

FREE GUIDE · ALDRICH CONSULTING

One Great Quarter

A practical operating framework for SaaS founders who are done with drift — and ready for their most focused, predictable 90 days yet.

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Before We Start

Most guides like this open with the same energy: *"You just need a vision! Set ambitious goals! Execute with passion!"*

You've read that. It didn't fix the problem.

The problem isn't motivation. It isn't ambition. It's that most founder-led businesses run quarters on vibes — without the operating structure to turn good intentions into consistent execution.

This guide fixes that. Not with inspiration. With mechanics.

If you can honestly run the six steps in this document, you will have a genuinely different quarter. Not because you worked harder. Because you'll finally know what you're working **toward** — and you'll have a system that keeps you there.

Why Most Quarters Fall Apart

Most founders don't have bad quarters because they set the wrong goals. They have bad quarters because of **drift**.

Drift is what happens between week two and week ten. The quarter starts with energy. A few things hit. A few things don't. A crisis or opportunity shows up. Something urgent replaces something important. Nobody says "we're abandoning the plan" — it just quietly becomes irrelevant.

By week twelve, you're reviewing things that weren't even on the original list.

The antidote to drift is not accountability theater.
It's a weekly operating rhythm that makes drift **visible early enough to correct it.**

That's the thing most founders are missing. Not goals. Not clarity. **Rhythm.**

STEP 1

Define ONE Real Quarterly Goal

Not three. Not five. **One.**

This is harder than it sounds because the founder mind wants to fix everything. But here's what actually happens when you run a quarter with five "top priorities": each one gets twenty percent of your team's attention, and nothing moves far enough to matter.

Your quarterly goal needs to pass three tests:

1**SINGLE NARRATIVE TEST**

State the goal in one sentence to anyone on your team. If you need a paragraph, it's not a goal — it's a strategy deck.

2**90-DAY TEST**

The goal should be genuinely completable — not started, *completed* — in one quarter. "We'll be on our way" describes an initiative, not a goal.

3**OUTCOME TEST**

A goal is an outcome, not a task. "Launch the onboarding flow" is a task. "Reduce time-to-first-value from 14 days to 7" is an outcome. Only outcomes tell you when you've won.

✓ STRONG GOALS

- Reduce average close time from 38 days to 22
- Bring MRR churn below 1.5% per month
- Get ops team running weekly review without founder
- Hire and fully onboard a head of customer success

✗ WEAK GOALS

- "Grow revenue"
- "Get more organized"
- "Fix onboarding"
- "Focus on marketing"

Clarity beats ambition every time. A modest goal you actually finish compounds. A bold goal you abandon doesn't.

STEP 2

Identify the 3–5 Priorities That Make It Possible

Once you have your goal, the real question is: *What has to be true for this to happen?*

Founders often skip from goal to task list — generating a hundred action items and calling it a plan. Don't do that. Identify the **critical path** instead: the three to five things that, if they don't happen, the goal doesn't happen.

Ask: What are the biggest blockers right now? What capabilities don't we have yet? What broken thing will stop this goal even if we work hard? What decisions have we been avoiding that are prerequisites?

Example — Goal: MRR churn below 1.5%

Priorities: (1) Identify top 3 cancellation reasons + build a response. (2) Create a 30/60/90-day customer health cadence. (3) Establish a renewal risk dashboard reviewed weekly. (4) Close the product gaps driving top 2 cancellations. Four outcomes — each one mechanically required for the goal.

Ownership matters here. Each priority needs one owner — a real human, not "the team." That person is accountable for the outcome, not just the tasks associated with it.

STEP 3

Install a Weekly Rhythm

This is the most important step in the guide — and the one most companies skip.

Your quarter doesn't live in the plan you wrote on day one. It lives in what your team actually does on Tuesday afternoon in week five. A weekly leadership rhythm converts your quarterly plan from a document into behavior.



Scorecard

5–15 metrics with targets. Green = on track. Red = needs discussion. Not a data dump — a decision tool.



Priority Status

What moved this week? What stalled? This is where drift gets caught early — "in progress" for three straight weeks surfaces here.



Issues

What's broken, stuck, or unclear? A culture that surfaces problems early is more valuable than one that only shows you good news.



Commitments

Explicit commitments — not aspirational to-dos — for completion before next week. The discipline of keeping them builds execution culture.

Practical note: Working meeting, not a status meeting. 60–90 min max. Runs long consistently? You're solving issues in the meeting or the agenda is too big. Not optional.

STEP 4

Run a Mid-Month Recalibration

Most companies have two planning moments: the start of the quarter and the end of the quarter. Everything in between is execution on a plan that may or may not still make sense.

The mid-month recalibration is a 30–45 minute intentional pause — not a full replanning session — to ask: *Is this plan still right?* Run it at the end of months one and two.

Ask at each recalibration:

- Is our quarterly goal still the right goal? If something material has changed, adjust it now — not at the end of the quarter.
- Which priorities are on track? Which are stalled?
- Is anything we're working on no longer worth doing?
- What's surfaced as more important than we originally thought?
- Does ownership need to shift anywhere?

