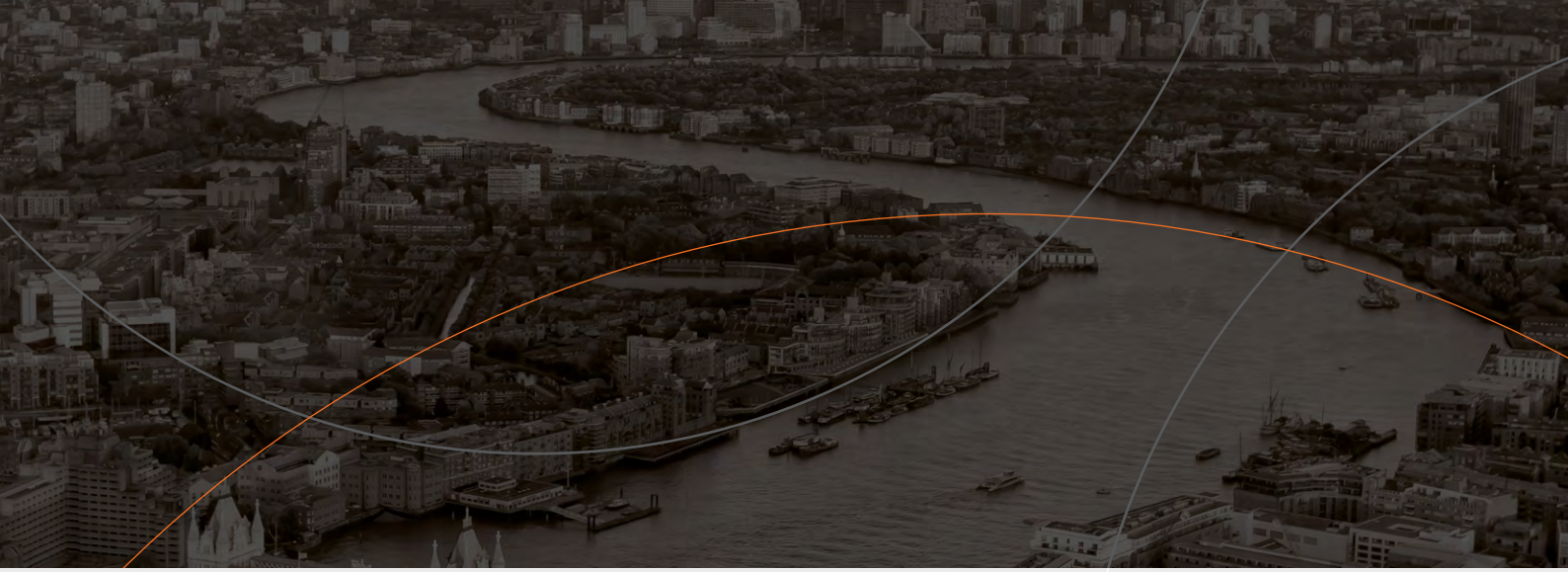
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Uncovering the secrets of high-growth tech brands

Learn from the best and unlock growth in your tech business



B2B Marketing



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Introduction



Danielle Howe
Reports editor
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The words 'high growth' immediately bring to mind brands like Uber, Airbnb and Deliveroo. In B2B, you may think of the likes of Slack, Salesforce or Drift. But what are the characteristics of these rapidly expanding companies? And what's different about high-growth brands in the tech sector, a sphere where explosive levels of growth look set to continue in the years to come?

That's what we're aiming to find out in this report. By looking at everything from business strategy to company culture – and, of course, marketing – we'll be evaluating what sets the most successful B2B tech brands apart from the rest, and what we can learn from them.

First we'll be taking a look at what 'high growth' really means in the context of the B2B technology industry, and then we'll be examining the business elements that differentiate high-growth tech firms from the rest. Next, we'll take a look at the importance of effective sales and marketing, and drill down into the detail with a case study. Finally we'll be taking a look at the things you can do to accelerate your own growth and emulate the success of the most impressive brands around.

The experts

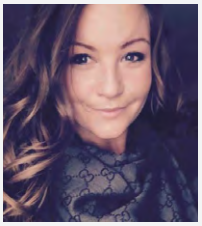
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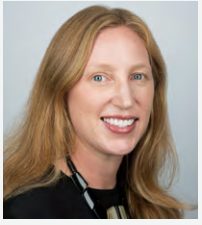
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Section 1:
What is high growth?

'High growth' is a pretty vague term – in terms of percentages, some might argue that a company growing at 10% a year qualifies as a high-growth business, while others may claim that 500% growth a year is the minimum qualification threshold.

