

FOREWORD KICKSTART GROWTH

Most people think small. When they see a tomato, they see nothing more than a tomato, an ingredient for a salad. Not the Heinz family: in 1876 they introduced their first bottle of tomato ketchup and eventually conquered the whole world with this product. Joseph Campbell, together with his partner Arthur Dorrance, also saw more in the tomato than the average greengrocer: they turned it into tomato soup and Campbell's soon became a worldwide empire. These people didn't think small, but big.

For growth you don't necessarily need a complicated product, nor a super-innovative service that no one has ever heard of. In fact, preferably not! The fastest growing companies sell something basic, something everyone knows and needs. The deciding driver for successful growth is not the product or service. But what is it then?

I have always been fascinated by growing companies, and I've been lucky enough to work at some of those companies. One of them was McDonald's, where I spent every day asking myself what we owed our success to and how we could sustain our growth at McDonald's.

Actually, I've been on a journey all my life with McDonald's, its entrepreneurship and its growth. As I was able to look in the kitchen of more and more successful companies, I slowly but surely discovered what all these companies had in common. By now I think I have found the answer for

successful, continuous growth: a framework and model with which you can successfully grow any organisation.

I hope that you also choose to go after growth. Because growth is actually more valuable than success. Success is by definition something temporary, while by choosing growth you safeguard the continuity of your company. This also forces you to remain flexible in a world that changes constantly.

I also believe that companies don't need Masters of Business Administration, but Masters of Business Acceleration - accelerating takes us further than administering.

Almost every day, I meet people with potentially great products or ideas. Successful butchers with *one* shop. Great cabinetmakers with *one* machine. Popular restaurant owners with *one* restaurant. Brilliant consultants with *one* employee. Don't get me wrong, some people don't want to grow, for example because leadership doesn't fit their character, and that's fine. But many entrepreneurs and managers want to grow, but don't know how. I wrote this book for them.

So, if you are in the business of developing software that everyone loves, a shoe that runs super smooth, a restaurant that's full every night of the week or a new gadget that everyone likes?

Then believe in yourself, grow and conquer the world!

René H. Savelberg

rs@velberg.com

info@nationaalgroeiplan.nl

[@rsavelberg](#)

nl.linkedin.com/in/rsavelberg

www.nationaalgroeiplan.nl

INTRODUCTION WHAT IS BUSINESS ACCELERATION?

Three teenagers stare at the screen of a smartphone, with red and blue tins in their hands. Their skateboards lie idly by at their feet. They look breathlessly at a snowboarder making a backwards double-somersault high in the Alps. They see a mountain biker dropping carefree into the depths of a canyon. They watch a surfer glide along a giant wave in the surf of the Pacific before he himself disappears into it. A hang glider drops off from a sharply pointed mountain top and disappears into thin air. Damn, so gutsy! The teenagers watch the film in slow motion and analyze the jumps of their heroes. One of them tries to imitate the backward somersault seen in the film. He ends up flat on his back, but stands up laughing and accepts another can with a high five from his friends. He opens his can of soda and puts it to his mouth, while another tries the somersault again. Is this an advertisement? No, the three boys are merely playing themselves at a skate park in a local neighborhood. But the movie they were watching was indeed advertising, sponsored by that red-blue can of soda: Red Bull. Particularly effective advertising, when you consider that this simple drink barely existed a generation ago and that it now sells eight billion cans a year. *Eight billion!*

Dream scenario

With action and adventure, Red Bull has been captivating young people for more than twenty-five years. With stunts and targeted sponsorship,

the simple energy drink has become synonymous with risk and gutsiness. Red Bull is all about pushing your limits and trying out all that your mother warned you about. From a medical point of view, the drink is relatively harmless, although with its high levels of caffeine and taurine, it's a risky booster. All the rumours about the health risks only contribute to the tough image. The negative publicity and sales bans in some countries build up the brutal, cross-border image.

