

Patterns and Trends

By Brad Schow, COO, HTG

One of the many powerful constructs used in StratOp is Pattern and Trends. It's a simple concept but provides insightful perspective used to put the right plan in place. During the StratOp process, our facilitators, coaches and consultants consistently see a few patterns and subsequent trends that begin to emerge.

A typical progression of an entrepreneur sees them becoming successful in the first stage of their business based on their 'muscle' inside the company and their 'feel' for what they should be doing. They are successful because they have learned behaviors and skills that work. The problems begin to arise when they want to grow their company. They struggle to find the formula for hiring or developing people for their company that can take ownership of various areas. Service delivery is generally the first area they need someone to own and as they grow, marketing, sales, hr, and finance can be added in various order.

That's the pattern - building a business with 'muscle' and 'feel' and then plateauing when the energy level of the entrepreneur becomes depleted.

The trend we see is this. Many business owners are trying to develop or hire those leaders inside the organization that can truly take ownership of various areas — but are struggling to have success. They're stuck trying to do what is required to keep the business going, while also trying to develop leaders.

Generally, what's missing in that progression is a bit of a worldview shift from the dynamic 'feel-based' leadership you've provided, to a truly managed staff. We call this "learning what 'good' looks like" and it is a much more structured numbers-based approach. We see members trying to hand off 'muscle' and 'feel' to next level leaders inside the company. The problem is, what got you here won't get you there. Even if you successfully hand off the 'muscle' part (we see varying degrees of success doing that), you will still have to provide the 'feel'. In the rare case you successfully hand off both 'muscle' and 'feel' — and learn the leadership dance of staying connected to the leader who is taking over — the 'muscle' and 'feel' approach doesn't scale. In fact, what we see in the short term is that it makes the owner/entrepreneur feel better, but they quickly reach a new plateau that isn't much higher than the one they were at because 'muscle' and 'feel' have limits.

To truly position your business to push through the current ceilings you're experiencing usually takes a much different approach. You have to transition to really understanding what 'good' looks like and put quantifiable measurements in place for your leaders.

In the coming months, you'll hear us talking a lot about how to do this well. We're doing it with our Service Exec Peer Groups and with our consulting services. We're developing significant content from what we've learned that works for us and we'll be making that available for you to use.

This year we're committed to taking plans - especially leadership plans - to a new level based on working with the best companies in the industry. If you find yourself stuck in this pattern, let me know and we'll talk about how to push through. My email address is bschow@htgpeer-groups.com.

Glad to have you along for the ride!