



# RE THINK

*Aligning what you do best with  
what your customers want most.*

**TOM MARIN**  
FOUNDER OF MARKETCUES

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This eBook is written based upon the results of MarketCues' 30 years of strategic and market research, a firm that conducts organizational assessments and provides strategic development to businesses, educational institutions, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations.



## WELCOME

Thank you for picking up MarketCues' *RETHINK* eBook on smart organizational strategy. We are pleased to provide you with an easy read of some of our best thinking on the ever-changing topic of growing healthy organizations using smart strategy that produces the results you are looking for.

We, at MarketCues, are constantly researching new organizations to discover what makes some so successful and why others remain with flat growth or worse, fail. In the following pages you'll find that every senior leader of his or her organization struggles to figure out the one or two "Big Ideas" that are going to accelerate their organization's growth. We call these "Cues" as they are the catalysts that start or stop an organization from growing. We also look for what is inhibiting their growth that are often constraints that are so difficult to identify.

We hope this RETHINK eBook will provide you with new ideas and insights for your organization. We also invite you to subscribe to our monthly newsletter, [\*The Cues\*](#), to keep you up with our latest thoughts on strategy. And be sure to take our free assessment, [\*The 360° Health Checkup\*](#).

We welcome your comments and always welcome hearing your thoughts.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Marin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Tom Marin  
Founder of MarketCues

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Marin is the Founder and President of MarketCues and serves as a senior advisor and change-management consultant with 35 years of experience. He has worked for some of the world's largest corporations as well as middle-market firms. Tom's focus is to plan and drive strategy shifts and strategic growth programs. He advises private, public and not-for-profit clients with high stakes strategy in a myriad and diverse range of market sectors including Business, Education, Nonprofit and Churches. Tom is the architect of the SmartPlan360° Program™, a strategic planning system powered by advanced algorithms that identifies and graphically represents the "Cues" that drive growth.

During his career, Tom has worked for many types of organizations on a regional, national and international scale. He has advised senior executives concerning their strategic planning and has earned a superior reputation for delivering both top-line and bottom-line results. Tom is an acknowledged leader in strategic planning and brand strategy.

Earlier in his career, Tom served as President of his strategic marketing firm in Chicago and managed the client service teams for prominent institutions such as the Board of Trade Clearing Corporation, CNA Insurance Companies, the Chicago Stock Exchange, Fuji Film, Rand McNally, First of America Bank and Roper/Whirlpool, to name a few.

Tom is an accredited member of the national and international chapters of the Business Marketing Association (BMA) and a certified business communicator and a past marketing chair of the Chicago chapter. Tom holds a Bachelor of Science in Education and Social Science from Northern Illinois University. He and his wife, Denise have been married for 41 years and are the proud parents of three extremely active 'kids' who all couldn't be more different from each other if they tried.

## ABOUT MARKETCUES, INC.

[www.marketcues.com](http://www.marketcues.com)

MarketCues, Inc. is a national consulting firm established to serve business, nonprofit, educational and faith-based organizations. Its principal office is located in Raleigh, NC and the firm has Senior Advisors with years of coaching and consulting experience who are located in Chicago, Los Angeles, Dallas, DC, Nashville, Seattle and New York. MarketCues has become an acknowledged expert in organizational assessment and strategic development in the broad categories of Business, Nonprofit, Education, and Faith-based organizations. Three decades of successful work history provides clients with added value that only experience can bring.

### *About The SmartPlan360° Program™*

The SmartPlan360° Program™ provides organizational assessment and strategic development. What really puts the smart into the SmartPlan360° Program™ is how quickly solutions to problems hiding in plain sight are revealed that intelligently guide changes to improve any organization. In a traditional coaching and consulting engagement, 50 to 75 hours or more are spent in the discovery process. Employing the SmartPlan360° Program's online assessments reduces this time to 30 minutes for staff and 10 minutes for customers. This substantial time savings allows executives to focus their efforts on implementation using the provided strategic guidance that is based on quantitative analysis. This eliminates the "Gut Instincts" approach that so often misguides a strategic plan.



MarketCues

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thank you goes to my daughter, Ariel Marin who expertly helped me organize this eBook, edit it thoroughly, and make writing suggestions throughout. As any good writer knows, a good editor is also needed, and Ariel fills both of these admirably!

