

CHECKLIST: GROWTH



In a startup, growing is about doing things that seem impossible, discovering secrets about your market that no one else knows about because no one has pushed so hard.

GROWTH SHOULD BE YOUR OBSESSION

Startup equals growth. For everything you do, wonder first “Will it make me grow?” If yes, push harder; if no, stop it - now. You have to build your growth, it won’t be handed to you on a golden platter.

IT’S NOT COMFORTABLE

Growth hurts: it cannot be planned, decisions cannot be made in advance, you’ll always be late and have no choice but to work harder and harder. Growth has a very personal cost: it costs your time, your mental and physical health. Do not expect anything other than chaos.

GROWTH CREATES VALUE

Growth is the only way to build value and the only thing that can solve any problem in your company.

GROWTH GIVES YOU CONTROL

Who runs a startup? If it’s growing, it’s the entrepreneur; if it’s not, it’s the investors. If you don’t grow, there is no one to protect you - that’s the deal. The more you understand your growth, the more you will be in charge of your company because no one will want to stop the train.

DON’T MAKE PLANS

Plans kill growth, because people always believe their plan. If you plan to do something within 6 months, you’ll actually do it in 6 months or more. Never think in terms of timeline, think in terms of milestones, with KPI-based objectives, not time-based objectives. Your only obsession about a timeline should be to reduce it.

LEARN TO IGNORE YOUR INVESTORS

Investors are afraid of growth because it costs money: European funds are small, they have little money and they are not used to losing a lot very fast in a growth situation.

DON'T BE AFRAID OF DEATH

Startups' biggest problem is the difference between stakeholders when it comes to their risk tolerance level. The fear of death is a great danger: it keeps you from being bold. You'll recognize it when you'll begin to think twice before doing something. Go against that. It is part of the job to fail or go bankrupt.

GO FOR THE OBVIOUS

Forget any big plan for the first 1000 customers and focus on doing things manually in order to learn. Short-term growth is manual. Leverage your friends and your entire community as a beginning. Be dead simple and be good at it. Repetition is key - it is very hard to get something into people's minds. Then you'll find the limits of manual growth and start using automation and growth hacking solutions, developing softwares and marketing.

THINK METRICS

Benchmarking is for losers. Do not compare yourself to others, compare to yourself one week before. Use the "Up or Out" methodology: look at your "natural" metrics on the first week and then make each of them grow, pushing up from whatever the starting level. Never add metric goals that are not relative.

THERE ARE 3 KINDS OF METRICS:

- **Life metric:** it is the very metric that tells if you are alive or not. In 99% of cases, the life metric is revenue. Growth obviously means growing revenues and more revenues equal more means for growth.
- **Optimization metrics:** they are key metrics that fuel the Life metric.
- **Vanity metrics:** they are useless as they have no impact on your life metric.
For a social network for instance, the number of subscribers is a vanity metric: what counts for this kind of project is not the acquisition but the retention rate, so the number of daily active users is an important optimization metric.

MEASURE BY WEEK

If you keep doing small things in a tight timeframe, you'll have big effects on the long run. If you try to do big things on a large timeframe, you'll get depressed, because you'll never know if what you did worked (or not) and if you are successful (or not).

And please: growth rates must be calculated week over week in absolute numbers, not cumulative numbers.

BE AMBITIOUS AS A TEAM

Everyone in the team must be aware of the goals and feel concerned about reaching them. Celebrate the right things and similarly, share desperation: communicate internally about every piece of news, be it good or bad. Create an automatic email sending the numbers to everyone in the team. Be harsh. Be clear about what success means and what failure means, on the basis of your KPI.

CHOOSE YOUR SIDE

Apply the Achilles dilemma to yourself: happiness or glory. Glory means doing something that matters, not being mainstream famous. The glory path is hard: everything you'll do can fail at any moment. At the same time, the happiness path would be boring for a lot of entrepreneurs. There are as many kinds of entrepreneurs as there are ways of life and ambitions. Make a true decision, choose which kind of entrepreneur you want to be. It is a one-way ticket.

GROW OR DIE

At every step, you must find a new solution to reach the next level of growth. And if at every step you take you are not at risk of dying, it means that you are not growing fast enough.