



LEADING GROWTH FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

Growth is built by creating value. To lead growth, understand the problem that needs to be addressed for the customer and galvanize your organization to align your strengths, strategy, and teams to solve it.

CASE STUDY

Consumers shape opportunity

When Bridgette Heller assumed the role of General Manager of Kraft Foods' coffee division, Maxwell House was a stagnant brand in Kraft's larger portfolio.

Before building a staged growth plan, Bridgette and her team went into the homes of their consumers and followed them through their morning ritual, always asking questions.

They found that the most difficult part of the process, and the largest source of consumer dissatisfaction, was opening a new can of coffee.

Maxwell House introduced the flip-top can, resulting in significant growth in both revenue and market share.

01 KEEP CUSTOMERS AT THE CENTER

What is the value you are trying to create? Who are you trying to create it for? Start with the consumers and customers. Let them help you define and shape the core value opportunity.

"I always frame growth with the concept of understanding where the value opportunity is."

- Bridgette Heller

02 RELENTLESSLY EXPLOIT STRENGTHS

How can you leverage your strengths to create competitive advantage? First, understand them. Differentiate between personal strengths and strengths of the company. Dissect every part of what you do while asking,

1. What do we do well?
2. Why do we do it well?
3. What are the core strengths that underpin everything else?

Once identified, ensure the growth strategy and every project in it is built around a core strength of the company. To become the best in the industry you need to lead growth with what you are best at.

"'The Flywheel' by Jim Collins is a great way to hone an understanding of your own strengths."

- Bridgette Heller

CASE STUDY

Know what you're best at

Kraft Foods grew through the acquisition of many small firms, turning it into a company with a strong entrepreneurial spirit.

Bridgette recognized this strength and built her growth strategy upon Kraft's advantage in agility and speed - something that competitors such as P&G did not have.

03 SELL YOUR STRATEGY

Drive clarity and alignment through the organization, vertically and horizontally. Ensure that everyone is working against the same objectives.

"Everyone from the doorman up to the C-suite should be able to repeat the strategy."

- Bridgette Heller

Build traction and support for your projects by telling your full story. Paint a picture where all parts matter to the whole and lure people in bit by bit. Create interest in the rest of your portfolio.

"No matter what they say, you say your story. This is my story, and I'm going to tell you my story and I'm going to tell you again and again."

- Bridgette Heller

Use a small team to sell your strategy up to the executive team. Explain what you need to change, what you need to manage through, and what you are doing to do that. Show them that you have thought it through.

Even if they are not connected to the business, each executive should be able to understand the strategy and explain why it is going to work. Equip them with what they need to sell your strategy to the board and other internal and external stakeholders.

"Open, very honest, and free flowing dialogue and debate either wins support or it makes your strategy better, one or the other. You can't lose."

- Bridgette Heller

CASE STUDY

Narrow your focus

When Bridgette led the consumer business at Merck, it was only 2% of the total company portfolio and was allocated very few resources.

To maximize what they had, Bridgette led the team to narrow their focus to only seven geographies where they knew they had quality headroom.

The business grew from \$1 billion to \$2.3 billion in three years.

Ask four key questions to ensure alignment:

1. What part of the strategy do you get?
2. What part do you not get?
3. What is it going to look like in your market?
4. How does it translate to your business?

04 IDENTIFY HEADROOM

Have a disciplined unbiased approach to identifying headroom. Make sure you are using your resources in the places where you are driving the most possible turnover or value generation for the company. Be focused. You can't play everywhere.

"I'm going to fish where the fish are, but only if they're quality fish, and only if they meet my definition of quality, and if I can find ways to access them. It makes no sense to fish for big game fish when all I've got is this tiny little pole."

- Bridgette Heller

Compare alternatives and how to balance them. Making choices is hard but spreading yourself too thin is also a choice.

Be selective about loyalty. Remaining with customers and suppliers during a crisis builds trust and helps accelerate growth once the crisis is over. Once you pull out, it's hard to get back in.

But you cannot be loyal to everyone. Understand where your strongest relationships lie and focus your long-term commitments.

CASE STUDY

Make it personal

While at Danone, Bridgette sensed tension among her teams.

She asked everyone to put a picture on their desks that reminded them of why they did their jobs.

Not only did it provide personal motivation to each individual, but it sparked conversation between team members around the context of each other's photos and their personal priorities.

The team understood its collective purpose.

05 LISTEN WITH INTENT

Ask questions. People will often open up simply because you asked where nobody else did. Represent what you hear accurately.

Focus your questions on growth and the forward strategy to get people beyond the day-to-day tensions and concerns. Create a safe space for ideas by directing people's thoughts toward the future.

“As I went on that listening tour, my first question to everyone was, how are we going to grow? What are we going to do?”

- Bridgette Heller

Give people the opportunity to have input and co-create the strategy with you. Create ownership of the end result by including them in the process. When people see the ideas that they shared built into the final strategy, they feel authentically heard.

“You can't just come out and say, ‘Here's what I decided, and here's my strategy.’”

- Bridgette Heller

06 CHAMPION YOUR TEAMS

Create and insulate teams within large corporations so that they can do their own thing. Strong teams need to be focused and aligned.

Know how much your teams can give. If you're being asked to push them harder, stand firm on the understanding of their limits. Burnout is very real although few teams will admit how close to the limit they are.

Let people know that it is hard and that you know it is hard. Don't be afraid to authentically recognize that they are struggling and share your own challenges in leading them through the current context. Know their stories, both personal and professional.

"You'll find that you start to build more authentic relationships and it gets to be more team, more us, more we than it is them or me."

- Bridgette Heller

Make the job fun for your teams and allow them to rest. Teams cannot be all in, all the time. Recognize and reward small and large achievements constantly. Walk the halls to publicly show gratitude or send small thank you notes.

Acknowledge where people don't have the skills or the capability to do what you're asking them to do. Invest to develop it for them or develop it within them.

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