

The Two-Week Disappearance Test

If you vanished for fourteen days starting tomorrow — no phone, no email, no backchannel — what would stall, slip, or strain? This is the honest test of whether you've built a leadership system or just a leadership presence. Nothing exposes system debt faster than absence.



The premise. Presence covers for missing architecture. You catch the slipping commitment because you happen to see it on the board. You break the scheduling deadlock because you happen to be in the meeting. You remember the vendor promise because it's in your head. None of that scales. And none of it survives your first real vacation.

In the first two weeks you're gone, which of these actually happen?

Answer **Yes** only if it would reliably happen even if you sent no instructions before leaving. Don't count heroics from your best teammate as a No — that's the hidden failure mode. Tally your Yes answers at the bottom.

1 Team delivery drops below your published target. Yes No

A commitment number is only real when it holds without you chasing it.

2 The weekly schedule gets built late, or not at all. Yes No

If planning has a single point of failure, that's an input gap, not a person gap.

3 A decision stalls because "we need to wait for them to get back." Yes No

Authority boundaries that aren't written down default to you. That's not a compliment.

4 A vendor or contractor commitment gets missed because nobody remembered it.

Yes No

Commitments living in one head are liabilities, not relationships.

5 A postmortem or incident write-up doesn't close in the agreed window. Yes No

Learning loops you personally run are not learning loops. They're checklists with your name on them.

6 A standard you've restated multiple times visibly slips. Yes No

If your presence is the enforcement mechanism, the standard isn't a standard.

7 Your best teammates start doing work that isn't theirs to do. Yes No

Heroics under your absence reveal the fragile handoffs you haven't built.

8 A cross-department issue escalates because there's no clear handoff without you.

Yes No

Your relationships were the bridge. That's the bridge that needs to be built into the system.

0–1**HEALTHY**

You've built architecture, not presence. Protect this. Don't re-centralize under pressure.

2–4**WARNING**

Load-bearing habits are quietly concentrated in you. Pick one Yes and turn it into an input this month.

5–8**SYSTEM DEBT**

You can't take a real vacation — and more importantly, your organization can't. Start with the highest-impact Yes and build the input that survives you.