# Your Startup Seems On Track — But An Invisible Growth Blocker Says Otherwise

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As a founder, your focus is growth — more users, more features, more market share. But sometimes the biggest thing standing in your way isn't your business model, marketing or funding. It's your tech team.

Not because they're doing something wrong — but because they've taken you as far as they can.

And when you finally bring in a new team or vendor, it's a stress test. For the business, it means facing hard questions about control. For the new team, it means diving into someone else's legacy code. And for you, the founder, there's one phrase no one ever wants to hear:

"Honestly, it might be easier to rebuild this from scratch."

But here's the thing — you don't need a fire to smell the smoke.

**Related: The Top 2 Mistakes Founders Make That Hinder the Growth of Their Companies**

## The calm before the stall

Sometimes, founders realize something's off when everything starts breaking — delivery delays, ballooning budgets or a tech stack that feels five years old. But just as often, things look fine on the surface.

Code is getting shipped. Deadlines are met. Users are active, maybe even paying. On paper, it all looks “on track.”

But under the hood, your product may already be maxed out. Not because of bugs – but because the team that built it wasn’t thinking far enough ahead.

This is the silent stall: when your product stops being a launchpad and becomes a ceiling. It still works, but it can’t grow.

## No scalable tech foundation

Most growth plans boil down to a simple idea: make it work, then scale. But can your architecture, tools and infrastructure handle that scale?

If your tech partner lacks a long-term mindset, they’ll deliver what you ask for – but not what you’ll *need* next. That means you’ll constantly be in maintenance mode, fixing things that should’ve been built right the first time.

And growth adds pressure fast: more users, more data, more complexity. What works for a few thousand users might fall apart at scale – or cost you exponentially more to run.

A good tech partner doesn’t treat scalability as an upgrade. They design for it from day one. Modular systems, clean infrastructure and smart trade-offs aren’t technical luxuries – they’re what make future features (and funding rounds) possible.

Because rebuilding later costs more. In time, money and momentum you won’t get back.

## An incomplete team

Here’s something that trips up a lot of startups: assuming

developers alone can carry the product.

Developers are essential, of course. But building a successful digital product takes more than code. You also need:

- Business analysts to map user and market needs into features
- UX and UI designers to shape user experience
- Solution architects to plan scalable systems

If your current vendor only supplies engineers, you're not working with a product partner – you're working with a contractor. That might be fine early on, but over time, it's a limitation.

Without the right roles in place, your product gets built in a vacuum. There's no one translating strategy into functionality or guiding decisions with the bigger picture in mind.

A complete product team is cross-functional by design. The best vendors can pull in the right expertise when needed – not weeks later, but immediately.

## No plan for what's next

Plenty of teams are great at delivering today's requirements. But what about tomorrow's?

If your tech partner isn't helping you plan for monetization, scale or the next fundraising round, you're not set up for sustainable growth.

Think about how much future planning touches:

- Payment systems
- Onboarding flows
- App store requirements
- Subscription models
- Analytics and data tracking

Miss these pieces early, and you'll end up rebuilding later — right when you should be scaling. Investors notice too. They expect clean data, thoughtful UX and systems that support growth, not just usage.

A strong tech partner will challenge assumptions and help you anticipate what comes after this version. Because scaling isn't just more code — it's pricing, performance, infrastructure and go-to-market timing all working together.

If your team isn't thinking that far ahead, it's time to find one that is.

**Related: 6 Unconventional Habits That Actually Help Entrepreneurs Find Work-Life Sanity**

## Final thoughts

Not all stalled products fail loudly. Sometimes the most dangerous moment is when everything *seems* fine — but nothing's moving forward.

You don't need a crisis to justify a change. You need a vision that your current team can grow into — not just keep afloat.

Yes, switching vendors takes time, effort and sometimes cleanup. But it also gives you a reset — a chance to align your product with where your business is actually going.

If you've hit a ceiling, don't wait until it becomes a wall. Find a partner who can build what's next, not just maintain what's now.

As a founder, your focus is growth — more users, more features, more market share. But sometimes the biggest thing standing in your way isn't your business model, marketing or funding. It's your tech team.

