initiatives could be rapidly converted into meaningful revenue streams.

Deferred Partnership Opportunities

There are several existing partnership opportunities that remain viable and could be reactivated with minimal effort. The most developed of these is with a regional OEM specializing in industrial ovens and process equipment. The company has previously subcontracted two projects to the business, during which their lead engineer expressed interest in establishing an ongoing integration partnership. The OEM was seeking a partner that was agile, responsive, and technically proficient, criteria that the business was already meeting. Dale chose not to advance the discussion at the time due to limited installation capacity and an inability to support the OEM's projected volume. However, the relationship remains positive, and with a follow-up discussion and defined scope of support, the opportunity could be reengaged quickly.

Another potential partnership involves a mid-sized engineering firm that outsources control panel design and programming. The two companies previously collaborated on several RFPs, during which the firm showed strong interest in the business's integrated hardware and software capabilities. The firm proposed a retainer-based arrangement involving pre-scoped monthly blocks of hours. Dale did not pursue the opportunity further due to resource constraints stemming from several large, active client engagements at the time.

Additionally, Velocity Digital, the business's SaaS development partner, has expressed ongoing interest in co-marketing the company's monitoring platform once it exits beta. With an established client base in logistics and energy, Velocity Digital has identified market overlap and has extended an open invitation to collaborate on content and go-to-market strategies. The opportunity has not yet been pursued due to the platform's current development status.

These existing relationships represent viable channels for business development and strategic growth under new ownership, pending investment of time and operational focus.

Strategic Concepts Awaiting Capacity

Several strategic initiatives have been conceptualized by Dale over the years, each with the potential to address identified market gaps and operational opportunities, though none were pursued due to constraints in time, capital, and available resources.

At the top of this list is a configurable "smart panel" product line, pre-designed control panels incorporating embedded sensors, remote monitoring capabilities, and plug-and-play configurability. This concept was intended to fill a clear market niche between fully custom control systems and standard off-the-shelf hardware. The organization frequently received project inquiries that did not justify a full design cycle but exceeded the complexity of a basic relay solution. Development of this product line would have required upfront investment and dedicated R&D leadership, which Dale was unable to allocate while maintaining delivery on existing client work.

Dale also identified the need for a modular training and certification program targeted at both junior technicians and clients. The proposed structure included hands-on labs, standardized programming practices, and troubleshooting guides. The objective was to reduce onboarding time, formalize support processes, and create a parallel revenue stream through training. Internally, this would have supported workforce development and reduced dependency on senior team members during scaling of field operations.

Another proposed initiative was a short-format consulting service, envisioned as focused, two-day on-site engagements for facilities facing challenges with legacy systems, data visibility, or process inefficiencies. While not expected to generate immediate large-scale installations, this offering, tentatively titled “System Tune-Up”, was designed to position the company as a solutions-oriented partner and create a pipeline of qualified leads.

In addition, Dale consistently prioritized talent development and envisioned a mentorship track for high-potential junior hires. This would have involved assigning stretch projects, providing exposure to quoting and client-facing responsibilities, and cultivating future leadership capabilities. Due to ongoing demands on the core team, this initiative remained aspirational.

While these initiatives remain unimplemented, they continue to represent viable growth opportunities. Their realization has been limited by the operational constraints typical of founder-led organizations, but with appropriate resourcing or leadership support, each remains a candidate for future execution.

Unexplored Client Input

A few pieces of customer feedback have remained notable over the years because they identified opportunities the company did not have capacity to pursue. One recurring suggestion was the introduction of a tiered service plan or ongoing support agreement. Clients such as Thermadyne and Delta Cold Storage indicated a willingness to pay a monthly fee for guaranteed response times, minor programming adjustments, and proactive system health checks. The company has provided those services informally but has not packaged them. Such an offering would have been an accessible revenue opportunity and would have added predictability to the revenue stream.

Another request from several long-term clients involved short, on-site training workshops to teach maintenance staff how to troubleshoot control panels or understand the logic behind programming. Clients requested enough training to reduce downtime when the company was not immediately available. This service would have differentiated the company but required coordination and documentation that were not available.

One client proposed assistance to standardize controls documentation across multiple plants, effectively engaging the company as a controls documentation partner. The company has not offered this service formally, but the request aligns with its strengths in clarity and organization.

These suggestions consistently indicate that clients trust the company and seek services beyond project delivery. At the time, the company lacked the structure and personnel to implement them. For a new owner with additional capacity and strategic focus, these opportunities represent viable, revenue-generating enhancements.

Untried Pricing Models & Service Concepts

Dale evaluated several pricing models and service packages that were not implemented. One option was a tiered service retainer for legacy clients offering monthly or quarterly support plans with defined response times, minor code tweaks, remote troubleshooting, and light maintenance. These tiers (Bronze, Silver, Gold) would provide increasing levels of access and benefits. Clients such as Thermadyne and Bray expressed interest in on-call support despite not having active projects, and the company was providing that informally without charge. Formalizing this would convert informal support into a revenue-generating, value-added model.

Dale also considered a fixed-price small project package, a “starter automation bundle” for smaller manufacturers or first-time automation clients. The package concept included up to X I/O points, pre-defined logic blocks, a simple HMI screen, and basic installation support. Clear pricing and rapid delivery were intended to accelerate deal closure and reduce the extended quoting process that impedes lower-tier projects.

Another concept was a “Panel-as-a-Product” model for repeat clients ordering consistent layouts. The approach involved pre-specifying and pricing a set of common builds to enable faster quoting and delivery, maintain standardized inventory of components, and improve margins and turnaround times.

Dale also explored bundling monitoring with installation projects via a “smart panel add-on” that would include remote access, basic alerts, and a 12-month dashboard subscription. This was intended to establish recurring revenue and post-project engagement; however, the company’s SaaS capabilities were not sufficiently developed for a clean rollout.

All of these models were assessed as having merit but requiring dedicated time and structured pilots. They remain feasible options that could increase client retention and improve revenue forecasting from project initiation.

Bottlenecks, Lessons & Competitive Landscape

BOTTLENECKS, LESSONS & COMPETITOR WEAKNESSES OVERVIEW

Category	Specific Issue
Bottleneck	Conservative cash reinvestment delaying leadership, tooling, and SaaS growth
	Founder dependency limiting quoting, decisions, and scalability
	Lack of standardized systems and documented processes
	Underinvestment in business development infrastructure
Competitor Weakness	Limited post-project support and disengagement after delivery
	Overreliance on rigid, standardized solutions
	Poor communication and limited project transparency
	Weak design-to-field execution handoffs
Lesson	Freelance quoting assistant lacked integration, reducing margin control
	Off-the-shelf project management tools misaligned with workflow
	Outsourcing panel builds led to quality issues and rework costs
	Scaling must align with actual operating model, not theoretical efficiencies

The primary operational bottleneck has consistently been founder dependency, with Dale serving as the central point for quoting, client relationship management, and strategic decision-making. Despite adequate delivery capacity, project timelines have often been delayed due to Dale's limited availability to generate proposals, provide input on technical matters, or prioritize initiatives in a timely manner. This dependency has constrained quoting volume, reduced operational agility, and limited scalability beyond relationship-based sales.

A secondary constraint has been the absence of standardized systems and documentation. While the team is highly capable, much of the company's operational knowledge resides with individuals rather than in formalized processes. This has created inefficiencies in onboarding new employees and managing multiple concurrent projects. Some progress has been made, Sara has begun developing standard operating procedures, but current documentation remains incomplete and inconsistent.

In addition, the company has historically underinvested in business development. Revenue has primarily been driven by word-of-mouth referrals, repeat business, and Dale's personal network. While this has contributed to strong client trust, it is not a scalable strategy for long-term growth.

The absence of a dedicated sales or account management function is attributed to a lack of supporting infrastructure, creating a self-reinforcing limitation on outbound sales efforts.

Finally, the organization has maintained a conservative approach to cash reinvestment. This financial prudence has delayed key investments in mid-level leadership, tooling, and SaaS product development. While a higher tolerance for risk may have accelerated growth, Dale has prioritized stability and preservation of the existing business.

Lessons from Unsuccessful Attempts

One initiative that did not yield the intended results was outsourcing panel builds to a secondary low-cost vendor to increase throughput during peak demand periods. While the approach appeared viable in theory, it resulted in inconsistent quality control, delayed communication, and rework costs that offset any projected savings. The internal team ultimately spent more time correcting the vendor's errors than would have been required to complete the work in-house or through the existing supplier, Rick's Panels, who was already familiar with the company's quality standards. The outsourcing arrangement was discontinued after approximately three months.

Dale also tested the use of a freelance quoting assistant to support estimate preparation and bill of materials (BOM) generation. Although the contractor possessed the necessary technical skills, the lack of familiarity with the company's systems and customer base resulted in quotes that lacked the required detail and margin protection. Instead of streamlining the process, the arrangement introduced additional inefficiencies. This outcome reinforced the need for quoting responsibilities to remain with personnel fully integrated into the company's operational logic and constraints.

Another unsuccessful effort involved implementing off-the-shelf project management tools to automate client reporting. The objective was to provide more structured and frequent updates; however, the tools proved incompatible with the company's project workflows, which require greater flexibility than the platforms could accommodate. The implementation added administrative overhead without improving client engagement, as clients did not interact with the reports as expected. The team ultimately reverted to custom check-in emails and summary calls, which better aligned with client communication preferences.

Each of these initiatives was intended to support growth, increase efficiency, or improve leverage. However, they were ultimately ineffective because they did not align with the company's actual operating model. The key takeaway for Dale was to focus on scaling proven processes rather than theoretical efficiencies.

Perceived Competitor Weaknesses

Dale has identified several consistent weaknesses across key competitors, which have presented recurring opportunities to win business. First, many competitors rely heavily on standardized solutions. While this approach may appear operationally efficient, it often results in systems that lack the flexibility to align with a client's specific operational needs. Dale has secured multiple projects where clients expressed dissatisfaction with rigid, template-based implementations from larger integrators that failed to account for contextual requirements.

Second, communication breakdowns are a frequent client complaint regarding other providers. Clients have reported instances where competitors became unresponsive mid-project, failed to provide timely updates, or offered limited visibility into project status. In contrast, Dale has established a competitive advantage by maintaining responsiveness, transparency, and consistent availability, particularly during complex or high-pressure phases of a project.

Third, several competitors demonstrate a disconnect between their design teams and field execution. This often manifests as poor handoffs to installation crews, resulting in delays, unexpected change orders, and preventable integration issues. Dale has mitigated these risks by implementing cross-functional communication protocols and pre-installation checks, contributing to a smoother installation process and more reliable project outcomes.