This confusion is further complicated by the fact we're only talking about tech companies in this report – increasingly a sector where it's about what tech enables people to do, rather than the technology itself. A significant number of B2B companies in the sector are skyrocketing, and many assume rapid growth should be a done deal, as long as you have a great product. But what level of growth should we really be expecting to see? And are these expectations realistic?

In terms of a growth percentage, we've come up with a definitive benchmark. Based on analysis of high growth definitions from the UK government, the OECD, the Tech City Future Fifty and Upscale programmes, the Tech Tour Growth 50, the *Sunday Times* Tech Track 100, The Silicon Valley comes to the UK 'Scale-up' club, the Deloitte Technology Fast 500 (North America) and Fast 50 (UK), we suggest:

Slow growth: Between 0% and 10% per annum.

Medium growth: 10% to 50% per annum.

High growth: 50% to 1000% per annum, for at least three consecutive years.

Super high growth: 1000% or more per annum, for at least three consecutive years.

The reason we've differentiated between 'high growth' and 'super high growth' is that the 'super high growth' category really only applies to start-ups that can grow at 1000% a year or more because they were relatively small to begin with. These are incredible companies, but it's worth saying that growing at this rate is a) unrealistic for many businesses and b) unsustainable in the long term.

For the purposes of this report, we're looking at the companies seeing high levels of growth beyond the start-up phase – essentially, 'scale-up' companies. These are brands that have made the move from start-up to something more established, but perhaps aren't yet the size of multinational corporations.

What's a scale-up company?

"The accepted definition of 'scale-up' is a company of at least 10 people, achieving 20% per annum sales growth for at least three years in a row. If a company achieves that, it moves from a start-up to a scale-up. If a business can manage this type of growth, there's a good chance they're going to be successful, because they've got good, steady, consistent growth and they've got momentum – unlike a lot of companies that are going up and down like a yo-yo.

"If the UK could encourage more companies to become scale-ups, that would be a massive boost to the economy. At the moment, 90% of start-ups are failing, only 30% ever get to £300,000 turnover and only 1% ever get to £7m turnover."

Gordon McAlpine



1.1 Multiple rounds of funding don't necessarily guarantee success

Admittedly, these percentage thresholds are a fairly black-and-white view of what high growth looks like, and while it serves as a good indicator, a growth percentage doesn't take into account other factors that indicate success, and can fail to acknowledge what's really happening behind the scenes. Growth in percentage of turnover is therefore not a reliable enough indicator of a company's success; this growth has to be healthy, sustained and profitable – focusing on multiple rounds of funding is not the answer:

> *"The tech space has been too influenced and distracted by the wrong kind of 'high growth' measures. Namely, we've tended to see funding as an indication of high growth or success when, behind the scenes, the actual sales going on were abysmal. Not to mention a lack of profitability."*
>
> Maureen Blandford

> *"Many tech businesses are looking at flotation or to sell, so they have to be an attractive proposition for investors. That can't be just today, where it's about a potential that the business never realises. It's got to be about a timeline that's going to achieve profitable growth in the future."*
>
> Royston Guest

> *"Currently there's a lot of focus on funding, rather than making sales. The brands that have an obsession with growing sales are the ones that are most successful, funnily enough – they don't necessarily need funding."*
>
> Gordon McAlpine

1.2 Being disruptive isn't the be-all and end-all

While it may be exciting to envision your company as the next Salesforce, we can all admit this is unrealistic for many – and in fact, huge levels of success can be achieved in a specific market without becoming world-renowned. This is not to say that aiming to disrupt the *status quo* isn't a goal worth aiming for, but as Gordon McAlpine explains: "It's almost like new B2B tech companies don't realise they can be very successful without anyone ever knowing their name. Lots of the big names are bandied around so much; thousands see that as unmotivational. They can't see that they'll ever become like that."

> *"This isn't about becoming the next Facebook or the next LinkedIn; it could be just about growing a business to turning over £10-20 million and then exiting. It's taking it back to being an achievable dream, rather than shooting for the stars."*
>
> Gordon McAlpine

Maureen Blandford says she's most impressed by companies that are, to some extent, flying under the radar – "companies that, often, the marketplace isn't talking about".

So, new or emerging tech companies that are aspiring to accelerate their own growth need to bear in mind that huge success can be achieved without anyone on the street knowing their name – a more important indicator of success would be the extent to which your customers are willing to recommend your brand.