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# Starbucks Bets Big on Protein Cold Foam, Protein Lattes Hitting Menus This Month: ‘Growing Consumer Demand’

Starbucks revealed its protein lineup on Tuesday, and the company is going “all in,” according to a press release.

Starbucks coffeehouses in the U.S. and Canada will offer a Protein Cold Foam topper alongside a new line of Protein Lattes starting September 29. The lattes are made with protein-boosted milk.

**Related:** Starbucks Is Betting on Protein Cold Foam and a ‘Sugar Reduction’ to Turn Around Lagging Sales. Here’s a Look at the Sweeping Changes.

“As we continue to get back to Starbucks, we’re focused on modernizing our menu with innovative, relevant, and hype-worthy products that will resonate with our customers,” said Tressie Leiberman, Starbucks’ global chief brand officer, in the release. “Our new protein beverages tap into the growing consumer demand for protein in an innovative, premium, and delicious way that only Starbucks can deliver.”

Starbucks says its Protein Cold Foam has been used in one out of every seven beverages since the company began testing the foam in July. The company also says the demand is there — 70% of Americans surveyed said they were interested in consuming more protein, according to the 2025 IFIC Food & Health Survey.

Starbucks

The new drinks are customizable with sugar-free and unsweetened options.

**Related:** Starbucks Just Experienced a ‘Record-Breaking Sales Week’ Thanks to One Line of Products

## What Is Starbucks Protein Cold Foam?

According to Starbucks, the foam is a “creamy, frothy topping that adds texture and flavor to any cold coffee, tea, or Refreshers, creating a delicious, layered drink” and adds 19 to 26 grams of protein per Grande beverage.

It also comes in various flavors (banana, vanilla, sugar-free vanilla, chocolate, matcha, salted caramel, brown sugar, and plain), and seasonal flavors, including pumpkin and pecan.

The new lattes, meanwhile, offer even more protein: 27 to 36 grams worth. Rather than the foam topper, these drinks are crafted with the newly introduced protein-rich milk.

**Related:** Starbucks Is Hiring a ‘Global Content Creator’ to Travel, Drink Coffee, and Get Paid Six Figures

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# Baby Boomers Over 75 Are Getting Richer, Causing a

# ‘Massive’ Wealth Divide, According to a New Report

Older Americans have seen their wealth rise tremendously in recent years, while other age groups have not been as lucky, according to a new paper.

Over a recent 40-year period, between 1983 to 2022, the relative household wealth of those now ages 75 years and older has “sharply risen” while the wealth of all other age groups has declined, New York University Economist Edward Wolff wrote in a new paper. The Americans whose wealth has outpaced all other generations are a part of the older Baby Boomers group, or those born before 1950.

Wolff used the Federal Reserve’s Survey of Consumer Finances to compare two age groups — 35 years and under and 75 and over — and found the main factors that drive generational wealth are high homeownership rates, high amounts of stocks owned, and low home mortgage debt.

**Related:** Home Sellers Now Outnumber Buyers in Record Numbers. Here’s What It Means for Home Prices.

Here’s how older Baby Boomers got so rich:

## Homeownership rates

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Baby Boomers own nearly 40% of all available homes in the U.S., even though they make up just 20% of the population. The National Association of Realtors estimated in April that the Baby Boomer generation accounted for 42% of all home buyers, with nearly half of all Boomers purchasing homes with cash.

Meanwhile, a Freddie Mac report from February 2024 found that, as Baby Boomers age, declining home ownership will cause 9.2 million homes to hit the market by 2035. The generation owned 32 million homes in the U.S. in 2022, but Freddie Mac predicted that the number would decline to 23 million by 2035.

Meanwhile, the National Association of Realtors estimated that home prices have almost doubled from 2014 to 2024, growing from a median of $217,100 in 2014 to $418,700 a decade later. In July 2025, median home prices hit another record high.

## Stocks

When it comes to stocks owned, Boomers also stand out. According to The Kobeissi Letter, a commentary on global markets, Boomers held 54% of all U.S. corporate stocks and mutual funds in the first quarter of the year, compared to just 8% for millennials.

