

Growing Pains: Signs for Change!



Marilyn Lustgarten

If you've ever bought shoes for a teenager, then you know first-hand about the pains associated with fast growth. Just when one pair seems barely broken in, it's time for a bigger size! Similar to a parent who can't ignore the urgency of meeting the changing needs of a constantly growing child, the leader of a business in transition also needs to put top priority on addressing the "growing pains" - signs that the organization's talent, structure and systems have become outgrown.

Every organization goes through phases of development. As your business expands, it will start to feel uncomfortable in its own skin. Customers will continue to expect the next best thing, and in order to anticipate and meet their evolving needs, the organization must be resilient enough, as well as willing and able to transform itself as necessary. Without a plan, things can just seem to "happen", until one day you find yourself surprised by the stinging reality that what once fit so well, just doesn't fit right anymore.

How do you know when it's time for change? There are many telltale symptoms of organizational growing pains*. While every business in transition is unique, take a look at a list of common signs and mentally check off any that are painfully familiar:

- Lack of a shared vision***
- Conflict where there used to be harmony***
- Everything is a crisis***
- Organization looks to top leader for every decision***
- Spending too much time putting out fires***
- People feel like there aren't enough hours in the day***
- Tactical technicians in top leadership***
- Meetings are a waste of time***
- "Ready, fire, aim!" decision-making***
- Sales are growing, but not profits***

If you've checked off more than one and your aim is taking the business to the next level, then it's time to replace the growing uncomfortableness of *the way it is*, and step into bigger shoes.

*Additional resource *Growing Pains Survey* Yvonne Randle and Eric G. Flamholtz www.mgtssystem.com

Marilyn Lustgarten, president of The Star Makers Group, is an organizational strategist, coach and consultant to leaders in organizations ready to move to the next level. Contact her at www.starmakersgroup.com