Section 2:
What all high-growth tech brands have in common

What is it that differentiates high-growth tech companies from the rest? Based on extensive qualitative research, we've identified a number of key factors setting high-growth B2B tech brands apart. While the list is not necessarily exhaustive – there may be other individual factors that contribute to certain companies' growth – the majority of rapidly growing tech businesses have most, if not all, of the following factors right. This is, in essence, their recipe for success.



Section 3:
The business principles of high growth

3.1 Start with the product

All high-growth businesses:

- Have an offering that completely meets customer needs.
- Ensure their product is quick to implement and easy to use.
- Know the product alone isn't enough to fuel growth.

To an extent this goes without saying, but fuelling high levels of growth when the product and market fit is wrong will be impossible. Having said this, there are some key factors that characterise the products of high-growth tech companies – any new tech product now has to be easy to implement and easy to use, but also easy to roll out across the client's business.

If your product is too complicated for clients to set up, you'll struggle to to keep up demand and it'll be less easy to capitalise on customer's potential advocacy (another important factor for high growth, as we'll see later).

As Alastair Dryburgh asks: "Is your product actually designed to be easy to sell, easy to deploy and easy to expand within the company? Historically, B2B software sales were really hard work because there was a big commitment in the early stages. Whereas now, really smart people have found a way around that – it's all to do with cloud services. You've got your whole product designed so it's easy to take on, well designed for a pilot and can be built from there – that's a completely different proposition."

The risk for many tech brands, however, is that too much of a focus on the product often leads to a belief that it's so good it will sell itself. A good product on its own will not be enough to stimulate growth – although growth will be difficult without a solid product in place.

3.2 Know what your growth is down to

All high-growth businesses:

- Have a clear and simple business strategy.
- Understand where future growth will come from.
- Are able to squeeze maximum value from existing customers.

Assuming the product and market fit are right, all high-growth tech companies share a clear and simple strategy and have a precise idea of where they expect their growth to come from. Crucially, as we've seen already, seeking out external funding is not the answer for long-term, sustainable growth. There are two key business principles followed by high-growth firms:

1. **Focus:** taking a focused approach to business strategy, and concentrating on a limited number of profitable products and markets.

> *"A lot of entrepreneurs talk about selling to the whole world (corporate, professional services, medical) but if you've only got 10-20 people in your team, how do you sell to all those brackets? Why don't you just focus on your best markets? When you go to all these different markets, each one is likely to ask if you can change the product for them. You then go into a world of chasing features and having lots of different versions of one product, and it can drive a company down."*
>
> Gordon McAlpine

2. **Value:** squeezing maximum value out of these particular products and markets.

> *"High-growth tech businesses are built on a sound commercial business growth model around acquisition, maximisation and retention, so there's a lifetime value to the customer where you're going to be able to generate consistent, recurring or annuity revenue."*
>
> Royston Guest

3.3 Encourage hands-on leadership



All high-growth companies:

- Are led by visionary, high-performing leaders.
- Have leaders who get their hands dirty.
- Have leaders who continually motivate their workforce to do better.

Assuming a clear vision and strategy are in place, these then need to be communicated and enacted from the top down by effective leaders. Maureen Blandford believes that a "savvy sales organisation under strong leadership" is a key factor for success, while Royston Guest points out that high-performing leaders are always part and parcel of high-performing companies.

We're not going to examine the characteristics of strong leaders in detail here – this is something we've looked at in separate research in 2016 – but there's one key aspect that defines leaders at some of the most successful, fast-growing companies, and this is a hands-on approach. Gordon McAlpine has directly observed the leadership qualities in some of the country's fastest-growing businesses.

> ***"Good leaders understand what makes people tick, put effort into people and get involved in recruitment themselves. Poor leaders always say: 'I'm too busy' or 'I can't get involved in that…' Poor CEOs say they don't have time to attend sales meetings, because they have to 'run the company'. They should be out doing things that actually make a difference – not sitting at their desk, but talking to people and meeting clients."***
>
> Gordon McAlpine



3.4 Invest in your people

All high-growth businesses:

- Understand the importance of recruiting the right people.
- Invest in professional development and nurture their staff.
- Create a positive working culture that breeds success.

Simply put, a business with the wrong people is unlikely to grow with any degree of consistency – and a business with unappreciated people is equally likely to stall before too long. There are two key principles here:

1. **Recruitment:** recruiting the right people in terms of talent and cultural fit is absolutely paramount in a business that wants to ensure its growth acceleration. Mark Organ at Influitive spends a large amount of his time recruiting the right people into his business – and he also ensures every other senior manager values the importance of recruiting and retaining the right team.
2. **Development:** growth is not driven by miserable, stressed or unmotivated people. People thrive – and in turn, boost business growth – when they're valued and supported, and high-growth businesses know exactly how to do this, as Gordon McAlpine explains: "A lot of small companies don't put enough into the development side of things – if you're well developed, you feel like the company's really investing in you, and you're becoming better. You appreciate it and therefore you don't want to leave."