“The generational wealth divide is massive,” The Kobeissi Letter wrote in a post on X.

> *US equity ownership is heavily skewed toward older generations:*
>
> *Baby Boomers now hold 54% of all US corporate equities and mutual fund shares, down only slightly from 57% in Q1 2020.*
>
> *By comparison, Millennials own just 8% of all equities, up from ~2% in 2020.*
>
> *Gen X accounts… pic.twitter.com/4ofwErSlPq*
>
> *— The Kobeissi Letter (@KobeissiLetter) July 14, 2025*

## Home mortgage debt

Home mortgage debt, which refers to the amount owed as a

result of buying a home, is also particularly low for older generations. According to Bankrate, the average mortgage balance in the final quarter of 2024 was $194,334 for Baby Boomers — much lower than the $312,014 balance attributed to Millennials (ages 28 to 43) or the $283,677 balance associated with Gen X (ages 44 to 59).

Mortgage debt is trending higher overall. The average U.S. mortgage debt was $252,505 in 2024, a close to $8,000 increase from the previous year, according to credit bureau Experian.

**Related:** Here's How Much You Need to Make Per Year to Buy a Typical Home in the U.S., According to a New Report

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# The Leadership Practice That Keeps Teams Moving in Uncertain Times

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When uncertainty rises, many leaders do the reasonable thing. They become more careful. They slow spending. They pause plans. They wait for clearer signals before committing to big moves.

At first, it makes sense. The conditions are unclear. The pressure is real. No one wants to overcommit when the stakes are high and the path ahead is blurry. A measured pause can feel responsible, even necessary.

But over time, that caution can shift the culture. Motion slows. Teams hesitate. The energy that once kept people building begins to fade. Not because anyone made a bad decision, but because belief is no longer being modeled.

When leaders stop showing confidence in where the company is going, the whole system responds. This is not about charisma or volume. It is about posture, the way conviction shows up in tone, in timing, in the pace of decisions.

In moments like this, optimism is not a luxury. It is what keeps progress alive.

**Related: How The Best Executives Show Leadership in Times of Uncertainty**

# The power of optimism

I have led through crises, pivots and culture resets. In each case, the same pattern showed up. When leaders carry belief, even when the path is unclear, teams keep moving. When belief disappears, momentum fades. People start waiting for clarity, direction or permission.

In complex environments, the emotional posture of leadership becomes the silent operating system. Optimism either sustains forward motion or its absence introduces friction. Even the best plans slow down when belief disappears from the room.

Optimism is not a personality trait. It is a leadership practice. It shapes how you speak, how you make decisions and how you guide others through complexity.

You do not need to be overly positive. You do not need to perform. You need to keep pointing forward with consistency. When your team sees that, they stay engaged.

The strongest leaders I've worked with are not the ones who avoid uncertainty. They are the ones who can hold it without handing it off to their teams. Optimism helps them do that. It keeps the weight from becoming the tone.

In most organizations, tone travels faster than tactics. If you grow more hesitant, your team will sense it. That is not a flaw. It is a human response to the emotional signals leaders send.

What you say may be precise, but how you say it often has more impact. A slight shift in energy from the top can change how an entire team interprets risk and momentum.

I experienced this in a high-pressure environment when our company came under scrutiny. We had a plan, but the atmosphere changed. People paused. Focus slipped. Energy became scattered. The quiet question in the room was clear. Do we

still believe in what we are building?

In moments like that, no one waits for an all-hands meeting. People take their cues from daily tone, hallway conversations and executive language. That is why steady belief matters.

What helped us recover was not a new strategy. It was steady communication. We named the pressure. We spoke with clarity. We made sure people heard conviction in our voice. And we chose to keep moving.

That choice mattered. It gave people something to align around. It gave them permission to act.

Once teams see that leadership still believes, they recalibrate. Confidence comes back. Initiative returns. You do not need a perfect plan. You need clear, active belief.

This is what optimism does. It restores direction. It keeps systems in motion when certainty is unavailable.

