2021

CEO FORUM

FIELD GUIDE

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FORUM

Welcome to the CEO Forum Field Guide

Consider the many challenges you face as a CEO—a distributed workforce, countless employee distractions, societal tension and anxiety at epidemic levels, global uncertainty—all now part of your new environment. These things pale in comparison to what is coming…a future workforce that will force change in ways you can't yet even imagine.

This Field Guide is designed to help you cultivate the environment and regenerate health and resilience in your company so you can create a space of inspired work and prosperity—now and in the days to come. There have been a few transformational moments like this in history when the old ways of doing things erode beneath our feet. The future never fails to become the present. The good news is you always have time to learn something new and prepare to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

That time is <u>now</u>.

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> **"Without work, all life goes rotten. But when work is soulless, life stifles and dies."**
>
> Albert Camus

The Nature of Work: How Ecosystems Can Teach Us to Build Lasting & Fulfilling Businesses

Excerpt from 2014 Schumacher Institute Lecture by Matt Stinchcomb

I'm preceded by Wendell Berry, David Orr, Bill McKibben, Judy Wicks, Otto Scharmer, Gus Speth, Ivan Illich—people I consider my heroes. They have been so influential on my self-educational path. It amazes me how much the company has grown. That first year back in the second part of 2005, about $200,000 worth of goods were sold; last year it was $1.35 billion, and this year we exceeded that number months ago. What's important to remember, though, is not these big numbers; it's *who* is making the money, and that is very many people. The way I thought about Etsy started to change as it kept getting bigger. Still taking only 3½ percent of the sale price means that the $1.35 billion dollars last year had a meaningful economic impact in people's lives. I realize this when I travel around the country and talk to Etsy sellers, and I also realize that business can be a tool for creating more value for the world than it takes—in this case economic, but I imagine in other ways, too.

In 2007, when we had twenty or so employees, as a company we all read the book *Deep Economy* by Bill McKibben. That book was an eye opener for me in showing the importance of local community economies and the role that supporting or shopping locally can play. He gave voice to how we felt about business. As a result, I started to rethink the way I should be educating myself.

That same year I met a woman named Linda Ligon, a pioneer in the craft movement in the U.S. in the 1970s. I was telling her about building a new model and all that we were doing. She asked if I had ever read E. F. Schumacher. When I said "Who?," she told me to read a book called *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. I did, and it set me on a whole new path. When Schumacher talked about evolving to a new lifestyle with new methods of production and new patterns of consumption, a lifestyle designed for permanence, it made so much sense. It represented everything that I was feeling, and I started to see the role Etsy could play in realizing his vision with our big number of small things—rather than a small number of very big things—by means of all the connected human-scale economies that were forming in Etsy.

That was when Etsy's purpose started to change. And so I helped create a new mission statement for Etsy: Re-imagine commerce in ways that build a more fulfilling and lasting world. And to do that not in order to make as much money as possible but to build a world that is lasting, more sustainable, more durable from a social, ecological, and financial point of view and also is more joyful, more connected, more fulfilling.

Schumacher said this too. In *Small Is Beautiful,* he wrote, "The perpetual state of crisis in which we find ourselves suggests that there might be something wrong with our education." And I believe that's true. For him, the task of education first and foremost was to transmit ideas and values. He also wrote, "More education can help us only if it produces more wisdom." Twenty years later, David Orr echoed this sentiment in his Schumacher Lecture when he

> **cul·ti·vate**
> /ˈkəltəˌvāt/
>
> prepare and use (company) for growing abundant outcomes

said, "The skills, aptitudes, and attitudes necessary to industrialize the earth are not necessarily the same as those that will be needed to heal the earth or to build durable economies and good communities." Isn't this what we are trying to do with Etsy—re-imagine commerce to build durable economies and good communities? So I asked myself, what are the skills, aptitudes, and attitudes that will get us there?

As a first step, to echo Schumacher, we need to bring more wisdom to education. Business skills are certainly essential—you do need to know accounting and a few other business skills to be an entrepreneur—but I believe they should be supplemented by or secondary to courses in systems thinking, permaculture, ecological commerce, biomimicry, art, craft, authentic leadership, ethics, citizenship, nonviolent communication, community organization, a just culture, and mindfulness. These are the subjects that have been especially useful for me as I've been on my educational journey. I think we need to take education away from the wholly theoretical and move more toward the experiential. David Orr, in that same lecture, said, "Things like rivers are real; disciplines are abstract." My whole education in business has been experiential—I just figure things out by doing them. I've made mistakes, but that's okay. I often ask myself if mastery of Microsoft Excel matters more than mastery of one's own mind through meditation. Will I learn more in a marketing class or walking in the woods?

In thinking about the lessons we could learn from the nature of ecosystems when it comes to business, the first thing I find applicable is that it is both complex and distributed—like Etsy with its 1.2 million small businesses. A big number of small things rather than a small number of very big things turns out to be a highly resilient structure for business.

Another characteristic of ecosystems is that they're dynamic, always shifting and always changing. This is extremely important for entrepreneurs to emulate. Like ecosystems, businesses are always changing, and they're always moving really quickly. I attribute my longevity at Etsy to the fact that I don't hold on too tightly, that I am flexible, that I move with the energy and the flow because I recognize that things are moving. I find that

those who get too caught up in identity or a fixed sense of "I am this person, so I need to do this" are the ones who don't last, and theirs are the businesses that don't last.

Ecosystems are patterns within patterns—big ecosystems made up of ever smaller ones, and this is probably one of the most important lessons you can apply to business. Using Etsy as an example, we are part of many ecosystems, both larger and smaller than we are. We are part of the business ecosystem that comprises all businesses but also of a smaller ecosystem of tech companies and smaller still of the ecosystems of New York businesses and Brooklyn businesses.

All of these parts are (also) interdependent, and this is key. The success of Etsy is linked to the success of all those other pieces. So if you see yourself as part of an interdependent ecosystem, then you need to make the decisions that create the most benefit for all of the little stakeholders. You should never make decisions that are to the detriment of one of those stakeholders because you're going to be harming yourself if you do. You should conduct business in ways that are good for your peers, good for your neighbors, good for your employees, good for you—and perhaps most importantly, good for the planet. The planet is part of the ecosystem; the planet *is* the ecosystem.

re·gen·er·ate
/rəˈjenəˌrāt/

regrow (people) or
replace lost or injured
(people engagement)

Looking to ecosystems, we're presented with a strategy that teaches us what we need to know to operate successfully—namely, that the most abundance exists at the connection point between two ecosystems. Think about the edge of a forest or an estuary, where you have the most biodiversity and the richest soil. Similarly, we create the most abundance for Etsy when I'm connected as the ecosystem of me—body, mind, and spirit—with my team, when I see that Katie's success is my success and Will's success is my success, and so on. Another connection point: we create the most value when we connect a buyer with a seller or when we connect two sellers as a team; those meaningful transactions are what makes Etsy special. Much of the work we do is really about trying to strengthen these connections because when we do, then we're able to see the interdependence of all the different parts and make the decisions that create the most value for people and the planet. I want to quote Judy Wicks again because she knew this inherently. In her Schumacher lecture she said, "I attribute our success…to making decisions not for the sake of maximizing profits but instead maximizing relationships with our customers and staff, with our community, and with our suppliers and our natural environment." Her emphasis on relationships is crucial.

I want to end with one last thought that is a challenge of sorts, both to myself and to all of you. If you consider the huge problems we're facing right now, to meet the challenge, I believe we all need to think more carefully about the choices we make as businesses, as individuals, as consumers. We all make choices. We choose to eat one thing instead of another; we choose what we read, what we watch, where we go online; we choose to buy one item or another item; we choose to take the stairs or ride in an elevator, fly somewhere or stay put; we choose to engage with the world around us or stare into our phones; we choose to listen deeply or to be lost in thought. I say this because we need to spend more time thinking before we act. And maybe as both entrepreneurs and consumers, we should pause and ask ourselves what choices we can make to strengthen the connections among, and create the most benefit for, all of the parts of this interdependent ecosystem. Then, by acting accordingly, we might begin to build a new system, one that creates far more value *for* communities and the planet than it takes *from* them. This is what I'm working to do in my personal life and with Etsy. It's all about choices. The challenge that I give to myself and to you and to your businesses is to choose connection in everything you do and live in fragments no longer.

Read the full lecture here:

Introduction to the CEO Forum Field Guide

There exists an underlying myth in business that growth is limitless, but it is mathematically impossible to grow infinitely in a finite world. We can't keep pulling yield out of our companies without tending to the underlying environment inside and around them. We saw this plainly in 2020 when people became increasingly more depleted as companies and communities lived in a perpetual state of crisis. We were confronted by the finite limits in ourselves and the systems we are a part of. The resources we must draw upon—people, natural resources, time, and more—are finite. The answer to sustainable growth lies in how we tend to our environments.