> ***"The workforce of today is looking for more than just a job; they're looking for fulfilment and to build relationships with the people they're spending time with for the majority of their week."***
>
> David Saenz

> ***"Anyone can grow a great business with a mediocre product, but great people are paramount. A great bunch of people make the product look good and differentiate it."***
>
> Gordon McAlpine

3.5 Be prepared to change

All high-growth businesses:

- Have a deep understanding of industry trends and what's coming next.
- Are agile, able to pivot easily and prepared to constantly innovate.
- Ensure they have exceptional operations and processes in place.

The ability to cope with high levels of growth and the rapid pace of change within the tech industry can be summed up with one word: **agility.**

While an effective, original product is important, it won't count for much if you can't keep up with the fast pace of change in the tech industry – and this is something all high-growth companies know how to do well. Without the ability to be agile in fast-moving market conditions, sustaining growth for any period of time will be nigh-on impossible.

> *"It's all about maintaining your relevance – the companies that are really surviving are the ones that are relevant, but they're agile; they've got the ability to reinvent themselves quickly. Big companies become lazy when they grow to a certain size. They become more inside-out than outside-in, and they start to become complacent. And we all know that complacency is a dangerous place to be."*
>
> Royston Guest

> *"The most common reason for a plateau is finding yourself stuck within a certain niche market. In order to make inroads in a different part of the market you've got to start doing things differently."*
>
> Alastair Dryburgh

> *"Business leaders need to have their fingers on the pulse of the industry they operate in, and ensure their proposition serves a real need that's pressing today or that will be in the near future. A firm understanding of how the business is serving the world around them will inevitably trickle down and force the wider business to constantly adapt to an ever-changing landscape."*
>
> David Saenz



Ensuring operational excellence

Dull it may seem, but unimportant it is not. Operational excellence is another factor high-growth companies have in common; after all, if you run a messy operation, how can you expect to effectively deliver on the needs of an increasing number of customers?

Royston Guest and Mark Organ both agree that operational excellence is key to ensuring growth continues, with Mark explaining that "to be able to scale, you need a great operating system" – in other words, if your business isn't run smoothly, you won't be able to keep up with the pace of change.

Section 4:
Growth driven by sales and marketing

4.1 Put sales and marketing front and centre

All high-growth businesses:

- Have a growth strategy fundamentally based on an effective sales and marketing approach.
- Possess sales and marketing teams that are completely integrated and aligned.
- Create shared sales and marketing goals.

No high-growth B2B tech company can function without a full appreciation of the value – and complexity – of B2B sales and marketing. And while B2B tech marketers tend to be in the relatively privileged position of working in companies that appreciate their work, this is by no means the rule of thumb, and the under-appreciation of B2B sales and marketing's value can be a real stumbling block for companies seeking to accelerate their growth.

"In an ideal organisation, profitable growth is fuelled by (assuming product/market fit) a savvy sales organisation under strong leadership, marketing that drives material sweetspot engagement, and a strong internal sales function to do the human nurturing and help a prospect be willing to talk to a salesperson. A gap in one of these three will hurt overall growth."

Maureen Blandford

"Marketing can make a big difference, so don't skimp on investment. It's often the first budget and team to be cut in slow-growth times. However, it should be just the opposite; investing through those slow-down periods can lead to a rise in performance."

Laurel Wolfe

"Our approach to marketing is crucial to driving the fast growth of the brand."

David Saenz

"One way or another, the sales and marketing aspect is absolutely crucial. The danger is that young people who are really good at technology just don't realise how hard, how different and how difficult it is to sell into large companies."

Alastair Dryburgh

"Marketing is more important than it's ever been, in terms of maintaining salience and relevance and keeping the brand front-of-mind."

Royston Guest

"I think the reason a lot of these tech companies are successful is because they focus a lot more on sales and marketing than unsuccessful brands. And with that focus on driving growth through sales and marketing, anyone can be successful."

Gordon McAlpine

"Before salesforce.com even launched, we understood the value of a marketing-obsessed culture"

Marc Benioff,
CEO, Salesforce, 2009

So it's pretty clear that high levels of growth – and specifically, profitable, sustainable growth – can't be achieved without an in-depth understanding and appreciation of the value of B2B sales and marketing. This needs to be led right from the top of the business – and we've already seen the importance of effective leadership. If a company was set up by tech 'geeks', it doesn't matter how good their understanding of the technology is; they need to study, understand and appreciate the power of effective B2B sales and marketing and build a highly qualified sales and marketing function that can truly lead the growth of the business.

