

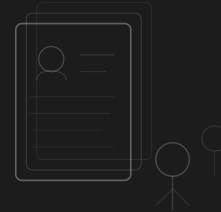
Every Seat: Position Playbooks

THE 50 FACTOR — GROWTH FACTOR #13

Playbooks for Every Position

The Complete Implementation Guide

BY SCOTT SCULLY



Principle #13: Playbooks for Every Position

The Complete Implementation Guide

This white paper is a companion to Chapter 13 of The 50 Factor by Scott Scully. The book tells the story. This guide gives you the step-by-step playbook to build position playbooks for every repeating role in your company — the documents that cut new hire ramp time by 70-80% and make scaling possible.

Why This Principle Matters

The wall every services business hits between \$5M and \$15M is almost always the same wall: you can't onboard people fast enough. You hire good people. They sit next to someone for a few weeks. They absorb what they can. They ask questions when they get stuck. And four months later, they're producing at maybe 60% of what your best person in that role produces — because they learned by osmosis instead of by system.

Meanwhile, your top performer's knowledge lives in their head. When they go on vacation, things break. When they eventually leave — and they will — six months of institutional knowledge walks out the door with them. The next hire starts from scratch. The cycle repeats.

Position playbooks fix all of this. A position playbook is a living document that defines a role: what it does, how it does it, what the daily rhythm looks like, what tools it uses, what excellence looks like, and where the role goes next. It's the operating manual for a seat in your company.

The payoffs are measurable and immediate. Companies that implement position playbooks consistently report: new hire ramp time drops from 4-6 months to 4-6 weeks. Quality consistency improves because everyone is running the same system. Hiring improves

because the playbook generates better job descriptions and better interview questions. And turnover decreases because people know what success looks like — which is one of the most underrated retention factors in any company.

The Seven Sections of a Position Playbook

Section 1: Mission of the Role

One paragraph. Why this job exists. What it produces. What "great" looks like at a high level. This isn't a job description — it's a purpose statement that gives the person in the role a reason to care about what they do every day.

Example (Account Manager): "The Account Manager exists to grow and protect our client relationships. A great AM retains 95%+ of their accounts, expands revenue within existing clients by 20%+ annually, generates 3+ qualified referrals per quarter, and creates advocacy assets that fuel our sales engine. The AM is the client's trusted advisor and the company's most important retention asset."

Section 2: A-Player Score

The 3-5 daily behaviors from Principle #6. This is what "winning the day" looks like in this role — the daily inputs that produce great outputs over time.

Section 3: Weekly and Monthly Rhythm

The time-blocked template for the role. What happens Monday morning. When 1:1s occur. When client calls happen. When admin gets done. When learning time is scheduled. This gives the person a structure they can follow from Day 1 instead of guessing how to organize their week.

Section 4: SOPs for Core Tasks

This is the longest and most valuable section. Step-by-step guides for every recurring task the role produces. Not theory — actual steps, with screenshots, examples, and templates.

For an Account Manager, this section might include: how to run a QBR (agenda, timing, prep checklist), how to handle a client complaint (escalation tree, scripts, documentation requirements), how to process an upsell (CRM workflow, approval process, contract templates), how to onboard a new client (checklist, timeline, handoff process from sales).

The depth test: Could a reasonably smart person with no experience in this role pick up this section and execute the task correctly on their first attempt? If not, it's not detailed enough.

Section 5: Tools and Systems

Every piece of software, every login, every system the role uses — documented with links, access instructions, and basic usage guides. This eliminates the first two weeks of "how do I log into this?" and "what's the process for that?" that plague every new hire.

Section 6: Career Path

What the next role looks like. What skills, scores, and tenure move someone from this seat to the next one. People stay longer when they can see where they're going — and the career path gives your best people a reason to grow with the company instead of leaving for the next opportunity.

Section 7: Resources

Training materials, reference documents, key contacts, escalation paths, the manager playbook for their manager (Principle #11), and anything else they might need that doesn't fit in the other six sections.

Who Builds the Playbooks

Not you. Your managers do, with input from top performers in each role.

Your job is to build the template (the seven-section structure above), coach the process, set the timeline, and review the drafts. If you try to write every playbook yourself, two things happen: it takes forever, and it's disconnected from how the work actually gets done — because you're not the one doing the work.

The best playbooks are co-authored by the manager (who sets the standard) and the top performer (who knows the reality). The manager writes the mission, the rhythm, and the career path. The top performer writes the SOPs and the tools section. Together, they produce a document that's both aspirational and practical.

The Build Timeline

Each playbook takes approximately 8 weeks to develop, pilot, and refine:

Weeks 1-3: Draft. Manager and top performer sit down, work through the seven sections, produce a first draft. Doesn't need to be perfect — needs to be usable.

Weeks 4-5: Pilot. Test the playbook with two people: one new hire (to catch clarity gaps) and one experienced person (to catch reality gaps). The new hire reveals what's missing. The experienced person reveals what's wrong.

Weeks 6-7: Refine. Incorporate feedback from the pilot. Fix the gaps. Tighten the SOPs. Update the tools section.

Week 8: Launch. Formal launch meeting. Walk the full team through the playbook section by section. Explain the why. This is a ceremony, not an email (see Principle #15 for the full rollout framework).

Running 3-5 playbooks in parallel with different managers, you can build playbooks for every core role in 12-18 months.