**Related: How to Lead With Positive Energy (Even When Times Get Tough)**

## Lead with belief

Optimism is not about ignoring risks. It is about leading with belief anyway. When that belief is present, teams stay focused. They solve problems faster. They keep building when others start waiting.

It helps people think creatively instead of defensively. It creates space to try instead of waiting to react.

If things feel stuck, take a closer look at how you are showing up. Not just in presentations or briefings, but in everyday conversations. Are you modeling progress or stalling? Are you holding direction or broadcasting hesitation?

Because people do not just need approval. They need to know

their leaders still believe in what they are working toward. That belief, when communicated with intention, becomes contagious. It resets energy. It shifts momentum. It brings direction back into the room.

Optimism, when carried with clarity, cuts through noise. It is not emotional. It is structural. It sets pace. It creates alignment. It holds energy in motion.

The leaders who move teams through uncertainty are not always the ones with the perfect plan. They are the ones who give people a reason to keep going. They carry belief on purpose. They model direction even when the conditions are imperfect.

Optimism is not the opposite of realism. It is what makes realism useful.

When leaders carry it well, the effect spreads. Not because they are louder, but because their clarity steadies the room.

**Related: How to Lead With a Balanced Sense of Optimism When The Future Looks Bleak**

When uncertainty rises, many leaders do the reasonable thing. They become more careful. They slow spending. They pause plans. They wait for clearer signals before committing to big moves.

At first, it makes sense. The conditions are unclear. The pressure is real. No one wants to overcommit when the stakes are high and the path ahead is blurry. A measured pause can feel responsible, even necessary.

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# Warren Buffett Is ‘Disappointed’ About the Kraft Heinz Breakup After Orchestrating the Deal 10 Years Ago

In 2015, Berkshire Hathaway CEO Warren Buffett helped orchestrate the Kraft Heinz mega merger. On Tuesday, Kraft Heinz announced that it is splitting into two companies, effectively undoing the monster deal Buffett helped put together a decade ago.

Berkshire Hathaway has a 27.5% stake in Kraft Heinz and is its largest shareholder, per CNBC. Buffett told CNBC’s Becky Quick on Tuesday that he is “disappointed.”

“Disappointed with them coming up with this idea, and disappointed that shareholders won’t be getting a vote,” Quick said, reiterating what Buffett had told her.

**Related:** Warren Buffett Made 95% of His Wealth After Age 65. Here’s How Much His Net Worth Has Grown Past Retirement Age.

Under the new contract, which is expected to close in 2026, one company will focus on shelf-stable meals, spreads, and sauces, and include brands like Heinz, Philadelphia cream cheese, and Kraft Mac & Cheese. The other will host Maxwell House, Oscar Mayer, Kraft Singles, and Lunchables, per the AP. Names for both are forthcoming.

Kraft Heinz shares have dropped nearly 70% since the merger in 2015, CNBC notes. Changing food tastes, a desire for healthier options with less preservatives, and more modern cooking methods have all been blamed for the decline.

In 2019, Buffett said he was "wrong in a couple of ways on Kraft Heinz," per Reuters.

Buffett is stepping down as CEO of Berkshire Hathaway effective January 1, 2026.

**Related:** 'It Was Unfair': Warren Buffett Reveals the Real Reason He Stepped Down as CEO

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# Here Are Your Entrepreneurial Elders' Top 3 Concerns About Passing the Baton

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Between now and 2048, an estimated $124 trillion in family assets will be passed from Generation X to millennials and Gen Z, the first mass transfer of its kind. This is a phenomenon so significant that it is named the Great Wealth Transfer, and it's an event that began unfolding in the mid-2010s, catalyzed by the retirement of the Baby Boomer generation.

A market research firm called Cerulli and Associates estimated that out of the $124 trillion worth of assets that will be transferred, around $105 trillion will be inherited directly by heirs and $18 trillion will go to charity. Swiss banking giant UBS, in its 2024 wealth report, estimated that $83 trillion globally will be passed on within the next two decades, and that a large chunk of these assets will be held across the Asia Pacific region. A recent McKinsey report showed that the value of these assets circulating in this Eastern region could be worth $5.8 trillion by 2030.

