Your Business Is Growing, But Is It Actually Going Anywhere? Here’s How to Grow With Purpose, Not Just Profit.

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Key Takeaways

- Leveraging joint ventures can help businesses grow without overextending resources.
- Establishing scalable infrastructures and processes lays the groundwork for growth without unnecessary overhead.
- Focusing on stability before scaling can lead to sustainable and healthy business expansion.

Business growth is valuable, but too often entrepreneurs treat it as a final destination. In reality, expansion is just one part of a long-term success plan, unfolding through many smaller milestones along the journey of building a business.

Here are three ways you can expertly use expansion to build on success, along with examples of companies that have handled expansion as a positive part of the success process. They’re good examples of the fact that sometimes the smarter entrepreneur waits, builds resilience and then scales, only when growth supports it.

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and resources you need to know today to help you run your business better. Get it in your inbox.

1. Use smart partnerships to expand strategically

Growth doesn’t have to come from doing everything yourself. Sometimes the smartest way to build a business is by allowing others to do it for you, with guardrails, of course. That’s the idea behind JUMP’s Venture program by Limitless Flight. Instead of opening dozens of locations on his own, founder James Jensen follows a joint venture process that allows entrepreneurs around the country to open their own JUMP locations under a specific high-tech and research-based framework.

This approach accomplishes two things simultaneously: It grows the brand without overextending internal resources, and it positions the company to engage larger investors who are interested in a proven, scalable model. Venture locations ensure JUMP’s high standards of immersive wingsuit VR experience, while entrepreneurs running them benefit from an established blueprint for success.

It’s a growth model that other businesses can use: Identify a replicable part of your operation, turn it into a turnkey system and offer it to partners who can help you scale responsibly. The key is doing it in a way that protects quality, reinforces your brand and turns expansion into a carefully curated opportunity rather than a race to open as many locations as possible.

Could you use the strategy of building a joint venture process to grow your business? Thinking about how to create that process in a slightly unusual way could end in big results.

2. Put structures in place before adding overhead

Success is typically followed by scaling, which needs effective systems. This requires thoughtfully setting up a company early on.

If, for instance, you're building an app, you don't want to shortcut the development end of your R&D because you could end up boxing yourself in when it comes time to grow. Invest time and money into having a developer design a back end that can scale with success.

The same goes for most physical or digital aspects of a business. Get the systems and processes in place first. Then figure out how your business could scale – not just how you could grow your audience and inventory.

A good example of this comes from Brightwheel, an early-childhood education management platform. Before making bulk hires or quickly investing a large chunk of their monthly budget into marketing, the founder spent the company's first months building a scalable infrastructure. Those elements include a unified data layer, a flexible communications engine and clear operational processes for onboarding new schools. When user growth suddenly surged, these smartly built systems absorbed the demand with minimal friction. The team grew successfully because of a solid foundation, which kept overhead aligned with real, demonstrated need.

Where are you planning based on limited data? Early demand is encouraging, but continual, consistent growth comes from projections you can trust – and systems strong enough to support them.

3. Resist the urge to grow into stability

It’s tempting to think, “Well, we’ve got to get ahead of demand, and then, once we’ve invested in everything, we’ll steady the ship.” There is a certain degree of truth to the fact that you need to stay ahead of demand if you want to take advantage of growth opportunities.

However, you need to stay agile and willing to adapt as you go along. That’s what KIND Snacks did when founder Daniel Lubetzky paused on expansion long enough to refine a stable product and cash flow. Lubetzky made the call to slow down long enough to refine a reliable product that could scale without compromising quality.

It wasn’t until KIND operations stabilized that its founder fired things up again and began scaling sustainably. The result? A brand selling a billion health food bars a year. This came from an unrelenting willingness to maintain a culture of healthy, sustainable growth.

Where are you putting the cart before the horse? Where are you accelerating parts of your growing company that aren’t ready (or at least haven’t been stress tested) yet?

Building a business the right way

Expansion isn’t automatic. It’s earned. Even then, it requires careful intention at every step.

Whether you’re growing through smart partnerships, putting systems in place before adding overhead, or resisting the urge to scale before your operations are stable, the principle is the same: build on what works, and scale only when the foundation is ready. Provide clear frameworks, support structures and operational guidelines so growth doesn’t

outpace your ability to maintain quality.

By slowing down to experiment, codify processes and selectively partner with others, you turn expansion into a controlled engine for long-term success instead of a gamble. The businesses that thrive aren't necessarily the fastest. They're the ones that scale with strategy, consistency and integrity.

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How Freelancers Can Stay Profitable in Every Economy — From Crushing Recessions to Crazy Booms

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Key Takeaways

- Economic changes and AI advancements necessitate freelancers to pivot and evolve, ensuring business survival.
- A recession-resistant freelancer is proactive, with a broad skill set, diversified services and an adaptive mindset.
- Building economic resilience involves financial preparation, upskilling and maintaining a solution-oriented approach with clients.

If there's one truth freelancers learn sooner or later, it's this: The economy doesn't care about your pipeline needs. Markets shift, industries contract, new technologies emerge and budgets get tighter without warning. The ups and downs aren't personal, but how you respond to them can completely change the trajectory of your business.

I've lived through multiple cycles of surges and slowdowns in the freelance world. Some were tied to client layoffs or

marketing budget freezes. Others connected to broader market uncertainty or the rise of new technology, especially AI, which sent many clients into “testing mode.” But the hardest stretch I ever navigated was the post-pandemic period, when the initial digital-marketing boom faded, businesses returned to more traditional routines and economic ripples finally caught up. Marketing spend tightened, AI disrupted workflows and freelancers across industries felt the shift.

None of these downturns was easy — but each one forced me to evolve. And that evolution is the reason I’m still here.

Freelancing isn’t about avoiding uncertainty. It’s about becoming resilient enough to thrive through it.

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The slowdown after the pandemic: A hard lesson in adaptability

During the pandemic, many companies reinvested heavily in digital marketing. When those budgets inevitably tightened in the years that followed, freelancers felt the pinch. At the same time, AI surged into the market, causing many clients to experiment with replacing or supplementing human talent. It wasn’t that the work disappeared — it just shifted.

My income dipped in ways it never had before. But instead of waiting it out, I used that downturn to reassess my entire business. I evaluated every skill I had, every service I offered, and every gap I saw in the market. That reflection ultimately led me to a major freelance business pivot for me: I began offering fractional CMO and project management services. That change ended up rebuilding my freelance

business completely after I was laid off from a full-time role in the fall of 2024.

The lesson? When the market changes, your services often need to change, too.

What makes a freelancer “recession-resistant”

The freelancers who navigate economic uncertainty the best aren’t necessarily the most talented — they’re the most aware. They’re constantly paying attention to the shifts around them: new tools, new buying behaviors, new types of work clients are prioritizing. They don’t cling to the exact same offer year after year.

A recession-resistant freelancer usually has:

- a niche, but not a narrow skillset,
- two or three core services they can lean into depending on demand,
- an understanding of where their industry is heading,
- and a willingness to adjust their positioning early instead of waiting for the dip.

