

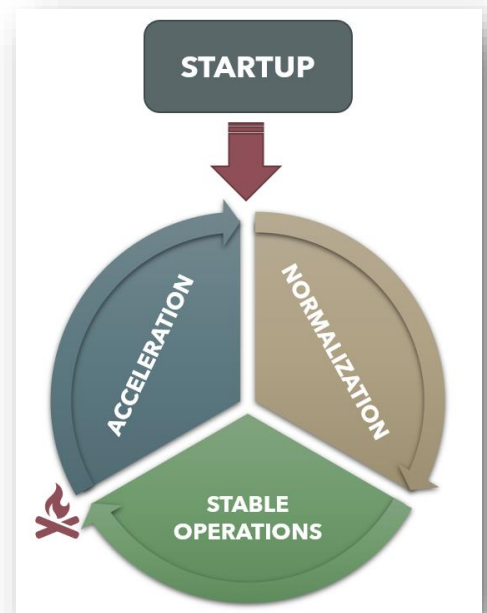
If You're Not the Lead Dog, Your View Never Changes

Why your Business must Accelerate ... and do it NOW ... or be eaten

There are four phases in the evolution of every business – Startup, Normalization, Stable Operations, and Acceleration.

As a leader or owner, you've likely mastered the first three and have evolved your business to a state of operational stability. At this stage you are rightfully beginning to feel proud of your accomplishments – a well-managed operation with a steady and predictable revenue stream; not just feeding your own family but also supporting a number of employees who now depend on your continued success. Pause, exhale, and take it all in. Congratulations! You've mastered the art of the business.

But you've also reached a fork in the road. You may not see it yet, but the road you will now embark on will determine whether your success was a fleeting one followed by a catastrophic failure, or if you have the fortitude to sustain and accelerate your business. Because frankly, there are no other alternatives. Following the initial thrust of the Startup, the three remaining phases are a perpetual cycle of "rinse and repeat" without which the engine of the company stalls and quickly peters out. You are at the most perilous point in the evolution of your business and your options are either to **reignite** and evolve or be eaten (by your competition), as many of your predecessor have been before you.



Evolution means Acceleration. Prepare yourself to press that pedal hard and when you do, a lot of things will change both for your business and for you individually as an owner, leader, manager and all the other roles which you too will need to evolve into. There is nothing more exhilarating than seeing your initial efforts grow exponentially and, when they do, you will take great pleasure in the ride along that path. But also, you will be challenged at each step in the evolution as "what got you here may not be what takes you there," as the proverb advises.



A normalized business in the state of stable operations can remain that way sometimes for an extended period of time, but the fork in the road is always ahead and once you arrive at it you will either be prepared for what's ahead, or you will be uncertain which road to take and surprised by what each new milepost throws at you along the way on the path you've chosen; or worse, one you have been forced onto.

On the Acceleration path you will find great opportunities paired with fearsome challenges. Both can be exhilarating for the owner as long as you are prepared for them and have anticipated most of the obstacles and challenges along the way.

One of the tried, true and proven ways to ignite your Acceleration is through Innovation. That word is scary to some, welcomed by others, but when harnessed through tools and a structured processes becomes a joy for most. It stretches your mind to explore the “art of the possible” and sets reasonable and measurable goals for each next step in the evolution of your business.

A structured innovation process involves a few steps, none of which can be skipped over or deprioritized. These include:

Innovation Charter – this is the compilation of all facets of your business which impact on how, where, when, how fast, etc. you want to, need to, or are able to accelerate. Included in the Innovation Charter are things like:

1. Your and the company’s Risk Profile – just like with market investing, your tolerance of risk, your personality, skills, background, etc. will help define and drive the scope and profile of your business innovation initiatives.
2. Time Frame – depending on where you are in the Risk and Threats category, you may feel more or less driven to act fast, or perhaps to lay out a longer-term implementation for your innovation program.
3. Level of Change – this too falls back on your personal style, capabilities and needs to innovate – will this be a minor, incremental program or one which completely rips-and-replaces significant parts of your business.
4. Scope and Impact – wisely targeting your innovation is key. Not everything can be changed and accelerated all at once. Determining a well confined scope and understanding its associated impact will assure you can deliver on the innovation to your business without unintended disruption.



Capture Business Goals. You’ve entered the road to Acceleration. Now you have to be clear about what you’re going to want to accomplish in this innovation sprint. It will likely not be everything you can think of, but a set of well thought out objectives for this step in this Accelerate – Normalize – Stabilize (ANS) cycle. Remember, there will be a next iteration of this cycle in the future and what doesn’t fit into this cycle may be resurrected in the next.

A Challenge Statement – developed from your SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Strengths – we’ll cover that in a separate article), and also from your Innovation Charter and Business Goals workup, the Challenge Statement clearly and concisely articulates your objective for the next step in the evolution of your business. It then becomes the overarching agenda for the entire process of brainstorming, ideation and idea assessment throughout the workshop (see below) and subsequent activities.

Brainstorming Ideas and Methods. This is a group activity involving you, your key trusted advisors, and others who you may want to engage to capture an external perspective. Brainstorming is typically done in a workshop environment where ideas, sometimes even silly ones, are captured, methodically assessed and validated against your Innovation Charter, Goals, Risk Profile and other metrics and constraints to ultimately converge at those few actionable ones which we can move forward with to Accelerate the business.

[Think / Understand / Act]

Business Leadership Insights



You are now on the path to accelerate your business – not to the speed of light, but incrementally through a repeatable process which assures you are not blindsided by your competition, ahead of what your customers need and operationally and financially sound at each iteration of the ANS business cycle continuum.



At CLG, our goal is to guide you through and actively contribute to this recurring process. Since our involvement always begins with immersion – a deep understanding of your business from all perspectives – we can be instrumental not just as an external academic resource but a partner in your journey toward innovation and business acceleration. It is here where we apply our motto of being your **Partner in Strategy** | **Facilitator of Innovation** | **Enabler of Execution** and elevate it to the significance it deserves when it involves the success of your business.

I leave you with this last thought.

If you don't like change, you'll like irrelevance even less.

To stay relevant, you need to be the lead dog and stay in the lead. Innovation and acceleration is the process to get you there and CLG is your partner to make that happen, over and over again.

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