This Field Guide is designed to equip you to:

1. Nourish yourself

2. Nourish the environment in and around your company and community

This Field Guide considers nourishing yourself and your environment through three distinct and critical lenses:

Lens	Definition	Key Concept	Myth
I	I, the CEO, President, and Owner	Health, resilience, and abundance begins first with me.	My well-being doesn't impact my company. It doesn't impact my work when I'm depleted.
WE	We, as a Team	A resilient environment is a diverse environment, where every person is a contributing part of the health, balance, resilience, and abundance of the whole.	I can do it better. If I let others contribute, they'll compromise the goals and success of the company. If people don't speak up, they must be fine.
IT	It, the Company and Community around us	A sustainable company is one that nourishes the environment in and around it and recognizes its interconnectedness and interdependence with the world around it.	My company's success is not dependent on the environment, it's solely dependent on me and my will to succeed.

The Goal: True Abundance…that this sad tale would never be said of our lives or of those who choose to spend their lives in our companies:

> **"Life is something I don't see half enough of,' said a thoughtful and sensitive worker. 'Perhaps I shall see more soon because I don't intend to stay in this company much longer. I shall not be missed—nobody is ever missed. But what of him who takes my place? Will he stick it? If he does, he will receive at the end of 50 years a gold watch—then he will be able to measure in retrospect the time he's wasted."**
>
> Anonymous

GUT CHECK

To what degree am I experiencing vocation?

How is my well-being?

What signs let me know I'm beginning to reach limits and am becoming depleted?

The Calling of Vocation

The Latin for vocation is vocare, meaning "to call." It speaks to being called to achieve something beyond ourselves. Whether in sustained periods of inspiration or brief moments of joy and fulfillment, when we experience vocation, it unleashes us in ways that mere work cannot.

David Whyte puts it this way, "A true vocation calls us out beyond ourselves; breaks our heart in the process and then humbles, simplifies and enlightens us about the hidden, core nature of the work that enticed us in the first place."

To discover your vocation, consider:

What am I being called to do in the world?

What is the world calling me to do?

How does my work currently honor these two things?

How can I use my gifts in greater ways to honor and fulfill my calling?

vo·ca·tion
/vōˈkāSH(ə)n/

to call

"Vocation does not come from willfulness. It comes from listening."

Parker Palmer

Stress isn't typically due to having too much work. It's usually a signal that we are incongruent and, on some level, not aligned with our hearts.

What can I learn from noticing the areas where I am experiencing stress?

"Vocation is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking*

Designing My Role to Thrive

It can be incredibly freeing to see ourselves as designers of our life and leadership. Whatever our current state, we are free to redesign as we wish.

Well-being

The first key to thriving in our role is to prioritize and maximize our well-being. One could argue it is the foundation of everything. According to the *Greater Good Science Center*, there are 12 keys to well-being, and they speak to the fact that we are not separate but deeply connected to others.

Altruism	Awe	Bridging Differences	Compassion	Diversity	Empathy
Forgiveness	Gratitude	Happiness	Mindfulness	Purpose	Social Connection

Access the full list here:

To maximize your well-being, consider:

When was there a time I could not feel more alive? What about that experience was healthy?

When was the last time I questioned or challenged my beliefs and what matters most?

Describe what is unhealthy in my well-being? (emotional, physical, spiritual)

What do I need to know or understand about myself to achieve personal abundance?

> **well-be·ing**
> /'wel ˈˌbēiNG/
>
> the state of being comfortable, healthy,
> or happy

Based on my insights, what structures do I need to put in place to create sustained well-being for myself?

Unique Genius

Each person is born with intellect, gifts, natural ability, and creative power that brings uniqueness and color to the lens we bring to the world and the way we do our work. Understanding our unique genius is a foundational key to thriving in our roles.

To discover your unique genius, consider:

What is the lens I bring to everything I do, no matter where I am?
Example: intention, understanding concepts in a linear way, continuously challenging what is, visually seeing solutions, etc.

What do others say I am great at or regularly ask me to contribute?

What is unique about the way I approach my work and life?

Based on my insights, what do I think my unique genius is?

Role

The problem with viewing ourselves as having many separate roles is that we are <u>one</u> whole person, and a multiplicity of roles can leave us fragmented, disjointed, and in conflict. When we design our role around our unique genius and when our environment is conducive to our unique genius, we are far more likely to thrive.

To design your role around your unique genius, consider:

Make a list of the roles I play and describe them:

Do I tend to view my roles as connected or separate, cohesive or competing? Why?

To what extent is my organizational environment conducive to my genius? How could I improve it?

If I redesigned my role to reflect my unique genius, what would it look like?

How can my genius inspire me, even when the work I am doing is not what I would choose?
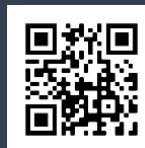
gen·ius
/ˈjēnyəs/

exceptional intellectual or creative power or natural ability

Dive deeper in discovering your unique genius here:

Learn more about nRhythm's Regenerative Organizational Design here

& tell them CTLF sent you!

Creating the Conditions

The key to leadership in the 21st century is unleashing the potential of others. To this end, the CEO has one job: to create the conditions for people to thrive.

We must practice not having all the answers.

Confucius said, "When you know a thing, to hold that you know it, and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it—that is knowledge."

In what areas do I need to recognize I do not know?

Where do I need to practice *not* having all the answer?

Unleashing Potential in Others

The first step to unleashing potential in others is cultivating a love for the work of your company and helping them find ways to bring their own vocation into that work.

To unleash potential in your people, consider:

What has held me back in the past from engaging my people fully in the work of my company?

What has been the cost?

How can I cultivate a love for the work we're doing and the impact we're making?

How can I create opportunities for the vocation of my people to meet the work of my company?

"**Leaders are not responsible for the results; leaders are responsible for the people who are responsible for the results. And the best way to drive performance in an organization is to create an environment in which information can flow freely, mistakes can be highlighted, and help can be offered and received.**"

Simon Sinek, *The Infinite Game*

The second step to unleashing potential in others is intentionally bringing *their* voices into the room, engaging them quickly and fully in the work of the organization and harnessing *their* creativity.

Tom Chi is the inventor who started Google X, Google's invention team. During their first 10 months, he and his team of 10 produced more than half the patents Google had ever generated in years prior. Patents included Google Glass, self-driving car technology, Project Loon, glucose monitoring contact lenses, and more. **Tom utilizes a powerful methodology to solve big problems quickly**, and this technique allowed his team to create a working prototype of Google Glass in just one day! He teaches people all over the world how to solve big environmental, social, health, corporate problems rapidly, and it begins with a unique brainstorming process.

You can use this methodology to invite as many unfiltered ideas into the room as possible, allow every voice to be heard, and engage your people in solving the problems of the company. <u>Here's how:</u>

1. Pose a clear question around a problem you wish to solve. "How do we…?"

    The Process:
    - Each person individually writes for two minutes every idea they can think of to solve the stated problem.
    - Each person must write at least one ridiculously simple idea—something so "easy" you normally wouldn't bother writing it down.
    - Each person must also write at least one outright crazy idea—something so outlandish, it feels nearly impossible to accomplish.

    The Reasoning:
    By individually writing, we invite our minds to engage in the question without filtering or holding back based on what others are saying. By sharing simple ideas, we are guaranteed to have solutions we know will work. By sharing crazy ideas, we stretch ourselves out of our comfort zones into a place of creativity, and we give ourselves permission to explore new possibilities. The more ideas, the better. You're far more likely to find the best and most successful solution when choosing from 50 ideas rather than one or two.

2. Start a two-minute timer and begin. When the timer ends, ask everyone to stop writing.

3. Go around your team and ask every person to share what they wrote down. To move quickly, invite each person to share only the ideas they wrote that are new, avoiding repetition. Once complete, it may be helpful to categorize and combine ideas so that like suggestions become one.

4. Prioritize the ideas, choosing two or three, equally considering both big, crazy ideas and ideas you know you can immediately implement to be successful.

5. Repeat the process by asking everyone to write down ideas to build on, expand, and improve the two or three chosen concepts.

6. Execute. With the energy and engagement generated through this process, your team will be ready and excited to make the ideas a reality!

> **"Good management is the art of making problems so interesting and their solutions so constructive that everyone wants to get to work and deal with them."**
>
> Paul Hawken

Tending Your Environment

There really is no getting around the fact that our companies are environments, and for them to be healthy, they need to be tended so that the people in and around them can contribute to the company's growth and abundance.

E. F. Schumacher aptly stated, "Infinite growth of material consumption in a finite world is an impossibility." Yet, how often do we fail to recognize and accept finite limits? "I believe every human has a finite number of heartbeats. I don't intend to waste any of mine," said Neil Armstrong.