Red Bull is the dream scenario for breaking into an overcrowded market with a new brand. The soft drinks market seemed to be stuck at the end of the eighties and was roughly divided between Coca-Cola and Pepsi. On a business trip in Thailand, the Austrian Dietrich Mateschitz came into contact with the drink, which he launched as Red Bull at the Monaco Grand Prix in 1987. As a seasoned marketer at both Unilever and Procter & Gamble, Mateschitz knew what it took to market a brand. Today, Red Bull is the market leader in energy drinks, a market that Mateschitz largely created himself. The brand grew from cool to chill. Over the years the target group has broadened, so that it appeals to young people with different lifestyles. It covers the youth market, from techno clubs to extreme sports.

Dietrich Mateschitz had the imagination and the guts to make his own childhood dream come true. That is the magic of his success. The Red Bull fantasy is authentic: Mateschitz himself also tumbles through the air as a stunt pilot and regularly shreds in a Formula 1 car. Not only is he a handy marketer, the Red Bull feeling comes from within him. Mateschitz knows how to combine the 'realness' of extreme top sports with the stimulating effect of his soft drink. Young people believe that Red Bull improves their performance, and that's how it works for them. Red Bull gives them wings.

Red Bull definitely has business acceleration power, that's for sure. But who or what do we thank for this? Where does it come from? Can we do the same as Red Bull?

Magical attraction

Large, successful brands have a magical appeal. Young people have a thing for Red Bull, I have a thing for Coca-Cola. You have a thing for IKEA, I have a thing for Walmart (yes, really!). It's something astounding, we feel a personal relationship with the producers of drinks and retailers, with brands and people we don't even know. They become our house guests, they grow up with us. Shopping in our favourite shops and eating in our favourite restaurants feels familiar. We connect with many brands, whether we like it or not. How do these companies get that done anyway? How do they manage to connect tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands and sometimes millions of people? How can companies like IKEA and McDonald's continue to grow and succeed, being accepted and embraced in societies and cultures around the world? What is the secret of a brand like Unilever's Ben & Jerry's? How does this brand convince millions of people that they are doing good for the planet when they buy their ice cream? And how does the same Unilever manage to excite the opposite feeling in millions of people through sinning with a Magnum ice cream?

All my life I have been fascinated by the magical appeal of successful companies and brands. How have they managed to grow so big - so big that it looks as if they have developed a perpetual-motion machine that grows by itself?

Aren't you always talking about McDonald's?

As a boy, I re-built American cities with my little brother. We took our toy cars for a drive in the deep streets of our own cardboard Manhattan and even took videos of it with a super-8camera. I was already impressed by the United States and its well-known companies that had grown into global multinationals. In America, that's where it happened. After my graduation from Hotel Management School, I went there as soon as possible for a Masters in Hotel and Foodservice Management. I lived in Miami in the early eighties when it was still a city where the Colombian mafia and pensionados dominated the streets. I lived next to the headquarters of Burger King and regularly went to their concept store to see and taste what new products and flavors they had come up with. After my Masters I went back to the Netherlands, where for a long time I wasn't even aware of my fascination for fast growing companies. Until a colleague pointed my passion out to me.

In 1971 the Dutch supermarket-chain owner Albert Heijn brought McDonald's to the Netherlands, in fact the McDonald's in the city of Zaandam was the very first McDonald's store in Europe. I had been following the growth of this renowned brand with great interest for some time. Over lunch with colleagues, I regularly analysed the growth of the company and the appeal of the concept. One day my colleague shoved a job ad right under my nose. 'Hey René, you always talking about McDonald's, this is 100% for you.'

I was immediately convinced. In the job advertisement, McDonald's Netherlands was seeking a Local Store Marketing Coordinator, who would

help McDonald's restaurants to market themselves locally - in a smart way. Trying out all sorts of marketing tricks at a company that I had admired for years seemed like a fantastic opportunity to me!

