4 Keys to Grow and Scale Your Startup

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One common thread between all types of startups is navigating the pathways between growth and scaling. This rings true whether you're a business with dozens of employees or a duo working out of a studio apartment. While some startups are easier to scale than others, all companies must grow. All businesses are created, born of passion and promise, aiming to develop into valuable entities able to scale successfully; they bring an exceptional return on investment for all parties involved. Approaching seasons of positive evolution as a startup — whether growth or scaling — requires tenacity and commitment, passion and people skills, and strategic utilization of time, energy, and resources.

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What is scaling? What is growth?

Before diving into four key tactics that founders should implement, clarifying growth versus scaling would be a solid foundation. Because of the costs associated with development, entrepreneurs navigating the early years of startups have become obsessed with the concept of scaling.

The critical difference from growth is that scale is achieved by increasing revenue without incurring significant costs. To be truly successful long term, when companies add customers and revenue exponentially, costs should solely increase

incrementally (if at all). Take, for example, Google, a spectacular example of founders defining growth vs. scale for their company and sustaining it. Alphabet's crown jewel has solidified an operating philosophy that has allowed it to continually add customers (either paying business clients or ad-supported free users) while keeping costs at a minimum.

Startup failure is widespread, with 90% of startups failing within five years. Founders who want to succeed have to adapt with ability and flexibility as they navigate the journey from the first sparks of a concept, guided by a forward-thinking business plan that clearly differentiates what growth will look like and how scaling will be attained. While there are never guarantees of success in an arena where failure can seem destined, to be the 1 in 10 that properly grows and blooms into sustained scalability requires an open mind, a willingness to learn, and the ability to adapt. Implementing the four concepts below will significantly increase your chances of being the needle that masters the haystack.

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Master the Power of Digital Advertising

As new digital technologies continue to advance dramatically, the way firms communicate and interact with consumers via digital media has, by necessity, evolved. When you consider the undeniable, it frees you of indecision and spurs you to assess, adapt and achieve: every month and around the world, consumers interact with the digital world to the tune of nearly 2.5 billion active users on Facebook, 1 billion on Instagram, and 330 million on Twitter.

Without a doubt, digital advertising must be a significant component of modern-day marketing strategies. Accurately

implemented, digital advertisements add pure fuel to the fire powering your online identity. Growing your online presence translates into the broader visibility needed to foster conversions and sales at an increased rate. However, if your digital strategy isn't well thought out, the results can be catastrophic.

Whether it be the design, channel, or messaging elements, every aspect of the digital advertisement needs to be taken into consideration. And critically, an awareness of the reality that ads are content in today's digital landscape. When created and utilized effectively, they can be contextual, relevant, targeted, and helpful in ways they never could before. And the online advertising landscape continues to evolve, challenging entrepreneurs to adapt in motion. New platforms, ad types, and targeting capabilities are popping up all the time. Want your startup to be at the forefront of your industry? Define quality digital marketing as a cornerstone of your marketing strategy and business plan.

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Sustainability through a Strong Support Network

To understate the obvious, creating and building a startup is no easy task; reality is the opposite in many ways. As we mentioned earlier, there's a 90% chance any startup will fail to fully realize its potential. Nurturing an entity from birth through growth and into successful scaling requires an inner resolve and passion; sustaining this energy requires a key ingredient: people. Always keep like-minded people close to you, in your inner circle, and flesh out your support system.

Maximize the local meetups in your area, and integrate yourself into the business support groups that will empower

you and your startup. Find the right individuals, fellow entrepreneurs, and friends, and lean on them for brainstorming, feedback, and constructive criticism. Building and maintaining an effective support network will ensure a sense of accountability and a wealth of insight and perspectives to keep you on track.

And throughout your time within this circle of trusted individuals, remember a key nugget of wisdom we all learned during our formative years: what you were the key to good relationships is not making them one-sided; give as much as you get, helping others where you can, and you'll find you have an enviable support system, a network of people you can rely on as you work to grow and scale up your business.

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The journey won't always be easy or smooth, and in the seasons when your business is fighting to get off the ground, the network you've built, the connections you've nurtured, will be crucial in keeping it – and you – afloat. As they say, success is predicated on who you know as much as what you know. Never stop networking!

Square one is creating your presence on LinkedIn and gradually expanding your efforts to include industry-specific business groups, small business meetups, and attending dedicated networking events in your local area. The time and effort invested will often return tenfold, connecting you to your community and your industry in invaluable ways.

Maximize Time and Resources by Outsourcing Sales

Whatever industry you may operate in, you undoubtedly want to maximize your resources to allow you the most significant

amount of time to spend on that which drives you: the service or product you provide. Outsourcing sales to a third party to generate sales for your startup or business has proven to be highly beneficial for many companies across a broad spectrum of industries. Young companies can face time and resource limitations as well as knowledge or skill gaps that can not be addressed internally. Proactively executing outsourcing partnerships enables founders to successfully achieve results beyond what you might be limited to on your own.

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Meeting the Needs of a Transformed Customer Base

Businesses within every industry are having to adjust to a transformed customer base, with clientele possessing instant access to more information than ever. This shift can benefit both parties, ideally helping to minimize frustration or delay. An informed customer experiencing clear cut and transparent communication is *always* the end goal. Founders will find themselves balancing product research and development, client care, staff management, and sales growth; these time constraints can make it challenging to develop the skills needed to connect with potential customers. A highly specialized sales team has the training, experience, and resources to cut through the noise and successfully communicate with potential customers, answering any questions they may have on the consumer's journey.

Sales outsourcing doesn't diminish a founder's tangible influence but instead empowers an experienced sales team to spread awareness of the products or services you provide. When you trust their understanding and respect for the standards and values that define your startup, it allows you to focus on developing the business solutions that will deliver the well

deserved reputation you're striving for.

Leverage Startup Programs to Bolster Development

As you start to develop your business, you'll want to have mentors you can trust, an advisory board steeped in experience and expertise. While navigating the entrepreneurial labyrinth, trusted mentors and proven startup programs will have the advice and guidance you need to find success.

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Discover the SBA (Small Business Association)

Explore options such as SCORE, funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Association; SCORE is a network of retired volunteer business mentors who guide startups at no cost. Also supported by the SBA are Small Business Development Centers, known as SBDCs; these Small Business Development Centers are located around the country to help start and develop small businesses with no-cost consulting and low-cost training.

Find the mentors you need and the startup programs willing and able to support your business; lean on these individuals who are eager to help and guide your business from growth to scaling up. One day you'll be able to return the favor to the next generation of entrepreneurs looking to launch the successor to Google. You'll mentor these driven individuals with a passion and commitment to create a new example of exceptional scalability, adding customers and revenue exponentially, with a limited and incremental increase in costs.

Be the Exception to the Expectation!

No destiny is set in stone, whether for individuals or startups alike. There are always exceptions to the rules, and you can be the fulfillment of the 10% chance that all startups have of achieving success. Reduce the amount of chance that is inherent in your journey by investing your priceless time and energy into these key tenets of exhilarating growth and scalability for any startup.

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