This Field Guide will help you explore four aspects of your company's environment:

1. The Foundation: Is it strong and deep enough to sustain the growth you desire?

2. The Goal: Are you building a big company or a great one?

3. The Connection Points: Are they strong and contributing to your health and growth?

"One of the biggest shifts is recognizing that your #1 responsibility should be creating conditions. Period. It's about the environment that is being created. The more engaged people are, the more creativity is being put to work. The more people can bring their whole selves, the more potential there is."

Tre' Cates, Founder, nRhythm

1. The Foundation: Is it strong and deep enough to sustain the growth you desire?

How Deep Are the Roots?

Redwood trees are said to be one of the most resilient trees in the world, averaging eight feet to as much as twenty feet in diameter, and some as tall as 375 feet high. A typical redwood forest is believed to contain more biomass per square foot than any other place on earth, including the Amazon Rainforest. Because the bark chars before it burns and forms an ablative shield protecting the living tree inside, they are resilient even against fire.

This is in large part due to their powerful root systems, which reach down as much as three feet into the earth. They typically grow slowly so that their roots methodically make their way deeper without damaging surrounding land. Their roots provide a reliable source of nourishment as they draw water from the deep underground. Redwood tree root systems are actually comprised of hundreds of tiny roots embedded in the wood itself. More and deeper roots lead to stronger, taller trees.

Similarly, when we consider companies that desire to grow big and strong, it begs the question, what does the foundation look like and is it strong enough to support the growth above it? We should only grow when our roots are deep and strong enough to support it.

To support your company's growth, consider:

What are the "roots" of our company that provide a strong foundation for our growth?
Consider a foundation for thriving teams, individual contribution, aligned decision-making, resources, suppliers and vendors, intellectual capital, and more.

Where is our growth plan being supported by roots that are unquestionably strong enough to support it?

Where is our growth plan at risk or compromised by weak or shallow roots?

What is our current growth pace and why?

Where is our growth methodical and well-paced, so as not to damage the people, community, and environment in and around our company?

Where is our growth unsustainable or damaging to the people, community, and environment in and around our company?

What needs to change?

"In their highest boughs the world rustles, their roots rest in infinity; but they do not lose themselves there, they struggle with all the force of their lives for one thing only: to fulfil themselves according to their own laws, to build up their own form, to represent themselves. Nothing is holier, nothing is more exemplary than a beautiful, strong tree."

Nobel Laureate Hermann Hesse

2. The Goal: Are you building a big company or a _great_ one?

Defining Great

As CEOs, we are often made to feel foolish when we pay attention to more than just the bottom line, but as human beings, we are wired to do so. Matt Stinchcomb recalls, "At Etsy, when we tried to put more focus on building local communities, our shareholders laughed at us." That's not surprising because Wall Street rewards companies that maximize financial profits alone. Wendell Berry calls this kind of economy and culture "the one-night stand."

The Great Resignation, the seismic downshift in the workforce in the wake of the current pandemic, is a reminder that people value something very different—companies that maximize _their_ personal potential.

We must reconcile the conflict between big and great for ourselves and decide what kind of company we want to build and how we will define "great." We must decide what our company will honor and what it will stand for.

> **"When I open my closet door in the morning, I see a sign that says, 'Good morning, beautiful business.' It's a reminder to me of just how beautiful business can be when we put all our creativity, energy, and care into producing one product or service in exchange for another. When we think about it, economic exchange can be one of the most meaningful and beautiful interactions among human beings. My business is the way I express my love for the world, and that is what makes it a thing of beauty."**
>
> Judy Wicks, Proprietor, White Dog Cafe

Read more here:

What is beautiful about our business?

Years from now, when people talk about our company, what will they say about it? What would I want them to say?

What does "great" mean to me?

What does "great" mean to my people?

What forms of capital will we grow and measure in our definition of "great"?
Consider multiple forms of capital: beyond just financial, including human, intellectual, community, relationship, and environmental capital.

The Pressure to Perform

To successfully grow multiple forms of capital, we must acknowledge the very real pressures that exist to perform, grow, and generate financial profit. In his book, *Margin*, Richard Swenson says, "We have more 'things per person' than any other nation in history. Closets are full, storage space is used up, and cars can't fit into garages. Having first imprisoned us with debt, possessions then take over our houses and occupy our time. This begins to sound like an invasion. Everything I own owns me. Why would I want more?" While to a degree an extreme statement, it draws our attention to the worldwide propensity to have, get, make, and do more.

My Life

What pressures exist in my life and how do they affect my decision-making?

What do I really need for myself and my family?

How will I define prosperity?

My Company

What pressures exist in my company and how do they affect our decision-making?

What do our shareholders and investors need?

What is the smartest way for us to achieve the growth we need and desire?

What lines are we unwilling to cross, because in building big, it could compromise "great"?

> Invest in the millennium.
> Plant sequoias. Say that
> your main crop is the forest
> that you did not plant, that
> you will not live to harvest.
> Say that the leaves are
> harvested when they have
> rotted into the mold.
> Call that profit.
> Prophesy such returns.
>
> Wendell Berry

Write a Quality of Life Statement for Your Company
Taken from nRhythm's [Regenerative Organizational Design](#)

It's not uncommon to see great companies built at the expense of great lives. One could argue that if our lives are compromised in the process, what we're building isn't that great after all. A Quality of Life Statement defines what we want our lives to look like inside our organization, and it extends to our team, customers, suppliers and beyond.

How to create a Quality of Life Statement:
- With your teams, write all the words that describe the way you want your lives to be inside the organization.
- Work together to combine similar concepts and prioritize the things that are most important to your team.
- Combine the words into a statement that best captures the essence of the quality of life you desire to have.
- Allow your entire company to react to the statement and share feedback to improve it.
- Periodically revisit your Quality of Life Statement, recognizing that each time a new employee joins your team, your environment evolves in response to the contribution they bring, so your Quality of Life Statement should evolve too.

> **We are healthy, calm, spacious, and grounded. We are present. We are self-aware, continually and humbly growing as leaders. We are committed. Our relationships are deep and trusting, and we are accountable for how we serve. We have fun and enjoy the journey. We cultivate the genius in ourselves and help others discover their own.**
>
> Colorado Thought Leaders Forum Quality of Life Statement

3. The Connection Points: Are they strong and contributing to health and growth?

Evaluating the Connection Points in Your Company
In Matt Stinchcomb's Schumacher Institute Lecture, he said, "Looking to ecosystems, we're presented with a strategy that teaches us what we need to know to operate successfully—namely, that the most abundance exists at the connection point between two ecosystems…Much of the work we do is really about trying to strengthen these connections because when we do, then we're able to see the interdependence of all the different parts and make the decisions that create the most value for people and the planet."

To evaluate the connection points in your company, consider:

Rate the Connection Points Between:	1 (weak) to 4 (strong)	What do I notice about these connection points?
Me and myself		
Me and my team		
My team members and each other		
My company and my customers		
My company and my suppliers		
My company and the community around it		
My company and our market		
My company and the planet		

<u>To understand why strong connection points exist (or don't exist) in and around your company, consider:</u>

What is creating the conditions for <u>strong</u> connection points where they exist?

What is creating the conditions for <u>weak, compromised, extractive, or nonexistent</u> connection points?

<u>To intentionally strengthen connection points, consider:</u>

How can our customers benefit from their connection to our business?

How can the community around us benefit from its connection to our business?

How can our decisions best maximize our relationships?

Which connection points will we strengthen first?

<u>To incorporate connection points into your strategy, consider:</u>

Where do we need a greater awareness of the intersections that exist in our environment—between our company and the people, companies, communities, and world around us?

How does an intention to maximize relationships impact or change our overall strategy?

"The challenge that I give to myself and to you and to your businesses is to choose connection in everything you do and live in fragments no longer."

Matt Stinchcomb

4. The Resilience: Are you able to withstand difficulties and bounce back quickly?

Resilience

Bruce Lee equated fluidity to power. "To be a great martial artist, you become like water. Water is totally accepting of whatever gets thrown into it. I'm like water and you are jumping into my ocean when you fight me. And to be like water is the most powerful way you can be, both as a martial artist and as a human being."

To create greater resilience in yourself, consider:

In what ways am I like water, totally accepting of whatever gets thrown at me and open to bouncing back better?

In what ways am I resistant and inflexible?

To create greater resilience in your company, consider:

What parts of my company are resilient, able to withstand and recover quickly from difficult conditions?

re·sil·ience
/ rəˈzilyəns /

the capability to recover quickly from difficulties, toughness

What parts of my company are inflexible, not resilient, or rigid?

What factors influence our responsiveness and adaptability to the environment of change we live in?

How can we cultivate a culture that can evolve quickly to meet the moment before me?

> "What we resist not only persists, but will grow in size."
>
> Carl Jung

What one action will we take to increase our resilience?

Margin

In our busy lives, we often put a lot on our plates, pushing some things to the margins and letting others fall off from time to time. In times such as these, have you ever noticed what is sitting out on the margins that you cannot *not* do, because it calls to you? Margin isn't just how much space there is in our lives – it's noticing what is on the fringes that draws us and allowing more space to nourish and grow those things.