Finally, post-project support is a commonly overlooked area. Many integrators disengage after project completion unless bound by a formal maintenance agreement. Dale has prioritized proactive follow-up, offering support on minor issues and guiding clients through operational changes without additional charges. This approach has supported client retention through a service model focused on long-term partnership rather than transactional interactions.

These patterns, standardized offerings, inconsistent communication, fragmented execution, and limited post-project support, continue to represent areas of vulnerability among competitors. Dale has consistently addressed these gaps by operating as a responsive, adaptable technical partner, creating ongoing opportunities to expand market share.

Low-Hanging Fruit & Tactical Levers

There are several low-effort, high-impact initiatives that a new owner could implement within the first 60–90 days to generate early wins and build confidence among both internal stakeholders and external partners.

First, reviving warm leads from past clients such as Bray Controls, Delta Cold Storage, and several OEMs previously quoted but not closed. A brief outreach email with a personal introduction can reactivate projects that were already scoped and budgeted; the groundwork is complete and requires follow-through.

Second, formalizing a basic quoting and intake system would reduce bottlenecks. Even a shared spreadsheet and a few templates would enable Mike and Sara to scope work without waiting on Dale, increasing throughput without additional hires.

Third, reconnecting with Rick's Panels and the Rockwell sales representative through a coffee meeting or check-in would preserve vendor relationships, maintain access to high-value perks, and support scheduling priority. These vendors are already receptive and require confirmation of continued steady engagement.

Internally, the new owner could host a team-wide huddle or lunch to introduce themselves, solicit feedback on current processes, and reinforce organizational stability. This approach builds trust quickly and does not require detailed operational knowledge up front.

Finally, there is a near-complete SaaS MVP with Velocity Digital. A focused sprint to finalize and launch the monitoring tool with one or two legacy clients could establish a recurring revenue stream with limited development effort; the product is approximately halfway complete and requires a push to reach market readiness.

None of these actions require significant strategic overhaul, capital investment, or high risk, but they communicate continuity and momentum, helping to maintain team stability and client engagement during the transition.

Customer Loyalty & Revenue Expansion Tactics

Dale would prioritize two key retention initiatives: formalizing post-project support and productizing the early-stage SaaS platform to establish recurring revenue streams. Existing client trust provides a strong foundation for retention efforts, but requires conversion into structured offerings. Dale would implement a tiered service plan with defined service-level agreements covering response times, minor programming updates, remote troubleshooting, and potentially discounted rates for urgent requests. Clients such as Thermadyne and Cobalt currently reach out for ongoing support on an informal, unpaid basis; formalizing this engagement through contractual agreements would maintain close client relationships while clearly articulating the value delivered.

To generate recurring revenue, Dale would focus on further developing the in-progress SaaS monitoring platform co-built with Velocity. The platform provides panel performance tracking, alert generation, and historical data access, features that have received positive client feedback, though the product has not yet been fully launched. With additional refinement, Dale would integrate the platform into existing system deployments or offer it independently as a "visibility-as-a-service" subscription, characterized by low operational overhead and high customer retention potential.

Additional opportunities under consideration include offering annual system health checks or bundled service packages, such as firmware audits, backups, and safety reviews. These services are efficient to deliver and difficult for competitors to replicate without equivalent client familiarity. The overarching approach emphasizes converting ad hoc support into predictable, structured offerings that align with demonstrated client demand and established internal capabilities.

Visibility & KPIs

Dale identified several KPIs that consistently lacked reliable tracking due to time constraints and inadequate systems. Primary among these is the quote-to-close ratio, segmented by client type and project size. The company issues a high volume of quotes, including low-probability inquiries, but lacked a method to differentiate where resources were being expended inefficiently versus where proposals were converting. Visibility into segment-level conversion rates would have supported targeted resource allocation and pricing refinement.

Dale also highlighted the need for real-time labor utilization metrics showing billable versus internal or idle time. Hours were recorded informally in project reports, but no dashboard provided statements such as “field technicians are 72% billable this week” or “Sara spent 14 hours addressing scope creep that should have been change-ordered.” Such insights would have aided capacity planning and margin protection.

Project margin by phase was another gap. Overall job performance was visible, but identifying whether slippage occurred in design, materials, or installation was difficult. Relevant data resided across QuickBooks, spreadsheets, and field notes without integration into cohesive reporting.

Finally, Dale noted the absence of clear customer lifetime value and service frequency reporting. The company maintained legacy clients with recurring service, but the CRM did not present consolidated metrics such as “this client generated $180,000 over five years with service calls every six months.” That information would have supported retention prioritization and upsell strategies.

THE VAULT

Confidential Institutional Knowledge

STRATEGIC DEALS & QUIET ADVANTAGES OVERVIEW

Category	Specific Strategic Deal / Quiet Advantage
Key Employee Retention	Mike identified as primary retention priority (future GM candidate)
	No formal retention plan or written stay agreements in place
	Recommended 12-month stay bonuses ($10K–$15K) for Mike and Sara
	Sara critical to technical continuity and undocumented standards
	Tammy central to operational rhythm; potential early transition risk
Unofficial Arrangements	Company-funded training for Mike and Sara (no formal policy)
	Informal expectation Mike will be consulted on leadership transition and GM consideration
	Low-pressure follow-up prompt to revive stalled deals
	Mike Halperin discretionary quarterly bonuses ($2K–$5K, verbal)
	Sara Vaughn flexible scheduling and informal authority over quality decisions
	Sara's de facto quality-control veto authority
	Structured objection-handling script preserving system protections
	Tammy Reed spot bonuses, PTO incentives, and scheduling autonomy
	Tammy's expanded administrative scope beyond title
	Tiered scope structure (base + upgrade path to protect margins)
	Value-first pricing strategy (anchor scope before price discussion)
Vendor Agreements w/ Special Terms	Altech Supply extends net-45 terms instead of standard net-30
	Rick's Panels provides priority scheduling during urgent builds (informal, trust-based)
	Rockwell Automation grants early allocation notice, price protection, and priority access

Strategic Deals & Quiet Advantages

Dale has developed a set of pricing and negotiation techniques suited to industrial clients who prioritize clarity, speed, and confidence. One primary strategy is anchoring scope before discussing price: Dale presents the problem, the proposed approach, and how the design prevents future downtime. By presenting value first, clients are aligned with the rationale before cost is introduced.

Dale also segments scope into tiers: a base version that provides immediate operational capability and an upgrade path for enhancements or future automation. This tiered structure provides client flexibility, preserves perceived control, and protects margins while keeping the initial conversation competitive. Clients frequently return for add-ons after observing the core system's performance.

For price objections, Dale uses a script that reframes the discussion toward preserving essential protections: “I totally get wanting to keep costs down. Just so we’re aligned, I want to make sure we’re not removing something critical that protects your system long term. Want to walk through it together and see what’s optional vs. what’s foundational?” This approach shifts the conversation from cost-cutting to making informed tradeoffs and typically receives client respect.

When a deal appears to be stalling, Dale uses a low-pressure prompt to create clarity: “No pressure either way, I just want to make sure this doesn’t fall through the cracks on your end. Is there anything you still need from me to get this moving?” The prompt is non-coercive but encourages either engagement or a prompt end to unresponsiveness.

Overall, Dale’s playbook emphasizes building trust, explaining the reasoning behind proposals, offering structured flexibility without undermining value, and maintaining momentum in negotiations. This approach has generated more business than discounting.

Vendor Agreements with Special Terms

There are several key vendor relationships that operate on informal, trust-based arrangements, providing the company with preferential treatment despite the absence of formal contracts

Rick’s Panels	Although there is no written agreement, Rick consistently prioritizes the company’s orders during urgent situations, occasionally rescheduling other jobs to meet critical deadlines. In exchange, Dale has ensured a consistent volume of work and has not disputed minor overages, establishing a mutually beneficial understanding based on reliability and consistency.
Rockwell Automation	Harborstone receives favorable treatment, including early notice on allocation constraints, occasional price protection, and prioritized access to hard-to-source components. These benefits are not contractually guaranteed but have resulted from Dale’s consistent, partnership-oriented communication approach. As a result, the company is treated as a “quiet priority” account. However, this status is relationship-dependent and may be at risk if a transition in ownership occurs without proper introduction and continuity in engagement.
Altech Supply	Altech Supply has extended net-45 payment terms, despite their standard being net-30. This accommodation is based on a track record of timely payments and proactive communication, not on a formal agreement.

These vendor relationships are operationally advantageous provided the incoming owner assumes them respectfully, maintains existing rapport, and preserves consistent communication and expectations. If handled appropriately, they represent leverage points for the business; however, continuity in relationship management is required to sustain those benefits.

Unofficial Arrangements (Compensation, Expectations, Incentives)

There are several informal perks and side arrangements currently in place that serve as retention mechanisms for key personnel, though they are not documented in formal HR records.

Mike Halperin	Receives discretionary quarterly performance bonuses based on Dale's judgment rather than a fixed formula. These bonuses are typically awarded following strong quarterly results or the successful completion of complex installations, with amounts ranging from $2,000 to $5,000. The arrangement is verbal and based on a performance-recognition dynamic rather than a formalized compensation plan.
Sara Vaughn	Operates on a flexible schedule, particularly during school breaks. She regularly starts later on Fridays and occasionally works remotely on days with lighter administrative workloads. This flexibility has been consistently granted but remains undocumented. A sudden shift to rigid scheduling would likely be perceived by her as punitive and misaligned with established expectations.
Tammy Reed	Receives occasional spot incentives such as Visa gift cards or additional paid time off in response to periods of high workload. These gestures typically follow intensive project cycles and are not tracked formally. They are considered part of the company's operating culture and contribute to her engagement and retention.

Additionally, the company has funded various training courses for both Mike and Sara, including programs focused on soft skills and leadership development. These expenses have been reimbursed directly or paid through the business without being tied to a formal employee development policy.

These arrangements are trust-based, informal benefits intended to reward commitment and performance. If a new owner eliminates or standardizes them without understanding the context, morale and continuity may be adversely affected. Honoring these practices and transitioning them into a documented structure could support employee retention and operational continuity.

There are also several informal expectations and unwritten understandings in place with senior team members that have contributed to the company's operational stability.