In other words, they stay curious and they stay versatile.

The strategies that actually work in uncertain times

When the market tightens, freelancers often experience two reactions: panic or paralysis. But the most effective response is a combination of action and introspection.

During slow periods, I focus heavily on two things:

1. Increasing marketing and pitching activity. Your instinct

might be to retreat, but slow seasons are the ideal time to reconnect with past clients, expand your network or test a new offer. Even a simple “checking in” email can reignite dormant relationships. Even in slow seasons, there are still opportunities to make money with freelancing.

2. Up-leveling your skills. If financially possible, I always treat slow periods as opportunities to invest in learning. Whether it’s a course, a book or a new software tool, anything that improves your value makes you stronger for the next upswing.

The mistakes freelancers make when the economy tightens

Freelancers can accidentally sabotage themselves during downturns — not because they mean to, but because they forget what clients really need when budgets shrink.

One common mistake: not clearly demonstrating your ROI. Clients don’t want vague activity; they want to see the benefit. If they don’t hear from you or don’t receive updates that show progress, your line item becomes an easy cut. Even if you’re doing things that don’t have cut-and-dry numbers, continue to invest in explaining why they matter. I had a client who wanted to cut all their blogging efforts because they thought, “Why does it matter?” But once I walked them through how much SEO was contributing to our presence online overall, their new business and their mentions in ChatGPT, they saw the value.

Another mistake: relying exclusively on one high-ticket service. When demand shifts, freelancers who only offer one type of project are stuck. A web designer who only sells full-build projects may struggle during a recession — but one who also offers maintenance retainers, quarterly analytics reviews or small audits creates continuity. Those smaller offers won’t

replace your income entirely, but they create stability and keep you top of mind.

How client behavior shifts in booms vs. recessions

During economic booms, clients are more willing to invest. They're open to new initiatives, experimentation and bigger-ticket projects. But during recessions or market uncertainty, every dollar gets scrutinized. Clients expect more communication, more clarity and more strategic recommendations.

This is the moment when freelancers need to shift from "vendor" to advisor.
Clients want someone who can say:

- "Here's where you're overspending,"
- "Here's a smarter way to structure this campaign,"
- or "Here's a smaller yet effective option if budgets are tight."

Freelancers who only execute tasks struggle in recessions. Freelancers who provide insight tend to survive them.

Financial practices that keep you stable

Economic resilience isn't just about strategy — it's also about financial preparation. Freelancers benefit tremendously from maintaining cash reserves both personally and in the business. Diversifying income streams, paying quarterly taxes on time and conducting periodic expense audits all help you weather the unexpected.

You shouldn't wait until revenue drops to re-evaluate spending or adjust your offerings. The more you plan ahead, the less

reactive you need to be.

The mindset that makes everything easier

Perhaps the most critical element of surviving economic cycles is mindset. Freelancing is not a linear path. You will have months of overflow and months of stillness. Some patterns are predictable — mid-December, early January and the weeks before Labor Day — while others arrive without warning.

Knowing this allows you to prepare rather than panic.

You can plan vacations around slow seasons. You can pitch more heavily during active buying cycles. You can dedicate quiet periods to skill-building instead of spiraling.

Ultimately, resilience comes from understanding that freelancing is a long game. Ups and downs are not signs you're failing — they're signs you're in business.

The bottom line

Economic cycles will continue. AI will evolve. Industries will shift. But freelancers who stay aware, diversify their services, communicate proactively and remain adaptable will not only survive these changes; they'll grow because of them.

Stability doesn't come from the economy. It comes from building a business that can bend without breaking.

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LinkedIn Launches a $100/Month Integrated Sales, Marketing and Hiring Hub



For many users, LinkedIn is a platform for business content and job listings. But the company also wants to be better known as an operations tool for small business owners – and today launched a new integrated service that brings sales, marketing, and hiring tools together into a single platform.

The company calls the service Premium All-in-One. Rather than switching between different tools and platforms, Premium All-in-One provides a centralized dashboard to showcase activity across all three business functions while offering recommended actions on what to do next.

The new consolidated subscription costs $99.99 per month. LinkedIn says it’s specifically targeting founders,

solopreneurs, and small teams who are “wearing multiple hats with limited time and resources.”

LinkedIn sweetens the deal with credits for subscribers. During a free trial, users receive $100 in credits to both promote job listings, and $100 to boost their own posts in the LinkedIn news feed. Paid members will receive $50 in monthly credits for listings and $50 for post boosts.

Key features include unlimited searches with advanced filters, InMail credits for outreach, AI writing assistance for personalized messaging, and auto-invites for people who engage with content. LinkedIn says that its early data is promising: Small businesses using the platform report a 57% increase in followers, 40% more profile views, and up to 60% increase in reply rates from daily prospect suggestions.

The launch represents LinkedIn’s strategic effort to make existing small business tools more prominent and integrated, moving the platform beyond its traditional networking role into essential business operations.

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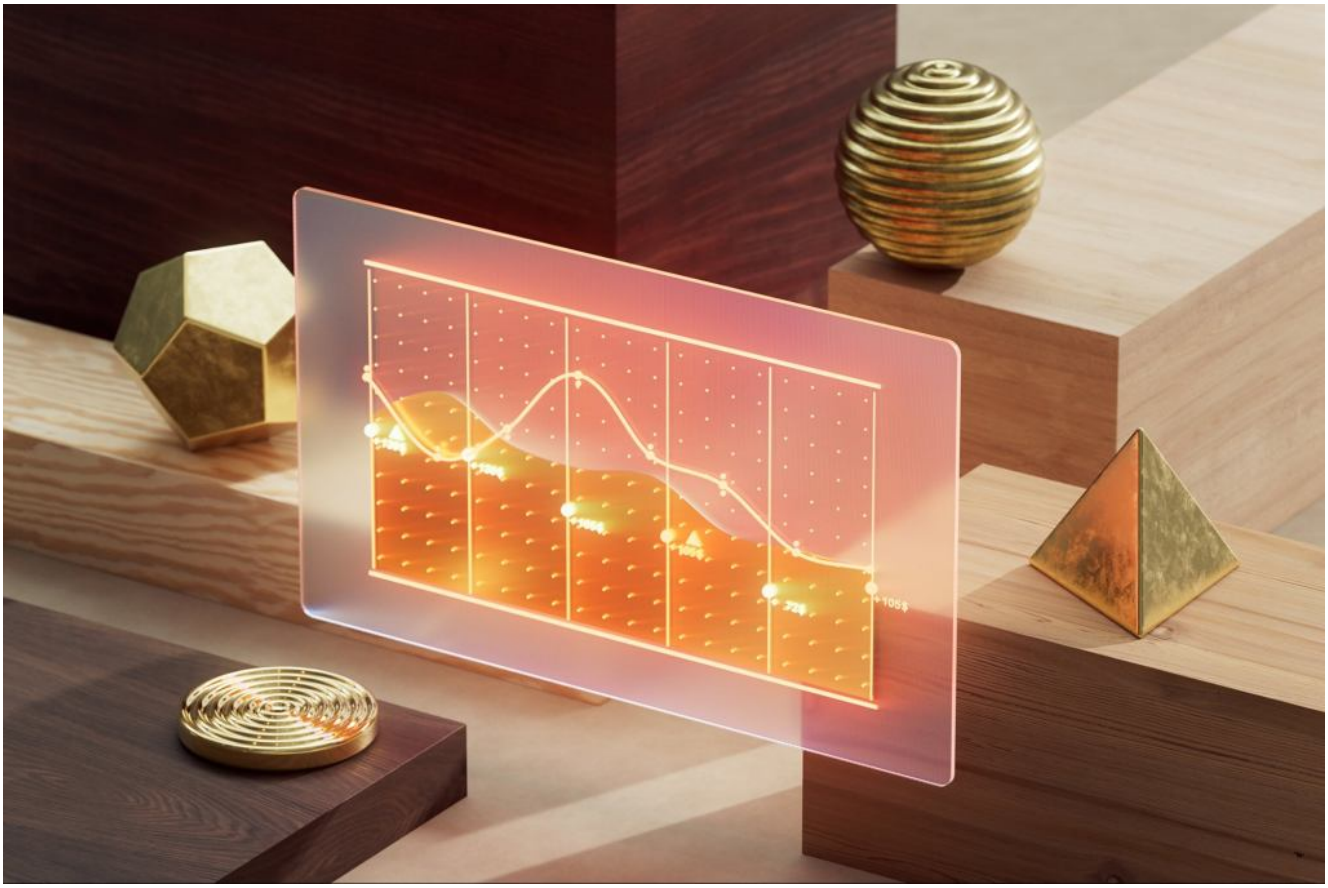
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There’s a Quiet Shift Happening in Finance — and Business Leaders Who Ignore It Will Fall Behind



