



THE BAROMETER

THE RIGHT ALTITUDE · WEATHER SERIES

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This barometer reading maps the human and political forces around a decision. It is a preparation tool, not a recommendation.

THE READ

Jordan, you already decided. You said it yourself — if nobody was watching, you'd have handed it off months ago. So this isn't a decision about whether your deputy is ready. You told me they're ready and they know it. This is a decision about whether you're ready to stop being the one who carries it.

That's a different problem, and it's worth naming honestly. You wrote that running Atlas has been 'my proof I'm still the one who delivers.' Read that back. The project isn't on your plate because the org needs it there. It's there because it's how you know you still matter.

Here's what you can't see from inside it: you're treating the handoff as a risk to your credibility, when the real risk to your credibility is what you're modeling. Eighteen months in, holding a project a capable deputy could run signals one of two things to people watching — either you don't trust them, or you can't let go. Neither helps you.

And the tell is in your own six-month forecast. One version has your deputy running Atlas while you do the work that's been waiting. The other has you 'still holding it, more tired, wondering why nothing changed.' You've already written the regret. You're just not living the answer yet.

WHO WINS, WHO LOSES, WHAT IT SIGNALS

The Political Map

Look at who wins, because you listed them clearly. Your deputy steps into the level they've earned. The team gets a real owner instead of one filtered through you. And you get back hours for the work only you can do. That's three wins against a short-term cost that's almost entirely yours to absorb.

The friction lives in two places. Your boss 'won't love it' — they're used to your hands directly on this, and the handoff asks them to trust instead of check in. A couple of senior people are in the same position. That's not sabotage. You said it plainly: no one can sabotage this once it's decided. What you're managing isn't opposition — it's the discomfort of people who've grown comfortable with you as the single point of contact.

What this signals to the organization is the part you're underweighting. A clean handoff says you build people who can carry weight. Holding on says the opposite — that the only safe pair of hands is yours. For a leader who wants room to do bigger work, the second message is the expensive one.

WHAT INACTION COSTS

The Cost of Waiting

You said nothing breaks if you don't decide. That's exactly the trap. There's no alarm, no deadline, no client escalation forcing your hand — so the cost stays invisible while it compounds.

Here's what's actually eroding right now. Your deputy 'stays a step below where they should be' — and capable people don't wait at that step forever. Every week you hold Atlas, you're paying interest on a development opportunity that was ripe months ago. You also said you 'have no room for the work only I can do.' That work isn't waiting patiently. It's the cost you can't see on a spreadsheet — the projects that aren't happening because you're occupied.

You called the timing late — 'should have done this already.' So the question isn't whether to wait. It's whether you keep paying a cost you've already named, in exchange for a feeling of being needed that isn't actually true. Your deputy can run it. The waiting buys you nothing but a slower version of the regret you already forecast.

THE GAP

The Decision You'd Make if Nobody Was Watching

Let's sit with the gap, because it's the whole thing. Nobody watching, you'd have handed it off months ago. What's stopping you is the fear that without Atlas on your plate, you're 'not visibly contributing' — plus guilt that handing it off 'looks like I'm offloading.'

Those aren't constraints. They're fears wearing the costume of responsibility. 'Offloading' is the story you tell yourself to make holding on feel principled. But handing a ready deputy a project they've earned isn't offloading — it's the job. The version where you keep it isn't generosity. It's you protecting your own sense of mattering, and calling it diligence.

And you admitted the protection runs another direction too — you haven't fully owned that the indecision shields you. It keeps you visibly busy. It postpones the harder question of what you contribute when you're not the one doing the delivering. That's the real work here, Jordan, and it's bigger than Atlas. The project is just where it's showing up.

STRATEGY

How to Move

Move in this order. First, talk to your deputy — not to ask if they're ready, you already know, but to transfer ownership clearly. Say the phase is theirs to run and you're stepping back, not hovering. Be specific about what 'own it' means: they make the calls, they don't wait for you to weigh in. That last part matters, because you named it as a requirement for execution.

Second, go to your boss before they hear it any other way. Frame it as pragmatism, which is what you said it signals — you're putting your hands where the org needs them most, and Atlas is in capable hands. If a more senior project is the thing that would make this obvious, name it. Give your boss the strategic reason, not the personal one.

Third, handle the couple of senior people used to your direct involvement. Short conversations: the deputy is the owner now, route through them, and you're confident in the handoff. You said no one can derail this once decided — so decide it fully. Half a handoff, where you still quietly weigh in, is the one thing that proves your fear right.

SEQUENCE

Who to Tell First

Your deputy hears it first — always. Anyone else learning before them undercuts the ownership you're handing over and tells them they were the last to know about their own promotion. Make it direct and make it real: this is yours now.

Your boss is the costliest relationship, so they hear it second and they hear it framed for them — realistic deployment of your time, confidence in the handoff, and what you're freeing yourself to take on. For the senior people who lose your direct hands, lead with the gain, not the loss: the deputy gives them a sharper, faster owner closer to the work. Don't apologize for the handoff. Apologizing tells everyone you're not sure — and you are.

THE ONE THING

You're not deciding whether your deputy can run Atlas — you decided that long ago. You're deciding whether you can stop using this project to prove you still matter, and that question won't get easier by waiting. If the pattern behind the indecision runs deeper than this decision, a coach can help you get to what a brief cannot.

The pressure is read. The forces are mapped. The cost of waiting is clear. Now make the call.

— *Don*