Mike Halperin	Mike has a longstanding, informal understanding with Dale that he will be the first to be informed of any impending leadership changes or considerations regarding Dale stepping back from day-to-day involvement. While Dale has not made any formal commitment regarding the General Manager role, Mike operates under the assumption that he would be given primary consideration for the position should a transition occur. He also expects to be involved in strategic decisions that impact operations, regardless of whether those areas formally fall under his scope. A sudden change in this dynamic without appropriate communication could result in Mike feeling excluded from critical decision-making processes.
Sara Vaughn	Sara has assumed responsibilities beyond her formal engineering role, effectively serving as a de facto authority on quality control and technical standards. There is an established understanding that she can override decisions that she believes would compromise long-term product stability or safety. Although this authority has not been formalized, it has been earned through consistent performance and trust. In addition, there is mutual flexibility in how she manages her workload, particularly during high-demand periods. In return, she prioritizes responsiveness and engagement during critical incidents. This arrangement functions as an informal agreement rather than a codified policy.
Tammy Reed	Tammy handles a broader scope of administrative and client-facing responsibilities than her title indicates, including managing internal scheduling, client communications, and minor billing concerns. In recognition of this, Dale grants her a high degree of autonomy in how she structures her work. She is not subject to strict scheduling protocols. If her role were to be narrowly redefined or burdened with excessive procedural requirements, there is a risk she may disengage, even if she remains in the position.

These relationship-driven expectations are not documented but are integral to the current operating rhythm. A new owner should engage these individuals with curiosity and respect before instituting changes and seek to understand responsibilities that are not immediately visible.

Key Employee Retention Plan

There is no formal Key Employee Retention Plan in place: nothing in writing, no structured bonuses, and no stay-on agreements. This represents a documented gap in current employee retention practices. Informal conversations have taken place with several individuals who are considered key employees regarding potential transition and growth scenarios.

Mike is identified as the primary key employee. He is described as the most capable operations professional and has the strongest understanding of the entire project lifecycle, from scoping to installation. He has been considered as a potential future general manager. If a retention plan existed, he would be the first candidate for a bonus or equity carve-out to remain and lead through a transition. Currently, his principal incentives are loyalty to Dale and a history of steady bonuses.

Sara is also identified as a key employee, critical for technical quality and systems. Her departure would result in the loss of substantial unwritten knowledge regarding standardization of builds. She has not received a retention bonus; however, the company has funded training for her and provided flexible work arrangements that would be difficult to replicate elsewhere.

Tammy performs behind-the-scenes administrative functions and is a central contributor to day-to-day operations. She maintains informal operational workarounds and has demonstrated personal loyalty to Dale. No retention terms exist for her; if she does not feel respected or secure under new ownership, an exit within 90 days is a reasonable possibility.

While no official retention framework exists, Dale strongly recommends that any prospective buyer or incoming leadership team implement a clear and lightweight retention strategy promptly. A suggested approach would include a 12-month stay bonus for Mike and Sara, potentially in the range of $10,000 to $15,000, tied to specific operational milestones, as well as early retention discussions to align expectations. This is expected to mitigate transition-related disruptions and preserve institutional continuity.

Founder Knowledge & Unspoken Norms

FOUNDER KNOWLEDGE & UNSPOKEN NORMS OVERVIEW

Category	Specific Founder Knowledge / Unspoken Norm
Founder Knowledge	Anticipates vendor lead-time risks from communication patterns
	Detects early warning signs (e.g., vague scope = larger issue)
	Identifies field/panel build inconsistencies without drawings
	Internal checklist for anticipating downtime, scope gaps, and risk exposure
	Interprets unstated client needs, political pressure, and compliance risks in RFQs
	Judgment framework not formally documented or systematized
	Proactive risk anticipation as core differentiator
	Strategic proposal structuring (where to add contingency vs. stay lean)
Unspoken Norms	Authority earned through competence, not title
	Autonomy expected; micromanagement would trigger quiet resistance
	Change should be introduced gradually via informal influencers
	Competence over self-promotion; quiet recognition culture
	Context over speed — consult Mike/Sara before acting on ambiguous decisions
	Dale's involvement signals true urgency (implicit triage indicator)
	Immediate client responsiveness is mandatory cultural standard
	Mike holds strong informal authority regardless of title
	Resolve issues at lowest level; avoid unnecessary escalation
	Sara functions as technical conscience with veto-level influence
	Tammy operates as informal morale and communication stabilizer
	"Keep it clean for the next person" (handoff-ready work standard)

There are a set of unwritten rules that govern operational behavior and serve as cultural guardrails not documented in manuals but understood by long-tenured staff. First, speed is important, but context is more important. When a problem presents a decision fork, employees contact Mike or Sara rather than waiting for a meeting or sending an email. Initiative is valued, but actions taken without sufficient context are not rewarded.

Second, issues are not escalated unless they constitute a genuine urgent incident. The organization emphasizes resolving problems at the lowest appropriate level. Presenting matters to leadership that could have been resolved between teammates is viewed negatively because it bypasses colleagues' ability to address the issue first.

Client calls receive immediate priority. Employees engaged in CAD work or on a jobsite are expected to answer client calls or promptly indicate a brief callback window (for example, “I will call you back in 10 minutes”). This responsiveness is a primary driver of repeat business and is embedded in day-to-day practices.

A “keep it clean for the next person” approach applies to panels, toolboxes, and project folders. Work is maintained so that a successor can take it over without confusion or rework. Although not formally enforced, this practice is a point of pride, particularly among the field crew.

Modest, competent performance is preferred over public self-promotion. Subtle recognition (for example, Mike offering brief in-passing praise) is more meaningful within the culture than company-wide announcements. The tone reflects a blue-collar work ethic within a technical environment.

When Dale becomes directly involved in an issue, it signals that the matter is critical; his involvement indicates trust in the team’s ability to manage routine matters and serves as an implicit triage indicator prompting faster action. These norms function as the social mechanisms that maintain operational continuity. The incoming owner will need to learn these norms through active inquiry (for example, asking staff what prevents operations from failing during high-demand periods) rather than by observation alone.

Instinctive Founder Knowledge

Dale instinctively interprets the implicit needs in job specifications and client conversations, identifying not only stated requirements but unspoken concerns. Many clients present vague requests or incomplete scopes; Dale developed an internal checklist to detect issues such as anticipated downtime, compliance risks, or internal political pressure. He detects these signals through phrasing, omissions, and the tone of an RFQ.

This intuition enables Dale to prepare proposals that are both accurate and strategic. He identifies where to allocate contingency, where to remain cost-efficient, which items will be scrutinized, and which details must be included for legal and operational protection even if they are unlikely to be reviewed closely. For example, when a contact at Thermadyne describes work as “just a small controls tweak,” Dale interprets that as a potential indicator of a larger, unmanaged problem. Similarly, if a vendor representative becomes unresponsive after specifications are submitted, he anticipates possible lead-time issues.

Dale can assess a panel build or a jobsite without drawings and recognize technical inconsistencies, such as improperly placed sensors or wire runs that may cause interference. This capability is the result of extensive practical experience with failures and complex client situations, which allows him to identify early warning signs.

This judgment framework is not documented in formal procedures and may be difficult to convey without contextual knowledge. Dale intends to transfer this judgment to Mike and Sara over time, as it contributes to the company's differentiation by enabling proactive anticipation in addition to execution.

Unspoken Team Norms & Power Dynamics

There are several informal dynamics that influence team operations and must be understood to avoid disruption during the transition. Mike holds significant informal authority. Although his title does not reflect this, most personnel defer to him for job prioritization, field decisions, and troubleshooting. Staff consult him before making substantive decisions, including Dale on occasion. He is respected because he does not assert authority aggressively, and the team trusts his judgment. If a new owner bypasses or publicly questions him, operational rhythm could be disrupted.

Sara functions as the technical conscience of the business. She speaks only when issues are significant, and when she does, the team attends to her concerns. She maintains a high standard for quality and does not tolerate corner-cutting. The team treats Sara's objections as critical rather than optional. She also exerts quiet influence over engineering interns and junior staff; without her commitment, their engagement declines.

Tammy manages cultural and behind-the-scenes communication in ways that are not always visible. She is aware of vendor statuses, client follow-ups, and internal morale. Employees confide in her, seek answers they hesitate to direct to Dale or Mike, and rely on her to address issues discreetly. She is not formally part of the leadership team, but her departure would significantly reduce organizational stability.

There is an established expectation that Dale does not micromanage, so team members are accustomed to autonomy. The team values clarity and logical reasoning rather than oversight for its own sake. If a new owner attempts to increase control prematurely without first understanding the rationale behind existing workflows, quiet resistance is likely. Staff may offer superficial compliance while failing to implement substantive changes, leading to growing resentment.

Overall, a trust-based ecosystem governs behavior: authority is earned rather than conferred by title, and respect is linked to competence and follow-through. The new owner is advised to begin as a curious observer, secure buy-in gradually, and engage informal influencers as strategic partners rather than treating them solely as employees. This approach supports preservation of the culture while enabling structural changes.

Hidden Risks & Sensitive Areas

HIDDEN RISKS & SENSITIVE AREAS OVERVIEW

Category	Specific Risk / Sensitive Area
Inheritable Liability	8% of recurring SaaS/licenses unused (cost leakage)
	Client/vendor loyalty tied personally to Dale
	Former employee (Mike L.) at competitor poses solicitation risk
	Relaxed billing terms (net-45/60 without formal amendments)
	Vague legacy warranty language and informal post-project support
Low-Visibility Threats	Lack of centralized SOPs for quoting, panel builds, and workflows
	Lean appearance masking low structural resilience
	Overlapping, undocumented responsibilities among core team
	Vendor reliability dependent on personal rapport (non-transferable)
Operational & Strategic Risk	55–60% revenue concentration in three primary clients
	Informal operational knowledge concentrated in Mike & Sara
	Personnel dependency (Tammy's undocumented back-office knowledge)
	Supply chain reliance on relationship-based vendor goodwill
	Underdeveloped IT & cybersecurity (no MFA, poor credential management)
Ownership & Control Risk	Centralized decision-making historically tied to Dale
	Legacy client contracts assume Dale's personal involvement
	No formal board or structured strategic governance
	Risk of autonomy backlash if control increases abruptly
	Team habitually seeks Dale's confirmation
Relationship Challenge	Midwest Controls declining reliability masked by Dale's oversight
	Ridgefield client producing scope creep and weak margins
	Tim Ellis underperformance and feedback resistance
Short-Term Vulnerability	Burnout or temporary absence of Mike or Sara
	Capacity overload from accelerated large installations
	Cumulative minor breakdowns (handoff gaps, missed prep, scope drift)
	Lack of redundancy and real-time tracking systems

There are several operational and strategic risks that Dale has been actively managing to prevent disruption, though they have not yet surfaced due to ongoing mitigation efforts.