<u>To let the margins of your life and company speak to you, consider:</u>

<u>In my life:</u>
What do I think about often and make time for, even when my plate is full?

What is filling my plate, and should it be there?

How can slowing down help me?

<u>In my company:</u>
What ideas or possibilities in my company do I pursue even when it conflicts with other priorities?

What is occupying my company's time and resources, and should it be there?

Where do I need to say no, remove, and strip away, so that I can give more to my vocation and to the work most aligned with the "great" company I am trying to build?

**It doesn't seem like it would be true.
It doesn't seem like slowing down would get more done.
But it does.**

**Every day I do it, I get more done.
Every day I experiment with slowing down I understand the tortoise and the hare.**

If I'm doing the right thing, I can do it as slowly as I want, and my life will get better.

If I'm doing the wrong thing (caused by a stressed, rush-rush contaminated decision-making process) it doesn't matter how fast I go, I'm going to be even more STRESSED when I'm finished because it wasn't the wisest thing for me to be giving my time to.

And I know it, and it stresses me out to know it.

If I am on the wrong road, it doesn't matter how good I get at speeding down the road. It's the wrong road.

I need to remind myself of this: Slow down and win.

Take your sweet, gentle time and have this one conversation ahead of me be relaxed and warm so that the relationship I have becomes relaxed and warm.

**Slow down.
Even slower than that.
There you go.**

Steve Chandler

"**Shape clay into a vessel; it is the space within that makes it useful. Cut doors and windows for a room; it is the holes which make it useful. Therefore, benefit comes from what is there; usefulness from what is not there.**"

Lao Tzu

Food for Thought

"Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius—and a lot of courage—to move in the opposite direction."

~ E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: Economies as if People Mattered*

"There is a tendency at every important but difficult crossroad to pretend that it's not really there."

~ Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature*

"I will say, from my own belief and experience, that imagination thrives on contact, on tangible connection. For humans to have a responsible relationship to the world, they must imagine their places in it. To have a place, to live from a place without destroying it, we must imagine it.

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

J.R.R. Tolkien
The Fellowship of The Ring

By imagination we see it illuminated by its own unique character and by our love for it. By imagination we recognize with sympathy the fellow members, human and nonhuman, with whom we share our place.

By that local experience we see the need to grant a sort of preemptive sympathy to all the fellow members, the neighbors, with whom we share the world.

As imagination enables sympathy, sympathy enables affection. And it is in affection that we find the possibility of a neighborly, kind, and conserving economy."

~ Wendell Berry, *It All Turns on Affection*

And now...

It's up to us to lead people to make positive changes and create new possibility…to use whatever power and influence we have to mobilize people to work for what they care about it. As Theodore Roosevelt encouraged us, "Do what we can with what we have, where we are, right now."

Now What?

Once again, consider the many challenges you face as a CEO—a distributed workforce, countless employee distractions, societal tension and anxiety at epidemic levels, global uncertainty—all now part of your new environment.

These things pale in comparison to what is coming…a future workforce that will force change in ways you can't yet even imagine.

There have been a few transformational moments like this in history when the old ways of doing things erode beneath our feet. The future never fails to become the present.

The good news is you always have time to rethink, learn something new, and prepare to meet the challenges that lie ahead. That time is now. Only **you** can decide what to do in your company.

This is your moment.

cour·age
/ˈkərij/

from the Latin root HEART:
to act from a place of heart and vulnerability

"Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

Mary Oliver

About Colorado Thought Leaders Forum

Colorado Thought Leaders Forum, Colorado's most revolutionary business community, is on a mission to redefine what modern leadership and business culture look like today and well into the future.

For companies to thrive, the leaders of those companies—CEOs, owners, and key people like you—must also thrive. And we believe thriving has everything to do with the quality and depth of our leadership, the way we design our roles, and the people we surround ourselves with.

CTLF is uniquely equipped to help CEOs and their leaders expand their thinking, challenge convention, grow as a person, and experience authentic connection with others.

We're living in one of the most challenging environments of our lifetime. And yet, all the things we're facing at this moment in history pale in comparison to the relentless force that promises to redefine the future in ways we can't yet imagine. That force is the next generation of workers and the courageous individuals who embrace the responsibility to lead them.

Right now, today, is our window of opportunity to challenge the status quo. To redefine what words like "leadership" and "company culture" should mean going forward. To think differently about how we are tending to the environment in our company.

In this moment, we have before us a real gift—the gift of *potential* to make a profound impact in our lives, our companies, and our communities. Maybe even the world.

We not only have the opportunity, but the responsibility, to look honestly at the environment that exists now—for your people, your suppliers and partners, your customers, and the community around us—and to *redesign* it so that our foundations...our roots...are strong enough to support the sustained, healthy growth we desire.

The days of rugged individualism in leadership, of driving company growth by swooping in and playing the hero, are over. Instead, the future belongs to the leaders who attract, grow, and retain top talent by creating the conditions—the environment for people to realize their full potential at work.

As leaders, the best way to create this kind of profound, beneficial impact on our watch is to bravely challenge convention together, embrace opportunities that may challenge us and, frankly, take risks that may lead to some mistakes. But knowing full well that true growth...true potential...comes from both.

That's what Colorado Thought Leaders Forum is all about.

About Our Programs

Every organization has a unique genius—something they do better than anyone else. Colorado Thought Leaders Forum's genius is creating the conditions for authenticity, deep connection, and growth. Because we move beyond tips, tools and techniques, there is real transformation. We help leaders unleash their potential by seeing themselves as designers of their leadership and life.

CTLF Creates Opportunities for You and Your Teams To:

1. CHALLENGE CONVENTION
2. INSPIRE AND EXPAND YOUR THINKING
3. INCREASE YOUR IMPACT
4. GROW AS A PERSON
5. AUTHENTICALLY CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Learn more here:

From the CTLF Community

"CTLF has helped me to be a more thoughtful and mindful CEO. CTLF has helped me to develop stronger business and personal relationships with other entrepreneurs."

"I now have a circle of peers that I can go to for advice, inspiration, feedback, and business development needs and my influence has grown more in three years than in the decade prior."

"I learn so much from my fellow leaders and am constantly striving to improve myself and my leadership with the lessons learned."

"At my company, I've had no turnover, a definite increase in productivity, and my overall confidence has improved by my participation."

"You can do good and do well at the same time. (CTLF) reinforces this with actions and ideas that I use in my business."

"The strong connections I have made…give me an honest sounding board for challenges and issues that I have to address, which either confirm my approach or allow me to adjust to better meet my organization's needs."

"(CTLF) continues to give me permission to (be) authentic, vulnerable and humble in a way that deepens my professional relationships and enhances my greater influence in the business community."

"CTLF has been the most valuable community that I have been involved with. The culture, quality of people, events and speakers, and opportunity for growth are bar none."

Reflections for Growth & Expansion

John F. Kennedy once said, "Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other," yet how often does learning lead to true leadership transformation? E.F. Schumacher believed, "The perpetual state of crisis in which we find ourselves suggests that there might be something wrong with our education. More education can help us only if it produces more wisdom."

Since the early days of the pandemic, our Board of Advisors has convened every Monday morning for a call, where we regularly ask ourselves challenging questions, push ourselves to think anew, encourage one another to be honest about the state of our lives and companies, and find fresh inspiration for the week ahead. Throughout the year, our entire community has joined in these kinds of conversations, too. Afterall, community and team isn't the place to get your questions answered; it's the place to get your answers questioned.

Many of us grew up with the mindset that to *be* valued, we must *do* more. Regardless of the motivation, countless years were spent doing for love, respect, success, admiration, and reward of all kinds. The more we were in action, the greater our sense of control. Yet the pandemic made one thing infinitely clear—control may have been an illusion anyway. We began to embrace a more flexible and open, less rigid, and deeply present way of living. After all, "you always get your way if you have more than one way!" Some realized that in ways big and small. We experienced a jolting detox from our addiction to the constant action that once defined so much of our lives.

It seemed as if the entire world was plunged into Dr. Seuss's *The Waiting Place*, in which playwright Samuel Beckett captured powerfully in the final lines of *Waiting for Godot:* "Shall we go? / Yes, let's go. / (They do not move)." There in the sitting place, we wrestled with our desire for normalcy and the realization that there is much about the "old normal" we no longer want back. It became evident that the rush-rush tyranny of the urgent that led to some of our success in seasons past came at the expense of deeper, more meaningful work and connection.

Upon reflection, our propensity to be in action—perhaps even hyper-action—pushed things that really mattered into the shadows, not willfully or consciously, and often without notice. In the glaring light of solitude, we noticed health and well-being had been compromised. We spotted signs that relationships needed tending. In the midst of the heaviness we felt, we clung to the opportunity to reimagine our lives moving forward. We held onto notions like "Don't waste a good crisis," "Calm is contagious," and "Vulnerability is strength."

