



Six!

When my son was a toddler, he had a habit of boosting his age. (I know, it started early!) Although he was 2, whenever anyone asked how old he was, the response was a resounding "6!" Now, he knew he was 2, and would fess up to being 2 when pressed on it, but he so wanted to be 6 that he could taste it.

What was so glorious about age 6? Well, the cousin with whom he spent a lot of time was 6. And so, in those 2-year-old eyes, 6 was the age to be. However, what our tyke didn't grasp was the difference in schedule and expectations that went along with being 6. (Indeed, there are responsibilities even at that early age!) Our guy saw the glamor...and nothing more...that is, until he became 6!

Well, no, we're not turning the hands of time backward this month. In this edition of **EA Insights**, we take a look at organizational growth. Growth is a high priority for many groups; however, frequently there isn't full understanding of all that goes into accomplishing, and sustaining, the sought-after progress.

So, keep reading! My hope is that your cry of "Growth!" will be as loud as my son's claims of being "Six!" were. But, I hope your assertions will be clear, informed, and ready to be carried on for years to come.

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

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Quotes

"All growth depends upon activity. There is no development physically or intellectually without effort, and effort means work."

~Calvin Coolidge

"When entire companies embrace a growth mindset, their employees report feeling far more empowered and committed; they also receive far greater organizational support for collaboration and innovation."

~Carol S. Dweck

*"Patterns of repetition govern each day, week, year, and lifetime. *** Structure gives us a sense of security."*

~Robert Fulghum

"Leadership is practiced not so much in words as in attitude and in actions."

~Harold S. Geneen

"If there is one thing that offers challenges to small companies as they start to grow and expand, it is the hiring process... every single area. The issues that can

Growing...but Still Small-Minded?

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Talk to leaders in most small organizations, and you will hear desires to grow. For-profit or nonprofit, it really doesn't matter. The picture of double or triple revenue...more locations or programs...expanding staff...and the like is painted in vivid color.

Unfortunately, often missing from all of the planning is thought, and then the follow through, related to what actually is involved with growth. It takes time and effort to transition from *small* to *not so small anymore* and then to sustain success in that new state. However, to grow, and grow well, something's got to change. Here are four examples of aspects of an organization's functioning in which change may be most necessary for successful growth.

Change #1: Mindset

You've operated as a family. The team, vendors, and those whom you serve have a special bond. Nobody wants that to disappear.

The underlying values that have come to represent your organization need not change. On the other hand, everyone's *mindset* must change IF growth is what you want.

Successful growth must be accompanied by an attitude adjustment. There must be recognition that you're not small anymore. What you could do when you were two, or few, you won't be able to do in the same way at twenty-two or a few hundred. It doesn't mean that you must lose everything that you have held dear, but it does mean that you must distinguish your non-negotiables from what will simply stand as nice memories of your past. And, then you have to determine how to translate those must-have aspects of your organizational culture into attitudes or practices that can be followed as growth occurs.

Change #2: Structure

If just reading the word "structure" evokes a groan, you may want to reconsider your visions of growth. You see, there very well may be fluidity and flexibility in today's small atmosphere. You've worked together; you're all of the same mind; and you've functioned like a well-oiled machine...without a whole lot rules or specifics. And that's fine.

The challenge is, as you add people to the mix, that history and shared experience and unspoken knowledge of how to get things done with and for each other is not going to be there (at least not immediately) with all who are added to the fold. For that reason, providing some level of structure becomes essential. It gives people what they need in order to understand roles and how they fit into the grand scheme of things. It helps them gain familiarity with processes for how work is to be accomplished generally and in a way that meets your expectations for working with one another and for serving customers.

Structure needn't be strangling; instead, it can be loosely crafted. Develop it, in whatever way is comfortable and effective, to provide the guardrails to guide both existing staff and newcomers to how you all will function in this evolving organization.

Change #3: Staffing Strategy

It goes without saying that a candidate's skills, abilities, and potential are to be considered in hiring, promoting, and retaining staff. Similarly, the values you have established over time will weigh heavily. However, when growth is a part of the organizational plan, another critical consideration must be factored in. What is it? Take stock of the person's desire and affinity for working in an organization that may look differently tomorrow, and perhaps the tomorrow after that, than it does today.