A note on the sales and marketing relationship

It almost goes without saying that the sales and marketing relationship is fundamental to fuelling growth – something the fastest-growing firms also understand. These two functions must be working to the same objectives and be fully supportive of each other's work. Admittedly, this is not a new idea in B2B marketing, but it bears repeating as it remains a struggle for so many businesses, and it's yet another thing the world's fastest-growing brands understand implicitly.

"Our team structure reflects our focus on results, with the marketing and business development teams sharing budgets and working as one to target customers throughout their journey along the sales funnel."

David Saenz

"The most successful companies are those where the marketing and sales relationship is one of equals. It doesn't work if sales thinks marketing works for them or if the marketing team thinks they don't have to understand the pressure and the commercials of the sales team."

Laurel Wolfe

"Sales and marketing must absolutely be aligned. Start from scratch if not. You'll waste so much time and money otherwise."

Andrew Davies



Just traditional B2B sales and marketing?

Alastair Dryburgh argues that the successful tech businesses he's been witness to have taken a relatively traditional approach to B2B marketing – doing the things that IBM has been doing for 20 years, for example. This naturally reinforces the idea that exceptional growth can't be achieved without effective sales and marketing. But this point fails to acknowledge the fact that modern high-growth tech companies have a specific armoury of marketing tactics that fuel growth, including:

- A strong message supported by a strong brand.
- A highly targeted approach (essentially, ABM).
- A complete focus on the customer and customer retention
- An ability to capitalise on customer word of mouth and influencers.

4.2 Be a brand with a mission

All high-growth businesses:

- Sell a movement, rather than a product.
- Can sum up their mission in one sentence.
- Make sure employees and customers alike know what they stand for.

Having a 'mission' and communicating it clearly is something Mark Organ believes is an essential facet of high-growth tech brands. He explains the most successful companies create a 'movement' around their brand – a key example being Slack, whose rallying cry is to eliminate all internal email, enabling work to get done. This is something both customers and employees alike can get behind and is a clear and simple marketing message (and is, of course, backed up by a great product). A clear message is also amplified by a strong visual brand in the most successful companies (again, think Slack or in the consumer world, Airbnb).

Some of the best mission statements by million-dollar B2B start-ups

"Enabling anybody to sign, send and manage documents anytime, anywhere, on any device with confidence"

DocuSign

"Our mission is to make it as easy as humanly possible for businesses to manage and care for their employees"

Zenefits

"WeWork's mission is to create a world where people work to make a life, not just a living"

WeWork



4.3 Target, target, target

All high-growth businesses:

- Focus on a few, key marketing tactics to deliver ROI.
- Define exactly who they want to do business with.
- Measure and learn consistently.

Highly targeted, efficient marketing is central to most high-growth strategies – reducing wasted budget obviously maximises ROI. At the centre of this is account-based marketing (ABM): marketing to a specific pool of prospects. Andrew Davies, Maureen Blandford and David Saenz all agree this approach is crucial to their marketing and fuels the rapid growth of their businesses:

> *"Tightly defining a small target client base has been key to fuelling the growth of our company. We have a list of accounts we want to win because we know we can help them a lot, and quickly. It's about understanding their business and painpoints and focusing all marketing activity only on that target market. Measuring and learning is also key."*

Andrew Davies

> *"With a new, focused marketing strategy, led by wicked sharp content and influencer relations, we've hugely grown engagement among our audience – sweetspot targets who are providing their real information to gain access to our content."*

Maureen Blandford

> *"The first thing to say is you don't have to spend big to get ROI. We place a huge focus on hyper-personalised communications using personas we've developed as a foundation, and work to a very targeted list to increase our chances of creating viable leads with our spend."*

David Saenz

4.4 Create the cult of the customer

All high-growth businesses:

- Ensure the customer is at the centre of everything they do.
- Deliver an exceptional customer experience.
- Place a special focus on customer retention.

You may be reading this with raised eyebrows – after all, the debate around customer centricity is nothing new in B2B – but one of the fundamental things high-growth companies and their marketing teams have in common is not just an understanding that the customer comes first, but an ability to follow-through and actually deliver products that meet their needs as well as deliver exceptional customer experience. There are two reasons this customer-centric approach is so important:

1. Effective customer retention is at the heart of sustained growth.
2. Word of mouth marketing is another fundamental part of high-growth companies' approach (as we'll see next).