Client Concentration	Approximately 55–60% of the company's revenue is derived from three primary clients. While these clients have demonstrated long-term reliability, any changes in their leadership or disruptions in the company's service delivery could materially affect cash flow. Dale has addressed this by maintaining a warm sales pipeline and sustaining direct relationships with key decision-makers; however, these relationships remain inherently vulnerable. A new owner would need to either diversify the client base or take deliberate steps to reinforce and institutionalize these relationships.
Internal Documentation Shortfall	Much of the company's operational knowledge resides informally within team members, particularly Mike and Sara. Dale has frequently served as the intermediary during project handoffs and design reviews, compensating for missing specifications and undocumented assumptions. This approach has maintained project continuity to date but introduces risk if personnel turnover occurs or if the business scales quickly.
Personnel Dependency	Tammy possesses unique knowledge of back-office systems, vendor-specific processes, and internal organizational structures such as project folder hierarchies. Retention has been supported through flexible work arrangements and recognition, but no formal cross-training has been implemented. Her unexpected absence would have an immediate operational impact.
IT & Cyber Security	The company's IT and cybersecurity protocols are underdeveloped. There is no formal password management system, no enforced two-factor authentication, and several essential credentials, including Rockwell licenses and vendor portal logins, are either known only to Dale or stored locally. While Dale has begun addressing these gaps, the current state poses exposure to phishing attacks, device loss, or other security incidents.

All identified risks are currently contained because Dale is actively managing them; they are not visible to the broader team. For a transition of ownership, Dale would identify these items as priorities to stabilize within the first 90 days.

Low-Visibility Threats to the Business

The most significant current risk in the business is the overreliance on informal knowledge transfer and overlapping responsibilities among key personnel, specifically individuals such as Mike, Sara, and Tammy. While operational performance appears stable, projects are completed, clients are satisfied, and profit margins remain acceptable, the core functionality is sustained by a small group of employees with extensive institutional knowledge. These individuals frequently compensate for undocumented processes through on-the-fly problem-solving. The effectiveness of this arrangement is dependent on their experience and long-term commitment. However, the sudden departure of any one of them would likely cause substantial disruption across operations.

This risk is compounded by its low visibility. Externally, the business presents as lean and efficient, but internally, it lacks structural resilience under stress, particularly during employee onboarding, client issue escalation, or periods of increased workload. Key operational processes, such as quoting procedures, panel build sequencing, and standard operating protocols, are not formally documented or consolidated into a centralized, up-to-date resource. The organization has so far managed these deficiencies due to the adaptability of the core team, but this adaptability is informal and not supported by scalable systems.

A second material risk involves vendor reliability and lead time variability. While the company has established strong relationships with suppliers such as Rick's Panels and its Rockwell representative, these partnerships are heavily reliant on personal rapport and informal agreements. In the event of increased demand, changes in personnel, or attempts by new ownership to renegotiate terms, the current supply chain may not have sufficient depth to absorb volatility. The business's ability to secure parts and expedite orders has depended on goodwill and long-standing relationships, which may not be transferable under new operating conditions or at increased scale.

Dale identifies these operational dependencies, not financial performance or client retention, as the primary risks to continuity. Addressing them will require deliberate investment in documentation, process standardization, and supply chain diversification to ensure long-term stability.

Short-Term Vulnerabilities

If a significant operational issue were to arise within the next six months, it would most likely stem from a project bottleneck or delivery failure caused by a capacity overload. This risk would typically be triggered by one of two scenarios: either a key client accelerating a large installation ahead of schedule, or the unavailability of critical personnel such as Mike or Sara due to burnout, personal leave, or conflicting priorities. The team is currently operating at near-full capacity, and continued performance has relied on tight coordination, rapid informal communication, and a high degree of team flexibility. However, in the event of a large-scale project, particularly one with short lead times or custom integration requirements, the organization lacks sufficient backup resources to manage the increased demand without operational strain.

Triggers for such an overload are often straightforward. For example, a client such as Thermadyne might request an installation be moved up by three weeks, or Bray Controls could approve a previously delayed proposal. In either case, Dale's standard practice is to accept the job, in line with the company's service-oriented approach, and then rapidly reallocate resources, reassigning technicians, expediting panel builds, and manually coordinating schedules. If Mike is simultaneously managing two installations and Sara is engaged in ongoing design revisions, the risk of execution issues increases. Initial signs may be subtle, missed site preparation details, incomplete handoffs, or misaligned scopes that are only identified mid-project.

A series of such issues could erode client trust, particularly if compounded by additional variables such as Tammy's absence or delays from external vendor partners. These challenges would not arise from a single point of failure but rather from the cumulative impact of multiple small breakdowns. The current operational structure lacks sufficient redundancy and real-time tracking mechanisms to detect and mitigate these risks proactively. For this reason, Dale identifies this scenario as the most pressing operational concern, persistent, difficult to detect early, and potentially damaging if left unaddressed.

Ownership & Control Considerations

There are several key dynamics related to ownership and control that are important for a new owner to understand during the transition. Dale is the sole owner of Harborstone Systems, with no silent partners, external investors, or equity-sharing arrangements. This structure simplifies the legal aspects of the transition but also means that all decision-making has historically been centralized through Dale. Even when responsibilities have been delegated operationally, final decisions have consistently been attributed to Dale by clients, vendors, and internal team leads. This established pattern of deference will not immediately dissipate with a change in ownership, as team members have developed a consistent habit of seeking confirmation from Dale, even in areas where they have operational ownership. Adjusting this behavior will require time and intentional effort.

There is no formal board of directors or executive committee in place. While Dale has consulted key team members, specifically Mike and Sara, on significant decisions such as launching the SaaS initiative or restructuring the quoting process, these consultations have been informal. Neither individual has been positioned to vote on strategic direction. Should a new owner choose to implement a more collaborative or distributed decision-making model, that approach would need to be introduced gradually. Despite strong individual competence, team members are not accustomed to contributing to high-level strategic discussions and may require time and support to adapt to such expectations.

There are no active legal disputes, liens, or contractual issues that would impede a sale. However, some longstanding client agreements contain loosely defined language regarding warranty service and owner involvement, reflecting an assumption that Dale would remain personally engaged. If the transition is handled abruptly or if the new owner does not quickly assume a visible, relationship-oriented role, these assumptions could result in client friction.

From a control perspective, the internal team operates within a high-trust, low-structure environment. Rapid introduction of new policies or processes, particularly without clear rationale, is likely to be perceived as a reduction in autonomy. To ensure a smoother transition, it is advisable for the new owner to focus initially on building credibility before enacting structural changes. The order in which these actions are taken will have a significant impact on team alignment and operational continuity.

Quietly Managed Relationship Challenges

Dale has been managing several situations quietly to maintain operational stability, although underlying issues remain unresolved.

Midwest Controls	A secondary component supplier, Midwest Controls has shown decreasing reliability. Shipping accuracy has declined, with incorrect part numbers, missing labels, and delayed drop-shipments. Dale has maintained the relationship because the supplier offers favorable pricing on certain repeat-build SKUs. Dale has been double-checking every order prior to production to compensate for these deficiencies, which consumes time and reduces trust. If the new owner relies on Midwest Controls without scrutiny, this gap will become apparent quickly.
Ridgefield Packaging	Ridgefield is a client that has been problematic for an extended period. Harborstone continues to accept projects for Ridgefield due to historical ties and a strong personal relationship between Dale and Ridgefield's operations lead, but Ridgefield consistently generates scope creep, delayed approvals, and payment delays. These engagements consume significant team bandwidth and produce razor-thin margins. Dale has protected the team from most of the related disruptions, but this approach is unsustainable unless Ridgefield's expectations are reset or the relationship is wound down.
Tim Ellis	A newer panel technician, Tim is skilled and efficient on clean builds but does not respond well to feedback and is frequently unavailable during troubleshooting. Mike and Dale have been correcting minor errors and assigning Tim to tasks that do not require client interaction. Tim's development ceiling is limited. The company has not implemented a formal performance improvement plan; however, if scaling or hiring for growth, Dale would consider phasing Tim out or reassigning him to a lower-risk support role.

While none of these issues present immediate crises, Dale notes that without proactive attention, they are likely to surface within the first 60 days of new ownership. Early intervention, particularly with vendor performance management and client account prioritization, could mitigate potential disruptions.

Inheritable Liabilities

There are no major lawsuits, debts, or public relations crises pending; however, there are several low-level liabilities that a prospective owner should monitor, as they could escalate if not managed carefully.

Legally, the company is in good standing: it is incorporated in Indiana as an S Corporation, required licenses and insurance policies are active, and taxes are current. Some legacy projects include warranty language that is vague, and Dale has provided fixes or adjustments voluntarily rather than from a contractual obligation. If a client such as Thermadyne reported a controls issue months after a transition and did not receive the same response previously provided by Dale, the client could escalate. No contractual guarantees for ongoing support exist, but client expectations of such support could become a reputational concern if the transition is not communicated and handled explicitly.

Financially, billing terms have occasionally been relaxed for key clients, with net-30 invoices extending to net-45 or net-60 without formal amendments to terms; these practices were relationship-driven rather than structural. Immediate tightening of accounts receivable enforcement by a new owner could harm established goodwill unless those clients are consulted directly. Approximately 8% of recurring expenses are associated with licenses or SaaS tools that are not actively used, representing nonproductive operating spend.

Reputationally, client and vendor loyalty is frequently directed toward Dale personally rather than solely toward the company. That loyalty is a function of Dale's responsiveness and hands-on engagement over time. A new owner adopting a more corporate or distant approach initially could trigger client churn or reduced vendor flexibility. Additionally, one former employee (Mike L.) departed on unfavorable terms and is now employed by a regional competitor; although no incidents have occurred, there is a risk he could attempt to solicit clients or employees if aware of an ownership change. This constitutes a reputational risk to be monitored rather than a current legal issue.

Team Reality Check

Overperformers

Mike Halperin	Currently titled as Senior Project Manager, Mike is effectively leading operations across multiple functional areas. His responsibilities span field crew scheduling, real-time issue resolution, and direct client engagement throughout project phases. In addition to these core duties, Mike has taken on mentoring responsibilities for junior technicians and plays a key role in maintaining team morale under tight deadlines. His contributions consistently exceed the scope of his formal role, and he is operating at the level of a General Manager in practice.
Sara Vaughn	Demonstrates strong ownership of system design quality, proactively identifying and resolving issues before they impact downstream processes. She independently initiates process improvements, such as standardizing file naming conventions and refining internal templates, without requiring direction. Her work is high-impact and contributes

	meaningfully to operational efficiency, despite being understated in visibility.
Tammy Reed	While not involved in technical execution, significantly enhances administrative operations, vendor coordination, and client follow-up. She routinely resolves operational issues before they escalate, minimizing the need for executive intervention. Her contributions become particularly evident during her absence, when operational disruptions increase, underscoring the preventative value of her role.