Unfortunately, the recruiter at McDonald's thought otherwise. On the phone he tried to get rid of me as quickly as possible: 'Hotelschool and an MBA in America? No, I'd rather not. You guys think differently'. To make matters worse, my Hotelschool was based in Maastricht which was regarded as one of the best classical hotel schools in Europe: I had done my utmost to be accepted to that school, but the good name of the school now worked against me. 'No, no, then you have been educated far too classically. We prefer to train our people in our own way'. The recruiter said, already starting a closing sentence. I thought about my current job, which didn't inspire me much, and I thought I had to make my move now, and soon. I took a deep breath and verbally put my foot in the door: 'I understand what you mean, McDonald's is a totally different concept. But apart from my education, you don't know anything about me at all. So at least give me the opportunity to introduce myself. Let's meet in person. One cup of coffee - and then you'll be rid of me again.'

Fortunately, the man could appreciate my tenacity and I was allowed the chance to sell myself. The result of that interview was that I was hired. I could start right away, only not right away in that nice marketing position. First, I had to start with the basics...

My first Big Mac

First I followed the complete training program for new franchisees. For months I learned everything about the products, the layout of restaurants, the logic on the work floor, preparing products, shadowing shifts and so on. I was trained in every function and task so that I knew exactly

what every detail meant and what role it played in the operation: from cleaning tables, floors and toilets, to cooking French fries for hours until my hands were sore because of the square handle of the French fries basket. The highlight, of course, was preparing and serving McDonald's' world-famous hamburger, my first Big Mac.

I learned everything about the daily operation of a McDonald's restaurant, which also gave me a deep respect for all the employees in the restaurants. Even now when I come to a McDonald's restaurant and order a Big Mac with French fries, I still remember how to prepare them.

Three building blocks

Only after completing my training I was allowed to start in my new 'guerrilla-marketing' role. My first challenge was to supervise the marketing of the opening of the new McDonald's restaurant in Eindhoven, the thirty-seventh location of McDonald's in the Netherlands.

I loved the work and in the years that followed I continued to grow along with the explosive growth of McDonald's, in the Netherlands and far beyond. In my fourteen years at McDonald's I started on the floor preparing Big Macs, but was also given the opportunity to eventually grow to become Managing Director, a position I held for seven years. In all my years at McDonald's I learned a huge amount, but everything I learned about successful growth actually started on the floor, as a trainee, cleaning and cooking in McDonald's restaurants. The Big Mac was prepared in exactly the same way every day, the collaboration with colleagues and suppliers was seamless and we put tremendous dedication into helping customers in an as fast and friendly a manner as possible. These were

actually the three building blocks that I found to be present in every successful, growing company, and that I see as the unique recipe for Business Acceleration:

BUSINESS ACCELERATION = Standardisation + Partnerships + People-Focus

Standardisation

To start, of course you need a good product or service, but it doesn't have to be genius level. Much more important is that it is of good, consistent quality and scalable. This can only be achieved through extensive standardisation. Remember, if every McDonald's were to prepare its own version of the Big Mac, McDonalds would likely still be just one restaurant in San Bernardino, California.

Every employee and every appliance needs to be able to prepare each product quickly and efficiently. Every customer should experience the same quality, at every visit. Imagine if KLM pilots were allowed to follow their own beliefs and standards... Standardisation is the most obvious success factor for growth, but it's also the most underestimated.

Partnerships

Some companies think they're alone in the world. They don't realise how dependent they are on other companies, including suppliers and specialized consultants. In our network and society in particular, each company is just one link in a chain, and if you don't perfect the quality of that chain you will never grow. Only the best is good enough: you have to work with

the best suppliers and the smartest advisors - not for the short term, but for the long term.