You see, some people don't want to work in a large environment; their niche is a more intimate

arise run the full spectrum, from 'finding good help' to that ubiquitous catch-all 'training' and everything in between."

~Michael Gerber

"Growth is kinda built into everyone's genes. It's built into management's genes, the salesman's genes, the investors' desires. People expect companies to grow."

~Andy Grove

"Strength and growth come only through continuous effort and struggle."

~Napoleon Hill

"Authority doesn't have to be concentrated in me when I'm hiring outstanding professionals who know their jobs. I will be there if there's something that's not following what I want. But I also know that day to day, they're the ones that have to be accountable."

~Kathy Hochul

"The quality of a leader is reflected in the standards they set for themselves."

~Ray Kroc

"Growth is uncomfortable; you have to embrace the discomfort if you want to expand."

~Jonathan Majors

"The biggest impediment to growth is in our minds and not in the world outside[.]"

~N. R. Narayana Murthy

"I believe good corporate governance is critical in enhancing competitiveness and ... leading profitable growth and superior returns for every stakeholder of

setting. Some people become unsettled by an evolving organization.

It is important to recognize that, simply because you want to grow, everyone aboard now or looking to join you may not share that vision and/or want to live within the parameters that accompany a changing landscape. Thus, broaching the subject of growth honestly and openly becomes of critical importance in making people-related decisions around hiring, promoting, or assigning existing staff to new roles. Such conversations allow for informed decisions about whether the organization that's taking shape is the right place for the individual, and it offers the chance to strategize about appropriate steps based on the answer.

Change #4: Approach to Leadership

Akin to the mindset change noted earlier, there also must be an adjustment in the way leadership is practiced. If hands-on, know everything, leadership is a must for you, please rethink the level of growth you're planning. Operating in the manner to which you've become accustomed just may not be sustainable over the long haul -- for you or for others as you become a bottle-neck for their work. Also, if new leadership layers are introduced, recognize that people who previously had direct and free access to you may feel isolated, and even abandoned, in light of new reporting or connection structures.

Additionally, in a growing organization, it becomes essential to settle upon a desired leadership framework -- a picture and set of expectations that align leadership with your spoken and unspoken values. This framework then becomes a barometer for hiring, for training, for communication, for accountability, and so on so that the leadership DNA established while you were still small gets replicated, as much as possible, throughout your growing organization.

One other note about the changing approach to leadership cannot be forgotten. That is, the requirements of changed mindset and acceptance of structure that you (and other leaders) preach must be the requirements that you also live by. Nothing is more disheartening to a team than to hear proclamations of how things must change and new rules must be followed, only to have the leader(s) circumvent the system any time rule-following runs afoul of personal benefit. If a new mindset or structure is necessary for the desired growth, then it is necessary for all...and not just for some.

Yes, to grow, you can't be small-minded. Something's got to change. And, it starts with you!

So, leader, if growth is in your sights, why not reach out to us at **[Executive Advantage](#)**? We're here to help you with not only the strategic thinking and organizational aspects of change and growth, we're also here to help you, as well as the current and/or future leaders around you, to move forward successfully. **[Contact us today.](#)**

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the institution."
~Shiv Nadar

"[W]e're aspiring to have a living, learning culture with a growth mindset that allows us to learn from ourselves and our customers. These are the key attributes of the new culture..., and I feel great about how it seems to be resonating and how it's seen as empowering."
~Satya Nadella

"The nicest thing about standards is that there are so many of them to choose from."
~Ken Olsen

"Don't be a bottleneck. If a matter is not a decision for ... you, delegate it. Force responsibility down and out. Find problem areas, add structure and delegate. The pressure is to do the reverse. Resist it."
~Donald Rumsfeld

"Growth demands a temporary surrender of security."
~Gail Sheehy

"If you go through some big corporate change, it's just not going to be the same."
~Mark Zuckerberg

About Executive Advantage

At **[Executive Advantage](#)**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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