Underperformers

Tim Ellis	A new panel technician, he is currently the least reliable team member. While his speed and workmanship are acceptable on straightforward builds, he demonstrates limited ownership when projects deviate from plan. He is reluctant to communicate proactively, has a tendency to cut corners without supervision, and requires more rework than any other technician. Efforts to assign him to simpler workstations have yielded diminishing returns. If the organization were to scale or implement more formal quality controls, his performance would present a risk to operational reliability.

Overall, the majority of the team is performing at a high level, which has enabled the business to absorb existing gaps in process and documentation. However, without corrective action, such as incentivizing top performers and reassigning or offboarding underperformers, there is a risk of operational stagnation or burnout among high-contributing personnel.

Immediate Promotion or Termination Decision

Dale would promote Mike without hesitation. Mike is already functioning as the de facto general manager, overseeing scheduling, managing field issues, serving as the primary point of contact for internal decision-making, and consistently earning the team's trust. He possesses the technical skills, leadership maturity, and the ability to remain calm under pressure. Promoting him would formalize existing responsibilities and signal to the team that performance and ownership are rewarded. It would also provide Mike with the authority to implement improvements he has deferred out of respect for Dale's role.

If Dale had to terminate an employee, it would be Tim. This decision is not based on malice or toxicity; rather, Tim is consistently underdelivering relative to the rest of the team. He requires excessive oversight, avoids complex tasks, and does not engage in problem-solving. Light coaching and narrowly scoped assignments have not closed the performance gap. In a lean operation, every role must contribute fully; currently, others are compensating for Tim's lower output. Termination would create short-term operational pressure but yield long-term relief and reinforce that low engagement is not acceptable.

Both actions would strengthen alignment and operational velocity, but they would need to be executed with clarity and care.

Tolerated Behaviors That Undermine Standards

Dale acknowledges several behavioral issues that have been tolerated to maintain team cohesion, which a new owner will likely observe immediately.

The most significant issue is inconsistent follow-through on documentation. Mike, Sara, and some technicians perform high-quality field work or builds but omit final steps such as updating drawings, logging installation notes, or closing the loop in shared folders. This has been tolerated due to high workloads and the fact that tasks are completed, but it increases downstream effort and complicates handoffs.

There is also soft punctuality. Official start times are unofficially set at approximately 7:30 or 8:00, yet timekeeping is not enforced. While most team members self-regulate, there is excessive flexibility in morning arrival times and post-lunch return. Dale has not enforced punctuality because overall productivity has not declined, but the practice conveys inconsistent expectations, particularly to newer hires.

A third issue involves Tim's avoidance of ambiguous or troubleshooting-heavy projects, which results in those assignments being redirected to Mike or Sara. Dale has been aware but has not addressed the behavior directly, allowing stronger performers to assume additional responsibility. This dynamic is unfair to high performers and tends to protect lower-performing behaviors.

Finally, there is insufficient discipline around the technology stack. Despite subscriptions to centralized platforms, staff frequently revert to spreadsheets or email due to habit. Dale has not enforced consistent use of centralized systems and has occasionally followed the same practices. While this has not been an immediate operational crisis, it limits scalable growth and perpetuates informal, ad hoc processes.

All issues are correctable but have been mitigated by loyalty and trust within the close-knit team. A new owner will need to reinforce norms to prevent these behaviors from becoming entrenched.

Other Considerations

There are several pieces of sensitive information the new owner should be aware of and handle carefully to avoid undermining team trust or client confidence.

First, Mike is the logical successor for a leadership role, and Dale has been gradually preparing him for that transition; Mike is not aware of how close he is to that consideration. If the new owner chooses to elevate him, the decision should follow a thoughtful evaluation of his fit and readiness. Rushing the promotion could create internal pressure or set him up to fail.

Second, the company has been underquoting certain projects for legacy clients, not drastically but sufficiently to cause margin erosion. Clients such as Ridgefield Packaging receive a soft discount due to historical relationships, and those projects are approaching unprofitable levels. Dale maintained these relationships out of loyalty; a new owner will likely need to either reset expectations or phase these clients out. This should begin with confidential analysis, followed by a strategic client conversation, because a sudden pricing change could alarm clients or provoke backlash.

Third, there is one pending warranty claim with a small client that has not been fully closed out. The potential liability is minor (under $4,000) but the claim has not been documented in any system. It should be resolved proactively and discreetly if the client reengages to avoid unexpected exposure.

Additionally, several staff members, particularly Tammy, have strong personal loyalty to Dale. Although they are not planning to leave, a sudden leadership change without a clear relational transition could result in turnover. Messaging regarding Dale's departure and the new owner's role should be deliberate, especially with Tammy.

Finally, there are informal vendor terms and internal pricing structures that are not documented but have shaped current operations. The new owner should become familiar with these arrangements before altering procurement or payment practices.

Sensitive staff dynamics, unrecorded pricing concessions, legacy liabilities, and informal vendor arrangements require careful navigation. Managed appropriately, they are controllable; mishandled, they can generate significant friction.

Family & Estate Considerations

Dale states that the primary financial benefit derives from the sale of Harborstone Systems. As the sole owner, 100% of the sale proceeds will pass to him and ultimately to his estate or heirs as specified in his personal estate plan. There are no co-owners or silent partners. Terms for any potential sale or transfer remain in draft form; legal counsel has prepared preliminary purchase agreements and ownership transfer documents, but none have been executed. Those documents are stored securely at the attorney's office.

Harborstone maintains a key person life insurance policy with $1.5 million in coverage. The company is the beneficiary, so a payout triggered by Dale's death would be received by the business to provide liquidity for transition expenses, potential buyouts, or operating cash flow during leadership stabilization. The policy is active, premiums are current, and all related paperwork, including beneficiary designations and policy terms, is held by the insurance broker and filed with the company's risk management records.

There is no formal salary continuation or deferred compensation plan in place for Dale. His compensation as owner will cease upon ownership transfer or sale closing; no ongoing payments to his estate are arranged beyond the sale proceeds.

Dale's personal estate planning documents, will, trusts, and power of attorney, are managed privately with his estate attorney and specify inheritance of his assets, including business interests. Copies are held by his legal advisor and designated family representatives. These estate planning documents are separate from the company's corporate documents.

Documentation related to the sale, insurance, and estate planning exists but is held across the attorney's office, the insurance broker, and the estate attorney. Dale indicates it is important to consolidate and finalize these documents during the transition so the successor and other stakeholders have centralized access and clear understanding, reducing the risk of ambiguity or unexpected issues.

Representation & Coordination

At present, the primary person authorized to represent Dale's family's interests during the transition is his wife, Karen. She has been involved in the family's personal and financial planning and understands the overall business context and its implications for the family's future. If Dale is unavailable for any reason, Karen is authorized to make decisions or consult on matters related to the business sale, estate issues, or financial arrangements tied to Harborstone.

Additionally, the family's estate attorney, Mark Reynolds, serves as legal advisor. He manages formalities related to wills, trusts, and any legal documentation that may arise during the transition or afterward. Mark should be engaged early if any estate or ownership transfer matters occur.

For coordination with the successor, Mike, Karen and Mark are expected to maintain open, transparent communication. They should receive regular updates on transition progress, financial information, and any significant decisions that could affect the family's interests. Ideally, Mike or his representative will schedule periodic check-ins with Karen and Mark to address questions, exchange documents, and ensure alignment.

This arrangement is intended to protect the family's interests without requiring involvement in day-to-day operations, while providing a clear channel for raising concerns or approving key decisions as necessary.

LEADERSHIP TRANSITION GUIDE

Interim Leadership Coverage

If Dale were unavailable and an immediate replacement were required, Mike would be the primary point of contact. He understands the rhythm of the business, including billing, scheduling, administrative functions, and vendor relationships, and he remains steady under pressure. He is not a technical expert, but he maintains operational continuity. For engineering and client delivery matters, Sara would assume responsibility. She can triage technical issues, manage the team, and manage client relationships. Together, they could maintain short-term operational stability. The company has not formalized emergency role assignments; Dale has relied on their willingness to assume responsibility, and they likely would. If Dale were unavailable for more than a few weeks, a defined organizational structure would be required promptly. This should be formalized.

Key Interim Decision-Makers

Mike Halperin is designated as the primary backup. He has the most comprehensive view of day-to-day operations and understands the business holistically. He is not technical, but he is level-headed, is familiar with the company financials, and demonstrates sound judgment under pressure. He currently manages most internal logistics and could assume operational control while major strategic decisions are addressed.

Sara Vaughn is designated as the secondary backup. She is analytically strong, is respected by the team, and manages engineering and project execution. She does not wish to serve as the public representative of the company, but for technical, client-related, or delivery matters she is the trusted decision-maker.

Neither individual has been prepared to assume full executive leadership, but they are the two personnel recommended to be present if an unexpected operational crisis occurs.

