

THE VENN OF GROWTH



A Venn diagram is a diagram that represents two or more separate sets of characteristics in the form of a circle, or other shape. Where the shapes intersect it indicates that there is a shared set of characteristics.

The Venn of Growth is a Venn diagram that indicates the three sets of characteristics required to experience growth within an organization, whether that is a company, a non-profit organization, a government entity or even an informal club. It also applies to individual growth and growth of teams.

For the purposes of this article the Venn of Growth will be used to illustrate the expansion of the organization to accomplish greater market penetration, sales, profit, quality, retention rates, or other key performance indicators (KPIs) defined by the organization, but these same principles can be transferred to growth in many other settings.

Within the Venn of Growth, the three components that fulfill sustainable growth are Focus, Execution, and Accountability.

Focus:

This is identifying and prioritizing the right goal at the right time. As the leader of an organization, you are continually faced with choices of which direction to go. Whether in times of feast or famine, there never seem to be a shortage of ideas of what to do next, how to grow, how to shrink, when to refinance, what position to hire next, and should you launch a new product line now or next year. Focus also involves keeping your sight set on accomplishing this goal until it has been accomplished while avoiding distractions, no matter how pertinent they may seem.

“Good leaders are people who make correct decisions at critical times”

I commonly talk with high energy leaders who are enthused about their latest idea that will certainly grow their business to the next level, the one that will radically change everything for the better. But, when I talk to them later, they've got a new idea that will radically change everything for the better and they've now forgotten about the last idea.

Maintaining focus is critical to the growth of an organization. Without focus the organization burns energy and resources chasing the latest trend or inspiration, and not being committed to growth.

Execution:

This is taking action in the correct way, considering all of the factors that affect the outcome and effectively mitigating any detracting forces.

Good leaders are people who make correct decisions at critical times, but in the words of one of my not so serious heroes, Red Green, "Any tool can be the right tool". Taking out the humorous aspect that Red implies, the same principle can be applied. I often say, "Ideas are dime a dozen, but execution is worth a million dollars", with the thought that any idea can be the right idea, it's the execution of the idea that is critical to success.

To illustrate this, I've seen two different companies execute the exact same idea in two entirely different ways, and have dramatically different results. Both companies decided to give their employees a \$100 gift at the holidays. The first company did it with the attitude that the employees weren't really worth it, but because this had become a tradition there was an expectation to continue giving employees the money. Although the words were never spoken the general sentiment that was perceived was, "Here's your money. You really aren't worth it, but because we've been doing this for a while, and because we had a really good year I guess we're obligated to continue it for now."

The second company executed it with a different attitude. They told its employees that although this past year had been really tough, we deeply value you as an employee and want to make sure we take every opportunity to show that to you. You are obviously worth a lot more than \$100 to us, and we hope to be able to show that to you soon. For now, we're doing what we can with what we have to show you our appreciation. Thanks for everything you do!

The exact same amount per employee hit the bottom line of both organizations with tremendously different impact. The first resulted in lower morale, higher turnover and a weakened resolve to go above and beyond to serve the client. The second saw an increase in loyalty and a willingness to make sacrifices to continue serving the organization and the client. Execution is worth a million dollars.

Accountability:

This is the force that ensures action is taken to accomplish the goals set though obligation to report, explain or justify progress.

We are governed by homeostasis, or the need to reach and maintain balance. Without motivation our innate desire is to sit on the couch, watch TV and eat potato chips. But, when you find yourself in the middle of a five mile run, or your third visit at the gym this week, it's because you've encountered a motivating force that tips homeostasis into action. Accountability provides this motivation because if we don't get off the couch and take action we know we will be held accountable and the imbalance of failure outweighs the opportunity to do nothing.

There are lots of “tricks” to holding yourself accountable. You can write your goals down, tape them to your mirror so you read them every morning, or emphasize your belief in how important your goal is to you. A very few, highly disciplined people can do everything on their own. Most successful people have some external factor that motivates them to take action and holds them accountable. Everyone knows it’s possible to do it on their own, and I believe anything is possible, but if it was easy we’d all be the business equivalent of an elite athlete with four percent body fat who didn’t hire a personal trainer. It’s takes accountability to reach success.

Accomplishing Growth:

Growth can certainly happen without harnessing the power of focus, execution and accountability, but the growth won’t be sustained. It will be a temporary surge, the flow after an ebb. To accomplish sustainable growth requires choosing the right goal at the right time and maintaining focus on this until success is reached. It also requires executing taking the right action in the correct way, considering all the factors that affect the outcome. Finally, it requires there is a force that ensures action is taken. Where these three sets of characteristics overlap you will find growth.

The Venn of Success is a multi-layered Venn Diagram, showing the three components making up success within a business, non-profit, department or other such organization. The three components are Optimize, Growth and Significance. We use the Venn of Success as a model to guide our clients toward reaching their ultimate success.