As a fourth-generation heir of the Kowloon Motor Bus Company, Hong Kong's oldest transportation company, I inherited my family's wealth at a really young age due to premature deaths

within my family. Despite this, I managed to carry the business forward as a director and figurehead, which I believe is rare since research has shown that as many as 90% of family wealth is often lost by the third generation. I am in a unique position to speak about this subject as a Baby Boomer looking to transfer to younger generations.

Among the concerns the older generation may have about the Great Wealth Transfer and how it will be orchestrated successfully across the coming years, here are what I consider to be three of the most salient points.

**Related: 3 Ways to Prepare Yourself for the Great Wealth Transfer**

# 1. Gauging millennial and Gen Z's financial interest

Most family elders, especially in Asia, are highly concerned about how they would go about educating their children about the family assets and businesses. How willing would their heirs be to take over a business that has been continuing for more than a hundred years? This is a common concern due to the fact that some of the oldest companies in the world are currently held by families in the East.

This concern is compounded by the fact that Baby Boomers and Gen X have significantly different attitudes to money compared to their heirs, since these generations have been conditioned to aim for a "job for life," with intense focus on accumulating savings for retirement. According to an article by the *Financial Times*, millennials (1981-1996) lack financial education, having the propensity to build up credit card debt, while Gen Z possess a short-term fiscal outlook compared to their elders.

## 2. Emotions can get in the way of discussions

There may be different types of emotions at play whenever the Great Wealth Transfer is mentioned in a family business. Older generations are generally more reluctant to discuss financial affairs more openly with younger generations, which can act as a barrier to effective communication. Moreover, younger generations may find it distressing to have discussions about inheriting wealth and business, as they often have connotations of death.

Younger generations can also have significantly differing views to their elders when it comes to running a company, with evidence showing that they are more socially aware of issues that affect the world, such as climate change, AI revolution and globalization, while some members of older generations may have a more conservative attitude, with a greater focus on wealth preservation and conservation. These differences can make discussions about business succession more heated and prone to disagreements and family conflicts. This is one of the main reasons families delay these important conversations from taking place, which could negatively affect a smooth transfer.

**Related: Passing the Family Company to the Next Generation Is a Complicated Business**

## 3. A rush to transfer wealth

An article written by the *Guardian* showed that the 2020 pandemic has accelerated the intergenerational wealth transfer due to unforeseen, untimely deaths. Many members of younger generations, especially in the UK, are beneficiaries of unexpected windfall, according to Treasury figures, which found that a record-breaking volume of inheritance tax was

collected during 2021 and 2022: £6.1 billion.

Research from Capital Group also found that high-net-worth families are actually accelerating the transfer of wealth to their heirs, in a survey conducted with 600 individuals across Europe, Asia Pacific and the U.S. The report found that 65% of Gen X and millennial inheritors who participated in the research said they had regrets about how they used their inheritance money, with nearly two in five respondents wishing they had invested more of their assets after the transfer.

With these concerns percolating in older generations' minds, it is only wise for family businesses to plan well ahead for the Great Wealth Transfer. Have those difficult conversations with your heirs early on so that unpredictable shifts will not shake up your family's assets. And more importantly, it is important to ensure that the family wealth's purpose is well-defined in this increasingly complex and volatile world, and for that, meaningful conversations between the generations need to continue. Family businesses can no longer rest on their laurels.

**Related: Running a Family Business Means You Need to Prepare Your Kids to Take Over — Here's How to Do It Right.**

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# CEO Apologizes for Viral Hat-Stealing Moment at the U.S. Open: 'Extremely Poor Judgment and Hurtful Actions'

Over the weekend, a video posted on various social media platforms showed a child waiting for a signature from Kamil

Majchrzak after his match at the U.S. Open on Thursday. The Polish tennis player takes off his hat and hands it, seemingly, to the boy, before an adult man next to him reaches in and snatches it away like a seagull at the beach.