When the unrest and inequality of our world entered our conversations, we began talking more about real transformation and change. We asked ourselves, "What is one step you are taking right now to walk towards the future you desire?" After all, purposeful action taken step-by-step and compounded over time is the only way to make real change happen. Much like a garden that needs to be disrupted and tilled in the spring to create the conditions for new growth, the question, "Where do I need to be intentionally disturbed in order to experience growth?" rang true.

With the ever-present reality that many are still suffering personally and are in a fight to keep their companies alive, the common language we share at CTLF of relationship (even kinship) and service is worth holding tightly in the midst of any storm.

As we continue to plan for a future tied to an unpredictable world, let's point our proverbial boats towards the horizon in the direction of our choosing and decide what we will do with the time given. After all, who wants to die with our sailboat still in our driveway?

To grow and expand your thinking through personal reflection, ponder these questions:

- How am I doing, *really*?

- What difficult decisions are in front of me right now?

- How has this season most transformed or changed my thinking and why?

- How do we emerge from this stronger?

- What is the one thing that matters most?

- Where in my life, specifically, could I benefit from listening with compassion?

- Where am I extracting from myself and others, and what is it costing?

- What can I let go of that no longer serves me?

- Are there any assumptions or beliefs I hold that may no longer be true?

- Why is it so hard to let go?

- What new habits do I want to create?

- What is my relationship with risk?

- Who do I want to be as a leader in this moment?

- Where do I need disruption in order to grow?

- Where does self-sabotage and doubt stop us?

- How do I sometimes get in my own way?

- Finish this sentence: I love myself because…

- What rhythms or structures could I put in place to enable me to thrive?

- If I become who I hang out with, who do I need to surround myself with?

- Where in my life is gratitude perhaps unexpressed or under-expressed?

- Am I living at the right level, or do I need to zoom out or zoom in in certain areas?

- What's one word that best captures the way I want to live my life?

- What is "the good life"?

- What is one step I am taking right now to walk towards the future I desire?

- If I knew I couldn't fail, what would I do?
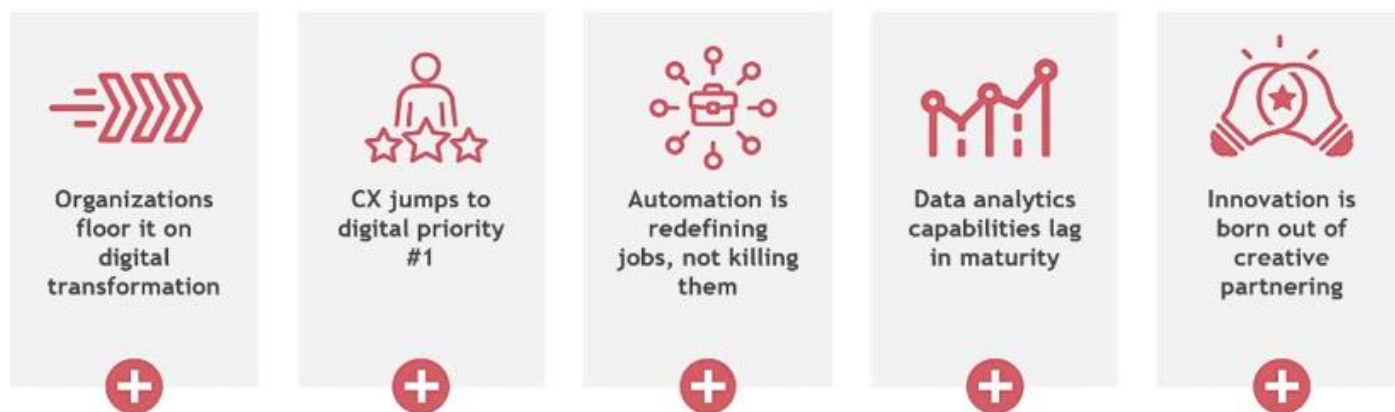
2021 Digital Transformation Survey

BDO surveyed 500 C-suite executives at middle market organizations on their plans for digital transformation. The survey provides insight into their digital transformation plans, maturity, threats and opportunities. See what these executives have to say about:

Organizations floor it on digital transformation

CX jumps to digital priority #1

Automation is redefining jobs, not killing them

Data analytics capabilities lag in maturity

Innovation is born out of creative partnering

Organizations Floor it on Digital Transformation

Middle market organizations are making these changes a result of the events of 2020…

- 51% Adding new digital projects
- 49% Revisiting long-term digital vision
- 43% Accelerating some or all existing digital transformation plans

BDO's Take: There is so much disruption happening while no one business can win in all digital respects. That's why organizations need to identify the digital opportunities that are the best fit for their business, and then rework their long-term digital strategy accordingly. You have to hit the fast-track button on implementation plans to beat the competition. Here's one tip: Embrace a "fail fast" mindset. In the current environment, it's more important to act swiftly than to wait and strive for perfection.

CX Jumps to Digital Priority #1

For the first time in the three years this survey has been conducted, customer experience (CX) jumped to the top of organizations' lists of digital priorities, beating out operational efficiencies.
More respondents (41%) said the digitization of customer service will have a "significant impact" on their business in the year ahead compared to any other digital trend.

BDO's Take: To make sure digital and mobile interactions follow the S.E.C. rule—simplicity, ease and convenience—investments need to be made in both customer-facing innovations and in back-end solutions. The customer is only truly at the core if data that's collected along the customer journey is integrated into all business processes.

Automation is Redefining Jobs, Not Killing Them

Automation will augment the workforce – not eliminate it – either by increasing the speed and quality of work or freeing up employee time to focus on more strategic priorities.

Changes to Workforce Strategy in Response to Automation

- 54% - Workforce reorientation toward strategic initiatives
- 46% - Developing an AI-enabled workforce strategy
- 43% - Decreasing headcount
- 42% - Comprehensively re-imagining roles
- 34% - Increasing headcount

BDO's Take: Technology is only useful if people know how to use and apply it. So, automation will only create efficiencies if the workforce is sufficiently trained and bought in. The buy-in piece can't be overlooked. A lack of skills or understanding of objectives are the key reasons digital initiatives fail. Change management should be a significant part of your digital transformation plans and portion of your budget, not an after-thought.

Data Analytics Capabilities Lag in Maturity

Organizations now realize that access to data-driven insights enables faster pivots. Still, most are in the early stages of data analytics maturity.

12%	36%	20%	28%	4%
Use analytics on ad hoc basis for specific needs	Primarily use analytics for real-time reporting	Insights from data exist in dashboards that few can access	Use advanced analytics, including forecasting and predictive models	Adopted machine learning and deep learning algorithms

BDO's Take: There was a jump in middle market companies that adopted data analytics capabilities in 2021. Most are using analytics for one off needs or reporting. But these applications don't use data to its full extent. However, with good data management habits and incremental improvements in data analytics capabilities, you can pave the way for unlocking the full potential of data. More sophisticated uses of analytics and artificial intelligence will allow you to make smarter, data-backed decisions, predict challenges before they happen, and fully monetize your data.

Business Model Innovation Is Born Out of Creative Partnering

BUSINESS OR OPERATING MODEL CHANGES IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

	PLANNING TO ADOPT
Introducing new digital revenue streams	51%
Pursuing enterprise agility	50%
Joining / expanding a digital partner ecosystem	46%
Expanding into new markets or customer segments	45%
Digitizing the supply chain	43%
Adding new payment models	42%

BDO's Take: Looking ahead, reliance on digital partner ecosystems will only continue to grow given their potential for co-innovation and revenue growth. Digital ecosystem partnerships start with a shared vision and understanding of the customer need they are seeking to address, but the synergies can't end there: Platform compatibility, risk appetite and culture all play a role in the ultimate success of the partnership. Digital ecosystems are also more scalable and flexible when they represent a range of industry segments and a broad geographic footprint.

About BDO USA, LLP

BDO USA, LLP provides professional assurance, tax and advisory services to a wide range of publicly traded and privately held companies. For more than 100 years, BDO has provided quality service through the active involvement of experienced and committed professionals. The firm serves clients through more than 65 offices and over 740 independent alliance firm locations nationwide. As an independent Member Firm of BDO International Limited, BDO serves multi-national clients through a global network of more than 91,000 people working out of more than 1,600 offices across 167 countries and territories.

"Bringing the company to market that I founded and grew for 23 years was a once-in-a-lifetime event. Our partnership with BDO was foundational to our highly successful transaction. BDO's advisors were diligent in testing and quantifying our own assumptions about the strength of our financial position and in assisting in the preparation of materials that were instrumental in demonstrating our value. I'm absolutely certain that we would not have achieved a similar outcome without BDO's expertise, and I'm grateful to the many BDO professionals who worked tirelessly to help ensure our success."

Clifford J. Williams, Founder and CEO,
Innovative Enterprises, Inc.

