6 Tips to Drive Sustainable Business Growth



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Driving sustainable growth is about more than just loading up your product development and engineering teams with endless feature releases and product improvements. You'll get better results when you take the time to understand your best-fit customers, have the right people in the right seats, and establish clear goals. That's how you can drive sustainable growth — or at least develop a plan that will get you on your way.

But as anyone who's ever tried to drive sustainable growth can tell you, it isn't easy. Sometimes you need an easy-to-understand list of growth tips to help you on your way. Here, I'm going to share six simple growth strategy tips that can put your business on the fast track.

But first …

What is growth strategy?

A growth strategy is the tactics your business uses to expand. This might mean opening up new locations, bringing on new customers or adding new products. A robust and effective growth strategy will include several elements – like your business goals, your staff, the products you offer, tactics you use to hit your growth goals, and the most important piece, your customers.

Types of business growth strategies

There are different growth strategies a business might adopt. Some of the most common include:

- **Market penetration:** Selling existing products to the current market
- **Market expansion:** Selling existing products to a new market
- **Product expansion:** Expanding or redesigning your product line
- **Diversification:** Selling new products to a new market
- **Acquisition:** Buying a controlling interest in an existing company

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Now that we're on the same page about what a growth strategy is, let's talk about how you build one. Here are six growth strategy tips you can use as a template:

1. Set clear goals

One of the first things I do with my growth strategy clients is to help them set clear goals. Without a goal, you won't know what you're working toward and will have no idea when you actually get there.

Start with high-level goals, like where you want your company to be in 5-10 years, how much revenue you want to generate, and how many employees you want to have. Then, reverse engineer those big goals into smaller goals that you'll need to hit in 3-5 years in order to achieve those higher-level goals. Next, break those goals down into 1-3 year goals before getting into the weeds a bit with your 6-12 month goals.

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2. Talk to the right customers

Not every customer is a best-fit customer. While it's important to get feedback from a wide range of customers, you'll want to focus on customers who are getting a lot of value from your products or services and who are happy with their decision to choose you. As Gia Laudi of Forget the Funnel has said, "If you talk to enough of [your best-fit customers] … you can uncover patterns."

When you're conducting customer research, take the time to get some one-on-one time with your best-fit clients. This will give you the space you need to ask follow-up questions and get to the heart of what they need. A survey is a great way to get feedback from the rest of your customers.

3. Ask customers the right

questions

“People don’t want to buy a quarter-inch drill. They want a quarter-inch hole!”

If you’ve spent any time with marketers, you’ve probably heard a variation of this quote from Harvard Business School Professor, Theodore Levitt. There’s a reason marketers say this over and over again: It’s true.

Customers present a bit of a paradox: They are the authority on what they want, but they also have no idea what the solution should actually look like.

When you’re conducting research to inform your growth strategy, remember that you don’t want your customers to tell you what the solution is. Instead, you want them to tell you what they were doing, thinking and feeling at each stage of their journey.

4. Create a customer experience map

Mapping your customer’s experience is the best way I’ve found to identify gaps in what you offer and what your customers need from you. You’ll get a better understanding of your customers, so you can build a consistent and engaging experience across the entire customer journey.

Related: The 5 Critical Components of a Great Customer Journey Map

5. Focus on the right key performance indicators (KPIs)

Similar to goals, KPIs help you navigate. They’re way down in tip #5, because it’s important to know more about your touchpoints and your best-fit customers before you start

translating their behaviors into metrics.

KPIs help you identify what tactics are working and which aren’t, so you can make adjustments to your strategy and achieve your goals.

Related: **The 5 Key Metrics Every Business Needs to Track**

6. Execute, test and iterate

Once you’ve done all of your goal setting, research and planning, it’s time to put your growth strategy into action. But that doesn’t mean “set it and forget it.” Your growth strategy isn’t set in stone, and you should regularly check your progress toward your goals as well as how your tactics are performing. If you’re not hitting those KPIs, change things up! Set up experiments and learn from the outcomes.

Growth hacking is exciting and can lead to great results, but isn’t meant to be sustained over time. That’s why it’s vital that your business creates a sustainable and scalable strategy. A controlled and intentional growth strategy is key to a successful business.

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