The Swedish fashion chain Hennes & Mauritz (H&M) sells affordable clothing, but also works with the world's best clothing designers, a different one every year: Stella McCartney, Karl Lagerfeld, Viktor & Rolf. If you cut back on a relationship, whether business or personal, you can be sure it's going to be a short-term relationship. If you want to grow like Hennes & Mauritz, you have to look for the best partners and invest in a long-term relationship. So, in the words of an American Indian tribe: if you want to travel fast, go alone. If you want to travel far, then go together.

People Focus

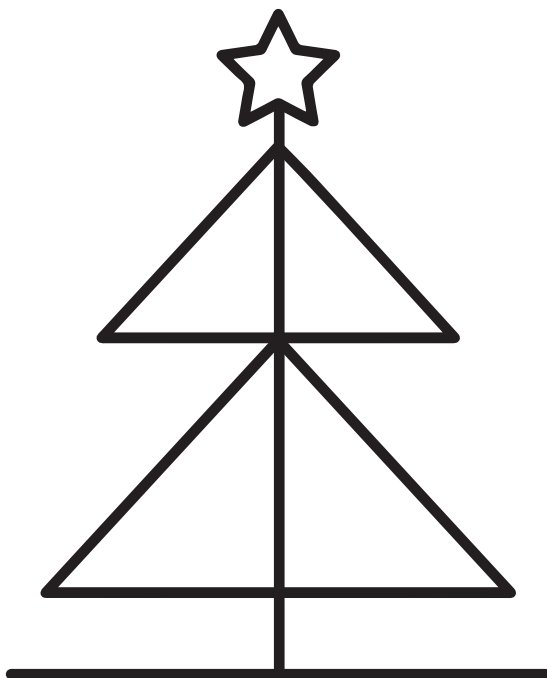
All the energy you put into your business has to be people focused. Your customers, employees, partners: everyone deserves personal attention.

Mars, the American manufacturer of snacks such as Mars and M&M's, is the largest family business in the world, with a turnover of almost forty billion dollars. The company has been criticized for years for its rigorous, performance-oriented organisational culture. Now, it is widely praised for its family values. Mars may be strict, but it is also a fair company. It has been chosen by Fortune as one of the best companies to work for. The Mars factory candy store in Slough in the UK is run by a lady who has worked there for more than sixty years. And she is not the only female 'boss': the so-called 'traditional' Mars has more women in the top than most/many competing companies.

People focus is the most important building block of Business Acceleration. Clients and employees are not there for your organisation, it's the

other way around; your organisation is there for your clients and employees. Only when that awareness is rooted in your corporate DNA can your organisation grow.

In order to clarify how you can achieve this people-focus in a growing organisation, I have developed what I call the Christmas tree model. It illustrates how to let human energy flow through any organisation and thus achieve long-term growth.



A Christmas tree with people

It has taken a long time, but in my opinion it has now become clear that people are more important than machines and processes. The blind faith in traditional command and control techniques introduced by people like Frederick Taylor (author of ‘the principles of scientific management’) is slowly but surely disappearing. Virtually every manager and entrepreneur now agrees that everything revolves around people, and more importantly, motivated people. But how can you arrange the energy and therefore the talents and potential of employees in such a way that a company starts to grow?

To make this clear, I will compare a healthy, growing organisation with a well-equipped Christmas tree.

Core values • A Christmas tree will only grow if you plant it in fertile soil. Just as a tree needs fertile soil, your employees and customers need healthy core values. What do you stand for? If you want to save the environment, make sure that all your employees and customers really feel and understand those core values. Core values give direction to ‘thinking and doing’ within your organisation. But beware: don’t compromise when it comes to your core values; they provide confidence, direction and self-correction within a company. If all goes well, your core values form the basis for the X-factor with which you inspire everyone, inside and outside your organisation.

People first • All energy flows through the trunk of the tree. That trunk needs to be thick, robust and straight, because that’s what your entire organisation is all about. Fed from the core values, your employees ultimately transfer that energy to the customer! This process requires total commitment, for which you have to put everything else aside. And no, it

can't be a trick or faked, you have to be genuinely interested in people in order to spark their enthusiasm. Because if energy stops flowing, your tree will die.

