

# I / We / It

*Why knowing yourself comes before structure*

Most problems in business don't start with strategy. They start with confusion about roles, expectations, and who decides what and why. Over time, that confusion shows up as tension, frustration, and misalignment.

And it often gets treated with more structure, more process, or more rules. But structure only works when it's built on clarity. And clarity starts with understanding three distinct contexts: I. We. It. Miss one, and the system wobbles.

## THE ORDER MATTERS

**You can't fix 'We' problems without understanding the 'I'. And you can't design a healthy 'It' without clarity in both. When businesses reverse the order, structure feels imposed and strategy lacks buy-in. When they get the order right, accountability is clearer and decisions land better.**

## The Three Contexts

I The Individual	We The Team	It The Business
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Values, strengths, blind spots, fears, aspirations</li> <li>– What actually motivates this person?</li> <li>– How do they handle pressure? What do they avoid?</li> <li>– Self-awareness is foundational, not soft</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– How do we make decisions together?</li> <li>– How do we deal with disagreement?</li> <li>– What do we tolerate that we shouldn't?</li> <li>– Strong teams don't avoid tension, they hold it productively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Purpose, structure, economic reality, constraints</li> <li>– Where governance, strategy, and systems live</li> <li>– Needs that are separate from individual preferences</li> <li>– Don't let unresolved I/We issues become 'It' problems</li> </ul>

## When the Contexts Are Confused

Problems arise when:

- Owners treat the business as an extension of themselves
- Team harmony is prioritised over business health
- Personal loyalty overrides commercial reality
- The 'It' absorbs unresolved 'I' and 'We' issues

A healthy business requires the ability to say: "This isn't about you - it's about the role." That requires maturity and trust.

## How This Shows Up in Succession

I / We / It thinking is especially powerful in ownership transitions. Succession fails when:

- Individuals haven't reflected on what they want (I)
- Teams haven't agreed on how they'll lead together (We)
- The business's long-term needs aren't clear (It)

When these layers are separated and understood, succession becomes a design exercise - not a crisis.

At Broadleaf, a lot of our work starts here. Not with spreadsheets. Not with structure. But with clarity. Only then do we talk about ownership, governance, or growth.

*"Before you redesign a business, before you change structure, before you bring in a partner, ask: Do I understand myself? Do we understand each other? Do we know what this business is actually here to do? Get those three right, in that order and everything else becomes more workable."*