Reporting & Decision-Making Cadence

REPORTING OVERVIEW

Report	Origin System	Medium / Location	Frequency	Insights & Red Flags	Escalation Path
Weekly Project Status Dashboard	Asana	PDF emailed + Asana portal	Weekly (Mon)	Dale looks to confirm critical automation projects are on schedule. Positive = milestones hit and risks flagged early. Negative = repeated slippage on key deliverables. Red flag = high-dependency tasks stalling in engineering.	Project Manager → Head of Engineering
Sales Pipeline Forecast	HubSpot CRM	HubSpot dashboard	Weekly (Wed)	Dale monitors pipeline health to validate SaaS rollout readiness. Positive = balanced pipeline with deals across stages. Negative = over-reliance on a single client. Red flag = pipeline collapse below 2x target coverage.	Sales Manager → GM
Service Ticket Resolution Report	Zendesk	Shared Google Drive report	Weekly (Fri)	Dale wants to see customer tickets resolved within SLA. Positive = backlog shrinking and first-response times improving. Negative = unresolved high-priority tickets. Red flag = repeat complaints from top industrial clients.	Support Lead → GM
Accounts Receivable Aging	Quick Books	Excel export emailed	Bi-weekly	Dale wants receivables collected within 30–45 days. Positive = steady cash inflow. Negative = invoices aging past 60 days. Red flag = >10% of receivables over 90 days, signaling client instability or weak collections.	Controller → GM → Owner
SaaS Roadmap Update	Jira (Dev Team)	Jira board + PDF snapshot	Bi-weekly	Dale tracks SaaS feature progress. Positive = critical milestones delivered on time. Negative = backlog of unresolved bugs. Red flag = delays in "must-have" modules threatening rollout timeline.	Head of Engineering → GM → Owner
Monthly Recurring Revenue (MRR)	Quick Books	Finance dashboard + PDF	Monthly (1st)	Dale checks for steady SaaS subscription growth and service contract renewals. Positive = net MRR increase. Negative = churn from multiple industrial accounts. Red flag = sudden drop tied to contract cancellations.	Controller → Owner
Employee Utilization Report	Harvest (Time Tracking)	PDF summary from HR	Monthly (End)	Dale checks for sustainable workload balance. Positive = utilization between 70–85%. Negative = staff consistently over 90% utilization. Red flag = drop below 60%, suggesting inefficiency or demand slump.	HR → GM → Owner
Safety Report	Internal Audit Logs	Shared Google Drive folder	Monthly	Dale wants zero OSHA or regulatory issues. Positive = clean audits. Negative = minor infractions logged. Red flag = repeat violations or a workplace injury, risking client contracts.	Safety Officer → GM → Owner

Leadership Reports

The leadership team is expected to monitor a set of core financial and operational reports. Mike reviews the monthly P&L, job costing summaries, and receivables, with close attention to balances aged beyond 30 days. Cash flow is reviewed at least bi-weekly to identify potential shortfalls. Sara conducts informal reviews of labor utilization to assess the proportion of billable time and evaluate whether hours on key projects are trending above or below expectations. While most decisions currently rely on QuickBooks exports, project folders, and team discussions, there is recognition that developing a more visual dashboard would improve real-time performance tracking.

Weekly & Monthly Reporting Cadence

Weekly, the leadership team should review the active project list, including current progress, assignments, delayed items, and any tasks at risk of missing deadlines. Labor allocation must be assessed to identify staff carrying excessive concurrent tasks, underutilized personnel, or technicians being shifted between jobs too frequently. Receivables should also be reviewed weekly, with particular focus on support contracts and large milestone payments. Any receivable outstanding beyond 30 days requires immediate follow-up.

Monthly, the P&L and job costing reports should be reviewed in detail. This includes comparing actual labor and material costs to quoted amounts, verifying whether margin targets were achieved, and identifying recurring patterns of over- or under-performance. Support contract profitability must be checked by comparing billed hours to actual time spent. Cash flow projections should also be updated to reflect newly booked jobs, contract renewals, and any significant upcoming outflows. While these processes have previously been informal, they must be formalized and structured to support scale and consistency.

High-Impact Metrics

Dale identifies labor efficiency and cash flow as the highest priorities. If labor hours on a job exceed the quoted estimate or technicians are idle due to scheduling issues, margins deteriorate rapidly. While perfect utilization metrics are not required, Dale monitors indicators of time inefficiency because they quickly reduce profitability. Cash flow is prioritized over revenue; delayed payments or overlapping expenses have previously converted strong-revenue months into operational stress. Dale also monitors support contract usage and flags instances where time spent on a fixed-fee client substantially exceeds the scoped effort. Revenue growth is considered less valuable when it is driven by thin margins or operational disorder. The primary focus remains on time management, client trust, and cash flow, with other outcomes following from those priorities.

Recurring Leadership & Team Touchpoints

There are three core meetings that are considered essential to the company's operating rhythm.

Meeting	*Participants*	*Focus*
Monday Operations Huddle (Weekly)	Dale, Mike, Sara, Tammy	Short & tactical: active jobs, assignments, delays, immediate issues. Keeps the week on track.
Wednesday Pipeline Review (Weekly)	Dale, Sara, Project Leads	Quoting, deals likely to close, prep for upcoming projects. Ensures readiness for new work.
Friday Financial Check-in (Weekly)	Dale, Mike	Receivables, cash on hand, invoices, vendor payments. Provides visibility into financial health.

These three meetings, operations, pipeline, and financial, provide sufficient visibility to operate steadily without excessive meetings. If those meetings do not occur, tasks and obligations are likely to be overlooked quickly.

Internal Communication Rhythm & Standards

The team expects clarity, consistency, and advance notice of any changes.. The team does not require constant updates or detailed supervision, but they need notification of matters that affect them, including changes in job priorities, schedule adjustments, client issues, or any new initiatives. When a new program or process is being implemented, the team expects advance notice rather than last-minute communication. Decisions must be communicated clearly, without vague directions or shifting expectations. Most staff are focused on execution during the week, so communications from leadership should be relevant and concise. If an issue occurs, the team expects a factual explanation of how it is being addressed. Dale states that this approach has maintained strong trust.

Decision-Making Protocol

Dale makes decisions based on clarity and efficiency. He expects a concise summary upfront — the decision required, its stakes, and a recommended course of action. Context should be limited to key facts, the options considered, and where the team currently stands. He does not rely on lengthy presentations or dense data; streamlined delivery is preferred. For technical matters, risks must be clearly stated. For operational issues, the effects on cash flow, customers, and personnel must be addressed. Every proposal should arrive with a pre-vetted recommendation so that Dale's role is to validate the analysis and finalize the call, not to rehash the problem. He also values awareness of the risks of doing nothing.

Looking forward, Dale recommends the successor maintain this structured approach but improve two areas: first, build a stronger feedback loop with department leads to ensure recommendations reflect cross-functional input; second, implement lightweight decision-tracking so outcomes and lessons learned can guide future choices.

Transition Planning

Dale acknowledges that current processes are largely informal. Most knowledge transfer resides with Dale or is conveyed through shadowing and day-to-day work. Mike and Sara both were onboarded through this method, learning by doing, asking questions, and progressively assuming greater responsibility. If ownership were transferred today, Dale recommends the new owner spend several weeks accompanying the field team, attending client calls, and reviewing past quotes to understand job scoping. The team has discussed establishing technical cross-training to provide backup for Jose and Sara, but this has not been implemented. In summary: the team is teachable and the work quality is solid, but a formal development plan is required for the business to scale or transition without degradation of performance. This represents a clear gap.

CEO Succession Recommendation

Dale identifies Sara Vaughn as having the clearest internal potential. She is described as technically adept, highly regarded, and responsible for most engineering decisions and for training the next layer of talent. Sara has not expressed interest in leading the entire business and does not possess strong finance or sales skills. With a capable operations partner or targeted executive coaching, she could develop into the role.

Dale indicates Mike could serve in an interim capacity; he understands the business thoroughly and would maintain stability, though he is characterized as an operationally steady leader rather than a strategic visionary. Dale assesses that neither individual is immediately suitable as a fully autonomous CEO, but that Sara and Mike together would preserve operational continuity while an external, longer-term chief executive with business-growth experience onboarded.

Alternate CEO Succession Recommendation

If Sara is not willing or available to assume the role, Dale's internal second choice is Mike. He is steady, accountable, and understands core business operations including quoting, payroll, contracts, and client expectations. He also has the temperament to maintain team stability during a transition. Mike will require support on technical and growth initiatives; he will not drive new service innovation or lead engineering decisions, but he can maintain operational continuity and financial accuracy. If paired with a technical lead or a growth-oriented deputy, he could occupy the role and preserve business health while a longer-term plan is developed. He is not focused on scaling the business, but he has earned the team's respect and can preserve operational stability.

Post-Transition Organizational Structure Adjustments

Dale recommends creating a formal operations lead or project manager role to serve between the field team and leadership. Currently, much of that coordination is handled by Mike and Sara, and they are stretched. Assigning ownership of job scheduling, resource planning, and installation logistics would reduce pressure on existing staff and streamline daily operations. Dale also recommends elevating Tammy's responsibilities, without an immediate title change, so she is officially responsible for internal process flow and document management. Tammy currently performs these tasks; granting her clearer authority would reduce confusion. Beyond these changes, Dale does not recommend additional immediate restructuring. The crew is close-knit, and extensive reorganization could be counterproductive. Over time, Dale expects roles for training, quoting support, and customer success should be defined; these functions are currently shared informally and present phased opportunities for formalization.

Onboarding the New Owner as the New Leader

Dale advises new leadership to observe, listen more than speak, and avoid making rapid changes. The team requires steady attention rather than a singular rescuer. Dale recommends spending time in the field, attending support calls, and soliciting feedback from technicians about effective practices and pain points. Dale advises that Mike and Sara should continue managing daily operations while the new leader becomes familiar with the business rhythm. Dale cautions against initiating major changes in the first month, such as streamlining the quoting process or reorganizing the organizational chart, noting that trust must be earned. Dale states that listening and achieving a few early, modest successes will encourage the team to permit leadership, whereas initiating aggressive change too quickly can cause the team to adopt a protective posture that is difficult to reverse.

Trust-Building Priorities for New Ownership

First, Dale prioritizes direct engagement in the field by riding along with technicians, visiting active job sites, and asking questions that convey a genuine intent to understand operations rather than to conduct an audit. This approach establishes operational credibility efficiently. Second, Dale emphasizes the importance of taking immediate action on small but meaningful issues. When a technician highlights a missing tool or an inefficient process, Dale addresses the concern promptly and discreetly, without drawing unnecessary attention. This demonstrates attentiveness and a commitment to supporting the team. Third, Dale practices transparent communication by sharing what information is known, what is still being assessed, and what operational elements are not subject to immediate change. This approach provides clarity, which Dale considers more critical than perfection during initial transition periods. Establishing trust through honesty, engagement, and consistency in the early stages is a key component of Dale's leadership strategy; failure to do so can significantly extend the timeline for building team alignment.

Common Issues During Leadership Transition

A common misstep is assuming that authority automatically translates to influence. Dale emphasizes that within this organization, leadership is not granted by title alone; team alignment must be earned. Individuals who attempt to assert control prematurely often bypass essential trust-building steps. This typically manifests as implementing changes without providing sufficient context, challenging prior decisions without first understanding their rationale, or attempting to modify processes that are already functioning effectively.

Another frequent misstep is excessive or poorly targeted communication, such as introducing numerous policies, new tools, or meetings before establishing substantive connections with the team; this approach generates organizational noise rather than clarity. A further issue is adopting an inappropriate tone by using grandiose statements, corporate jargon, or presenting a new vision without anchoring it in the operational realities; such approaches tend to prompt resistance.