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Key Takeaways

- Digital finance has moved beyond speculation into a quiet, institution-led rebuild of financial infrastructure, driven by banks, regulators and established market players.
- Tokenization, stablecoins and regulated frameworks are being integrated into core capital markets, making readiness and integration the new competitive advantage for leaders.

For years, discussions about digital finance have been dominated by retail speculation, tokens with wild price swings and consumer apps. That debate is now settled. Digital finance is reshaping the global economy. The question leaders need to ask today isn't whether it matters, but how institutions adapt safely, sustainably and with real readiness — or risk being left on the sidelines of the next transformation in capital

markets.

What’s unfolding is an institution-led rebuild of financial infrastructure. Banks, technology platforms, regulators and established financial institutions (not speculative traders) are doing the quiet work of relaying the pipes and reinforcing the foundations. Compliance frameworks, custody and settlement rails, risk controls and core systems are being rebuilt so capital can move safely and at scale.

This isn’t a hype cycle or a race for early adoption. It’s slow, deliberate, infrastructure-led change, the kind that happens out of sight, but ultimately determines which institutions can operate at scale and which will struggle as the system evolves around them.

Infrastructure is the real story

Many still look at digital finance through the lens of consumer apps or dramatic price moves. But the *real evolution* is happening deeper: in how capital markets operate, how assets settle and how compliance frameworks are being formalized.

This shift is now measurable. Analysts project that the market for tokenized assets, spanning bonds, funds, commodities and other financial instruments, could grow to roughly $16 trillion by 2030, reflecting a significant expansion of blockchain-enabled capital markets infrastructure. At the same time, McKinsey analysis also indicates that total tokenized market capitalization, excluding cryptocurrencies and stablecoins, could reach around $2 trillion by 2030, with optimistic scenarios extending to $4 trillion under accelerated institutional adoption.

What makes these projections credible is what’s already happening in live operations. Industry surveys show that more than one-third of major financial firms now report active

distributed ledger or digital asset initiatives, with many citing tangible benefits in liquidity management and transaction cost reduction.

Institutional adoption: The ultimate signal

2025 has increasingly looked like an inflection point for institutions. Adoption data from industry research shows digital asset initiatives moving from pilots into operational use, as firms build out scalable infrastructure and deploy settlement projects.

This shift matters because it signals mainstream financial commitment. Digital assets are no longer treated as fringe experiments; they are being woven into core banking, treasury and capital markets operations. As regulatory clarity improves around trading, custody and governance, institutions are better able to manage risk and compliance, lowering the barriers to broader adoption.

For business leaders, this marks a subtle but important change: The competitive edge is no longer about being “first to launch,” but about being first to integrate.

The rise of real-world applications

Beyond payments and trading, digital finance is now being channeled into *real-world applications* that resonate with traditional institutional priorities: efficiency, liquidity and risk management.

A clear signal came in 2024, when BlackRock launched a tokenized money-market fund that attracted hundreds of millions of dollars in institutional inflows within weeks, demonstrating how mainstream asset managers now view blockchain-based fund distribution and settlement as a

production-grade tool rather than an experiment.

In practical terms, this gives treasury teams faster settlement cycles, improved transparency over asset ownership and reduced operational friction – outcomes that matter far more to CFOs than price volatility or market narratives.

Stablecoins are also increasingly part of this institutional toolkit. Industry reporting notes that the stablecoin market was around $260 billion as of late 2025, with growth potential as institutional and regulatory engagement increases.

What's emerging is not a parallel financial system, but a hybrid one, where digital instruments coexist with traditional infrastructure inside regulated, enterprise-grade workflows.

APAC: A blueprint for the future

The Asia-Pacific region has emerged as one of the clearest examples of how *regulated and digital finance that is also shaped by institutional participation can scale* in practice. Rather than racing for speed or headlines, many APAC jurisdictions have focused on coordination, bringing regulators, banks and market participants together to define clear rules and workable operating models.

In Hong Kong, the government's Virtual Asset Service Provider (VASP) licensing regime has provided a structured pathway for institutions to offer digital asset services under clear supervisory expectations. The emphasis has been on custody standards, governance and risk management, creating the conditions for institutional participation rather than speculative activity.

Singapore has taken a similarly pragmatic approach. Through initiatives like the Monetary Authority of Singapore's Project Guardian, regulators and financial institutions have worked together to explore tokenization and digital asset use cases

within a regulated environment, testing how these technologies function inside real capital markets and wealth-management workflows.

For international CEOs and boards, APAC's experience offers a clear lesson: Adoption sticks when all involved parties (regulators, banks and technology providers) co-design frameworks that reflect operational realities. This alignment shortens the distance between experimentation and integration, accelerating the embedding of digital assets into core banking, payment rails and treasury operations, as part of the financial system itself.

A view from the frontlines of regulation and integration

One consistent takeaway from this period of transformation is that progress comes from working with regulators, and not around them. Jurisdictions that have advanced clear regulatory frameworks, whether around tokenized securities, stablecoin operations or custody standards, are the ones seeing real institutional engagement.