I would also like to thank Dr. Bert Ghezzi who has written 26 books and edited an untold number. Bert is someone I am proud to call my friend as he continuously gives whatever he has and offers excellent insights whenever I talk with him. Bert has stood by my side as I struggled to put words onto paper and offered invaluable counsel that makes this eBook valuable for anyone looking to be challenged and grow.

And last, but not least by any means, my thanks to Denise, my wife of 41 years who has been my constant cheerleader and best half throughout all of our years. Denise couples a deep desire to serve with pinpoint accuracy that is rare to find. This eBook never would have happened without her encouragement and excellent reasoning skills.

## PURPOSE OF THIS eBook

The *RETHINK* eBook is designed to help the reader understand what the essentials for every high performing organization are and how to avoid common pitfalls that many organizations, if not most, fall prey to at some point in their history. Using market research of over 500 organizations that MarketCues has conducted, the *RETHINK* book highlights actual case studies of organizations that soared and failed.

The central question that the *RETHINK* book answers is how to build a high-performance organization using MarketCues' "Core Strategy Model" that is easy to understand, and extremely effective when executed with razor-sharp focus.

This is a book for senior leaders and organization owners who need a powerful way to improve their organization but don't have the time to weed through lengthy complex organizational books to find the answer. Rather than bombarding you with endless numbers and facts, the *RETHINK* eBook provides the reader with a straightforward roadmap to success based upon substantial research of organizations just like yours.

MarketCues is a national consulting firm with 30 years of experience working for many different types of organizations in the sectors of Business, Education, Nonprofit, and Churches. Drawing from these many years of blended experience provides MarketCues with a unique ability to explain what does and does not work based upon real-world experience-- not conjecture.





## INTRODUCTION

This eBook is about challenging conventional wisdom to discover new ways to how you can improve and build your business. Our knowledge was formed over three decades while working in the trenches with businesses and all kinds and sizes of organizations. Our knowledge was hard fought and is rock solid.

We're deliberate about what we offer because as a specialist company we need to be nimble. This approach allows us to focus on very specific areas that will get things done in the most effective way possible for our clients. This serves them best and protects their most precious commodity: Time.

As you read through this eBook keep in mind that the research of hundreds of organizations and thousands of participants are the basis of our approach. We thank all of our clients who have actively participated in the design of our product. We couldn't have done it without them.

After consulting for three decades, we've learned that all organizations, including businesses, have one thing in common: they need effective leadership to remain healthy and grow. And that's what a transformation can produce.

When a new company is formed there is a big idea that propels its growth and secures a place for it to grow in the market. If the hard development work of assessing and analyzing is done upfront this gives a business a much better chance of success. After a business is established and has achieved success it can hit a growth barrier. When this happens it's time for the chief executive to renew his or her thinking and **RETHINK** what the business is doing and what it's going to do next. A key to a successful transformation comes from understanding the type of change your business needs and that starts with understanding the four basic types of change.

# CHAPTER 1:

## *RETHINK How to Change*

### **The four types of change and how they're different**

***The first type of change is a "Tweak."*** We call it that because it's a combination of small adjustments that are made to the current people and/or financial resources while retaining the business's current vision, people, and organizational structure. An example of a tweak might be adding a specific program or adjusting a series of events.

***The second type of change is a "Transition."*** Our research shows that 70% of all leaders and first-line directors are not meeting the contribution expectations for their role. A transition uses the current people and/or financial resources of the organization but often changes their roles and responsibilities as well as their accountabilities and authority. In a transition, more major changes are made to people and resources than in a tweak. But again, they are made while using the current vision, people, resources, and organizational structure at hand. An example of this might be moving a department from one area to another, changing a leader's role within the business, or shifting how resources are expended.

***The third type of change is a "Transformation."*** A transformation rethinks what everyone and everything is doing in order to move a business to its next stage of growth. This includes the people, resources, vision, and the organizational structure of the business. All of these aspects must be understood and possibly changed in order for the business to continue its growth curve and develop a greater capacity to meet the needs of its customers.