The most common discovery: you've been working on priorities that made sense in week one but have since been outrun by something that matters more. Document what changed and why — future-you will appreciate it.

STEP 5

Solve Issues at the Root, Not the Surface

When a customer escalation happens, the instinct is to solve the escalation. Get the customer calm. Move on. That's symptom management — necessary, but not sufficient.

The real cost of surface-level fixes: you'll solve the same issue again in six weeks. Every hour spent resolving a recurring problem you've already "solved" is time not spent building something.

When something breaks, before you fix it, ask *why it happened*. Keep going until the answer changes from "because something went wrong" to "because the system was designed to produce this outcome."

Unclear ownership	It "fell through the cracks" because nobody actually owned it. Not a people problem — a design problem.
Missing metrics	You didn't know it was broken because nothing was measuring it.
Mismatched expectations	The person thought they were doing it right. Nobody told them otherwise in a way that stuck.
No documented process	Everyone does it differently. The variation is the problem.
Founder bottleneck	It can't move until you approve it, and you're always behind. The org is routing around you.
Conflicting priorities	Two things marked "top priority" and nobody chose. The team picked one and hoped for the best.

Structural fixes remove the condition that produces the problem — they don't require re-solving. In your weekly rhythm: 3–5 issues at root level per week. Not thirty. Three to five, done well.

STEP 6

Close the Quarter with a Real Review

Most companies "do a Q review" by checking whether they hit their numbers and moving on. That's not a review — it's a report card.

A real quarter-end review extracts the learning that improves the next quarter. Answer these four questions in writing:

What worked?

Not just what succeeded — what *mechanisms* worked? What decisions, rhythms, or structures produced good outcomes? Protect and repeat those.

What didn't?

Be honest. Not "we got unlucky." What specifically failed, and why? Wrong goal? Unclear ownership? Did we drift? Did we avoid a hard conversation too long?

What did we learn?

Every quarter surfaces information the business didn't have before — about customers, team, product, market. Document it before it disappears.

What changes next quarter?

One or two specific structural changes. Not resolutions — changes to how you operate. This is what compounding looks like.

Companies that do this consistently over two years look dramatically different from those that don't. Not because they work harder. Because they're running on compounding learning rather than repeated cycles of the same mistakes.

△ WHAT THIS FRAMEWORK WON'T FIX

This framework won't fix a flawed strategy. If you're building a product nobody wants, tighter quarterly rhythm will just help you execute the wrong thing more efficiently.

It won't fix a leadership team that lacks real ownership of outcomes. The rhythm will surface that — but you'll still have to make harder decisions about accountability and role fit.

And it won't remove you as the bottleneck if you haven't redesigned your role. The quarter can be well-structured and still grind to a halt wherever your approval is required.

This is an operating structure. It assumes the underlying strategy is sound and the team is capable. If either is in question, that's the real work — and it's upstream of what any quarterly framework can do.

The One Great Quarter Checklist

Your actual operating reference. Come back to it every quarter.

BEFORE THE QUARTER STARTS

- Defined **ONE** clear quarterly goal that passes the single narrative, 90-day, and outcome tests
- Identified 3–5 key priorities that are the critical path to the goal — categories of outcome, not a task list
- Assigned a single named owner to each priority — a person, not "the team"
- Built or updated a lean weekly scorecard with a target for each metric
- Scheduled all 12 weekly leadership rhythm meetings — on the calendar, immovable

DURING THE QUARTER (EVERY WEEK)

- Running the weekly rhythm: scorecard review, priority status, issue surfacing, explicit commitments
- Solving 3–5 issues per week at root cause — not surface-level patches
- Mid-month recalibration completed at end of Month 1
- Mid-month recalibration completed at end of Month 2
- Adjusting priorities when the plan stops matching reality — documenting why
- Weekly commitments kept short enough to be actually completed

END OF QUARTER

- Completed written quarter-end review: what worked, what didn't, what we learned, what changes
- Identified 1–2 specific structural changes for the next quarter
- Reset priorities and scorecard *before* the next quarter begins — not during it

What Comes Next

If you run this framework for one quarter and find that it surfaces more problems than it solves — that's actually a good thing. It means you can finally see clearly what's been there all along.

That clarity is the hardest and most valuable thing a founder can have.

If you want a more complete operating model — one that addresses not just quarterly execution but strategic direction, leadership structure, founder role, and long-term exit readiness — that's what the **Chaos-to-Clarity System™** is built to do. Designed specifically for software and SaaS founders who've outgrown intuition-based management and need a real operating foundation.

Ready to Build a Business That Runs on Clarity?

The Chaos-to-Clarity System helps SaaS founders move from reactive, founder-dependent complexity to focused, scalable, strategically clear operation.

FREE · 15 MINUTES

Take the Diagnostic

Get a precise read on where your business has clarity and where it doesn't — across strategy, leadership, operations, and execution.

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WORKING CALL · NO SALES PITCH

Book a Review Call

A working conversation about your business. Walk away with a clear read on your constraints and what to address first.

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