Digital finance and traditional markets are not parallel universes. They are converging into a unified system where digital instruments coexist with established financial infrastructure. Whether it's tokenized debt instruments simplifying issuance, blockchain-based settlement systems reducing friction or stablecoins enabling faster liquidity flows, institutions are increasingly building hybrid workflows that straddle both worlds.

The takeaway for leaders

Digital finance doesn't mark the end of traditional finance. It's the next phase of its evolution. This transition may be quiet compared to the noise of speculative markets, but it is

enduring and structural.

The signals are everywhere: measurable asset growth, clearer regulation, real-world applications entering production and institutions allocating long-term capital and talent to integration. Business leaders who hope to sit this out will find themselves scrambling for relevance as partners, clients and regulators move on without them.

What matters now is not whether to engage, but how prepared organizations are. The evidence is clear: Adoption metrics are rising, regulatory frameworks are solidifying, production-grade applications are going live, and capital and talent are being deployed to support long-term integration.

Those who succeed will prioritize integration, security and real operational value over noisy trends. They will invest in resilient infrastructure and align closely with regulatory expectations. They will treat this shift as a long-term transformation, not a short-term experiment.

The future of finance is being written now, quietly, methodically and irreversibly. The only question is whether you will help shape it or be forced to adapt after it has already moved on.

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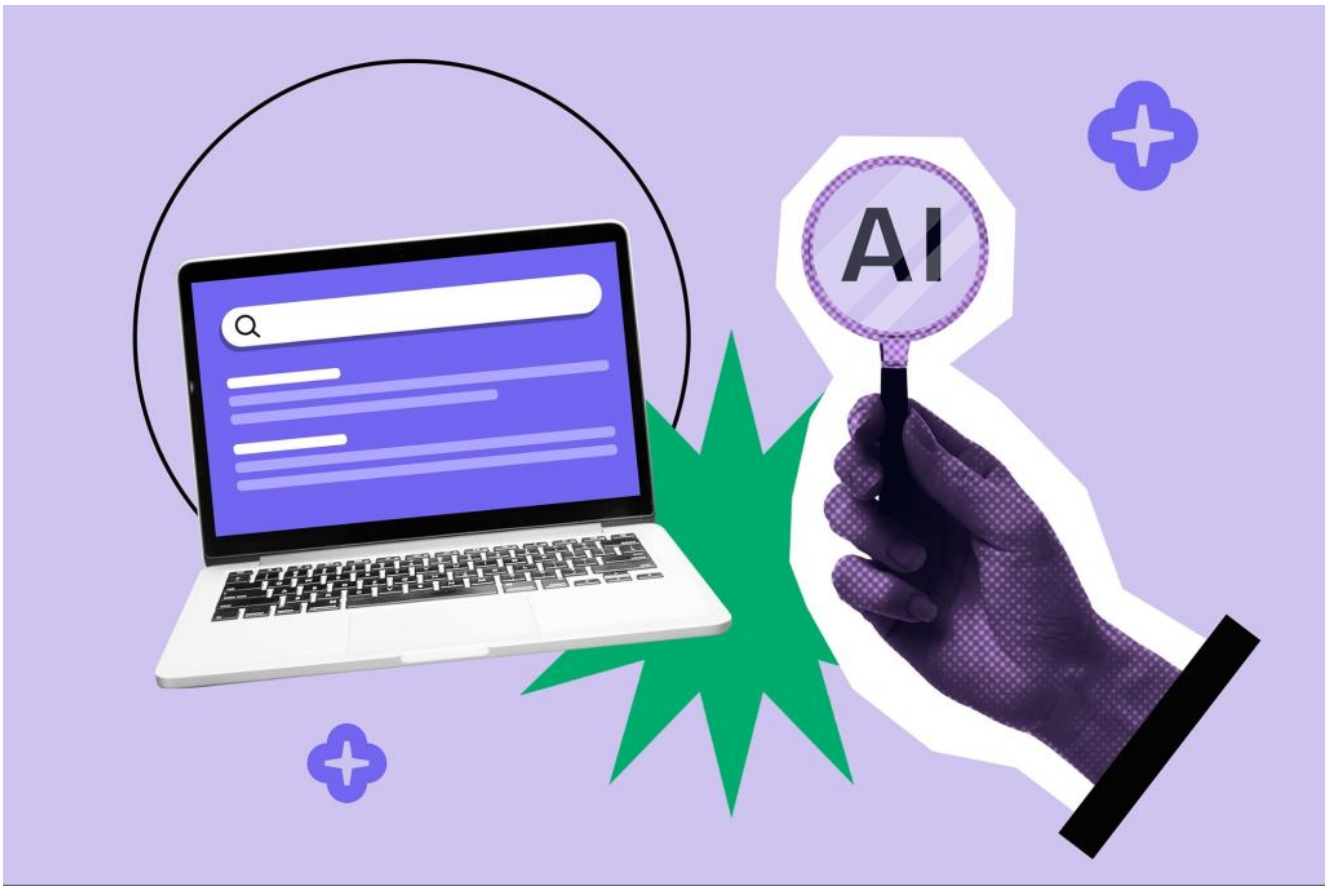
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The B2B Sales Process You're Using Now Will Cost You Deals by 2030 — Here's How to Replace It With a Rep-Free

Journey



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Key Takeaways

- Abandon your focus on keyword optimization and start optimizing for citations
- Your human talent should focus on risk removal instead of pitching
- By the time a human conversation happens, the decision is often 80% to 100% made
- Businesses no longer find value in standard blog posts, which AI technology has made obsolete

The traditional B2B growth engine is now showing signs of "leaking oil."

The predictable path to revenue has followed a straight line

for many years. It starts off with the marketing department generating leads. Then, sales development reps qualify those leads. From there, account executives spend weeks or months nudging prospects toward a signature.

However, high-growth companies have learned that their human-dependent sales process is often the biggest bottleneck to scaling.

Related: Most Business Owners Fail to Track This Key Metric. Here's Why That's a Dangerous Mistake.

Why your business must become discoverable to the AI layer

Deploying automated procurement systems will soon be non-negotiable.

Charles Gaudet, CEO of Predictable Profits, believes that businesses now face a complete transformation in how they interact with their markets. He predicts that by 2030, all B2B buying decisions – regardless of deal size – will be made through a rep-free experience.

"When most people think about how AI will disrupt their industry, they think about content, technology or employees," Gaudet says. "What they're missing is how profoundly AI is changing the buyer's journey. That's where the real disruption is – and the insights have been mind-blowing."

The current market buyer uses large language models (LLMs) to discover solutions instead of performing Google searches for a list of vendors.

Related: This Simple Strategy Got ChatGPT to Recommend My Business to People

The "front door" functionality of tools like Perplexity AI and

Glean combines review data with pricing information and white papers, which become available before any human staff member at your organization is aware of a potential customer.

You may also need to abandon your focus on keyword optimization and start optimizing for citations. Your value proposition could be inaccessible to algorithms that generate buyers' shortlists if it exists inside a protected PDF document or if customers need to book a discovery call to learn about your offer.

