LEGACY ARCHITECT RVA / FREE GUIDE

What's a Life Manual, and Why Would You Need One?

It's the instruction set for your life, written for the person who'd have to run it without you.

ORDER IN YOUR ABSENCE

It's the instruction set for your life, written for the person who'd have to run it without you.

The short answer

A Life Manual is a structured document that explains how your life actually runs: your accounts, your digital life, your household, your records, your people, and your wishes. It's organized so a trusted successor can step in and act without guessing if you're suddenly in a hospital bed or gone.

It doesn't hold your passwords. It tells the right person where access lives, who to call, what to handle first, and what can wait. Think of it as the difference between handing someone your car keys and handing them the keys plus the address, the directions, and a note that the gas gauge lies.

Why the question keeps coming up

Every family has an information desk, and it's usually one person. That person knows which card pays the water bill, where the title to the truck is, what the alarm code is, and which cousin can't be trusted with the group text. The system works great right up until the desk closes without notice.

When that happens, the people left behind aren't short on love. They're short on instructions. They spend weeks calling banks cold, digging through drawers, and guessing at logins while sitting in a hospital waiting room or planning a funeral. A Life Manual exists so that week goes differently.

What a Life Manual isn't

- It isn't a will. A will says who gets what. A Life Manual says how everything runs while that gets sorted out.
- It isn't a legal document. Your will, power of attorney, and advance directive come from an estate attorney. The Life Manual tells your family where those documents are and what they're for.
- It isn't a password dump. Credentials stay in a password manager or wherever you control them. The Manual records where access lives, never the secrets themselves.
- It isn't a shoebox of statements. It's organized, written in plain English, and built to be followed by someone under stress.

What goes inside one

Every Life Manual follows the same chapter order, so a successor always knows where to look. The chapters mirror the way a life actually operates.

- Introduction. Who you are, who the Manual is for, and how to use it on a bad day.
- Digital Life. Email, cloud storage, devices, subscriptions, where the password manager lives, and how two-factor recovery works.
- Emergency & Successor Orientation. Who steps in, the first 48 hours, emergency contacts, dependents, and where to find things fast.
- Financial & Assets. Institutions, ownership, beneficiaries, insurance, bills, and due dates.
- Household Operations. Shut-offs, access codes, spare keys, vendors, vehicles, pets, and the routines that keep the house running.

- Vital Records. Identification, deeds, titles, certificates, medical directives, and where every original is kept.
- Legacy & Wishes. Final wishes, memorial preferences, letters, and the things you'd want said in your own words.
- Business Continuity. Authority, payroll, vendors, clients, and whether the business keeps going or winds down. This chapter comes with the Business edition.

Who actually needs one

If anyone would be stuck without you, you're the audience. That's the head of household who runs the bills, the business owner whose partner couldn't find the operating agreement with a map, and the adult child who took over a parent's affairs and now carries two lives in one head. Age isn't the trigger. Responsibility is. A

40-year-old with a mortgage, two kids, and a side business has more riding on undocumented knowledge than a retiree with one checking account, and the question isn't whether you're old enough. It's whether somebody could pick up where you left off on a Tuesday morning.

How one gets built

A Life Manual isn't a template you fill out alone at midnight. Legacy Architect RVA helps you build it across a series of working sessions, chapter by chapter, while you review drafts in a private Client Portal. Your files live in a Secure Drive that you control from day one.

When the Manual's finished, your successor gets a walkthrough, you get 72 hours to make final corrections, and then the Client Portal and

working files are purged. The finished Manual belongs to you and stays under your control.

- Just-In-Case Plan, $29. A fillable workbook if you'd rather start on your own.
- Blueprint Session, $249. One live session that maps your gaps and leaves you with a 72-hour action plan. The full fee credits toward a Life Manual.
- Personal Life Manual, $1,500. The full build across the six personal chapters.
- Business Life Manual, starting at $2,500. Everything in Personal, plus Business Continuity.

Lives change, so every edition can be refreshed with an Annual Review for $250. A Manual that matched your life three years ago isn't much help to the person reading it next week. See the editions and pricing, or start with the free Readiness Check to see where your gaps are.

Quick answers

Is a Life Manual a legal document?

No. A Life Manual is a practical guide, not a legal instrument, and it doesn't replace a will, trust, power of attorney, or healthcare directive. It works alongside those documents by telling your family where they are and how the rest of your life operates.

Does a Life Manual store my passwords?

No. A Life Manual records where access lives, such as which password manager you use and who can reach it, without writing down the passwords themselves. Your credentials stay under your control the whole time.

How's a Life Manual different from a will?

A will decides who inherits what after you die. A Life Manual explains how your accounts, household, records, and responsibilities actually run, so someone can keep things going during an emergency, an incapacity, or the weeks after a death.

How long does it take to build a Life Manual?

A Personal Life Manual usually takes about two to four weeks across six to eight working sessions. Timing depends on your schedule and how complicated your life is.

Would your family know where to start?

Take the Free Readiness Check. Rather start on your own? The Just-In-Case Plan walks you through it for $29.

Order in Your Absence.

NEXT STEPS

Your first step can be small. Start with the free Readiness Check, or explore what a Life Manual can put in order for your family.

Take the free Readiness Check

Explore services and the Life Manual

REFERENCES & LINKS

Resource 2: jicplan.legacyarchitectrva.com

Resource 4: legacyarchitectrva.com

About this guide

Prepared by Legacy Architect RVA, Richmond, Virginia. This guide is educational and helps families organize practical information. It does not provide legal, financial, tax, or medical advice. Consult qualified professionals about decisions and legal authority.

legacyarchitectrva.com