Support organisation • This is the bottom triangle of the tree. No tree can grow without branches and leaves. Leaves capture light and convert it into energy. Your support organisation is the part of the tree that supports the people who have direct contact with the end-customer. They cannot grow without the help of countless people, from the conveyor belt worker to the marketing manager. You need the best specialists you can find, to design and deliver the best products and services. This is also where the CEO works, at the bottom of the tree. In fact, he's just one of the people that supports the company. A leaf at the bottom of the tree: nothing more, nothing less.

Internal Customer • The top triangle of the Christmas tree is the place in the organisation where your company has direct contact with the end-customer. In your store, in your restaurant, through your web shop: everything comes down to this. Now you have to deliver what you promised the customer, and preferably a little more. This is the workspace of the 'internal customer', who needs all the attention and support to make the customer happy. Internal customers in any organisation are actually more important than the marketing manager. They should be 100% supported by the organisation, not the other way around.

External Customer • On top of the Christmas tree we find the bright shining star, which is of course: your customer! This is what we do it all for! Every customer has to be one hundred percent satisfied, so they become an ambassador of your company, a fan of your brand. All human energy in the company must ultimately be focused on making the star shine to make the customer shine.

Feedback loops • This part of the Christmas tree reflects the communication between the support organisation and the internal customer. These are the pendulums in the Christmas tree, and they are extremely important: after all, as a company you want to be a learning organisation, to know what is going on in society and with your customers in order to be able to respond proactively with new and better products and services. Make sure you also listen carefully and regularly to what your employees have to say about your customers - and do something with that information. Learn from comments, criticism and mistakes!

What this Christmas tree shows is that growth is an ongoing process. Just having a good product or a brilliant idea is not enough. Between customer and employees, energy flows continuously through the organisation in the form of information. If you improve the quality of these energy flows, my Christmas tree model will function optimally and will become a growth accelerator. Organisations that are accelerating their business always try to make the right, valuable connections with their stakeholders and are constantly improving their products and services to better serve the customer. They know how to perfect seemingly simple products down to the smallest detail. They realise that their organisation is like a tree, a living organism that can only grow if it receives energy.

What distinguishes the Christmas tree from traditional models is the reversed hierarchy: not the management, but the customer comes first. The customer is not part of your work, the customer is your work. And the CEO? He or she dangles at the very bottom of the tree and is in the service of the employees. That's simpler than it sounds, because of course the role of the CEO is crucial - I'll come back to that in more detail later.

50,000
expert hours
in ONE book!

The secret of

BIG

Many businesses utilize only 50% or less of their growth potential.

While ambitious business leaders

strongly believe in their product, they often struggle to come up with the right plan to accelerate growth. In this book, former McDonald's top executive and serial entrepreneur René H. Savelberg reveals his framework for organising and accelerating business growth.

'Sparkling with great examples' – Jury Dutch Management Book of the Year

'Fascinating and inspiring read' – Credit Agricole Suisse Asia

'Very practical, easy to implement' – Accor Hotel Group

Find out how the companies we know and love, grow their business by thinking and doing things differently. And how you can do the same. Based on his 30 years of experience with growth companies, Savelberg developed a unique and easy-to-follow 8-step 'business acceleration framework' with which any company can grow. No matter how small you start or how big you already are.

'Believe in yourself, grow and conquer the world!'



At the age of 34, René H. Savelberg became the youngest CEO in the McDonald's global system. As CEO of McDonald's Holland, Serial Entrepreneur and International Keynote Speaker, he worked with high-performance companies around the world. He discovered that many of these companies invest in the same three key drivers to grow their business; standardisation, partnerships and people-focus. His book explains how you can also use

these building blocks to accelerate and maximise your growth and business potential.