***The fourth type of change is a "Turnaround."*** This is required when there is a highly critical problem or crisis that is causing issues across the entire business. A turnaround might happen to a business in crisis because of a loss of vision or because of an instance of fraud. Whatever the problem, businesses in this situation require immediate action to prevent the problem from growing completely out of control.

This eBook focuses on businesses going through a ***Transformation*** and provides specific insights that will help facilitate a successful change. Many businesses struggle for years trying to figure out what is holding them back. And, unfortunately more than a few are closing their doors each year in the United States, frankly, at an alarming rate. Our sole purpose and desire is to identify problems that may have been hiding in plain sight for years and find solutions for them to help businesses fulfill their vision and mission. As the saying goes, "You don't know what you don't know." It's our job to show you.



## CHAPTER 2: *RETHINK Transformation*

### **Transformation and when it's necessary**

Though a business in transformation is going through a major change, it is not necessarily occasioned by a crisis. It usually occurs when either a business is healthy but not growing or is in decline. These are the two most common reasons why a business might require a transformation. Of course, the other reason could be a specific situation that has placed a business into crisis. Thankfully this is much more the exception than the rule. So, what makes a transformation so difficult? We have found two basic reasons.

The first one might seem obvious: most people don't like change. They resist it. We've found that business leaders are always open to the idea of change, as long as the change isn't in their particular area! Of course, no problem will ever be resolved if everyone involved says, "You can change everything, just not my area!" Real change requires the full involvement and participation of every person, no matter what the change might bring.

Secondly, a transformation is difficult because most leaders know what their problems are but they don't always know what's causing them. Just like individuals, businesses can have a sincere desire to grow but be held back by internal conditions they don't fully understand. Have you ever been called to do something new that you were unable to accomplish despite your best efforts? If you struggled to figure out what the obstruction was, you probably needed to take the time to understand what was holding you back. Most people are uncomfortable in their uncertainty. This is also true for businesses. When a business stagnates it is usually because it is cloistered, or held back, by an organizational barrier.

*Most businesses experience three very common organizational barriers:*

1. **The first stage barrier challenge:** This barrier usually occurs when a business is laying its foundation. You are deciding where you will meet, who is going to be in charge, and what type of business you are going to have. You are just beginning to build and establish the business, so you must solve many different startup challenges.
2. **The second stage barrier challenge:** This barrier most often occurs after a business has been established. People have been with the business for years, helping it grow from just a few employees and customers. Because of their loyalty some employees may have been elevated into positions that they are not truly suited or qualified for. Even though they don't belong in these positions they have not been reassigned because of their commitment over the years. As a result, a business can end up with the wrong people in the right positions.
3. **The third stage barrier challenge:** This barrier typically occurs when customer demands exceed the capacity of the company's internal systems. What effectively managed a business of 10 employees no longer works with 50 or more. You want to grow past your current business stage but are constantly losing customers even while gaining new ones. Why? Because the business' internal systems have not kept pace with the demands being placed on them. If the business has carried its frugal mindset from the first two stages of growth into its third stage this will impose limitations on its growth. The business cannot serve a larger customer base because its organizational systems are not equipped to do so.

A transformation finds the solutions to all of these organizational barrier challenges by rethinking the norms and operations that are currently in place. By rethinking what has already been established, the business can take back control by diagnosing and removing its growth limitations. In the following chapters we will examine additional ways you can RETHINK your business and make it more effective in your transformation.



## CHAPTER 3: *RETHINK The Needs of Your Customers*

The first step is to rethink how well you are meeting the needs of your customers. However great the goals of your business are, they are useless without customers. You must always remember that customers come first and ideas come second. A wonderful mentor of mine in the Chicagoland area often said, "People are more important than the project. Once the project becomes more important than the people it's time to shut down the project."

Life moves faster now, people are more connected to each other and to real time news and information. The average customer spends two to four hours a week interacting with one of its vendors. The rest of their week is spent in environments, where they are constantly surrounded by information and bombarded by disruption. With smart phones, tablets, and smart watches, it's fairly safe to assume they even have these influences during their two to four hours interacting with your business.