What CEOs Should Know

CEOs should know the adoption and consumption of video is continuing to accelerate. We're seeing trends of shorter form messaging in every sector. Taking one page of content and transforming it to at 30-45 second video seems to be the hottest trend on a national and global scale. Companies are also taking advantage of creating training videos. They are finding videos make training uniform and duplicatable, while seeing hundreds of thousands of dollars in savings from decreased travel and trainer costs.

CEOs need to understand that video is an incredible tool that can be used internally and externally. And, it is powerful and effective when it is created correctly.

Why should CEOs consider utilizing videos?

High-quality video can be expensive, but it is worth it when you end up with a video that not only interests viewers, but engages them. Effective communication is pivotal for any business and any executive. Throughout the years our video production services have expanded rapidly. What started with in-studio and on-location video production has evolved into everything from basic marketing videos to documentaries, live streaming of events and mini-series. We have created strategic partnerships with several production companies to assure we deliver the best products for our clients.

- brand campaign
- social media
- onboarding new clients
- executive profiles
- customer success stories
- sales tools
- cultural campaign
- employee training
- FAQs
- year-end reporting
- testimonials

Each company and industry is unique but, many times, the video recipes and needs are the same. While there is not an industry standard guide for video production, Garlic Media Group educates our clients. We ensure they know the advantages and pitfalls and guide them through processes they may not have considered. Video should bring a noticeable ROI to your company and your content should be thoughtful and engaging. Lead executives in all industries should be recognizing trends in the digital and video sphere for scalable success.

Investing for the future

CEOs need to consider leveraging technology to innovate. As leaders we must be seeking and utilizing developing technologies to improve the efficiency and profitability of our businesses. For Garlic Media, this means building out an award winning production team and pairing it with a team of digital marketing experts. This combination created a unique and market leading approach to our ability to attract new business. Accountability and authenticity shape user experience and CEOs should consider how to advance their businesses by keeping these principles in mind.

Honest foundations

Blatant honesty has taken us far in creating long-lasting relationships with our clients. With that said, our type of expertise is just not found in typical marketing or production companies. Because we are confident in who we are and what we can do, we are happy to work with other

branding companies, ad agencies, marketing teams, PR firms, or production companies. Working as a team and becoming an extension of your company is what we do best.

We challenge you to think how to accelerate your campaigns and awareness to not only your clients, but your staff and the greater community.

About Garlic Media Group

Garlic Media Group was created to achieve two main purposes: first, to be an accountable solution in the video production and marketing environment, and second, to take care of the core needs of web, video, social and online marketing. We achieve our purpose through an entrepreneurial and consultative approach. Our core competencies are video development and production, marketing and advertising consulting, computer programming services, and graphic design.

Garlic is resolved to demonstrate a strong work ethic, deliver best-in-class customer service, and quality that surpasses the industry norm. We accomplish this by hitting deadlines, sticking to budgets, and listening to the needs of our customers. Thinking creatively on how to leverage technology and media wisely with a focus on campaigns that bring a strong ROI is our core believe.

We have assembled an incredible team that works hand in hand with our clients throughout the entire process. At Garlic Media Group, we know collaboration produces successful deliverables to our clients. We view this relationship as a partnership and work diligently to ensure we are not only meeting, but exceeding your expectations. We have worked with companies of all sizes; from start-up "kickstarter" campaigns to Fortune 500 companies in nearly every industry across the United States.

The early reviews are great! Everyone was VERY impressed with what they saw, and delighted that you were able to capture the personality of our company so well (We've never looked so "fancy" before). Big shoutout to the crew again for capturing such amazing interviews and footage.

-Chris Raftery, SCM Connections

presented by

The Case for Holistic Revenue Scale

In the initial stages of growing a company, every business owner eventually reaches the same realization — the tactics that propelled you to a certain point are no longer sufficient enough to help you reach the next goal in terms of revenue growth.

In essence, you've reached a plateau. Early-stage business growth formulas combined with your zealous, hardworking spirit fostered some initial success, but now you're stuck sitting on flat ground with no signs of growth in sight.

We know one thing for certain: as an entrepreneur, you didn't invest time, effort, and money into your dreams just to saunter up a hill and enjoy the view. That's the kind of heart that entrepreneurs have, and there's no turning it off. So what are you to do when you see that plateau approaching?

Think back to the early successes of your business when you accomplished a couple of exciting revenue milestones. You built something from the ground up and acted as a solopreneur to reach the $250,000 milestone, and you continued to grow your business to eclipse $1 million. It's close to this point where many business owners realize the need for additional help in a large number of departments and areas. But with cash flow still relatively limited, they make the critical error of trying to hire — the sales unicorn.

What Is the Sales Unicorn?

The sales unicorn is the person you bring into your company with the hopes that they will be able to save the day and do it all from a sales perspective — prospecting, cold calling, CRM upkeep, client management, proposal drafting, email communication, and so much more. Essentially, you're asking one person to grow revenue by themself without the help of automation or infrastructure.

Why the Sales Unicorn Doesn't Exist

The fact of the matter is that hiring this person as your end-all, be-all actually hurts your company more than anything else. They are tasked with so much manual work that it eats away at their time to win sales and make money.

No matter how talented of a salesperson they are, it won't mean anything if they spend 75% of their time on administrative tasks before they're even able to do what they're best at!

In the end, this is a waste of time and money and prevents you from scaling revenue effectively. So, what's the alternative?

Develop an Infrastructure to Grow Revenue

High-performing salespeople are so incredibly valuable to your company — that's a given. But if they don't have the tools to succeed, they won't reach their full potential.

Establishing and investing in internal infrastructure is vital to the overall success of your company. We all know that sales, marketing, revenue operations, and customer success work in tandem with one another — why, then, would you expect a salesperson to succeed without any of that in place?

Automation, technology, marketing, branding, and website design all play a massive role in the success of the sales process. From generating inbound leads to optimizing workflows and improving customer experience throughout multiple touchpoints, the sales landscape is inherently collaborative.

This kind of collaboration and infrastructure is the beginning of a high- performing revenue engine.

Break Down the Silos

Before getting into the specifics of revenue engines and how to build one, we need to make one thing clear:
You will not be able to scale revenue if marketing, sales, and customer success are still operating in silos.

Siloed departments limit the potential of your organization as a whole. As a CEO, if you notice your revenue-generating departments working independently from one another, that's a problem. In something as collaborative as modern sales, departments cannot decide their priorities and goals without consulting with other units — it just won't produce long-term results.

Departments that operate in tandem, on the other hand, will be able to set realistic, attainable goals together and understand the specific role they play in achieving those goals. This effort fosters the revenue engine.

What Is the Revenue Engine?

House of Revenue™ defines the revenue engine as a machine constructed of equal parts marketing, sales, customer success, and RevOps that is designed to scale your revenue in the long run, not just grow it for a short period of time.

RevOps

We start with RevOps for a specific reason — it's the glue that holds all the other departments together. RevOps breaks down the aforementioned silos between departments and improves internal alignment through technology and automation.

When your organization has the appropriate technology and automation in place, creating a lasting revenue engine becomes infinitely more feasible. RevOps and automation set the stage for the entire revenue engine.

Marketing

Nowadays, modern buyers have already completed up to 80% of the traditional Awareness - Consideration - Decision process before engaging with the sales team. Your marketing team must use this to its advantage and create holistic campaigns that attract and engage the buyer throughout their journey, making it clear why you offer the best solutions for their problems.

Sales

The next cog in the revenue engine is sales. Even if your marketing team perfectly executes a campaign that attracts your exact buyer, it won't mean anything if your sales department is not equipped to win the deal.
Sales training and implementation of strategic processes are effective in improving sales performance, but investment into RevOps and marketing play an equal role.
By investing in industry-leading technology and allocating appropriate time and energy into creating a sound inbound marketing campaign, you actually set your sales team up to do what they do best — sell.

Customer Success

This final component to the revenue engine we employ at House of Revenue™, customer success is often neglected. The sales process doesn't end after a salesperson wins the deal — now it's up to you to ensure that the customer's experience with your company far surpasses their wildest imagination.

Ensuring customer satisfaction does two critical things in relation to revenue scale:

1. Creates upsell opportunities among existing clients
2. Builds trustworthy referrals for future clients
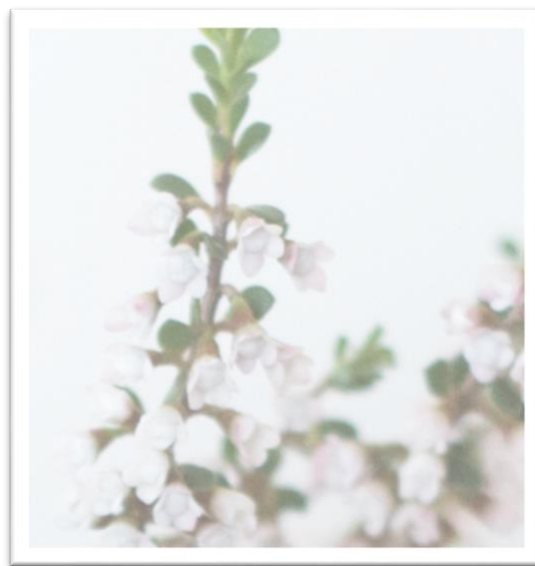
If you neglect the customer after the sale, the entire foundation upon which your revenue engine is built could collapse.