Naturally, the video went mega-viral, and Internet sleuths quickly identified the culprit as Piotr Szczerek, the CEO of a Polish paving company. On Monday, Szczerek apologized for the incident "unequivocally" in a post on Facebook.

> *Try watching this without cringing pic.twitter.com/5uwmIAmOXN*
>
> *— Jomboy Media (@JomboyMedia) August 29, 2025*

"In connection with the incident that occurred during Kamil Majchrzak match at the US Open, I would like to unequivocally apologize to the young boy, his family, all the fans, and the player himself," the post begins. "I take full responsibility for my extremely poor judgment and hurtful actions. It was never my intent to steal away a prized memento from the young fan."

**Related:** 'A Necessary Decision': Nestlé CEO Ousted After Revelation of Romantic Relationship With Subordinate

Szczerek wrote that he was "caught up in the heat of the moment and the joy of the victory" and during the excitement, he "believed Majchrzak was handing a hat to me to give to my sons, who had previously asked for autographs."

"I apologize to everyone I let down," Szczerek said.

Szczerek says he sent the hat back to the boy and noted the fiasco is "a painful but necessary lesson in humility."

After all the attention, the boy who missed out on the hat got something even better — he met with Majchrzak and walked away with even more swag.

**Related:** Astronomer CEO Resigns After Kiss-Cam Scandal. Here's How the Company (and Coldplay) Responded.

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# Starbucks Just Experienced a 'Record-Breaking Sales Week' Thanks to One Line of

# Products

It’s pumpkin spice season, and Starbucks is raking in the profits. The coffee giant launched its fall seasonal offerings last week, including the famous Pumpkin Spice Latte (PSL), and the company has already seen an increase in sales, according to Starbucks CEO Brian Niccol.

In an internal memo on Monday seen by *Bloomberg,* Niccol said that the fall products, including pumpkin-flavored offerings like the latte, pumpkin cream cold brew, and iced pumpkin cream chai, helped Starbucks “deliver a record-breaking sales week” at its U.S. company-operated stores last week.

**Related:** Starbucks Is Hiring In-Store Human Workers After Replacing People With Machines — and Finding It Didn’t Work

Starbucks first introduced the PSL in 2003, marking over two decades of the popular drink. There have been hundreds of millions of units of the beverage sold since launch.

Starbucks had 41,097 stores as of July, with 53% operated by the company and 47% licensed.

The news of rising sales arrives as Starbucks is in the midst of a turnaround, working to reverse consecutive quarters of declining sales. Niccol is in charge of the effort; under his leadership, Starbucks has adopted a “Back to Starbucks” plan designed to bring customers back to stores.

Changes under the plan include cutting 30% of the Starbucks menu, making coffee more quickly, and personalizing customers’ orders by writing names down in Sharpie on their cups.

Starbucks is also adding new offerings, like protein cold foam with 15 grams of protein and no added sugar, in the coming

year. It is additionally reducing sugar in drinks by adding coconut water-based drinks, like coconut-water matcha and cold brew.

**Related:** ‘We’re Not Effective’: Starbucks CEO Tells Corporate Employees to ‘Own Whether or Not This Place Grows’

In July, Starbucks reported its sixth consecutive quarter of declining store sales. According to the coffee chain’s earnings report for the quarter ending June 29, store sales dropped by 2% worldwide and in North America. However, net revenue rose 4% to $9.5 billion in the quarter, a 3% jump.

In the earnings report, Niccol stated that the company is “ahead of schedule” to “unleash a wave of innovation” next year.

Niccol also announced a mandate in July that corporate employees come back to the office four days a week, up from three, starting at the beginning of the company’s fiscal quarter in October.

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# ‘A Necessary Decision’: Nestlé CEO Ousted After Revelation of Romantic Relationship With Subordinate

Nestlé, the world’s largest consumer goods company, has dismissed its CEO, Laurent Freixe, following revelations of an undisclosed romantic relationship with a subordinate.

According to Reuters, concerns about a possible relationship first surfaced in the spring through the company’s internal reporting channel “Speak Up.” A board-led investigation followed, during which Freixe had denied the relationship.