> *"The hard work is converting the new customers. If you can service them properly and give them an amazing experience, and retain them and grow them, life becomes very easy."*
>
> Gordon McAlpine

> *"The way we transact in the business world has changed from offering one-off services to forming ongoing relationships that involve bespoke services and deliver value beyond the immediate deliverables."*
>
> David Saenz

4.5 Use the most powerful voices you have

All high-growth businesses:

- Turn their customers into an extension of their sales force.
- Amplify the voices of their customers.
- Use the right influencers to resonate with their audience.

Continued growth at the most successful companies in tech is fuelled by word of mouth – these companies' best customers are essentially an extension of the sales team, and, as Mark Organ has observed and experienced, the fastest-growing companies benefit from a "large, unpaid sales force". Maureen Blandford believes this is what sets the most successful tech firms apart: "If I see customers speaking publicly on behalf of their vendors or tech providers, that impresses me."

> *"My view is that your number one low-cost growth strategy is client referrals. And whether that's proactive referrals that you're creating or reactive referrals through the word of mouth, my philosophy is: 'How do you turn your customers into your sales force?'"*
>
> Royston Guest

Case study:
The rise of Apttus, the current world leader in quote-to-cash



Gemma Davies
Marketing director,
Apttus

We caught up with Gemma Davies, marketing director at Apttus, to find out how the company gets customers to sing its praises, the remarkable difference a solid company structure makes and how it created and exploited a brand new market.

What is quote-to-cash?

Apttus created a truly unique marketplace position fairly early on, developing an industry that's come to be known as 'quote-to-cash'. Think of it this way: there are lots of companies dedicated to creating CPQ (configure-price-quote) tools, contract management solutions and revenue management (billing). These are, after all, essential processes within enterprise business. Apttus streamlined the entire cycle into one set of solutions, each feeding into each other for the benefit of the customer.

What was the Apttus vision?

Originally, Apttus began with our three founders in a garage together. Today, those same three founders lead the company, a surprising and well-embraced rarity. It's their vision that we work towards, and it's put all of us in a wonderful position.

Key facts

2006
Year it was founded

1200
Number of employees

7 years
How long it was bootstrapped

50%
Recent annual growth

+$1 billion
Current value

Current status: IPO publicly discussed

Known for: Developing the quote-to-cash industry

Quote-to-cash was initially conceptual – look where we are today. That has been our biggest advocate for business strategy.

How did the business ensure rapid and sustainable growth?

Growth supported by effective sales and marketing has been essential. This business is about creating great experiences and higher profits for our customers. That's built on trust and starts with exceptional marketing that supports a strong sales team. Case studies, demos, references, third-party reviews: these are the ways to showcase the value of your offering and begin the long-term relationships that fuel the B2B world.

Don't underestimate the importance of structure. If that's in place, securely, you'll be shocked at how much can be accomplished. It simply wouldn't have been possible to create quote-to-cash without a strict sense of the right hand knowing what the left is doing, and vice versa. It's far too complex a field not to prioritise operational excellence.

How important is the customer at Apttus?

One of our first company tenets is 'customer first'. They define our ecosystem and we constantly focus on delivering to them successful outcomes, not just basic software solutions. Our customers are pioneers in the field of quote-to-cash and they believe it's a better way of doing business. That's how you know it's being done right.

Every day our reference programmes and marketing depend on the success of our customers – we have the product to thank for that.

What role do your people play and how do you support them?

Our CEO Kirk Krappe would say it's important to make sure your most talented people are playing to their strengths – everyone who's enjoying what they're doing is more productive for it.

We've therefore put into place education and career progression programmes that will help our employees develop their strengths and continue on with the company in the best way possible. This has allowed Apttus to successfully foster an atmosphere in which its people have a passion for the company and what they're doing.

What does the future look like for Apttus?

More success, long-term growth, and continued customer satisfaction. Sounds fantastic, doesn't it? We continue to focus our resources on innovating the technology of the field in particular, and will continue to introduce new capabilities that advance the field of quote-to-cash.

Section 5:
Your growth acceleration plan

5.1 What's holding your company back?

Before looking at how to accelerate your growth, you need to first identify what's holding your company back. Depending on your business, this might be relatively easy to pinpoint or pretty difficult – and if it's not something that you can identify as a result of reading this guide, then don't shy away from working with consultants to help you through your business challenges – the investment is likely to be worthwhile in the long run.

Here's a checklist to help you identify what's holding your business back. How many of the following can you answer 'yes' to, truthfully?