Dale advises that effective leadership in this organization requires observing and learning quietly, resolving one or two concrete problems, and then communicating proposed changes.

High-Friction Systems & Tools

Dale identifies the quoting process as the most difficult area to ramp up on, not due to complexity but because much of the knowledge is undocumented. There is no formal quoting tool or software; the process relies on past project folders, manual templates, and judgment informed by risk assessment, client history, and scope complexity. The approach is pattern recognition rather than a deterministic formula.

The company's job tracking and field scheduling are the second area of concern. Tammy maintains the master schedule, which is primarily managed via spreadsheets and email. There is no centralized platform, so personnel not included in the weekly operations huddle may not have visibility into assignments.

The documentation systems are a patchwork: some materials reside in Google Drive, some on shared laptops, and some information is communicated verbally among technicians. While these systems are not difficult to use, they require time to learn because they depend on contextual knowledge rather than automation. Dale notes this as an opportunity for improvement while advising caution before implementing major changes.

Internal Onboarding Support

Tammy is highly effective at helping personnel understand operational workflows. She is patient, detail-oriented, and maintains a comprehensive mental map of file locations, forms, vendor contacts, and related resources. When personnel are new or uncertain, Tammy provides step-by-step guidance without creating discomfort. She does not seek recognition and functions to maintain operational stability.

Jose demonstrates similar strengths in field operations. He effectively instructs less experienced technicians in troubleshooting, organizational practices, and the avoidance of common errors. He leads by example and provides explanatory guidance during field activities.

Sara is a strong mentor who operates at a rapid pace and expects others to maintain that tempo. Technicians who match her speed acquire substantial skills; those who do not may fall behind. Tammy and Jose are the most approachable instructors; Sara advances skill development for personnel prepared to operate at an accelerated pace.

Common Pitfalls & Watchouts

Dale identifies a common early error as underestimating the extent to which the business relies on trust and timing, in addition to tools and processes. New owners often attempt to systematize activities, quoting, scheduling, and client handoffs, prematurely, without understanding the informal rationale that makes current practices effective. Another recurring pitfall is assuming clients prioritize operational efficiency to the same degree as the company; clients prioritize reliable attendance, problem resolution, and predictable costs without unexpected complications. Reducing service quality for the sake of margin or perceived streamlining can produce negative outcomes. Internally, a significant mistake is promoting staff into leadership roles for which they are not prepared solely to fill vacancies; this team places greater value on role clarity than on rapid promotion. Finally, small indicators, missed deadlines, atypical client feedback, or understated staff dissatisfaction, serve as early warnings; overlooking them can lead to disproportionately large consequences.

Dale advises against implementing broad structural changes, such as reorganizing roles, modifying compensation, or altering reporting lines, prior to observing current operational practices. Top-down changes implemented without contextual understanding can undermine team confidence and generate concerns about job security. Dale also cautions against removing tools, software, or process steps perceived as redundant without first determining their purpose; apparent inefficiencies can function as safeguards or workarounds that maintain workflow continuity. Dale recommends refraining from rebranding or altering marketing strategy before engaging with core clients, as the Harborstone name carries established value and client trust requires time to reassign. Finally, Dale warns against interpreting silence as agreement: the team is loyal but cautious, and may withdraw participation if they perceive they are being sidelined or blindsided. First impressions are consequential; Dale advises avoiding cosmetic changes that could adversely affect team engagement.

Change-Sensitive Business Areas

Client relationships are the highest priority. Most of the top clients have worked directly with Dale for years and trust Harborstone because they trust him; that level of trust cannot be transferred by signature alone. If communication style, response time, or service quality declines even slightly, clients will notice and may not provide immediate feedback; they may instead cease sending work. Therefore any changes to quoting, delivery, or support must be managed carefully, particularly during the first 6–12 months after a transition. These relationships are not transactional; they are based on responding at all hours, absorbing costs to correct issues, and being available when other providers are not. If clients perceive a reduction in reliability, they will begin to consider alternatives, which is difficult to reverse. Adjustments to operations, tools, and processes are appropriate, but changes affecting revenue-generating client relationships should be implemented slowly and intentionally.

Project Prioritization Guidance

The primary initiative to continue is the SaaS tool developed with Velocity Digital. It remains in early stages, but it presents long-term value if deployed correctly. There are a few pilot clients and a functional dashboard; although not finalized, the product addresses a validated problem. The development team requires clear direction and a technical representative from Dale's side to manage scope creep.

The proposal to migrate all job tracking and scheduling into a new platform should be paused or reevaluated. Software evaluations were initiated, but the team has not adopted the concept, and enforcing the change at this time would likely create greater disruption than benefit.

Any internal rebranding or marketing upgrades should be deferred. The company currently receives steady inbound work and maintains brand trust; significant changes to the brand image could confuse core clients.

Recommendations: advance the SaaS initiative, reassess changes to the tech stack, and postpone brand or marketing overhauls until operational stability is confirmed.

Culture & Continuity Practices

Dale conducts a Monday morning operations huddle that establishes the tone for the week and provides the team with a shared overview of ongoing priorities. The huddle is informal but consistent, and staff rely on it. In the field, collaborative behaviors are embedded in the culture: technicians assist one another proactively, and there is an expectation that each site is left in an improved condition. This sense of pride supports team cohesion. The company also acknowledges small achievements; when a technician completes a difficult installation or recovers a job at short notice, the accomplishment is publicly recognized. These acknowledgements are informal but meaningful. During periods of lighter workload, the team often organizes a Friday lunch or group coffee run to facilitate informal check-ins. The culture is sustained by mutual respect and a norm that no individual is exempt from contributing operationally; this mindset functions as a central driver of cohesion beyond formal HR programs.

EMERGENCY SUCCESSION INFORMATION

Successor Identification

Designated Successor

Dale has designated Mike as the named successor to assume ownership and executive control in the event of his incapacity or death. Dale selected Mike based on demonstrated performance as the operational backbone of Harborstone, managing project management and client communication with skill and reliability. Over time, Mike has established trust with the team, clients, and vendors, which is critical for a smooth leadership transition.

Mike possesses technical capability as well as emotional intelligence to lead with empathy and pragmatism. He has a deep understanding of the company culture and the ability to balance preservation of core values with implementation of necessary improvements. Dale has provided informal development for Mike in preparation for this role; Mike may require support on broader strategic or financial decisions initially, but he is best positioned to maintain business stability and growth in Dale's absence.

Alternate Successor

If Mike were unavailable, Dale's designated alternate successor would be Sara. She is the technical cornerstone of the company, owns system designs and quality control, and has a deep understanding of the company's engineering standards and client expectations. Sara is highly respected by both the field team and clients for her expertise and steady approach.

Her qualifications include technical skill and a developing leadership presence. She has assumed informal mentoring responsibilities, implemented process improvements discreetly but effectively, and consistently advocates for quality and reliability. While she may require support in assuming full ownership, particularly in operations and client relationship management, her commitment and institutional knowledge position her as the most suitable fallback to maintain Harborstone's operations if both Dale and Mike are unavailable.

Transition Mechanics

Legal Documentation of Succession Plans

No successor designations have been formalized in any legal documents. There is no buy-sell agreement, trust, or shareholders' agreement that specifies succession or ownership transfer terms. The arrangement has been based on an informal, trust-based understanding developed over years of working closely with Mike and Sara. Formalizing these designations would be an appropriate next step to ensure clarity and a smooth transition in the event of unexpected circumstances. Dale recommends that the new owner prioritize this early.

Interim Authority of the Leadership Team

Until the successor is fully installed, the leadership team should retain day-to-day operational authority within their existing areas of expertise to maintain business continuity without disruption. Specifically:

Mike	Continue overseeing project execution, scheduling, and field operations, with responsibility for keeping ongoing projects on schedule and ensuring the field team has the necessary resources to deliver work in line with company standards
Sara	Remain responsible for engineering design, adherence to quality standards, and technical troubleshooting, in order to maintain the integrity of system performance and client deliverables.
Tammy	Continue managing administrative operations, vendor coordination, billing, and client communications to ensure stability within back-office functions.

Collectively, the leadership team should have the autonomy to make tactical decisions, such as reallocating resources, addressing minor client issues, and approving routine purchases, without awaiting full successor sign-off. This approach prevents bottlenecks and maintains operational momentum while the successor ramps up strategic and broader operational authority.

Major strategic shifts, new client onboarding, contract negotiations, or financial commitments beyond routine expenses should be reserved for the successor or handled jointly until the successor is fully empowered. Clear communication of these boundaries will help avoid confusion and ensure accountability during the transition period.

Succession Timeline & Milestone Map

Within the first 48 hours, the successor must assume clear authority over operational decision-making, client communications, and vendor management, functions essential to Harborstone's uninterrupted daily operations. This includes:

Approving and scheduling projects	Continue overseeing project execution, scheduling, and field operations, with responsibility for keeping ongoing projects on schedule and ensuring the field team has the necessary resources to deliver work in line with company standards
Client relationship ownership	Remain responsible for engineering design, adherence to quality standards, and technical troubleshooting, in order to maintain the integrity of system performance and client deliverables.

Vendor and supplier coordination	Continue managing administrative operations, vendor coordination, billing, and client communications to ensure stability within back-office functions.
Financial approvals for routine expenses	The successor must have authority to approve payroll, invoices, and minor purchases to maintain steady cash flow and avoid operational delays.

These authorities are critical to maintain business continuity and to reassure clients, vendors, and the team that the company remains stable and responsive. The successor should be introduced promptly and explicitly to the team and key external contacts as the new decision-maker to avoid ambiguity or hesitation.

Weeks 1-2: Crisis Response & Stabilization

- Delegate operational authority to the named successor (Mike) to ensure continuity.
- Communicate promptly with internal teams, clients, and vendors introducing Mike as the new primary decision-maker.
- Evaluate active projects, critical deadlines, and cash flow to prevent disruptions.

Weeks 2-6: Transition & Knowledge Transfer

- Onboard successor intensively through direct engagement with Mike, Sara, Tammy, and Dale (if available).
- Host joint meetings with key clients and vendors to maintain trust and facilitate leadership transition.
- Review and formalize operational systems, SOPs, and reporting tools to support structure and visibility.

Weeks 6-12: Autonomy & Strategic Integration

- Successor takes full responsibility for day-to-day operations and decision-making.
- Dale and leadership team shift to advisory roles, providing guidance while deferring authority.
- Begin implementing growth strategies and operational improvements under successor's direction.