This system produces two types of productivity loss:

1. It uses marketing spend to promote content that remains unseen
2. It devotes sales personnel to unqualified leads that the AI layer failed to pre-filter

Related: Predictive AI Search Is Here – Is Your Brand Ready for It?

Transitioning from a persuasion model to a validation framework

In a rep-free world, the sale takes place when the buyer's anxiety reaches zero. It doesn't happen when a rep's persistence reaches 10.

This means your human talent should focus on risk removal instead of pitching.

The companies that will succeed in 2030 will eliminate the "order taker" and introduce the "success architect" position, which handles the intricate emotional challenges that AI systems can't solve at present, including internal cultural alignment and final legal compliance.

By the time a human conversation happens, the decision is

often 80% to 100% made. The human's job is simply to ensure the landing is smooth and the implementation is contextualized to the buyer's unique environment.

Related: Your AI Coworker is Here to Help — Let It Become Your Sales Superpower

Actionable strategies for the rep-free era

To future-proof your growth and increase your team's productivity, implement the following strategies:

1. **Implement semantic seeding for AI discovery.** AI models select information that matches both consensus and structured data patterns. Place your main methodology outside gated white papers by creating structured knowledge base pages. This will allow AI to generate shortlists. Also, implement schema markup to establish the specific ROI metrics and use cases for your product. This enables AI agents to reference your specific transformation framework when they answer user requests, thus establishing the AI system as your main sales development rep.
2. **Build a frictionless validation engine.** Identify the "proof-of-value" gap. Most entrepreneurs lose prospects during the period that spans from their initial contact until they conduct a technical trial. You can close this by building a sandbox that functions as a basic automated version of your service. Consider tools like Navattic or Reprise to build interactive self-guided product tours. That way, customers can physically interact with products until they need to schedule a demo.
3. **Deploy micro-consulting content.** Businesses no longer find value in standard blog posts, which AI technology has made obsolete. Avoid the dead weight by creating

content that focuses on resolving the “post-purchase crisis.” The content should concentrate on political and technical obstacles that develop after the contract takes effect (e.g., “How to get your IT security team to approve a new SaaS solution within 48 hours”). When you provide the maps for the hard parts of implementation, you validate your expertise to the buyer’s logic-based AI filters.

4. **Invert the sales funnel roles.** The sales funnel needs a role reversal, which removes human-performed cold outreach. This method has a diminishing ROI. Instead, automate the first 80% of the educational journey. Develop your sales team into “transformation designers.” When evaluating performance, measure their success in achieving alignment instead of tracking the calls they made. This helps you redirect your highest-paid employees away from performing repetitive pitching and into high-level strategic consulting, where they solve the human challenges that AI can’t touch.

Related: Can AI Really Make Customers Trust You More Than Humans Can?

The shift to autonomous growth

B2B business development is all about building a customer experience framework that prioritizes buyer velocity and operational efficiency.

If buyers spend too much time on discovery calls when they can spend that same time self-educating, the human element is more a point of friction than an asset.

The key to success is leaving the human touch for the moments where it truly changes the game.

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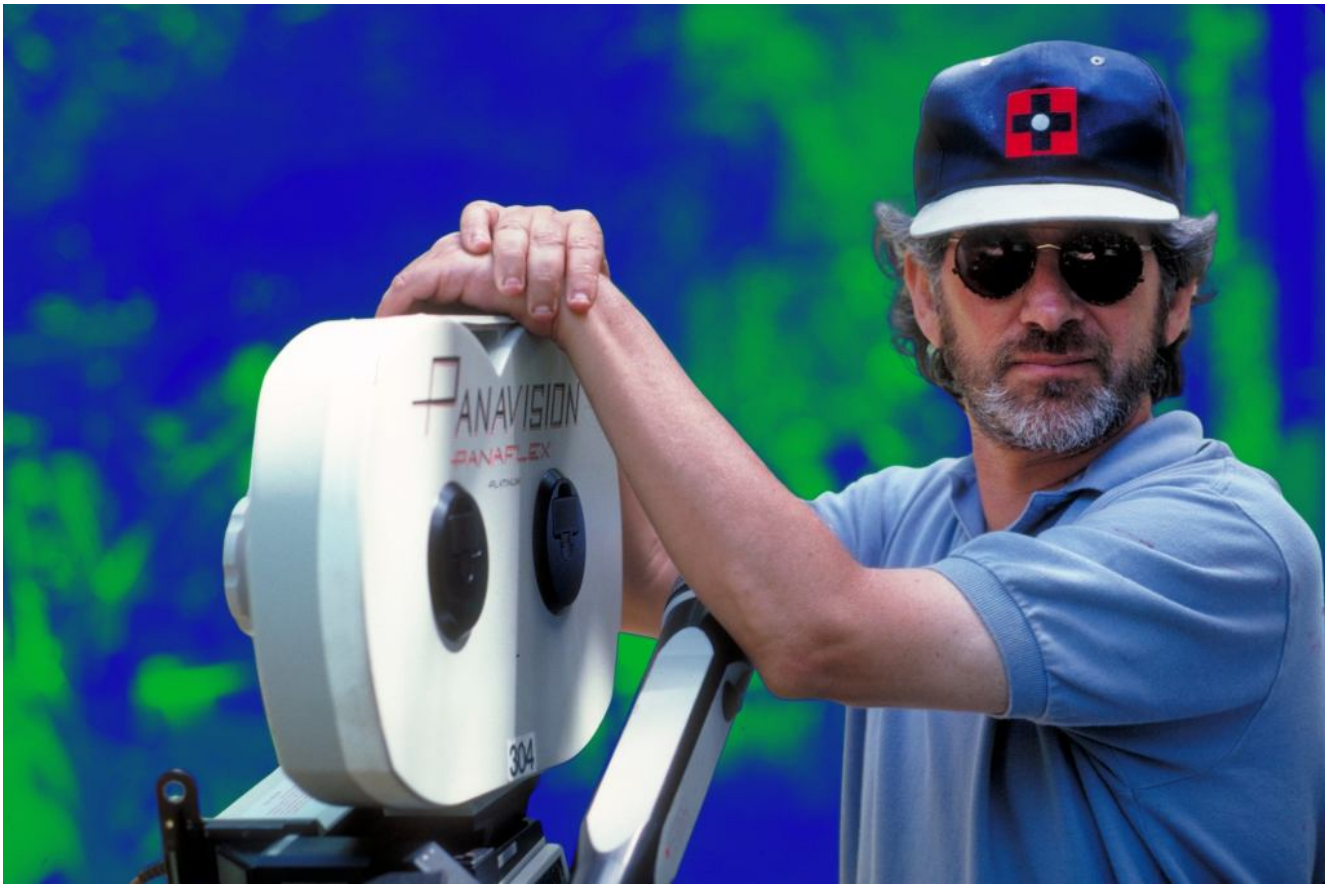
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Steven Spielberg Taught Me One of the Most Important Lessons of My Career — and It Can Transform Yours, Too.