All businesses need to be aware of, and deal with, real world trends and issues in order to remain relevant. It's critical that you understand how this saturation of information affects your customers. The business must provide them with answers to their specific questions. Customers value a rock solid place to do business that fits within their modern, connected lives. To provide an environment to accomplish these essentials, the business must understand the changing world and be ready to answer customers' questions and meet their needs.

For example, I consulted with the CEO of an industrial company whose engineering team had moved away from asking the company's customers what they wanted most in the next set of product updates. They viewed this discovery step as a nuisance and a waste of time. Despite early warning signs that customers had very specific ideas of what should be developed next, this team ignored all of this vital customer feedback. So the CEO moved the entire engineering department under his office's direct supervision to ensure that their customers came first, and the engineering team's ideas came second. By putting this team under his direct management the CEO was able to remind the team of their true role and assure customers they would produce what they needed to run their businesses.

So the questions to ask are: how does your business help your customers grow? Is your business relevant? You need to ask yourself these types of questions about real world events and issues because they are the same ones that your customers are asking themselves.

You can do this quickly by applying some new insights that produce positive results. Another business that I consulted in this situation reengineered its publishing to include both eBooks, print on demand, in addition to the traditional printed products they offered. The business grew its total revenues by 30% in three years.

### *The art of a quick win*

The world today moves at breakneck speed so it's easy to get passed by and ignored. That's why quick wins are so critical. Sadly, the pursuit of quick wins often leads to failure because they are often pursued without a full contextual or cultural understanding. Examples might include a business that begins without fully understanding the needs of its customers or its marketplace.

You might be thinking, oh come on, businesses take all of this into account! A quick look at the mile long list of failed businesses proves otherwise. In fact, business analysts have determined that marginal results are more often the case. Consider these statistics: one of ten businesses will make it to year 10, and of those that do, only one of those 10 will make it to year 20. Clearly there is a gap between the excitement of starting a new business versus building one that will be sustainable in the future.

MarketCues' research has found the benefits of achieving quick wins is powerful because they demonstrate to staff, customers, and vendors the business is moving in the right direction. This builds confidence that the business will get to where it needs to go in a relatively short period of time.

We have found this is particularly true of businesses that are going through an organizational transformation. Quick wins produce the luxury of time for leadership to address the more difficult challenges.

There are several tips we offer to clients in transformation and they are relevant no matter the size or type of business you are leading:

- Keep the “Big Picture” in mind and address issues that can be solved quickly within this context.
- Don’t overreact to criticism knowing it will surely come.
- Don’t fall prey to what we call the “One and Done Syndrome” that wants to pick one thing to harp on throughout the year.
- Provide engaging leadership opportunities for everyone, not just those with big titles.
- Don’t jump to conclusions. Make sure you have all of the facts before you change anything.

This crash course on quick wins has many positive benefits, but as you can see implementing them requires careful leadership to ensure what is accomplished is perceived to be a true win by everyone.



## **CHAPTER 4:** *RETHINK Opportunities versus Challenges*

Of course, people will always want to pursue exciting opportunities while avoiding difficult challenges. That’s because opportunities are far more fun and easy to explore. Challenges often involve uncomfortable confrontations and real work. Who wants to talk to somebody who is upset or disagrees with you? You’d rather talk to someone who is happy and agreeable. While this avoidance behavior may be a basic aspect of human nature, it is often detrimental in a leader. A leader who is faced with challenges who always chooses the path of least resistance is not building meaningfully toward a specific goal. He is building on the shaky foundation of what is convenient at the moment. This is a hazardous and ineffectual behavior.

When faced with a crisis, an effective leader should not simply choose the easy way out. You can’t put a Band-Aid on a broken arm. If there is an issue within the business, the easy approach should not necessarily be the answer. The honest approach, however challenging or uncomfortable it may be, is always the better option. This will lead to a stronger business and increasing growth in the long run.

Leadership often requires you to stand up and confront a situation, an employee, or a director in order to bring about a transformation. I once consulted a client who had a family member on the executive team that brought little value to the business, yet his salary was in the six figures. It was easy for me to see that this family member was not producing and yet he remained well employed. This favoritism was not appropriate and produced resentment among staff members. The senior leader ignored this problem for years because the employee was his brother. Talk about a difficult situation.

