

House System Starter Kit

Bonus Material from *Team as Code*

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Chapter 4 of *Team as Code* opens with a confession: Dmitry hates cleaning. Not because he dislikes a clean home — but because doing the same repetitive work manually, with no way to optimize it, feels like punishment. So he did what any engineer would do: he systematized it.

This guide walks you through building your first personal system — before you tackle anything at work. The principles are identical: start with why, decompose, add frequency, measure, evolve, delegate.

Why start with the house? Because it's low-stakes, you control all the variables, and the results are immediate. Every concept you learn here — decomposition, frequency scheduling, event triggers, continuous improvement — transfers directly to business operations.

Step 1: Start With Why

Don't start with "how to clean." Start with your goal. Dmitry's was simple:

"I want to live in a consistently clean home."

Notice what this *doesn't* say: it doesn't say who cleans, how often, or with what method. It leaves the solution completely open. If a magical fairy appeared and did everything, that would satisfy the goal perfectly.

Your goal:

Tip: Avoid embedding solutions in your goal. "I want to develop a cleaning habit" is a solution, not a goal. "I want to find a cleaner" is a solution. Keep the goal open so better approaches can emerge.

Step 2: Decompose

Break your goal into areas, then break each area into specific tasks. Keep going until each task is unambiguous — anyone reading it would know exactly what to do.

Example from the book:

Area	Tasks
Bedroom	Change sheets, vacuum/ mop floor, wipe surfaces, clean windows, organize wardrobe
Kitchen	Wipe counters, clean hob, empty bins, clean fridge, clean oven
Bathroom	Clean toilet, clean shower, wipe mirror, mop floor, descale taps
Living Room	Vacuum, dust surfaces, clean TV screen, tidy shelves
Hallway	Vacuum, wipe shoe rack, clean mirrors

Clarity test: If a task isn't clear enough, go deeper. "Clean windows" becomes "Clean windows inside and outside, wipe sills." Keep clarifying until the task is unambiguous.

Step 3: Add Frequency

Not everything needs doing every week. Assign a realistic frequency to each task:

Frequency	Example Tasks
Weekly	Vacuum floors, wipe kitchen counters, change sheets, clean bathroom
Fortnightly	Mop hard floors, dust shelves, clean mirrors
Monthly	Clean windows (inside), clean fridge, wash curtains
Quarterly	Clean oven, deep clean carpet, organize wardrobe, descale appliances
Biannually	Clean windows (outside), deep clean upholstery

Put every task into a reminders app (or a simple spreadsheet) with its repetition cycle. Each week, you'll see only the tasks that are actually due.

What happens: You spend *less* total time, because you're not over-cleaning things that are fine or forgetting things that have become grim. The system is more efficient than your intuition.

Step 4: Add Event Triggers

Some tasks aren't recurring — they're triggered by events:

Event	Triggered Checklist
Guests arriving	Fresh towels out, clean sheets on guest bed, bathroom deep clean, toothbrush by sink
After a dinner party	Wash all dishes, wipe dining table, vacuum dining area, take out recycling
Change of season	Swap wardrobe (winter/summer), check heating/AC, clean outdoor areas
Moving out	Full deep clean (every room), repair checklist, utility cancellations

Step 5: Measure and Improve

Once you have a system, you can improve it — and you can't improve what you don't measure.

- **Time each session.** Know your baseline.
- **Adjust frequencies.** Bathroom mirror getting smudged faster than expected? Shorten the interval. Guest bedroom barely needs attention? Extend it.

- **Load-balance.** If Saturday is too heavy, shift some tasks to midweek. Tasks with long intervals don't suffer from being shifted a week forward or back.
- **Group for efficiency.** Do all vacuuming in one pass (set up the vacuum once). Do all surface wiping in one pass.

From the book: "The number of refinements slowed over time. The system stabilized. This is exactly what happens with software in production: the bug rate drops as the system matures."

Step 6: Delegate

Because every task is written down with clear expectations, you can hand the entire system to someone else — a cleaner, a housemate, a family member. They don't need supervision. They have the list.

If one cleaner leaves and another starts, the transition is seamless. The system is bigger than any individual.

The book's key insight: "A system documented this precisely can be handed to *anyone* — a new hire, a contractor, or an AI agent. The system doesn't care who executes it. It only cares that the inputs are supplied and the outputs meet the standard."

Event Triggers

Event	Triggered Tasks

The Progression

The book's approach applies to everything, not just cleaning:

1. **Systematize** — write it down, add frequency, make it unambiguous
2. **Delegate** — hand it to someone (or something) else
3. **Automate** — remove the human from the loop entirely

As Bill Gates said: *“Automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. Automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency.”* Systematize first. Always.