Months 3-6: Full Handoff & Stabilization

- Complete formal transfer of ownership and full leadership control.
- Successor develops and communicates independent leadership vision and begins making strategic adjustments.
- Monitor key indicators: client engagement, team sentiment, and financial performance.

Milestones

- **Immediate:** Successor introduced and authorized to act; stakeholder communication completed.
- **30 Days:** Successor running daily operations and managing relationships with minimal oversight.
- **60 Days:** Knowledge transfer complete; internal documentation up to date.
- **90 Days:** Leadership team in a support role; successor driving strategic direction.
- **6 Months:** Reliable financial reporting, steady project delivery, and strong internal feedback.

Success is defined by uninterrupted operations, sustained client confidence, strong team morale, and a successor fully equipped to lead growth independently of Dale.

Operational Continuity

Founder-Controlled Access & Process Handover

The responsibilities Dale currently handles that must be reassigned first to maintain uninterrupted operations include:

Client Relationship Management	Dale serves as the primary contact for key clients such as Thermadyne and Cobalt Refining. Transferring this role promptly ensures clients continue to receive timely updates and maintain confidence in service continuity.
Project Approvals and Scheduling	Dale approves project scopes, timelines, and resource assignments. Passing this authority to Mike allows for uninterrupted job flow and prevents scheduling bottlenecks.
Vendor Coordination and Procurement	Dale manages relationships and negotiations with critical vendors such as Rick's Panels and Rockwell Automation. Assigning this responsibility to Tammy or Mike preserves priority access and supports smooth supply chain operations.
Financial Oversight	Dale handles payroll sign-offs, invoice approvals, and budget decisions. Delegating these duties ensures cash flow and expense management continue without delay.
Strategic Decision-Making	While certain strategic functions can transition more gradually, immediate delegation of urgent or ongoing strategic initiatives is necessary to maintain organizational momentum.
Crisis Management and Issue Resolution	Dale has been the primary point of contact for escalations and unexpected problems. The successor and leadership team must be empowered to address issues promptly and decisively.

There are several critical processes, passwords, and approval authorities that are currently controlled solely by Dale and are not fully documented or centralized, presenting an urgent operational and security risk.

Critical Processes Solely Managed by Dale:

1. Final quoting approvals for complex or high-margin jobs are managed directly by Dale. He serves as the final authority on pricing exceptions and scope clarifications, ensuring margin protection.
2. Dale leads high-level client negotiations involving contract renewals, escalated disputes, and legacy accounts, including long-standing clients such as Thermadyne and Bray.
3. Vendor relationship management for key suppliers is handled informally by Dale. These include non-contractual agreements and scheduling priorities with vendors such as Rick's Panels and Rockwell Automation.
4. Financial approvals for payroll and discretionary expenditures outside of routine operations are executed solely by Dale.

Passwords and System Access Controlled by Dale:

1. Dale maintains sole administrative credentials for core software platforms, including QuickBooks, FactoryTalk licenses, Velocity Digital SaaS tools, and vendor portals.
2. He also retains access to the company's shared drives and internal documentation repositories, including folders containing sensitive pricing and contract data.
3. Email accounts used for client communication and billing are accessible only to Dale.

Documentation and Security Status:

1. Passwords and access credentials are stored in a local encrypted password manager on Dale's laptop. This information is not backed up to a central repository nor formally shared with other team members.
2. Some process documentation exists in fragmented formats across Google Docs and internal notes, but there is no unified or current standard operating procedure (SOP) manual in place.
3. Operational knowledge remains largely undocumented and resides informally with Dale, as well as through verbal exchanges with team members Mike and Sara.

Recommendation for Successor Access:

Immediate action should be taken to centralize all passwords and critical process documentation within a secure, shared password management system with tiered access control. A collaborative session involving Dale, Mike, and Sara is recommended to identify and document high-risk operational areas, and to develop or update formal SOPs. Failure to implement these measures may result in continuity gaps, approval delays, and increased exposure to security vulnerabilities.

Initial Stakeholder Touchpoints & Messaging

In the first week, the successor must personally contact several key relationships to ensure a smooth transition and reinforce confidence. The following stakeholders and messages are recommended:

Customers

Thermadyne Systems	The successor should introduce themselves as the new primary point of contact, confirm the company's continued commitment to Thermadyne's projects, and provide assurance that service quality and responsiveness will remain consistent. The communication should convey readiness to develop a strong working relationship.
Cobalt Refining	Contact should include acknowledgment of the leadership change, with emphasis on continuity in technical expertise and support. The successor should invite open communication for any questions or needs, and underscore the company's commitment to long-term partnership and operational stability.
Tammy	Continue managing administrative operations, vendor coordination, billing, and client communications to ensure stability within back-office functions.

Suppliers/Vendors

Rick's Panels	The successor should confirm the continuation of the existing business relationship and provide reassurance that terms and expectations will remain consistent. Communication should highlight an intent to uphold the trust and mutual respect that have defined the current informal agreement.
Rockwell Automation	Outreach should reaffirm the company's commitment as a priority customer, include discussion of any upcoming orders or allocations, and provide assurance that the relationship will continue without disruption.
Altech Supply & Midwest Controls	The successor should proactively check on the status of current orders and address known issues, if any. Expectations for ongoing collaboration should be clearly communicated, with an emphasis on transparency and problem-solving.

Advisors/Lenders

Jeff Langston (Accountant)	Notification of the leadership transition should be accompanied by confirmation of continuity in financial reporting practices and regulatory compliance. The successor should also review any upcoming tax filings, audit deadlines, or financial obligations.
Amy Sebastian (Attorney)	The successor should inform legal counsel of the change in leadership, review any outstanding contracts or legal matters, and coordinate transfer of signing authority to ensure operational continuity.
Velocity Digital (SaaS Partner)	The successor should formally introduce themselves, discuss the current status and timeline of the SaaS platform, and align on any planned joint go-to-market activities.

Documents Requiring Immediate Update

Upon a change in control, the following compliance licenses, permits, and certifications require immediate attention to maintain legal and operational continuity:

Business Entity Registration

Mike ensures that the Indiana Secretary of State is updated regarding the change in ownership or management, with S-corporation status accurately reflecting the new controlling party.

State and Local Business Licenses

Mike notifies applicable state and local licensing authorities that issued Harborstone's operating permits, such as those related to industrial automation or electrical contracting, to report the ownership change in accordance with regulatory requirements.

Insurance Policies

Mike updates general liability, workers' compensation, and professional liability insurance providers to reflect the change in ownership, maintaining policy validity and ensuring continued coverage.

Contractual Notifications

Major client and vendor contracts are reviewed by Mike for any clauses requiring disclosure of ownership changes. Notifications are issued as required to remain in contractual compliance and avoid breaches.

Immediate Actions

1. Mike reviews all licenses and permits for change of control notification requirements, including those with deadlines of 30 days or less.
2. Legal counsel or compliance advisors are engaged to prepare and file the required documentation without delay.
3. Insurance providers are contacted proactively to update policy records and prevent any lapse in coverage.
4. All communications and confirmations are documented for audit purposes and future reference.

Failing to update these compliance elements swiftly can result in fines, suspended operations, or denial of insurance claims. Addressing these items early assists the successor in establishing a clean legal and operational foundation.

Support & Development

Since Mike has been named successor, onboarding and training resources are specifically tailored to bring him fully up to speed with strategy, culture, and operations, building on the deep familiarity he already has with the business. The following resources are in place and planned for Mike's transition:

Existing Resources

Advisor-Led Deep Dives

Mike has been closely shadowing Dale in day-to-day operations, client engagements, vendor management, and financial oversight. In addition, structured workshops have been scheduled to address strategic and less visible areas such as long-term growth planning, pricing strategy nuances, and succession-related considerations.

Comprehensive Knowledge Transfer Sessions

A series of recurring, detailed walkthroughs have been established to cover quoting logic, operational workflows, and escalation protocols, all tailored to Mike's expanding responsibilities. These sessions are designed to formalize and supplement the operational knowledge he has acquired informally.

Documentation Repository Access

Mike has been granted full access to the shared documentation repository, including standard operating procedure drafts, client contracts, and vendor agreements. He has been tasked with reviewing and contributing to the completion of these materials to ensure alignment with current operational standards.

Trusted Advisors & External Counsel

Tom Reynolds (External Business Advisor)	Tom Reynolds is an experienced consultant specializing in operational improvements and growth strategy. He will serve as Mike's primary resource for leadership coaching, organizational structuring, and addressing the challenges associated with scaling Harborstone under new ownership.
Jeff Langston (Accountant / CPA)	Jeff Langston provides professional expertise in cash flow management, tax planning, and financial reporting. His ongoing guidance will be instrumental in maintaining fiscal stability and ensuring regulatory compliance throughout the ownership transition.
Amy Sebastian (Legal Counsel)	Amy Sebastian will support Mike with contract reviews, regulatory compliance, and legal matters related to the ownership transfer and ongoing business operations. Her involvement is intended to mitigate legal risks during the transition period.

Risk & Contingency

There are several scenarios that could impede the transition if not managed carefully. Shareholder disputes are not a risk because Dale is the sole owner, eliminating partner or faction conflicts. However, internal disagreements regarding leadership style or strategic direction after Mike assumes leadership could generate friction if not addressed openly.

Regulatory or compliance delays could slow the ownership transfer. State licensing boards must be notified and business registrations updated promptly. Delays or additional scrutiny of those filings could stall contracts or vendor agreements. There are no complex regulatory hurdles such as government contracts or foreign ownership issues, but required filings remain important.

Client or vendor pushback is a potential risk. Key clients or vendors may request reassurances, seek renegotiation, or consider terminating relationships. If the successor does not demonstrate stability and continuity promptly, cash flow and operations could be disrupted.

Personnel turnover poses a risk if Mike or other key staff depart during or shortly after the transition, creating difficult-to-fill gaps.

To mitigate these risks, Dale has implemented a series of contingency measures:

1. Dale has drafted a succession agreement with Mike to formalize authority and reduce leadership ambiguity; those agreements are with legal counsel and ready for execution.
2. A checklist and timeline for regulatory notifications and filings have been prepared, with reminders established to avoid missed deadlines.

3. A client and vendor communication plan is being prepared to proactively address concerns and reinforce continuity.
4. Critical knowledge and processes are being documented and key team members are being cross-trained to mitigate the impact of unexpected departures.

If any of these issues arise, the response plan is to engage legal and advisory support, communicate transparently with stakeholders, and rely on the leadership team to maintain day-to-day operations while the successor addresses strategic matters.

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