Summary

There are no shortcuts to creating a successful revenue engine. It takes effort, commitment, and alignment between every part of the engine. If you try to skip even one step in the process, there are sure to be glaring holes that will prevent you from scaling revenue.

About House of Revenue

House of Revenue is a Denver-based firm that helps 2nd stage companies holistically scale their revenue by assigning a 5-7 person fractional revenue team for 12-18 months to assist with refreshing their brand, creating an inbound marketing engine, developing their sales team, and enhancing the overall client experience. In the past year, House of Revenue assisted 13 companies with their revenue scale, and on average, doubled their monthly recurring revenue within 10 months, and grew them by $3.2M on average in 12 months.
Get in Touch: Mary@houseofrevenue.com

"I've worked for a Fortune 500 company. I can stack the revenue engine that House of Revenue build for us against that Fortune 500 company and House of Revenue would win every time. Starting at just two month into working together, we've now broken our monthly sales record every month for the past 5 months."

Keith Koetting, CEO,
Nortex Sales & Distribution

The Innovation Gap

Covid-19 was a major black swan event for company strategy. In many cases it invalidated the entire business model or value propositions of companies causing irreparable failure. In others, business leaders combined radical redefinition and quick thinking to redirect their strategies for survival.

The figure below represents the impact of a disruption like Covid on business change. We call it the Innovation Gap. It illustrates how a company changes in response to normal pace of market forces over time. This (evolutionary) pace of change is gradual and generally accounted for in strategic planning. The pandemic (disruptive event) forced a sudden and unexpected shift in the environment and the scope of change facing companies. The resulting gap (revolutionary change) required companies to strategically innovate and change.
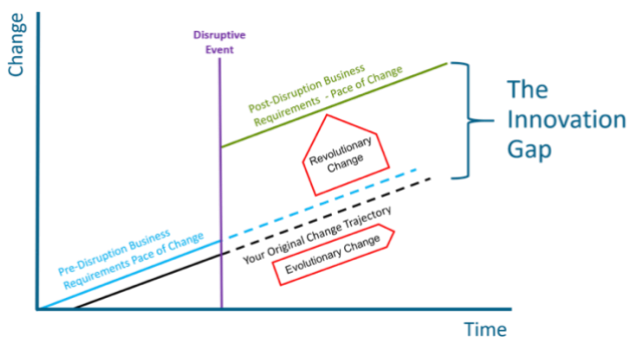
The questions below merit CEO consideration as they address the sweeping human capital impacts contained in the Covid disruption innovation gap.

How will you invest in your company's corporate culture?

Recent surveys have revealed that 96% of companies believe trust is foundational for a strong corporate culture. Yet only 38% have a strategic level plan for building trust.

The Covid experience has probably resulted in unseen culture shifts that may yet to be manifest. For example, the lack of face time with leaders and coworkers has eroded collegiality and trust. The office culture was built around a place to informally stop and chat, maybe bounce ideas around. Leaders may miss the emotional and cultural impacts on their people because they are keenly focused on productivity and survival imperatives. In the extreme, a toxic culture is one most regularly cited reasons for leaving a firm.

Companies should consider investing in a formal assessment of their culture to get a read on the aggregate emotional condition of the firm. Company-specific questions might include trust in leadership, connection to the firm, feelings around career path outlook, and employee views of company values. The prescriptive response to the collected data will be challenging, even complicated, but will send a message to employees of leadership's intentional plan to make the company a great place to work worthy of their commitment.

How will you attract top talent in the workforce? How will you hold onto your top talent?

The Covid experience has created a fundamental shift in power between employers and employees. This shift is attributed to the tightening of the supply of willing and skilled workers. Many experienced workers have chosen not to return to the workforce post-Covid (early retirement, permanent self-employment, added automation to their processes changing the requirement from unskilled to technically skilled employees). In

addition, Covid proved the theory that much of company work does not require proximity to the office. Many companies are now determining policy treatment for employees who moved to distant states during the crisis.

CEOs must assess what they must offer to rebuild a fully functional labor force. This may require rethinking benefits and officing requirements. Retention may be negatively impacted in companies requiring employees to drop everything and return to the office. One survey shows that 40% of home officed employees will consider quitting their jobs if forced back to the office.

CEOs should strategize their human capital needs both in number and content and then assess the attractiveness of their salary, benefit, and working accommodations offerings. They must realize that they are not only competing against other employee-starved firms, but also newly formed worker attitudes who suddenly have unconstrained geographic options.

What are your strategies for building trust and communicating change around these leading-edge employee concerns: return to the office, hybrid work arrangements, diversity equity and inclusion, employee well-being?

One recent survey revealed that many employees rated their senior leadership's honesty and transparency during the pandemic as very high even the best in years. This, however, has slipped back somewhat as many CEOs have intimated a return to the office. Communicating change is one challenging facet of leadership, and these issues may represent a do or die moment.

This change management challenge must be met with careful planning and execution. CEOs must consider the cumulated mental/emotional strain of the last year. In the last year employees have had to reorder their entire work and family lives. Some have made major life changes in reaction to lost day-care, senior care, home officing and growing career insecurity. CEOs must consider the impact each decision will have on their people.

As a leader, you must have...

Emotional intelligence
Assess the verbal and nonverbal cues of your people and adapt accordingly.

An eye for innovation
Always be on the lookout for the next opportunity to surpass your competition.

Active listening skills
Listen to employee concerns, actively engage in conversation and make improvements.

Endurance
Train yourself and your team to keep going for the goal with tireless ambition, no matter what challenges may arise.

Passion
Have a positive attitude and inspire others to view mishaps as learning opportunities, not confidence crushers.

Your hands in your business
Get involved with the functions of every level of your company and work alongside your employees to find solutions.

High standards
Walk the walk. Make it clear, by words and actions, that you expect a lot from your people. And from yourself.

They must weigh the human capital implications of every decision during recovery and expansion. All their decisions must be options rich, transitioned carefully and fully dialoged with affected employees before implementation.
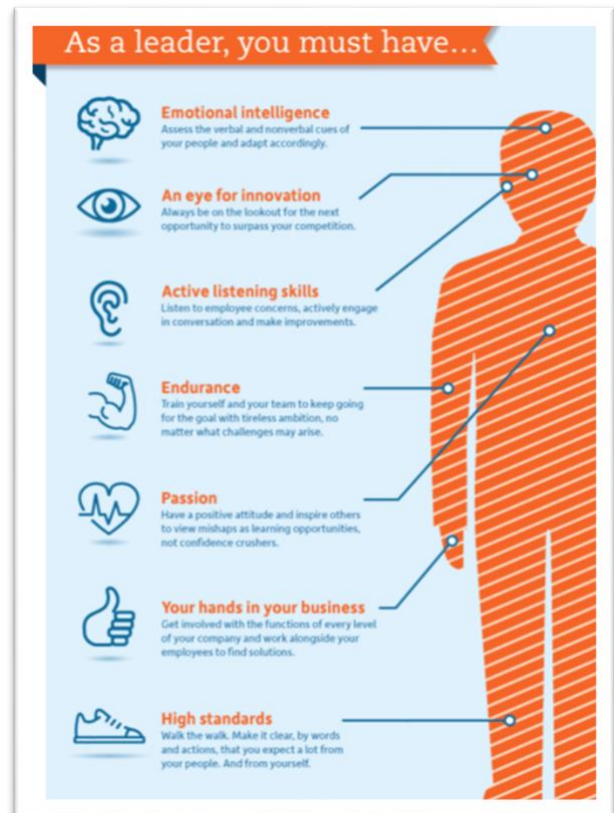
Where are you able to be more strategic and create a long term -vision or plan? Where will you need to navigate wave to wave and short term?

The Covid black swan disrupted and ultimately pointed the demise of many companies. It may seem that the danger is past and that the hard work of mitigating Covid risk is over, but nothing could be farther from reality. During the pandemic companies made sweeping moves just to survive. Some of these reactive moves, while critical, were not in harmony with previous long-term strategies.

Now is the time to review all that has transpired and return to an intentional strategic plan. CEOs should review their survival changes and align the post-Covid operation with a long-term strategic view of the firm. It is essential that human capital concerns be included in strategic planning because the rules of the employment game have changed and will continue to evolve.

What paradigms, beliefs, tribal traditions, legacy thinking should you challenge in this new era of work? Why should you change long-held thinking and methods?