The Build Order

Don't build all playbooks simultaneously. Build them in priority order:

1. **The role with the most people and highest hiring volume.** This is where the playbook has the most impact — because every new hire benefits from it immediately.
 2. **The role with the highest turnover.** High turnover means constant re-onboarding. A playbook turns each departure from a crisis into a manageable handoff.
 3. **The role closest to the client.** This is where quality inconsistency most directly damages retention and revenue.
 4. **Everything else.** Work backward from client impact and hiring volume.
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The Operating System Rule

This rule is critical and most companies violate it within six months: playbooks aren't for new hires. They're for everyone in the role.

The moment any team member starts to believe they're "above" the playbook, the system starts to decay. Your top performer follows the playbook because it's the standard — and their input helped create it. Your newest hire follows the playbook because it's how they learn. Everyone operates on the same system.

If your best salesperson decides they don't need to follow the CRM documentation SOP because "I know what I'm doing," you've created a two-tier system: people who follow the rules and people who don't. Within three months, nobody follows the rules — because the person with the best numbers doesn't, and everyone noticed.

Protect the playbook the way you'd protect any other operating system. Adherence is measured. Deviations are discussed. Updates are welcomed. But opting out is not an option.

Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Mistake #1: Writing the playbook in a conference room. Playbooks written by people who don't do the job are theory. Sit with the person who does the job. Document reality.

Mistake #2: Making it too long. A 60-page playbook doesn't get read. The mission is one paragraph. The rhythm is one page. The SOPs are detailed but focused on the 10-15 most common tasks — not every edge case.

Mistake #3: Building and forgetting. A playbook that hasn't been updated in 6 months is out of date. Version number, last-updated date, quarterly review cycle.

Mistake #4: Not including the career path. Without Section 6, the playbook describes a box. With it, the playbook describes a launchpad. People stay longer when they can see where they're going.

Mistake #5: Rolling it out in an email. See Principle #15. Formal launch. Walk through every section. Explain the why.

Mistake #6: Letting top performers opt out. The playbook is the standard for everyone — especially the best people. Their compliance signals to the entire team that the system matters.

Quick-Start Checklist

- ✓ ☐ Build the seven-section template this week
 - ✓ ☐ Identify the 3 roles with the most hiring or highest turnover
 - ✓ ☐ Assign a manager as owner for each playbook
 - ✓ ☐ Each manager schedules a kickoff session with their top performer
 - ✓ ☐ Set the 8-week timeline with specific milestones (draft by Week 3, pilot by Week 5, launch by Week 8)
 - ✓ ☐ Review every draft personally before the pilot phase
 - ✓ ☐ Hold formal launch meetings — not emails
 - ✓ ☐ Measure adherence in weekly 1:1s for the first 90 days
 - ✓ ☐ Update quarterly — version number and last-updated date on every copy
 - ✓ ☐ Start the next 3 playbooks once the first batch launches
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Implementation Tools

Ready-to-use templates for this Growth Factor

PDF

Position Playbook Template

Seven-section structure, ready to customize

XLSX

Playbook Build Timeline

Columns: Week, Phase, Key Activity, Owner, Deliverable, Status

PDF

SOP Template

Step-by-step format with screenshot placeholders

PDF

Playbook Pilot Feedback Form

For new hire and experienced tester

PDF

Career Path Framework

How to define the next role and what moves someone there

This is Principle #13 of 50. Manager playbooks (#11) tell managers how to manage. Position playbooks (#13) tell everyone else how to do their job. Together, they create the operating system that lets you scale without the founder being in every room. The wall at \$5-15M is an onboarding wall. Playbooks break through it.

Get the book: The 50 Factor by Scott Scully

The Scaling Unlock

Every services company hits a wall between \$5M and \$15M. The wall is almost never sales. It's almost never capital. It's almost never competition. It's the inability to onboard people fast enough to keep up with growth.

Without playbooks, each new hire requires 4-6 months of shadowing, tribal knowledge transfer, and trial-and-error learning before they're productive. During that ramp period, your existing team carries extra load. Quality fluctuates because the new person is learning on live client work. Managers spend hours per week answering the same questions they answered for the last new hire.

Scale that problem across 10-15 new hires per year and you understand why growth stalls. You're not limited by the market's willingness to buy. You're limited by your organization's ability to absorb new people without breaking.

Playbooks solve this by making the ramp predictable and fast. A new hire opens the playbook on Day 1 and knows: what the job is (Section 1), what winning looks like daily (Section 2), how to structure their week (Section 3), how to do each task step by step (Section 4), what tools to use and how (Section 5), and where they're going in their career (Section 6).

The difference between 4-6 months of ramp and 4-6 weeks of ramp is the difference between a company that can grow 30% per year and a company that can grow 60%+ per year. The playbook isn't just a nice-to-have. It's the mechanism that determines whether your growth rate is limited by your market or by your onboarding.

The Institutional Knowledge Problem

Your top performers carry institutional knowledge that exists nowhere else. They know the workarounds. They know the client preferences. They know which process steps actually matter and which are busywork. They know what the manual says and what

reality requires.

When they go on vacation, things get weird. When they leave, things break. And the next person in the role starts from scratch — rebuilding knowledge that took years to accumulate, by trial and error, without a guide.

Position playbooks solve this by externalizing institutional knowledge. The SOPs in Section 4 capture not just the official process but the reality — the tips, the shortcuts, the "here's what the system says but here's what actually works" wisdom that separates a first-month employee from a first-year employee.

Building this section requires humility from the top performer — they have to articulate things they do instinctively — and patience from the manager — they have to push for specificity when the top performer says "I just know." The Clone Question from Principle #5 works here too: "If I cloned you and gave the clone no instructions, what would the clone need to know to produce at your level?"

The answer to that question — documented, tested, refined — is the playbook.