

06

THE HERO SERIES · EPISODE 06

The Cobbler's Shoes: Build the Practice You Advise Others to Build

Independent advisors and coaches spend their days helping leaders see their businesses clearly. Many never turn the same lens on their own practice, and the old proverb about the cobbler's children going without shoes begins to describe them.

The cobbler's shoes



STARRING YOU, AS
Advisor / Coach

THE HERO SERIES PRESENTS · EPISODE 06

STARRING **YOU**, AS ADVISOR / COACH · GUIDED BY COMPASS PERFORMANCE



YOUR STORY, AS
Advisor / Coach

THE ADVISOR'S OWN PRACTICE

The cobbler's shoes

The cobbler is making beautiful shoes for everyone in the village, and walking to work barefoot.

The story in four acts

I

THE SITUATION

A meaningful calling

The first clients come through people who already know you, and the work feels exactly as hoped.

III

THE SHIFT

Design the practice

Choose who you serve best, design the path a client walks, and review time and pipeline every month.

II

THE TENSION

Delivery crowds out the practice

Marketing happens in the gaps, proposals are written late at night, and the pipeline fills and empties in waves.

IV

WHAT CHANGES

Wearing your own shoes

More time for the work that matters, and confidence that the next client will arrive because you built the way for them.

“

A calling answers why you do the work. A practice answers who it is for.

Design the path a client walks



Each stage has a purpose, a few questions it must answer, and a clear next step.

The cobbler does not need to stop making shoes for the village. They need one evening a week at their own bench.

THE FULL STORY

Most people who leave a corporate career to advise or coach do it for a reason that has little to do with business. They want their experience to make a difference to leaders who are where they once were. The first clients usually come through people who already know them, and for a while the work feels exactly as hoped: meaningful, direct, and free of the politics they left behind.

Then a pattern sets in. Every hour goes to delivery. Marketing happens in the gaps between engagements. Proposals are written late at night. The pipeline fills and empties in waves, and each empty stretch arrives as a surprise. The advisor is doing excellent work for clients and almost no work on the practice itself. The cobbler is making beautiful shoes for everyone in the village, and walking to work barefoot.

A calling is not yet a practice

The difference between a calling and a practice is structure. A calling answers why you do the work. A practice answers who it is for, how those people find you, what you actually deliver, how you know it worked, and how the next engagement begins before the current one ends.

None of these questions are new to an experienced advisor. They are the same questions you would ask any founder whose business depended on their personal effort. The difficulty is not knowledge. It is distance. It is much easier to see a client's operating model clearly than your own.

Start with who you serve best

The most useful first step is the one advisors resist most: choosing. Front-to-Back 80/20 applies to a practice exactly as it applies to a manufacturer. Look at the engagements you have delivered and ask which clients you

served best, where your experience made the clearest difference, and which work you would gladly do again. Those clients describe your ideal client profile far better than any positioning statement.

Choosing does not mean turning everyone else away. It means your attention, your story and your outreach are built around the people you serve best, so that the right introductions become more likely and the wrong ones easier to decline kindly.

Design the path a client walks

Clients rarely buy advice in one step. They move from a first conversation, to a sense that you understand their situation, to a decision to work together. When that path is improvised every time, it depends on your memory and your energy. When it is designed, it becomes repeatable.

A simple path might run from an introduction, to a discovery conversation, to a 20-minute coaching conversation focused on one real issue, to a strategic business review that maps where the client is and where they want to go, and only then to contracting and onboarding. Each stage has a purpose, a few questions it must answer, and a clear next step. The client experiences care and clarity. You experience a practice that no longer starts from zero.

Deliver with the same Architecture you recommend

Advisors often hold clients to a standard of clarity they do not apply to their own delivery. A practice benefits from the same disciplines a client would: a clear statement of intent, a small number of priorities, defined roles where others are involved, and a regular rhythm for reviewing what is working. The Compass Architecture structures that work for clients and can structure an advisor's own practice in the same way.

ARC gives the review its shape. Each month, analyze where your time and pipeline actually went. Refine the one or two changes that matter most, whether that is a referral habit, a cleaner proposal, or a boundary on unpaid work. Commit to them with dates, and check at the next review whether they happened.

Wearing your own shoes

None of this makes advising less personal. It protects the reason you started. A practice with a clear client profile, a designed path and a steady review rhythm gives you more time for the work that matters, and more confidence that the next client will arrive because you built the way for them to find you.

The cobbler does not need to stop making shoes for the village. They need one evening a week at their own bench.

TRY THIS · ABOUT 90 MINUTES

One evening at your own bench

On your own, with your last twelve months of engagements, proposals and calendar in front of you.

1. List every client you worked with. Mark the three where your experience made the clearest difference and the work felt most like the reason you started.
2. Write down what those three have in common: role, situation, size, and the problem they brought you.
3. Sketch the path each of them took from first contact to signed engagement, and note where you improvised.
4. Choose one stage of that path to design properly this month, with its purpose, its questions and its next step.
5. Block one recurring session a month in your calendar to review time, pipeline and delivery, and keep it as seriously as a client meeting.

If you could not find three clear examples, the first task is to notice where you are doing your best work. If you found them easily, your ideal client profile is already written; it simply needs to guide your week.

YOUR NEXT STEP

A confidential discovery conversation

If your practice depends on effort more than design, a confidential conversation is a place to think through who you serve best and how they find you. It is a conversation, not a proposal.

Schedule a Conversation: meetings.hubspot.com/steve-kopecky · skopecky@compassperformanceinc.com

Link to this episode: <https://compass-prototype-review.lovable.app/library/hero-series/episode-06>

Compass Performance, Inc. · <https://compass-prototype-review.lovable.app/library/hero-series/episode-06>