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- What feels groundbreaking today loses its effect over time, so success requires striking while the iron is hot and continually finding new, unexpected ways to engage your audience.
- Rather than overengineering products with bells and whistles, focus on building things that meaningfully change how users experience your product.
- The “wow” factor really comes down to two things — doing something your audience doesn’t expect and doing it in a way that’s memorable and valuable.

I feel obligated to begin this article with an admission that I’ve never personally met Steven Spielberg. I’ve been lucky (or determined) enough in my life to meet some incredibly influential people, including business magnate Steve Forbes and Seahawks coach Pete Carroll.

In fact, I've made a conscious habit of seeking out successful individuals so I can learn from their experiences. But the man often nicknamed the "King of the Hollywood Blockbuster" continues to elude me.

And yet, despite never meeting face to face, Spielberg taught me one of the most important lessons of my entire career. It's a lesson I've learned through engaging with his work.

From *Raiders of the Lost Ark* to *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, Spielberg's most memorable films all have one thing in common: a certain indelible "wow" factor that they manage to crank all the way up to 11. These movies might fall more on the side of entertainment than fine art, but I'm okay with that. The art of entertainment is important, too – especially if your goal is to attract an audience.

So what does it mean to "wow" your audience, and how can you do it for your business? Here's my advice.

Striking while the iron is hot: Novelty and the five-year rule

What is it that made the first *Jurassic Park* movie a modern classic and the rest of the series so much less memorable? All of those movies, as far as I can tell, have roughly the same number of CGI dinosaurs.

But audiences get tired of seeing the same thing over and over again. Box office revenue from superhero movies is currently less than half of what it was at their peak in 2012. And while the *Jurassic Park* series continues to make money, none of the newer movies by other directors have managed to touch the success of Spielberg's original after adjusting for inflation.

When the first *Jurassic Park* movie came out in 1993, no one had ever seen anything like it. It wasn't just new; its novelty made it visceral. People screamed and ducked in their

seats during the T. rex attack. It was so intense that some audience members walked out before the credits, but it also changed movies forever. Most blockbusters made afterwards have been following in its footsteps.

There’s a quote I’ve always associated with Spielberg, although whether he actually said it may be apocryphal: “What got a wow five years ago won’t get a yawn today.” Whether it originated from Spielberg or not, it certainly applies here. It’s also been my mantra for almost every project or platform I’ve ever worked on.

Applying the “wow” factor to business development

Take PhoneBurner, for example: the power dialing platform for outbound teams where I started as Chief Commercial & Product Officer in 2022 and eventually worked my way up to CEO. From my first day with the company, I knew it wasn’t enough to simply keep adding features. It would be like making a movie that was all special effects and no plot.

I didn’t want our platform to be overengineered and unfocused. But more importantly, I didn’t want to bore our audience with bells and whistles that didn’t have real-world impact.

Instead, we focused on building things that changed how people experienced outbound calling, often in ways they didn’t see but rather felt.

We became the first dialer to partner with a Tier 1 carrier. Though few know what this is, it quietly improves the reliability, quality and, notably, deliverability of every call they make. We developed Connect Scores: a way for our users to prioritize contacts most likely to answer the phone based on activity data and carrier signals. And with our ARMOR® service, we rejected gimmicks in favor of data-backed

insight and remediation to help teams reduce spam flags and respond intelligently to answer rate issues.

That might sound dry and technical, but so was the work behind the first CGI dinosaurs. Audiences weren't asked to understand how it worked, only to feel the result. We aimed to do the same — handling the infrastructure, data and deliverability so users could focus on what actually matters: conversations.

The best way to replicate your success might be to diversify

Whether you're a filmmaker or a founder, the "wow" factor ultimately comes down to two things:

1. Doing something your audience doesn't expect
2. Doing it in a way that's memorable and valuable

That might sound simple, but doing it even once is deceptively difficult. Doing it repeatedly is harder still.

That's where listening to your instincts becomes essential. Spielberg knew when to step away from the *Jurassic Park* franchise, but he didn't stop making groundbreaking movies. Instead, he applied what he'd learned to entirely different kinds of stories and found new places to inject the "wow."

I still run PhoneBurner, but the same principle pushes me to branch out. The ARMOR® service is now a standalone solution, so organizations that don't need a dialer, but still need help with spam flags and answer rates, can benefit from our expertise. And while we're known for our work with answer rates, our next "wow" will hit a different angle: helping teams improve what happens once someone actually picks up.

I may not get the chance to meet Spielberg, but I'm thankful for everything he's taught me. Pay attention to your heroes —

not just their work, but how they evolve. Because every “wow” has a shelf life. Knowing how to deliver the next one is what separates a single hit from a career.

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https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/how-steven-spielberg-transformed-my-career/502024

This Simple Blueprint Can Help You Sell More Franchises



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Key Takeaways

- Strong franchise sales start with a clear process everyone actually follows every day.
- Educated prospects buy faster, which makes your website and sales conversations critical.

Like building a house, building a strategy for selling a franchise requires a blueprint. You need a logical plan that takes you from laying the foundation (gathering leads) to

sealing the roof (closing the deal).

If you're struggling to sell, it may be time to stop and take a hard look at whether you have all the pieces in place. Asking two strategic questions can help you structure the plan more effectively.

What are you selling, and how are you selling it?

This is where it starts. You need a franchise that is profitable, that offers a product or service people can get excited about. Look at your franchise disclosure document and the revenue reported in item 19. This is important for people buying a franchise; for many, it's the first thing they look for.

A critical part of sales is the sales process; everyone has one, but not everyone has one that makes sense or is used consistently. Yours must be one that everyone understands, agrees to, and sticks to. It should have some specific channels that you use regularly to attract leads you can convert. For instance, at United Franchise Group, our brand websites are the most effective channels for us, followed by industry trade shows, targeted advertising and public relations.

Your website can be your top lead producer. The more educated a prospect is, the more likely they are to buy. Your website should tell your business story in a clear, engaging way, but always with the focus on your customers and how you help them. Every element should lead the reader to the decision that this franchise business is just what they're looking for – now, how do they get in touch to learn more?

Trade shows give you the face-to-face contact you need to turn prospects into buyers. It's hard to say no to someone who's

standing right in front of you, showing how your product can meet their needs. But you can't just wait for the leads to show up at your booth and ask questions; you have to prospect as actively as if you were cold calling back at the office. (And you are cold calling at the office, right?)

Looking to buy a franchise but don't know where to start? Entrepreneur Franchise Advisors will guide you through the process from start to finish — for free. Sign up here.

In our company's beginning days, we discovered the trade show crew was not bringing in as many sales as before. No one knew why. So, I hired a film crew and recorded the booth from across the hall. When I played it back, they were in shock that I had recorded them, but the video clearly revealed that they were letting people walk past the booth without engaging with them.

They just weren't working diligently in the aisle, working to get the right people at our booth. Once they understood that, they turned it around and our sales were back on track.

From the time you meet a potential franchisee to the time you close the sale, what are your steps, and do you have them down? Does everyone know their roles? Does everyone play their parts in the steps correctly?

