

The myth of 'organic growth': Why your business needs a sales strategy to scale successfully

For many entrepreneurs, the very mention of the word 'sales', or selling, is enough to make them break out in a cold sweat. Indeed, I've met some founders who are so averse to the idea of the Sales process that it can make them psychically recoil. I've seen the discomfort in their eyes and their body language at the very mention of the 'S' word.

I have heard countless founders say that "selling is not for me" or "our business doesn't do selling". One of the main reasons that they like to give is 'Organic growth'. It's a line that gets wheeled out very regularly. "We have grown organically," people are proud to say.

Realistically, no business will ever truly thrive on organic growth alone. Someone also needs to facilitate the supposed organic growing sales process because the actual customer transactions won't just happen on their own. Here are the reasons why.

In the Noughties the businesses and economies suddenly became more sophisticated. The convergence of powerful new technologies and hyper-connectivity brought about new changes and behaviours in a very short space of time. Suddenly the whole world was available at the click of a button through the internet. Social networks have brought instant connectivity and with them a digitally savvy customer base. Here was a way of reaching virtually every customer in the world 'without the need to sell' because the internet would now do that for us. All we would have to do was build it and they would come.

As the incredible pace of technological innovation played out, the negative sales message and narrative gained yet more traction. The front-footed sales approach was now very much out of fashion. It was backed up by the widely held belief that the internet would take care of everything. It suddenly became okay not to like, or indeed engage, in direct selling, because here was a (seemingly) perfectly plausible reason not to do it! People suddenly had a brilliant get out clause.

Yes, the internet and social channels have opened up new markets and in ways that were incomprehensible just a few short years ago. The world really is available at the click of a button and, needless to say, it is an essential, critical tool for any business. But, and it's a very big but, it is a complete misnomer that the internet and technology alone will do the sales job for you. It is part of the mix not the complete solution. Too many companies, and a lot of tech start-ups, overlook this very simple and straightforward fact. There is a view that selling is somewhat out of date and even old-fashioned. I hear this on countless occasions from businesses and often from many tech founders.

The great irony here is that virtually all large Software as a Service (SaaS) businesses employ huge sales teams. They have some of the best and most sophisticated new business teams and processes in the world. This is how they grow. Not by waiting for customers to find them. Certainly not through 'Organic growth', or by suddenly 'getting to' \$250M in revenues, but by getting out there into the world, connecting with their customers and selling. Companies such as Google, Facebook and Amazon have armies of salespeople. Even aspiring unicorns will probably have a sales team of at least 100 people. A tech company with \$100M revenues (and that is small these days) will easily have fifty people in their sales team. So, why shouldn't smaller companies have them? Because they often have a misguided view that they don't need to sell in the old-fashioned sense.

Businesses cannot rely on organic growth to get the job done. It will not be sufficient to propel a company to any meaningful level of growth. To do that we must move away from the concept of organically growing and instead focus on high level sales structures that deliver significant revenues. Whilst a lot of the sales process can now be conducted via technology, there will always be a

place for a customer interaction at some stage in the process. Buyers want to understand, they want to learn, they want rapport, they want to do their due diligence, and they want a relative degree of certainty in their decision making. Logic makes us think. Emotion makes us act.

A sales strategy is essential for you as you make a start in growing your business. Your business needs a clearly defined vision as to how it will sell, grow and attract new clients. By setting a course and sticking to it, your chances of success will improve dramatically.

In order to devise a strategy, ask yourself the following *ten key questions*:

1. What am I trying to achieve – what outcomes do I want?
2. How will I do this?
3. What are the challenges I must overcome?
4. How can I improve my chances of success?
5. What are my KPIs – are they realistic?
6. What is my time frame?
7. How much time will I (or my team) devote to this?
8. What does success look like?
9. How will I communicate this to my team?
10. How will I learn and get feedback – from my team/clients?

Once you have the answers to these ten key questions, a picture should begin to emerge. This emerging picture is the blueprint for your business and how it will grow. The advantage of working like this and answering these questions is that it has been customised to help you deliver what you need to successfully grow your business.

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