Leadership paradigms are an accumulation of lessons learned – the culmination of experience. Legacy thinking is a set of long held beliefs about the firm which can create inertia which may impede positive change. Long-term success can sometimes be our worst enemy because it may give the illusion of enduring excellence and obfuscate the need for creative change.

When Covid hit the need for change became obvious. Covid required "survival-at-all-costs" agility, rapid replacement of traditional methods even radical redefinition of the enterprise.

Surviving establishments must now step back and ask themselves which of the emergency changes they will keep, and which they will leave on the cutting room floor. This analysis requires everything to be on the table of possible change. Companies must pause legacy thinking and tradition to investigate new ideas, even the business model, in deference to the long-term strategic prosperity of the firm.

About Insperity

Insperity, a trusted advisor to America's best businesses since 1986, provides an array of scalable HR solutions designed to help companies maximize productivity and manage risk. Offering the most comprehensive suite of products and services available in the marketplace, Insperity delivers the optimal blend of service and technology to bring administrative relief, reduced liabilities and better employee benefits though Insperity-sponsored plans. With 2020 revenues of $4.3 billion, Insperity is currently making a difference in more than 100,000 businesses with over 2 million employees nationwide.

"Insperity has absolutely saved us money. For the size of our company and what we do and the number of states we do it in, I would need five HR people. Right now, I only have one HR manager and one part-time HR assistant. With Insperity, I get a whole HR team 24/7. They have everything I need – EEOC, payroll, the whole thing."

Paul Smiley, Sonoran Technology

"Everything's OK" and Other Big Lies CEO's Tell Themselves

Today in corporate America there's a disconnect between what we say and what we do. Many organizations say they're concerned about their culture. It sounds great. But in reality, few are truly investing in the solutions that can transform their companies. Where does your organization stand? Be honest.

What we've found is that many CEOs have an inflated sense of their workplace culture compared to what their employees are experiencing. They think everything's ok — and it's not.

Many CEOs are attempting to figure out how to address the problems brought up by the pandemic. But they aren't looking for long-term answers. They are being reactive rather than intentional in their solutions.

Recently, we conducted a nationwide survey asking both leaders and employees if their organizations had transparent feedback loops established and how effective they were. The results were startling. While nearly all (93%) of the leaders surveyed reported they have a transparent feedback loop between themselves and their direct reports; only 56% of employee respondents acknowledged an open line of communication.

That's a glaring contradiction between leaders and employees. Neither are being honest about what's truly happening in the workplace.

As both sides withhold the truth, an impasse arises. This what we call the Big Lie, and it's the major challenge faced by many organizations today. The Big Lie leads to lack of engagement, lowered productivity and increased employee churn. That's where we come in. SpiralMethod provides a proven way to bring the truth to light.
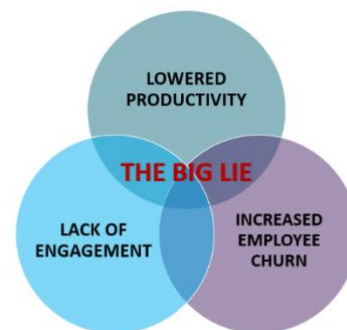
In the companies with whom we work, CEOs are willing to be vulnerable. They learn to listen deeply to their leadership and their employees and often admit that "business as usual" hasn't been working. They become aware of issues that were long buried. They learn to communicate honestly and openly with their teams —often for the first time. The results? Increased retention, greater employee satisfaction and engagement, higher performance, and the creation of a culture of wellbeing.

Team members who participate in SpiralMethod sessions feel the shift right away. Here are a few honest comments from those who've participated in our Team & Culture programs:

"SpiralMethod created a constructive way to discover the deeper levels of conflict in our organization."
"I was craving this type of honest conversation. Now I'm really excited about the future of our company."
"In just three sessions, the willingness to trust that's been expressed by our leadership signals a real willingness to change."

The Big Truth

If you're willing to admit that everything's not "OK," SpiralMethod can help.

If you want to know what your employees are really feeling, let's talk.

SpiralMethod facilitates those tough conversations about the challenges that keep you awake a night. Better still, we provide a sustainable feedback loop that offers insight and solutions that can't be discerned any other way.

Whatever your blind spots are, SpiralMethod can help you become aware of the Big Lie, so you can effectively and efficiently create a healthier, more successful organization.

About SpiralMethod

SpiralMethod is a proven relational practice that helps leaders and their team members establish a new level of authenticity and trust within their organizations. Within a SpiralMethod session, participants are properly supported to work through high-stake conversations and effectively generate solutions by learning how to share with honesty, ask thought-provoking questions, and listen with curiosity to remove the barriers that prevent teams from thriving. This profound communication practice creates a safe, inclusive, and collaborative environment built upon a strong foundation of trust and accountability which, in turn, develops a learning culture that elevates performance and promotes individual creativity and innovation.

"SpiralMethod has taken a collection of outstanding leaders to new, extraordinary levels of connection, introspection, awareness, and transformation. I was shocked at how much we accomplished in the realm of building relationships and reducing stress levels in just two hours. Our meetings are never stale, predictable, or ordinary. Each month, I come away with new insights that are helping me become more self-aware, more genuine, and more effective. Over the past four months, we've had numerous Spiral sessions and I rate each one a 12 out of 10."

Chris Romer, Founder & CEO,
Project Canary

TRUE | SPACE

Are we capable of growing?

The work of TrueSpace is to help entrepreneurs see with data, the capability of their enterprise to grow. Essentially, we aim to answer this Socratic question for a business builder: "are we capable of growing?" Our ongoing research, now in its eighth year, centers on the role of the entrepreneur and how they influence the eventual outcome of the business. When we started this mission, we endeavored to provide empirical value to the entrepreneur and to do so with little opinion and less influence from large businesses, professors and wall street. The baseline of small businesses in the longitudinal study reaches past 2500 firms, all with the ambition to grow and reach the middle market. The following are two intractable themes from the body of research:

Where you spend your time will determine where you end up

One of the most important decisions for a business builder is where to invest the limited time they have available. Choosing where and when to invest this non-renewable resource is a statistical determinant of predictable growth in our model. For example, entrepreneurs working in a stage of growth we refer to as, emerging, spend a considerable amount of time in sales. The emerging stage is past the startup but not yet showing signs of scale. The pressure to find new customers is too great for the entrepreneur not to get consumed with finding new revenue. In our research model of 2500 firms, nearly 82% of these businesses get stuck in the emerging stage of growth –

and remain there for a protracted period. These businesses struggle because the limit to growth becomes the capacity of the entrepreneur to sell; when they reach their limit, so does the business.

In contrast, the firms that reach our benchmark have predictable growth over a four-year period and average $32 million in revenue. The entrepreneurs in this stage spend most of their time in talent and culture development, leadership oversight and strategic opportunities. Either purposely or inadvertently, these leaders made the shift from selling to leading and the root of this change came from where they have intentionally invested time.

Broad and consistent growth requires a narrow focus

This paradox can arrest even the most open minded of business builders and the counter-intuitive suggestion is difficult for leaders who value new ideas, and innovations far above repeatable methods, and discipline. But building a business is a different task than starting one. At some point, an entrepreneur must identify a place where they can build and compete. Our research is immutable, the more distinct the target market, the greater chance for predictable growth. Top performing businesses in our database, who offer a technology or a professional service to another business, close greater than 85% of their proposals. They do so largely because they own and defend a narrow part of a market with enough high value customers to meet an expanding forecast for growth. In contrast, the emerging businesses with the same offer model, close less than 20% of their proposals. Imagine the waste in the sales and marketing efforts in the firms with low win rates. The dilution of time and capital while attempting to serve a broad set of sales opportunities proves to be a significant limit to predictable growth.

About TrueSpace

At its core, TrueSpace is a research firm anchored by a multi-year study of sustainable growth in businesses with $1 million to $10 million in revenue. The methods, tools and capital instruments of TrueSpace all tie back to the research which identified the Five Operating Conditions™ necessary for small businesses to reach the middle market. An ethnographic research method was used to immerse the TrueSpace team into the daily working environments of businesses. The study, through a partnership with Gallup, now extends to over 4000 business across the U.S. For the first time, we have the science and the data to better understand the processes, cultures, challenges, motivations, and themes that emerge in businesses that reach the middle markets.

"In a very short time period, TrueSpace has had a transformational impact on our business. The program has not only helped us to organize and execute our business practices in a dramatically more effective way, but we have no doubt that by following the TrueSpace Playbook and its principles, we will absolutely be successful in reaching the middle market. The benefits of the program are truly indescribable."

Shawn Edwards, Mindset

BDO

Blackstone Entrepreneurs Network

BOLDLEGAL

BUEHLER COMPANIES | the way the world is moving

Class **VI** Partners™

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HOUSE OF **REVENUE**™

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SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

COLORADO INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

DENVER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & OPPORTUNITY

nRhythm