After a number of frank discussions with my client, he confronted the family member in a professional way, even though it was uncomfortable. He told him where he needed to improve, and he did so in a way that left open room to change. After six months this family member left the company to the CEO's great relief. To achieve true growth, there will be times you will have to meet your challenges head on – even if it's a bit painful for the moment.

### ***Challenges are really opportunities hiding in plain sight***

Many businesses perceive their challenges as very real threats to their long-term health, but they are really just opportunities to transform the business into something better. Today's uncertainty brings leaders new challenges they may not have confronted before. The absence of a stable future can wreak havoc in any leader's planning!

If you have been running a business for some time you know that there are specific challenges that can impair or derail even the strongest business. There are three that leaders find most difficult to navigate, particularly for small to mid-size businesses:

- Economic uncertainty
- Attracting new customers
- Retaining current customers

***The key to transforming a challenge into an opportunity is to turn it on its head by using its leverage.***

***The Economic Uncertainty Challenge:*** "I can't believe how much the economy has changed things, and negatively affected our business finances!" First recognize that some economic problems are beyond your control. You can't hold yourself responsible for the world's economic difficulties! Opportunity: Identify specific programs and projects, etc. that you can invest in to build confidence that produces sales.

***The Attracting New Customers Challenge:*** "I'm worried I'm not going to attract new customers." Businesses often experience a back-door problem because they have not put in place a way to respond to new customers, so they tend not to engage. Opportunity: Realize that first, second and third touches with new customers drive successful relationships. If you take the time to develop strong relationships, customers will want to continue their engagement with your business and ultimately will remain loyal to your business.

***The Retaining Existing Customers Challenge:*** The Retaining Existing Customers Challenge: "I'm worried that we are or will begin losing customers because of reasons we can't control." There is a disquieting fact that the longer someone has been a customer of a business the higher the likelihood they are apt to find an alternative. We have found this data true while surveying our clients' business customers. Ensure that all of your customers receive your very best service all of the time. Even the most faithful customers need to be acknowledged and served well throughout the year. Never take a customer for granted!

Whatever challenge your business is experiencing during these difficult times, shifting your focus toward finding new opportunities will help move your business from a position of weakness to one of strength and action.







## CHAPTER 5: *RETHINK What to Implement*

Ideas are everywhere. What separates a good idea from a successful business is its implementation. Visionary leaders always have many ideas and are often prolific. Because of this they use a two-step process: **1) vision** and **2) action**. This direct vision to action style is perfectly suited for the first and second stage of business growth because it facilitates driving the business. But when a business is in its third stage of growth, and particularly when it is in a time of transformation from one stage to the next, this two-step process of vision to action holds the business back because it skips two vital steps: assessment and planning.

In the third stage of growth a business needs to become more intentional in the steps it takes to ensure retention of its current customers as well as the attraction of new ones. When leaders continue to follow the vision to action model without taking the proper time of assessment and planning, they can lose control of the direction of their business. A well laid out plan, based on the true strengths of the business, allows the leaders to choose the direction the business is most suited. And it empowers the business to grow successfully.

Too many ideas can actually be a detriment to your business. Ask yourself: is your business trying to be all things to all people? Are all of your products, programs, and services equally well marketed and supported? Or are there so many that the business is unable to meet customer requests in a timely manner?

As a business grows, of course there may be many attempted programs and services with a variety of results. However, as your business breaks through the third barrier of growth, it is important to parse down your offerings to only those that are truly successful in meeting the needs of your customers. Growth may have slowed or stopped in the business because the programs have outgrown the business' ability to provide them. By assessing the products and programs the business can support, and eliminating some it can't, this can free up resources to support those that remain with greater excellence.



### *Culture change does not require a large personality*

If you are responsible for the leadership of your business you know how vital your team is to its success. This is not only true for getting things done but also for creating a positive culture in your business. Leaders create culture. Not the other way around.

It's important to know that cunning manipulation or inspirational appeals to staff are not conducive for building an extremely healthy organizational culture. In fact, these practices are hazardous to building a strong positive culture. What is far more important are simple honest declarations of what the business stands for accompanied by actions that prove them to be true. That's where the rub is. Sometimes proving something is true is much more difficult than simply stating it.

