

MSME OWNER'S PLAYBOOK · BONUS 09

# 8 Cs to Build a Team From Scratch

*Hire right, align early, scale smoothly.*

**WORTH ₹499 — YOURS FREE**

*For every founder hiring their first team beyond family and terrified of getting the foundation wrong.*



## THE PROBLEM

# Five Good Hires. Zero Team.

Nikhil just hired his first five employees beyond family. Each one is individually capable — good resumes, good interviews, genuinely good people. Three months in, they're five individuals doing their own thing in the same office, not a team.

You've seen this with founders you know — the friend whose "great hires" never quite gelled, the cousin who assumed good people would naturally figure out how to work together, and watched them quietly not.

**A team isn't something that happens automatically** once you hire enough good individuals. It's something you design, deliberately, before the hiring even starts.



## WHY THIS HAPPENS — AND WHO'S REALLY RESPONSIBLE

# You Alone Shape the First Team's DNA. For Better or Worse.

This one's entirely on the founder — not as blame, but as fact. Whatever culture, communication style, and decision rights exist in your first team, exist because you either designed them or, more often, let them happen by default.

Three reasons the first team rarely gels on its own:

**You hired fast to fill roles**, without a shared sense of how the team actually works together day to day.

**Culture, communication norms, and decision rights were never defined up front** — they got left to chance, and chance rarely produces alignment.

**You assumed "good people" would figure it out themselves.** Good people figure out their own jobs quickly. Figuring out each other takes deliberate design.



## ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

# Let's Actually Get to the Root of It

Run the "5 Whys" on Nikhil's five-individuals problem — the same drill-down you should run on your own early team:

|             |                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| THE SYMPTOM | <i>"Our first hires didn't gel into a team — just five people doing their own thing."</i><br><br>! Why?                               |
| WHY #1      | We hired fast to fill roles, without a shared sense of how we work together.<br><br>! Why?                                            |
| WHY #2      | We never defined culture, communication norms, or decision rights up front.<br><br>! Why?                                             |
| WHY #3      | We assumed good people would just figure it out themselves.<br><br>! Why?                                                             |
| THE ROOT    | <b>We treated team-building as something automatic once you hire enough good individuals — but a team is designed, not assembled.</b> |

Run this on your own early hires. The root is rarely "we hired the wrong people." It's almost always that nobody designed how the right people would work together.



## LIKELY SOLUTIONS — AND WHAT EACH ONE ACTUALLY GETS YOU

# Four Ways Owners Try to Fix This

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A

### Hire Fast, Fix Culture Later

**What you get:** Speed to fill open seats.

**What it costs you:** Bad habits set in early and are brutal to undo once they've become "how we've always done it."

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B

### Hire Only People You Already Know

**What you get:** Trust and faster onboarding.

**What it costs you:** Limited skill diversity, and awkward accountability dynamics when friendship and hierarchy collide.

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C

### Bring in an Experienced HR Head to "Handle It"

**What you get:** Process rigor and structure.

**What it costs you:** An expensive hire for an early team — and culture still needs the founder's fingerprint, not just a process.

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D

### Build the First Team Deliberately on 8 Foundations

**What you get:** A team that scales without falling apart at 15 people, then 50.

**What it costs you:** Upfront thought before the hiring spree, not damage control after it.

**THE RIGHT DEFAULT BEFORE YOUR NEXT HIRING PUSH**



## THE RECOMMENDED PATH — STEP BY STEP

# Design the Team Before You Hire the Next Person

- 01 Write your "how we work" one-pager before your next hire**  
Not after. Decisions, communication rhythm, what's non-negotiable — on paper, before the interview.
- 02 Interview for 3 of the 8 Cs explicitly**  
Pick the ones most at risk in your context and test for them directly, not by accident.
- 03 Give every new hire the same first-week onboarding**  
No exceptions, no "figure it out as you go" — consistency from day one shapes culture faster than any speech.
- 04 Set a 30-60-90 day check-in cadence from day one**  
Not a performance review — a fit review, both ways.
- 05 Revisit the 8 Cs every time headcount doubles**  
What worked at 5 people breaks at 15. Don't wait for the breakage to notice.



## HOW TO AVOID THIS GOING FORWARD

# Make It a Habit, Not a Hope

The foundations that work for 5 people quietly stop working at 15, then 30. Keep revisiting them on purpose.

- **Never let headcount outrun your "how we work" documentation.** Write it down before you need to explain it to a stranger.
- **Re-interview your culture, not just your resumes,** every time you scale meaningfully.
- **Catch communication drift early.** One skipped weekly sync becomes the norm faster than you'd expect.
- **Exit fast on character misses.** Character rarely improves with tenure — skill does, character usually doesn't.

*Your first ten hires set the culture your next ninety will inherit. Design it — don't let it design itself.*



## THE SIMPLEWORKS FRAMEWORK

# The 8 Cs

*The foundations of every team that scales without falling apart.*

- C**      **Clarity**  
Everyone knows the one outcome they're hired to deliver.
- C**      **Culture**  
The unwritten rules are written down early, on purpose.
- C**      **Communication**  
One clear rhythm for updates and decisions, not ad hoc chasing.
- C**      **Competence**  
Hire for the skill the role truly needs — not just enthusiasm.
- C**      **Character**  
Attitude and integrity checked as hard as skills are.
- C**      **Commitment**  
Clear expectations on hours, ownership, and accountability from day one.
- C**      **Compensation**  
Fair, transparent, and tied to outcomes — not guesswork.
- C**      **Cadence**  
A regular rhythm of feedback and check-ins, built in from hire number one.

*Eight Cs, checked before every hire and revisited at every scale-up. This is the foundation good people alone can't build for you.*



## ABOUT SIMPLEWORKS

# One Consultant. Four Connected Disciplines.

Simpleworks Consulting is a boutique advisory practice built for Indian MSME owners — founded by **Prem Menon**, drawing on 39 years across Consumer Durables, Tyres, Telecom, and IT/SaaS. The philosophy is simple: strip away complexity, and give founders tools sophisticated enough to work — and simple enough to run without a large team.

Every Simpleworks engagement draws on four connected practice areas, because strategy, go-to-market, execution, and measurement are rarely separate problems in a real business.

### 01 Business Strategy

The smallest set of choices that makes every later decision easier — where to play, and how to win.

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### 02 Go-to-Market

Turning the strategic choice into revenue — the right segment, message, channel, and price, working as one coherent system.

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### 03 Execution Enablement

The operating rhythm — meetings, decisions, ownership — that converts intent into outcome.

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### 04 OKRs

The feedback loop that tells you honestly whether the strategy is working, and holds the system accountable.

*Four lenses on the same question: how does your business get from where it is, to where you've decided it should be?*



LET'S TALK

# You've Seen the Problem. Let's Design Your Team on Purpose.

If this booklet described your first team, that's usually the first sign it's worth a real conversation — before the next hiring push, not after it goes sideways.

Reach out. No pitch, no jargon — just a straight conversation about your team, your growth, or whatever's keeping you up tonight.

## **Prem Menon**

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