

Application Guide

GAINING AND SUSTAINING MOMENTUM



BOTTOM LINE:

Successful leaders gain and sustain momentum through three components: new, improved, and improving.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

I. Momentum is emotional.

- A. It's a sense of energy and excitement that permeates throughout the organization.
- B. It's the feeling that progress is being made, goals are within reach, and anything is possible.

II. The real test of leadership is when momentum begins to slip away.

- A. The skills necessary for starting something are often a very different set of skills than are necessary for fixing a problem when it arises.
- B. When you have momentum things are easier; even the bad problems are easier to navigate.
- C. Momentum makes us all look a bit better than we actually are, and a lack of momentum can cause us to doubt ourselves and our decision-making abilities.

III. To fuel or maintain momentum, organizations have to evaluate constantly. Every model, even the best of the best, has a shelf life and must eventually be improved and made new.

- A. Anything new creates momentum; anything new and improved has the potential to sustain momentum. In order to sustain long-term momentum, it has to be constantly improving.
- B. Very few people have the opportunity to create a new category of something, rather we are dropping into existing markets and looking for new ways to do things.

IV. Three components for sustaining momentum in an organization: new, improved, improving

A. New

1. Momentum is rarely triggered by tweaking something old.
2. New always triggers momentum. People like new things, so just putting something new out there will create momentum.
 - a) New leadership
 - b) New direction
 - c) New product or service
3. Organizations tend to jump to putting new leaders in place in order to fix a problem.
 - a) This can be good because new leaders are often the ones who recognize the new direction an organization needs to take or the new product/program an organization needs to embrace.
 - b) But a new leader is not always the fix unless you are willing to dig deep into all aspects of what is causing the lack of growth.
 - c) A new leader may not change anything if your systems don't change with them because your organization is perfectly designed to get the results you are currently getting.

B. Improved

1. Creating something different isn't always an improvement.
2. The new must be an actual, noticeable improvement.
3. The new should be marketed as improved and then experienced by the consumer as improved.

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C. Improving

1. This component never ends. If we are lucky, we get to ride the momentum of a new and improved thing for a while, but eventually that will fade and we will need to re-evaluate again.
 - a) This starts with rigorous and ongoing evaluation that is built into the rhythms of the organization; if you don't know how something is performing, you cannot improve it.
 - b) Leaders then must make a commitment to make the necessary adjustments to keep moving forward.
2. Even the perception of making something better will maintain momentum and keep customers who have a sense of brand loyalty. People gravitate toward products that say they are constantly working on something to make it the best product it can be.

V. Inhibitors to momentum:

1. Falling in love with a system, product, business model, or process will slow or kill momentum because things are always changing.
2. Launching a product too soon.
3. Overhyping the marketing, and then the product doesn't live up to it, makes it difficult to come back from.
4. Micromanaging kills initiative which kills momentum.
5. Organization complexity can kill momentum.
6. Culture of suspicion kills transparency, which makes communication difficult, which keeps important info from making its way to the top, which ultimately kills momentum.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. How is your organization currently experiencing momentum? Is it growing or is it in decline?
2. Can you think of a time when a new product or service grabbed your attention? What about it made you want to use it? How can you implement those components or strategies into your organization?
3. What systems do you have in place for evaluating success in your organization?
4. Which, if any, of the listed inhibitors is an issue among your organization? What can you do to avoid them in the future?

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