A perfect example occurs when a business has promised something such as, "Your complete satisfaction or your money back." When a customer asks for his money back, if the business puts him through many hoops he often walks away in frustration, even when the money is finally returned. A few quick pointers to form a positive culture begin with:

- Realize your business' greatest strength is its internal gifts and talents, not its external products, programs, and services.
- Realize your business' greatest challenge is internal, not external.
- Realize the more your people feel connected to you and your vision the more empowered they will be in delivering on the promises your business makes.

As a senior leader, being decisive through this planning process can help the business grow when you listen carefully to all inputs and engage in a healthy discussion with your team. Once all of the voices have been heard and you've taken time to design the type of organization everyone prefers, it's time for everyone to get behind it and pursue the business' goals. It is extremely important that both leaders and staff fully understand what the guiding corporate beliefs are so when anyone faces a new situation, they have a roadmap to take the correct course of action.

## **CHAPTER 6:** *RETHINK How You Communicate*

Another important area to rethink is how you communicate with your staff and customers. In a transformation, clear and precise communication is critical. You can't expect full participation and complete honesty from those involved in the transformation unless you provide them with the same.

Before you start making changes with your leadership team, sit down and communicate with them. Explain the reasons for the changes and explore together how the changes will affect each staff member individually. What do you expect of them? How will they need to grow? Why are you making these changes? Simply assuming everyone will be in agreement with a new plan rarely works out well. Don't implement anything until you are sure that your entire team is on board. On the flip side, an effective leader should be willing to make changes or allow changes to be made to their position if it is for the benefit of the business – even if this means they are reassigned to a new position.

Sometimes a new position allows us to grow, and we should be open to that. But everyone is more willing to participate when they are informed in advance. The key is to let your staff know what is before them before you start the transformation. Don't surprise them! Rethinking what each team member needs to do is an essential ingredient in transforming your business. But in order to truly unify your staff, you need to make sure they're willing to change.

Ironically, the greatest communication skill is the ability to listen, not the ability to talk. Now I realize that the target audience of this eBook is leaders who make their living communicating all of the time, so this may sound counterintuitive. But think about it. When do you learn the most: when you're talking or when you're listening?

By taking a few steps back from your perspective and listening to what other people are saying you can broaden your understanding. Also, as the famous management guru, Peter Drucker, once said, "It's essential to hear what someone isn't saying." By discerning what is not being said, you can understand not only what the person's perspective is but also what informs it.

Learning in tough situations takes not only excellent listening skills, but also the ability to not get upset if someone criticizes something about you, whether it's your business, your programs, or your style. As we all know, the complaints will be many. But you'll never learn from them if you don't hear them in the first place.

### ***How you say something is as important as what you say***

Recently, authors and bloggers have been writing about the importance of establishing a 'platform' for individuals and organizations and that includes businesses. Michael Hyatt, former CEO of the enormous publishing company, Thomas Nelson Publishers, discusses this in his book, "Platform." Some people would say that *how* you frame your message is as important as what you say.

Regardless of how much you agree with this premise, what isn't up for debate is everyone needs a platform. No one is going to create it for you, and its importance cannot be stressed enough to build and maintain a vibrant culture in your business.

It's essential that your business messages resonate with your customers and helps them find the answers to their most critical questions.

The biggest problem with much of today's communications is that it needs to fight for attention simply because it is not well differentiated. If your goal is to build awareness for your business you'll need both a strong visual and textual message to be successful. Simply stating your business' vision and mission statements is not going to persuade anyone to feel drawn toward your business, unless your communications resonate with their needs.

In other words, primary communications without a specific purpose, such as a new product and program, will spin yours and your audience's wheels with weak results. Focus is essential. Otherwise you risk talking at your audience with little impact. Here are a few things you can do to build an effective platform.

