



It Takes A Team To Scale Up



As I'm writing this article, Justin Thomas has just broken through and won the PGA Championship, one of golf's four major championships. As he thanked his swing coach, his putting coach, and all the other coaches who had helped him, he reminded us that no one ever achieves peak performance without a coach, whether in sport or in business.

“THIS WAS ONE OF THE KEY PRINCIPLES KEITH MCFARLAND DISCOVERED IN THE RESEARCH THAT BECAME HIS BOOK, THE BREAKTHROUGH COMPANY.”

He found that for every company that broke through to scale up and become an entrepreneurial enterprise, there was a transition from relying on its own ideas to enlisting best practices from people outside the company. Says McFarland, “These (outside) groups provided the company with support, perspective, new ideas, and tools and helped hold the firm accountable to achieving their vision.” He found that breakthrough companies had surrounded themselves with outside resources to help them scale up, whereas the comparison companies who had failed to scale up successfully were more insular and less eager to form real partnerships with people outside the firm.

My personal business experience, my coaching experience, and my observation and study of successful companies all agree with McFarland's findings that it takes a team to scale up. Here are 10 reasons why when scaling a company, CEOs should adopt the team approach by using a coach:

1. You'll scale up faster, cheaper, and with fewer mistakes. A coach is like a co-architect who specializes in growth companies.
2. You'll avoid reinventing the wheel. The coach brings the process, tools, and experience to help you achieve your vision.
3. You'll get the coach's candid, independent, outside perspective on your company.
4. You'll implement a proven framework of best practices that you can use forever.
5. You'll be leveraging the brainpower of your management team.
6. You'll be building the skill level and commitment of your team.
7. You'll improve the level of financial literacy and performance of your team.
8. You'll uncover and solve your real issues, not their symptoms.
9. You'll get clear goals and accountability throughout your company.
10. You'll get everyone on the same page.

While working as an executive in two high-growth entrepreneurial firms, I experienced firsthand the value that external perspectives brought us. Now as a certified coach with Gazelles International, I'm obviously a believer in the value of coaching, but coaching is not for everyone. There is a fascinating paradox which is best summarized by this Douglas Adams quote:

“HUMAN BEINGS, WHO ARE ALMOST UNIQUE IN HAVING THE ABILITY TO LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS, ARE ALSO REMARKABLE FOR THEIR APPARENT DISINCLINATION TO DO SO.”

Translation: We can learn from others, but some choose not to. This paradox was confirmed by a Stanford University study that found while almost 100 percent of CEOs believed coaching would help them and wanted a coach, only about one-third actually used a coach. Surprised? I'm not. My view is that coaching is a winning move used by progressive-minded leaders, and unfortunately, they are always in the minority. ♦

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