Staff concerns persisted, prompting another investigation overseen by Chairman Bulcke and Lead Independent Director Isla and independent outside counsel. This time around, investigators found what they believed to be evidence of a romantic relationship with a direct subordinate. Swiss website Inside Paradeplatz reports that Freixe met the unnamed woman in 2022, when he was head of Nestlé’s Latin America business.

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This relationship violated Nestlé’s code of business conduct,

and as reported by Fox Business News, the breach led to Freixe's immediate removal after just one year in the role. He was not awarded any exit compensation.

"This was a necessary decision. Nestlé's values and governance are strong foundations of our company," Chairman Paul Bulcke said. "I thank Laurent for his years of service at Nestlé."

Nestlé installed Philipp Navratil, previously head of the Nespresso division, as the new CEO.

This is the second CEO exit in less than a year for Nestlé, adding to its financial troubles. The Swiss food giant's shares have shed 17% during Freixe's leadership, per Reuters, and the value has plummeted by almost a third over the past five years.

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# People Line Up Down the Block to Try This Iconic NYC Pizza. Now, It Could Be Coming to Your City.

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Lawrence Longo is certain about one thing: America needs a great national pizza brand.

Not just a chain that cranks out slices, but a name that stands for quality, heritage and the kind of flavor people will travel for. “Our goal is to be that premium slice shop in America,” he tells *Restaurant Influencers* host Shawn Walchef.

That mission is at the heart of his work growing Prince St. Pizza from a single shop into a brand with locations across the country.

The story started on a block in New York City’s SoHo neighborhood, where the original Prince St. Pizza has been drawing crowds for years. Its pepperoni square slice is an icon: crispy-edged, overflowing with curl and dripping with flavor.

Longo was a fan before he was a partner. “I used to go in as a customer,” he says. “I loved the pizza; I loved the energy in the shop. I could feel how much it meant to people.”

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That connection turned into conversations. Longo got to know the owners, learning not just about the recipes but about the pride and history behind them. “We started talking about what it could be,” he recalls. “I told them, ‘This isn’t just a slice shop. This is a brand that could mean something in every city.'”

Eventually, that dialogue became a partnership, grounded in a shared commitment to keep the product and culture intact. Now the expansion is real. This interview took place inside a new Prince St. Pizza in Las Vegas, just steps from the Strip.

The crowd here is a mix of locals and visitors, but the slice in their hands tastes just like it would in SoHo. “That’s the goal,” Longo says. “No matter where you are, when you bite into it, it should feel like you’re in New York.”

The Las Vegas shop is just one of several new locations, each chosen carefully. “We don’t just go anywhere,” he explains. “We look for cities where Prince St. can fit in and still stand out. And then we build the right team to protect what makes it special.”

For Longo, it is not simply about growing bigger. It is about creating a national pizza brand without losing the soul of the original.

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## The next great American pizza brand

Prince St. Pizza’s footprint is getting bigger, and the momentum is real. New locations are opening in markets like Miami and Dallas. Each one matches the quality and culture of the original SoHo shop. Celebrity customers have become part of the story. Usher. Adam Sandler. Dave Portnoy. They aren’t

there for photo ops. They come in because they like the pizza.

“They try, and they come back, and they like the brand,” Longo says. Being in cities like New York, Los Angeles and Chicago means crossing paths with people who live for good food, whether they are famous or not.

Growth also brings noise. “The bigger you get, the more haters you get,” Longo says. “You can’t listen to the noise. You want to listen to everybody, but you gotta just keep your head down, worry about yourself, do the best job you can and focus on your customers.”

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That mindset is what allows Longo to keep expanding without losing the flavor and culture that made Prince St. Pizza a destination in the first place.

Every new store is another chance to prove that a premium slice shop can scale nationally without losing what made it special.

“Every time you open a new restaurant, you learn something new about your brand,” Longo says, “and we’re only getting better.”

It’s the same goal he set from the start — to take Prince St. Pizza from a single shop in New York to a true national brand. And for Longo, the recipe for getting there is simple: protect the product, protect the culture and keep serving slices worth traveling for.

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