### ***Customize your messaging to your key audience:***

1. Place your messaging in the order that your customers prefer to digest information. A simple example is not feeling the need to alphabetize your pull-down menus on your website. If your top topic starts with an 'S' put it on top to make it easy to find. Make it obvious. Things that go first have more importance than those that go last. Obviously this necessitates you understanding what customers value most.
2. Figure out what your customers want to learn the most about and make that the center of everything you do. Highlight it. Don't feel the need to build up to a crescendo as if you're writing a symphony. Communications is about making critical information easy to find and understand, and a lot of drama is not required to be successful. In fact, too much drama can inhibit successful communications.
3. Track the results of your communications. Figure out what people spend the most amount of time looking at, push to the back areas they are less interested in and consider eliminating them altogether if they're ignored. Don't keep sacred cows! In communications it is just as important to figure out what not to include, than what is. No one likes to have to weed through large amounts of information.

The critical mass of all of this is that effective communications start, develop, and reinforce meaningful relationships with your customers and prospects. Making it easy to talk with you forms a strong relationship. To accomplish this, it's essential that you build communications they will enjoy, versus pushing your communication messages too hard. Remember to be creative and persuasive, but not overly aggressive.

## CHAPTER 7: *RETHINK Your Organizational Structure*

The last, and perhaps most important, area to rethink is your organizational structure. It often sounds radical to some, but the reality is that what works well in a first or second stage business will almost never work well in a third-stage business. This is because this existing business structure cannot support the significantly larger organization.

What I often hear is, "But this is how we've always done it!" This thinking is dangerous, as it helps perpetuate outdated and inadequate systems. Most businesses need a different organizational structure every time the business grows by 50%. I can tell you from three decades of consulting that what makes a business successful in its first and second stages of growth will typically stunt or even stop growth in its third and fourth stages. If an organizational change is not made, this often places great stress on the staff and leads to customer frustration.

### *Rethinking your leadership methodology*

Our research of hundreds of organizations has shown that there is often no single unifying leadership and organizational methodology or approach being used throughout a business. As a result, from the perspective of those the business serves, every time it offers a new product or service customers have to relearn an entirely new set of processes. This methodology, or lack thereof, creates a collection of differing approaches and programs that does not unify a business. Rather, it often causes confusion and disharmony.

*There are four warning signs that can be used to discern if your business is heading in this direction:*

1. The business is operating at some proficiency but constantly needs to make personnel shifts.
2. The business is not updating its processes to stay current with the needs of the customers it serves.
3. The business is in a stalled growth stage. Leadership realizes there are some staff problems that they have lived with for the past five years.
4. The business needs a new strategic focus but has been unable to determine one that has the legs and foundation to fuel the needed change.

MarketCues' research shows that a business' difficulties are not going to be resolved through external changes and updates. For example, improved friendliness or amenities, although these are positive and helpful improvements, they will not produce the substantial growth difference the business is looking for. Rather, what is often required is an organizational transformation that reflects its current stage of growth.

Often, a business with stalled growth is in the second or third stage of development but using first stage leadership practices. This is often the key to understanding what has hampered growth.

We have discovered that to drive long-term growth, what matters most is one strong unifying vision backed by an equally strong voice to foster reinvention of the organization's early-on pioneering days. Applying this simple but powerful vision and process throughout the organization greatly improves its chances of achieving its growth goals.



## CONCLUSION

***A strong leader knows that he/she can't do it all himself.*** It's important to establish a strong leadership team. This establishment of a leadership team is often the key to solving stalled growth, even in a healthy business. To get to the next stage of growth, the senior leader has to "LET GO" of daily operations and become an equipper – not a doer! As long as the senior leader is the main business doer, the business can never grow beyond the leader's reach. But by stepping into the role of equipper, the senior leader is able to empower those on his leadership team to lead, multiplying the senior leader's reach and influence.

Many businesses hit a ceiling in their growth because too many of the substantive decisions are made by one or two people. To unclog this bottleneck the senior leader must be willing to let go and empower his team beyond just two or three people. By expanding the number of people you directly equip, you are extending your reach.