1. Does your business have a focused growth strategy (not based on multiple rounds of funding)?
2. Are sales and marketing truly valued within the business?
3. Is your product simple to use and easy to deploy?
4. Are the leaders of your business involved in the day-to-day running of the company?
5. Are you investing in the professional development of your workforce?
6. Is the business able to adapt to the pace of change within the industry?
7. Does your company have a clear and simple mission statement?
8. Does your marketing team employ a highly targeted marketing strategy (e.g. ABM)?
9. Is the customer at the centre of everything you do?
10. Can you describe your best customers as an extension of your sales force?

Uncovering the secrets of high-growth tech brands © **B2B Marketing 2017**



5.2 What can you do about it?

1. **Does your business have a focused growth strategy (not based on multiple rounds of funding)?**

2. **Are sales and marketing truly valued within the business?**

If you answered 'no' to either or both of these questions:

- Question the leaders of your business about the reasons for their approach – if they're focusing on appealing to investors over customers, ask them why. How do they expect growth to be sustained in the long term?

- Make sure you're communicating your marketing successes (even small victories) in a language the board can understand – this might mean ditching the marketing speak and focusing on the numbers, but it's much more likely to catch the c-suite's attention and demonstrate the power of successful marketing in growing the business' bottom line.

3. **Is your product simple to use and easy to deploy?**

If you answered 'no' to this question:

- Think about your customer onboarding process – is it clearly set out to ensure new customers are truly shown how the product works? If this is a challenge you're facing, check out our free guide to customer onboarding here.

- Collaborate with the sales team to start tracking customer queries and complaints – over time you should be able to build up a picture of their biggest frustrations and put a plan in place to address their biggest concerns.

- Examine how your product fits in with your customers' tech stack – if it tends to cause integration headaches among your customers, look at ways you can collaborate with other companies they use, as this could be beneficial to both parties. Feed any complaints back to the product development team as and when they arise; they may well be able to tweak the product relatively easily.

4. **Are the leaders of your business involved in the day-to-day running of the company?**

If you answered 'no' to this question:

- If possible, encourage greater involvement by outlining the wider business benefits – perhaps spending an afternoon making sales calls or attending a client meeting.

- If this doesn't seem realistic, is there anyone external you could ask for advice, such as a non-executive chair who's able to bring a different point of view to the situation or can speak to company leaders more frankly, without jeopardising their own position? This could be the key to changing the way the business is run.

- If neither of the above seem realistic, and your business leaders really are holding back growth, is anything likely to change in the foreseeable future? If not, maybe it's time to think about moving on to a company with more potential.

5. **Does the business invest in the professional development of its workforce?**

If you answered 'no' to this question:

- Start with your marketing team: what can you do to assist with team development? There are multiple ways to do this – as outlined in this guide we recently published – but whatever you do, make sure you keep track of any incentives you run and their results (whether this is in marketing results or staff retention) in order to prove the value of investing in professional development to the rest of the business.

- Think about your employer branding – is it something that you currently consider? Ensuring this is consistent with your company values will make sure you not only attract the best people but also keep them on board and engaged.

6. **Is your business able to adapt to the pace of change within the industry?**

If you answered 'no' to this question:

- Consider adapting an Agile approach in your marketing team – you can learn about how to do this in our recent premium guide. If this works successfully in marketing, it can then be spread throughout the rest of the business to improve efficiency across the board.

- How many members of your team – and the rest of the business – are keeping up to date with industry and market trends? Encourage them to attend networking events, industry conferences and training, and invest in magazine subscriptions to help them stay on top of the next big trends in your sector.

7. **Does your company have a clear and simple mission statement?**

If you answered 'no' to this question:

- How can your company's reason for being be summed up in as simple a way as possible? Run a workshop with key stakeholders to brainstorm or conduct a survey of employees and customers to establish what it is you really want to communicate to the wider world.

- However you do it, make sure every single employee knows exactly what your mission is. This is absolutely crucial if you want to capitalise on the interest – and potentially passion – they have for your brand and what your business is looking to accomplish.

8. **Does your marketing team employ a highly targeted marketing strategy (ABM)?**

If you answered 'no' to this question:

- Sit down with sales to coordinate a plan – if not, ABM is likely to fail. If you're struggling to get the sales team on board, find an advocate within that department who's willing to work with you.

- If you don't have one, work with sales to create a wish list of accounts that you'd love to convert – it doesn't need to be long, but it needs to consist of companies that can truly benefit from using your product.

- Research the key influencers and decision-makers at each of these companies and identify the best possible ways you can engage with them.

- Action your plan and track progress; be prepared to move quickly and smoothly, and never stop testing and learning.

Download this guide for further details on implementing ABM.