Who's on your team?

Look at the team and make sure each member is in the right position. For instance, in staffing the phone room in our franchise development team, we look for younger people with outgoing personalities who want to learn and get experience — people we can work with and promote when the time is right. We use it as a breeding ground for employees for the whole company as well.

Their role is to get information from the prospect and educate

them so that when we pass the information down the sales pipeline, they are ready for the next steps. When the prospect reaches one of our regional vice presidents for closing, we need relationship-building and closing skills for that role. You'd be surprised at how many people just don't ask for the sale!

If you're at the top of your company, you should be aware of what your sales team is doing. That's part of our job, isn't it? If I go to a trade show, I'm not just there saying hi to old friends and colleagues; I'm making sure everybody's working and we're doing what we're supposed to be doing there. I see a lot of my peers who don't even come to trade shows anymore. That's a mistake: They're disconnecting from the whole industry. You have to stay up to date with trends and the people to keep a current pulse on what's going on.

Sign up for our weekly Franchise newsletter to get the latest franchise news, advice and opportunities. Get it in your inbox.

Blueprint for success

Everybody's blueprint is not going to be the same, because every company is not the same. But the basics apply to everyone. It's still a numbers game; it's still about building relationships and it's still about the face-to-face. If your blueprint follows those principles, you're on your way to building strong sales and success.

Key Takeaways

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Like building a house, building a strategy for selling a franchise requires a blueprint. You need a logical plan that takes you from laying the foundation (gathering leads) to sealing the roof (closing the deal).

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https://www.entrepreneur.com/franchises/why-most-franchise-sales-plans-fail-and-how-to-fix-yours/502443

Does Execution Feel Harder Than It Should? Eliminate This Hidden Friction That’s Keeping Your Team Stuck.



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Key Takeaways

- You’re not slow because your people aren’t capable. You’re slow because too many decisions live in the gray.
- Everyone’s busy. Meetings are full. Progress feels real. Yet the same issues keep resurfacing, deadlines slip, and accountability feels fuzzy. That’s not a talent problem — it’s a clarity problem.
- Clarity isn’t about how often something is said but about whether people can use it to make decisions when you’re not in the room.
- If execution feels harder than it should, don’t start by tightening accountability. Start by strengthening clarity.

You’ve hired smart people, and you’ve invested in tools. You’ve also restructured more than once. Given all these, on paper, everything should work.

But the reality is different.

Decisions take longer than they should, and ownership gets blurred. Teams move, then stall, then circle back. You step in more than you want to, not because you enjoy it, but because progress depends on you doing so.

Why execution pain gets mislabeled as accountability

Most leaders describe this as *“an accountability issue.”* They believe people aren’t owning outcomes, follow-through is inconsistent, and as a result, things fall through the cracks.

What I’ve learned over decades of advising senior leaders is different.

Accountability rarely fails on its own. It fails because clarity was never strong enough to support it.

When expectations are vague, accountability becomes personal. When ownership is unclear, follow-up feels like policing. Leaders sense this and hesitate, which only makes the problem worse.

Clarity is not communication

Many leaders respond by explaining things again. They send follow-ups, restate priorities and assume repetition will create alignment.

It doesn’t.

Clarity isn’t about how often something is said but about whether people can use it to make decisions when you’re not in the room.

If a team can’t answer who decides, what inputs matter and

what tradeoffs are acceptable, no amount of communication will fix that gap.

Slow decisions start with unclear judgment rights

One of the earliest execution leaks is **slow decisions**.

This doesn’t happen because leaders are indecisive; it happens because decision authority is fuzzy at best. People aren’t sure who owns the call, so they seek alignment instead of making progress.

Over time, this turns leaders into bottlenecks, and decisions rise upward — not because they should, but **because the system never defined where judgment was meant to live**.

Endless meetings fill the clarity vacuum

Meetings expand when and because clarity is missing elsewhere.

If the decision owner isn’t clear, discussion replaces decision. And if the outcome isn’t clear, the meeting becomes a holding pattern.

People leave busy but uncertain.

I’ve seen leadership teams spend hours each week trying to create alignment in real time because the system never created it in advance.

Broken handoffs reveal where clarity stopped

Handoffs fail for the same reason, and here’s what it looks

like in practice:

One group believes they've completed their work, but another believes it's incomplete. Neither is actually acting irresponsibly because **what's missing is a shared definition of "done**."

Without that, accountability turns into frustration instead of progress.

Hidden problems are a downstream effect

When clarity is inconsistent, people stop raising issues early.

They do that for a number of reasons, including:

- They're unsure what matters most.
- They don't know how concerns will be received.
- They're not sure whether raising a problem will slow things down.

Waiting feels safer than surfacing uncertainty.

By the time leaders see or hear about the issue, it's already costly. What looks like a surprise is usually a delayed signal.

Lost learning is what keeps the cycle going

Teams finish work and move on. Rarely do they pause to extract learning in a way that informs future decisions.

That's not a discipline problem. It's a clarity problem.

If no one owns learning (which is often the case), it disappears.

When learning disappears, organizations repeat the same execution failures under new labels.

Why this persists even with experienced leaders

In my experience of serving as a strategic advisor to leaders around the world, I've observed that most leaders try to solve this by pushing harder and having more follow-ups, more urgency and more personal involvement.

That approach can work briefly, but it then exhausts everyone.

The issue persists for four main reasons:

- The system never changed.
- People are still operating without clear decision rules.
- There are no ownership boundaries.
- Escalation paths don't exist or are unclear.

The shift that changes outcomes

The leaders who break this cycle stop asking how to hold people more accountable and start asking what needs to be clearer so accountability becomes fair and workable.

That shift moves leadership from constant intervention to intentional design. It replaces assumption with explicit agreement.

Clarity makes accountability possible. Without it, accountability feels arbitrary.

What clarity actually requires from leaders

Clarity isn’t a document or a one-time explanation. It’s an ongoing leadership responsibility.

Every new initiative, reorganization or strategic pivot introduces ambiguity, and if leaders don’t actively and intentionally resolve it, teams fill the gaps themselves.

Ultimately, what matters isn’t what was said months ago. It’s what people are using today to make decisions under pressure.

Why scale makes this harder, not easier

As organizations grow, clarity becomes harder to maintain.

More layers, more locations and more handoffs increase the distance between decision and outcome. What once worked informally now needs structure.

This is where many organizations stumble, because the clarity systems that worked locally don’t travel well across hybrid and global environments.

Setting up what comes next

When work spreads across time zones, functions and cultures, accountability becomes even more fragile. Not because leaders stop caring, but because clarity no longer scales automatically. It has to be designed.

Understanding how accountability breaks down at scale is the next leadership challenge, and it’s where execution either holds or quietly unravels.

If execution feels harder than it should, don’t start by tightening accountability. Instead, start by strengthening clarity.

Slow decisions, endless meetings, broken handoffs, hidden problems and lost learning all trace back to the same source. The system hasn’t made judgment, ownership and expectations clear enough.

