Does Your Business Feel Stuck? Here’s the Mindset Shift That Will Move It Forward.



Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

As a business owner, there is nothing more exciting than watching the venture that you built thrive. When things are going well, growth can feel effortless. This can be an exhilarating experience for an ambitious entrepreneur. But the real test comes when growth slows or the business becomes stagnant. New marketing campaigns aren’t working, your sales team struggles to convert leads, and your target consumer seems less excited about your products and services. When this happens, it’s easy to feel like a failure. No matter what you try, you can’t move the needle.

Business owners are naturally problem solvers. After all, businesses exist because their founder saw an opportunity in the market and delivered an effective solution. They know how to make incredible progress through out-of-the-box thinking, determination, hard work and a dash of luck. The challenge is that not every problem can be solved with brute force.

Our immediate impulse is to jump straight to finding a solution, such as deploying a new technology, replacing your management or injecting more capital. But this rarely works because it avoids the crucial step of truly understanding why things aren't moving. Entrepreneurs are hardwired for action, often skipping the deep evaluation that might be necessary to find a true solution.

Instead, reframing your questions is the key to unlocking new strategic pathways. It forces you to challenge old assumptions, revealing hidden bottlenecks and sparking a wave of creativity. This shift in mindset empowers you to push past outdated approaches, re-energize your vision and stimulate growth when your business feels stuck.

Related: What To Do When Your Business Seems 'Stuck'

1. Reframing your perspective with a question audit

Our brains naturally favor efficiency, leading us to ask questions that reinforce existing assumptions or focus on symptoms, not root causes. Entrepreneurs often jump to questions like "What's not working?" or "How do we get more customers?" While these seem logical, they typically lead to superficial fixes.

For instance, if you're struggling to find new customers, asking "How can we get more leads?" often just pushes you to double down on ineffective sales routines. It might increase

raw lead numbers, but it ignores why current methods aren't working. A better approach is to ask why current leads aren't converting or if you're even attracting the right types of leads. This opens the door to truly innovative solutions.

The goal is to shift your questions from blame to ownership, reactive to proactive, and vague to specific. Sit down and list your top three to five business challenges, and then reframe each question to be more open-ended, proactive and solution-focused.

2. Start with a blank slate

When your business feels stuck, you're often looking at problems through the lens of existing structures and past decisions. Break free of these assumptions by imagining that you're starting your business from scratch today, armed with all your current knowledge. This powerful thought experiment is effective because it frees your mind from ingrained assumptions.

Instead of asking, "How can we improve our existing marketing channels?", you might ask, "What would be the most effective way to reach our ideal customer if we were just launching this product today?" This radical shift helps identify fundamental changes or entirely new directions your current thinking might miss.

Related: Five Questions Every Entrepreneur Needs to Answer During Stagnation

3. Put yourself in the customer's shoes

As business owners, our deep immersion in day-to-day operations can create blind spots. We often view problems internally. To uncover new insights, step out of your own

shoes and into your customer’s by imagining their daily challenges, anxieties and their experience interacting with your brand.

Instead of asking how to reduce customer service calls, a customer-centric question would focus on understanding the underlying frustrations leading customers to call support in the first place and how to proactively address them earlier. By empathizing deeply, you’ll discover crucial gaps and identify friction points you might otherwise overlook, leading to truly customer-focused solutions.

4. Envision your successful future

Stagnation can force entrepreneurs to fixate on immediate problems, hindering foresight. A powerful technique is to fast-forward to what you believe your business would look like if it were successful and thriving three to five years from now. From this successful future, look back to the present. What actions did you take? What critical decisions were made? What pivotal questions did you ask that led to this renewed success? This isn’t wishful thinking; it’s reverse-engineering success. This approach pulls you from reactive problem-solving, forcing strategic and aspirational thinking that identifies big, impactful levers for change.

Related: How to Get Unstuck And Start Growing

Overcoming business stagnation isn’t about one magical solution. It’s about a continuous, iterative cycle of inquiry and improvement. The questions you ask are your compass. It’s critical that you repeatedly ask the right questions, act on the insights, assess the results and adapt your approach. This iterative process of slow, steady refinement is the true engine of sustainable growth. By consistently reflecting on what to improve or change, you’ll avoid getting stuck and keep your business moving forward.

Join top CEOs, founders and operators at the Level Up conference to unlock strategies for scaling your business, boosting revenue and building sustainable success.

As a business owner, there is nothing more exciting than watching the venture that you built thrive. When things are going well, growth can feel effortless. This can be an exhilarating experience for an ambitious entrepreneur. But the real test comes when growth slows or the business becomes stagnant. New marketing campaigns aren’t working, your sales team struggles to convert leads, and your target consumer seems less excited about your products and services. When this happens, it’s easy to feel like a failure. No matter what you try, you can’t move the needle.

Business owners are naturally problem solvers. After all, businesses exist because their founder saw an opportunity in the market and delivered an effective solution. They know how to make incredible progress through out-of-the-box thinking, determination, hard work and a dash of luck. The challenge is that not every problem can be solved with brute force.

Our immediate impulse is to jump straight to finding a solution, such as deploying a new technology, replacing your management or injecting more capital. But this rarely works because it avoids the crucial step of truly understanding why things aren’t moving. Entrepreneurs are hardwired for action, often skipping the deep evaluation that might be necessary to find a true solution.

The rest of this article is locked.

Join Entrepreneur+ today for access.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/why-your-business-feels-stuck-and-how-to-move-it-forward/494386