9. Is the customer at the centre of everything you do?

10. Can you describe your best customers as an extension of your sales force?

If you answered 'no' to these questions:

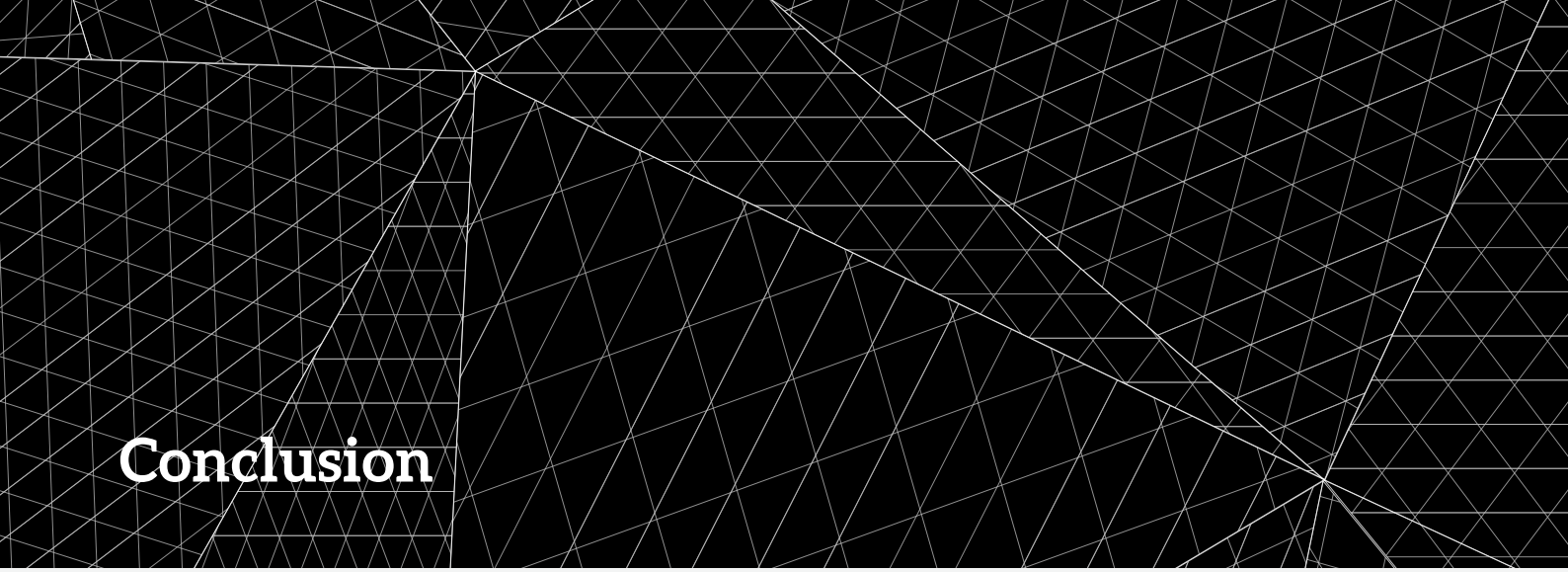
These questions are inextricably linked – if the customer isn't the centre of attention, your best customers are unlikely to be acting as advocates for your brand. In order to address this, start with the following:

- Identify which parts of the customer experience are letting you down – is it pre- or post-purchase? Our guide on managing customer experience will help you address wherever you're going wrong.

- If you're delivering as good a customer experience as possible, why aren't your customers shouting about you? Make it as easy as possible for them to do so – build relationships by inviting them to networking events and engaging with them on social media, and ensure your mission statement is nailed down (as seen in point seven).

- Have you thought about developing customer reference programmes, in the way that Apttus has? Implementing a structured programme will ensure you're capitalising on the power of your customers' word of mouth.





Conclusion

The encouraging story here for all marketers is that they can – and should – play a core role in fuelling profitable and sustainable high levels of growth in the B2B tech sector. But this doesn't mean that continually fuelling growth is easy; overcoming the balancing act of growing a business while getting to grips with the demands of today's workforce and ensuring constant customer satisfaction is no mean feat.

But if you're looking to up the ante in your tech business, our advice is to step back and take a look at what's genuinely holding you back, and where you could be if you removed those barriers. If there's one thing you take away from this report, let it be the fact that fast-growing businesses are founded on efficiency, discipline and a laser-sharp focus – they know where their growth will come from and what to do to ensure it continues.

Before transforming your business entirely, address and resolve key issues one at a time – you'll be surprised at the difference small changes can make. Have a vision, but don't create unrealistic goals; aim to change the status quo, but don't try and take over the world.

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