When leaders take responsibility for clarity, accountability stops feeling heavy. Execution starts to move.

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https://www.entrepreneur.com/leadership/how-leaders-unknowingl

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Grow Your Global Business Reach: Learn a New Language With Rosetta Stone



Disclosure: Our goal is to feature products and services that we think you'll find interesting and useful. If you purchase them, Entrepreneur may get a small share of the revenue from the sale from our commerce partners.

Learning a new language represents incalculable levels of value growth for your business. If you're an entrepreneur who wears multiple hats while trying to expand into international markets, mastering a new language could be the competitive

edge you need.

Whether you're building partnerships in Latin America, sourcing suppliers in Asia, or connecting with European clients, the ability to communicate in a potential partner's native language shows respect and builds trust that can translate directly into business success. That's part of why so many business leaders are rushing to snag this lifetime subscription to Rosetta Stone, which is only $149.97 (reg. $399) with code LANG30.

Why language skills matter for entrepreneurs

Understanding your international clients' language isn't just about translation. It's about grasping cultural nuances, building authentic relationships, and demonstrating commitment to global markets. Business owners who invest in language learning often see stronger partnerships and increased opportunities in new territories.

For the past 27 years, Rosetta Stone has been the go-to language learning platform for top-tier organizations like NASA, Calvin Klein, and TripAdvisor. What sets it apart is the immersive training method that mirrors how you naturally learned your first language. Instead of memorizing vocabulary lists, you'll match words with images and progress through interactive lessons using cutting-edge speech-recognition technology that analyzes your pronunciation 100 times per second.

The lifetime subscription to Rosetta Stone gives you access to all 25 languages, allowing you to switch between them as your business needs evolve. Start with basic conversational skills like negotiating deals and discussing logistics, then advance to intermediate skills like sharing strategic insights and understanding cultural nuances that can make or break

international partnerships.

An investment in long-term growth

For entrepreneurs, time is money. Rosetta Stone’s flexible platform lets you fit language study into your busy schedule, whether that’s 15 minutes between meetings or an hour during your commute. The progressive learning structure ensures you’re building practical skills you can immediately apply in real business scenarios.

Unlike expensive traditional language courses that can run thousands of dollars, this lifetime deal offers unlimited access to expert-led instruction across multiple languages. You’ll develop reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills that position your business for global expansion.

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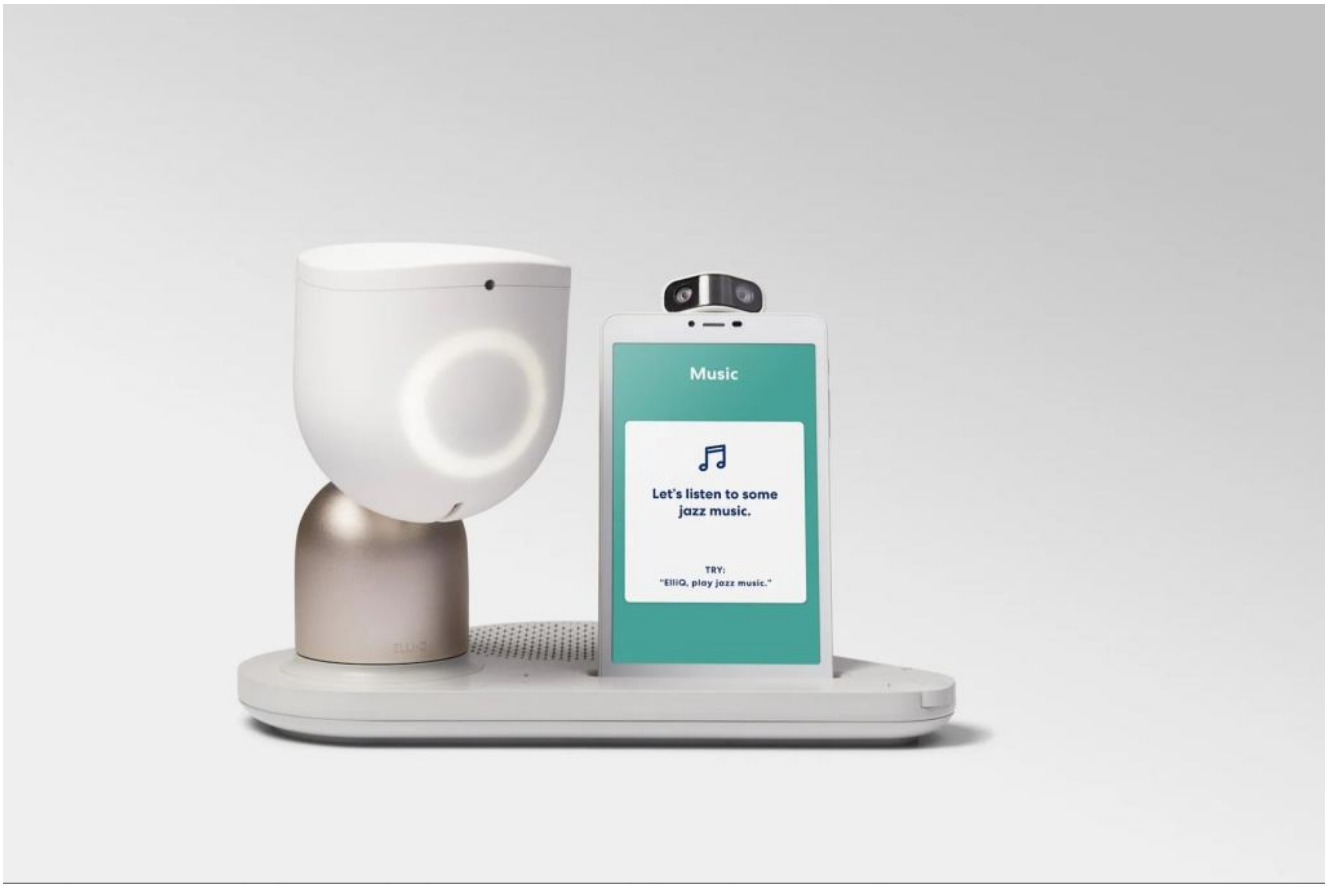
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‘She Makes Me Laugh’: Seniors Are Building Deep Bonds With This Friendly AI Robot



Thousands of seniors living alone are building real relationships with an AI robot that talks to them 30 times a day. ElliQ, created by Israel-based Intuition Robotics, is a voice-activated companion designed for older adults. Unlike Alexa or Siri, ElliQ is proactive. It initiates conversations, suggests activities, and remembers what users tell it.

The results have been striking. New York State reported a 95% reduction in loneliness among seniors who used ElliQ for at least 30 days. “I love ElliQ. She makes me laugh,” said Martha, 79. Barbara, 86, called it life-changing: “She’s my friend.”

Government programs in New York, Florida, and New Jersey are distributing ElliQ for free to combat a loneliness epidemic—with 28% of seniors living alone and that number expected to double by 2038.

Read more

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