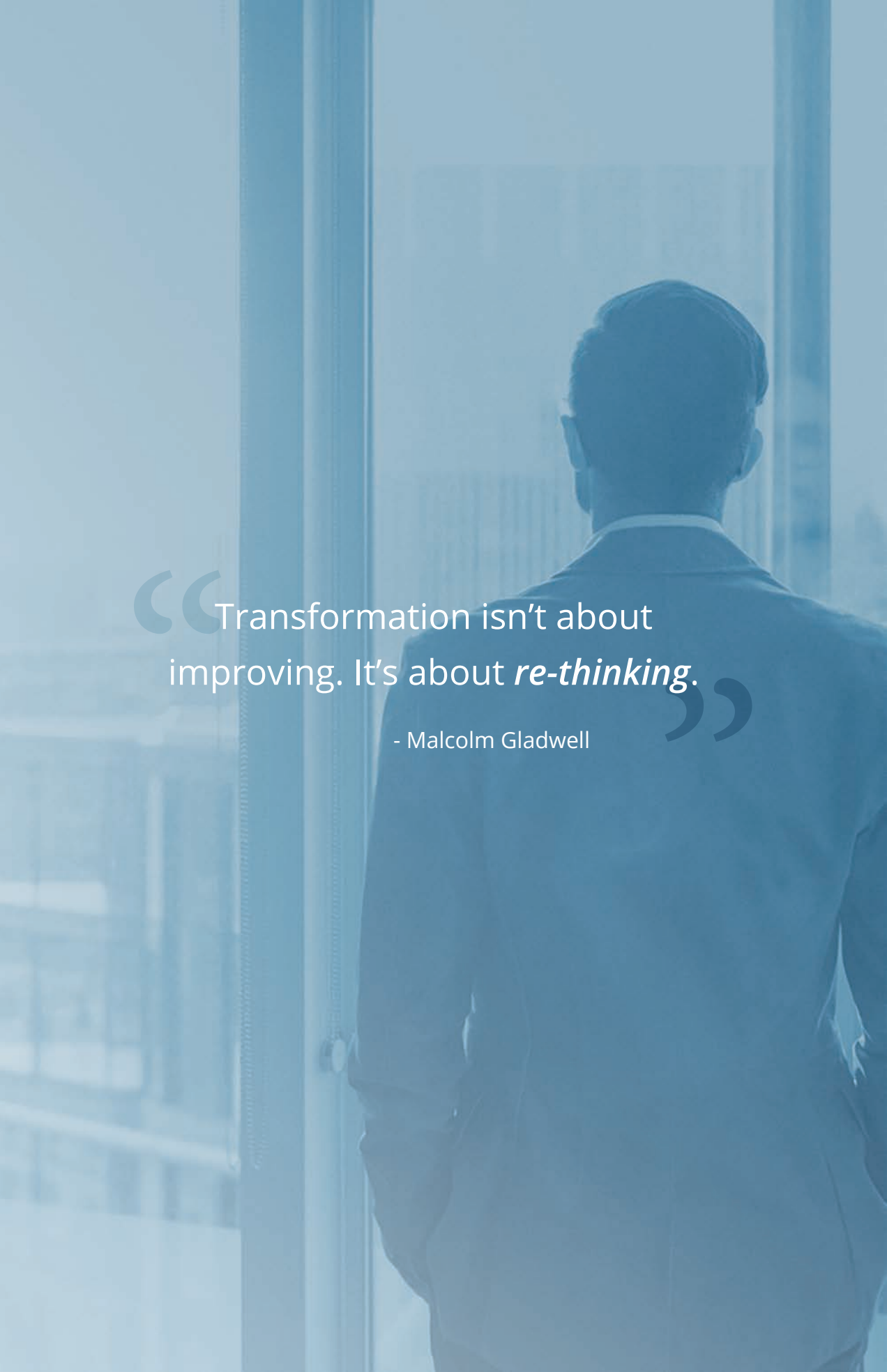
If you equip and train your key leadership team, you are empowering them to go and train the rest of the team. In this way you are extending your influence beyond the people that you yourself directly train. In a larger business, if you directly train only two or three leaders you are limiting your reach. Following are some steps you can take to get started.

### ***Three questions to ask:***

1. Do you have a simple growth plan from point A to point B written down?
2. Do you have an organizational structure that supports your business today as well as where you are building for tomorrow?
3. Do you have performance metrics in place that allow you to measure and manage the church on a monthly basis?

### ***Three steps to take:***

1. Listen to your staff.
2. Listen to your customers.
3. Determine if what you measure is sufficient to manage your entire business.



“Transformation isn't about improving. It's about *re-thinking*.”

- Malcolm Gladwell



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