

Creating a Growth Strategy

LED BY:

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CASE STUDY

12+

At Frontier, leaders had at least a ratio of twelve employees to one manager.

They tried to keep a maximum of five levels from the frontline to the CEO: frontline manager, director, EVP, C-Level and CEO.

Creating a robust growth strategy requires a profound focus on the organization's most valuable asset: its people. To lead growth, prepare your workforce to stretch beyond the goals it currently imagines and then focus your teams to align and strive toward the shared objective.

“If you want to change your strategy, you need to make sure you're changing the culture simultaneously.”

- Maggie Wilderotter

01 PREPARE THE ORGANIZATION

Stay flat

Flat organizations move fast. Promoting managers to new titles can be a tempting tool to reward and motivate your leaders, but it disguises levels in the business and slows communication. Every time a message is passed from one level to another, you risk further distorting its meaning.

Fewer levels oblige leaders to stay close to the work and be aware of the company's challenges. At the same time, it makes it harder to micromanage and forces them to choose the right people, trust their team, and allow for autonomy and independence.

Prepare the workforce for growth

Hire and develop great people and ensure they are in the right positions. Move people around to train them on all facets of the business, and then leverage this experience by promoting from within.

“Recognize that your employees are the most important asset.”

- Maggie Wilderotter

MEMBER CASE STUDY

Execution to creativity

At IBM, Ric Lewis adopted a proud execution culture that was risk-averse. The team was accustomed to being rewarded for excellence in delivery and precision rather than creativity.

To encourage a growth mindset, Ric used innovation jams, training, and leadership literature, to help his leaders detach from solely focusing on internal metrics. He encouraged them to focus on signals around customer pain points and how the competition was addressing them.

EXAMPLE

Frontier's 3 Ps:

- People
- Product
- Profit

Create a growth mindset. Redefine “perfection” as achieving progress. Don’t let people get caught up in the details when the main goal is to move forward.

Create stretch

Teach your workforce to manage and lead. Have them work through case studies of outstanding leadership. Bring in renowned leaders for a fireside chat. Create environments that require people to stretch and build resilience to adversity.

02 FOSTER SUPPORT

Communicate in 3s

Three is a categorical way of keeping things simple. From tales of three blind mice to three spots on a podium, we are culturally conditioned to remember things in threes.

Condense your growth strategy into a one-page document that outlines the company's three goals and the three to five deliverables required to achieve each. Use three questions to describe what success looks like for the company:

1. What will you do?
2. What will the outcome be?
3. When does it need to be done?

Update the one-pager every year or quarter. Have people hang it in their office or carry it on the road.

Focus attention and energy

Encourage employees to challenge the status quo and share ideas. Invite discussion around the ideas that fit into the company’s priorities and strategy.

CASE STUDY

Inclusion

Maggie brought together the top 100 leaders of Frontier to discuss each of the three Ps every year. They put one word on a flip chart and each leader proposed a goal they wanted to pursue under that category. If they didn't have their own goal, they could upvote another.

Later, the twelve executive leaders of the company would vote on the goals. Each would get six votes to spread across the goals, or vote multiple times for one if it was essential to them.

If an idea is not relevant, get back to employees quickly.

Acknowledge the idea's merit and be explicit about the mismatch in timing or direction. Ask for the employees' input on parts of the strategy that are being executed to keep them engaged. Save the idea to bring it up with the board or leadership team if the context changes.

Break relevant ideas into segments of what you will tackle first versus what you might do second or third. Fail fast and pivot.

“Don’t get married to the ideas, get married to the outcomes.”

- Maggie Wilderotter

Say no

Create discipline about what you are not going to do. There is no need to say “No, but...” to a proposal if it does not fit your desired path. Keep teams focused only on what they need to do.

“‘No’ is a complete sentence.”

- Jim Senegal (Costco) to Maggie Wilderotter

Seek alignment rather than consensus

It is important to attempt consensus, but that doesn't mean you'll always get everybody on board.

Give people a voice in the initial stages of strategy development. Processes like brainstorming and multivoting will help leaders feel part of the final decisions and understand how they were reached.

Once the path is set, hold people accountable for bringing their best selves to execution regardless of whether they agree with the priorities.

CASE STUDY

Notes of gratitude

Maggie made custom notepads for team leaders to write thank you notes whenever they caught somebody doing something right.

The notes were posted in offices and cubicle walls, reinforcing the culture of excellence and gratitude and creating a model of positive behavior.

Celebrate success

Use great storytelling to make people feel part of the collective mission and counter opposition from those who disagree with the strategy. Flag where things are going right, why, and how they are part of making it a success. Celebrate the people who go the extra mile or do something extraordinary.

“Every day is a big win when somebody gets caught doing something right.”

- Maggie Wilderotter

Unleash potential

Be in the moment with people. Hear what they have to say. Shut out other demands on your attention.

“One of the biggest ways that leaders have impact is to be present.”

- Maggie Wilderotter

No single leader ever knows everything. Lean on your workforce as the collective source for the answers to large challenges. Invest time in relationships to bring out the best in the people who work for you.

“Our teams really cared about the company, and as their leader, I had an obligation to put in place processes that took advantage of that.”

- Maggie Wilderotter



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