

FOREWORD BY JAY BAER

NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

10x

MARKETING FORMULA

YOUR BLUEPRINT FOR CREATING
'COMPETITION-FREE CONTENT'
THAT STANDS OUT AND GETS RESULTS

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CHAPTER ONE

THINK LIKE A STARTUP

In the late 1800s a tractor company pioneered a marketing strategy that would catch fire a century later.

John Deere started a magazine called [*The Furrow*](#). It was squarely aimed at their target audience: farmers. The publication was filled with pages of high-quality content that helped farmers solve their unique set of business problems. In fact, the magazine persists to this day and is focused on the same audience.

The first issue was hot off the press in 1895. And by 1912, they had grown to a readership of over [four million](#). Not a bad audience.

The Furrow is the beginning of content marketing lore. It's become an incredible asset for John Deere over the course of a century. Today, 45 percent of its readers read every word of every issue. Almost half go to the website to learn about their product lines. One-third of readers buy John Deere as a result of learning about new products and services in the magazine. And 90 percent of its readers say *The Furrow* is their [sole source of industry information](#). Because of this success, the magazine's story has become a proof-text for content marketing.

If it works in agriculture, it will certainly work in the XYZ industry, right?

CAN YOU COPY/PASTE RESULTS?

More recently, another established brand commanded attention with top-shelf content marketing results. The U. K. supermarket chain Sainsbury's won the "Best Retail Publication" category of Content Marketing Institute's 12th annual Content Marketing Awards. [Per CMI](#):

Sainsbury's has elevated foodie content to a multimedia art form. From their widely-circulated magazine to their "hugely successful portfolio of social media channels, sell-out live cooking demonstrations, weekly newsletters, the magazine's Food & Drink Awards, a series of editorial one-shots, and more and you get a level of multi-platform audience engagement that would make any content marketer's mouth water.

Awards are one thing, results are another. Let's look at their numbers.

Sainsbury's amassed a newsletter list over 50,000 readers strong. They have email open rates of 35 percent and click-through rates of 31 percent. Their social profiles overflow with hundreds of thousands of followers. And the kicker: eight-out-of-ten readers have become paying customers after reading their magazine content.

To be successful like Sainsbury's then, it makes sense to dissect what they've done and repeat it, right? Or perhaps take a cue from John Deere's enduring marketing magic with *The Furrow*?

The promise is if you do things just like them, you'll get results just like them. So, simply slap their strategies and tactics into your marketing plans. Get cranking and watch the same results pour in.

Only, for some reason, it doesn't work right for us. Our blog posts sit dusty on the back shelf of the Internet. Our social media accounts are devoid of engagement. Our email list never reaches that hockey-stick moment.

What's happened is we're told what to do and shown whom to mimic. But when it comes to *how* to make the same things work for us:

...crickets...

The Furrow

A JOURNAL FOR THE AMERICAN FARMER

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY

G. L. SHAUL
Clarinda, Iowa.

AGENCY FOR THE

Celebrated John Deere Plows **Cultivators and Harrows**

SPRING ANNOUNCEMENT ✱ It gives us pleasure to announce to our many friends that our stock of

**H
A
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Implements, Vehicles and Hardware

for the spring trade of 1897 is complete in every department. It is a satisfaction to be able to offer our patrons the **VERY BEST** in these lines. We have some **LEADERS** which it will pay you to examine early, and we believe we can suit you in quality and price. It is well to remember that **PRICE DEPENDS UPON QUALITY**. If you expect to invest anything in farm machinery, vehicles or building material this spring it will be to your interest to examine our stock, as it is generally conceded that the man or firm who sells the

John Deere Plows

has the best in their class, and it is reasonably safe to assume that other lines will be kept up to the standard of these goods. You will make a great mistake if you do not

SEE OUR GOODS AND GET OUR PRICES BEFORE BUYING

THE LURE OF CONTENT MARKETING

The dream of content marketing is that it's going to be a magical funnel that drips money into your bank account. Its lure is that it will create an inbound sales machine. And the prescribed formula is:

$$\text{high-quality content} + \text{audience building} = \\ \text{increased revenue and business growth}$$

Step one: create amazing content and optimize it a bit with some SEO love.

Step two: visitors experience this amazing content, falling in love with you and your brand.

Result: credits cards slide out of wallets while you sleep.

What should you do when it doesn't work like that?

The core concept is that if you provide huge value up front, you'll be swimming in quality leads and flywheel revenue. However, [less than half](#) of North American business-to-business (B2B) marketers rate their organization's content marketing successful.

These quality leads are supposed to come from website traffic. And content marketing should eventually deliver critical mass in driving traffic. Per research, year-over-year unique visitor growth should be [780 percent higher](#) for the best content marketers. Not only that, these same rock-star marketers achieve [600 percent greater](#) revenue yields from their content. But pesky reality brings many crashing back to earth.

Lack of Time

Most B2B marketers are too busy to go all the way with content marketing, with [69 percent](#) citing lack of time. Far from being lazy, they're managing more strategies, tactics, and layers of bosses breathing down their necks than ever.

Producing Content

The core function of content marketing is of course marketing content. But [55 percent](#) of B2B marketers report they don't have enough of it. If you lack content, success in this arena is a tough hill to climb.

Inability to Engage Audience

To turn an audience into paying customers, your content needs to be engaging. It has a job to do, and that's provoke an active response. Beyond likes, clicks, and shares, you need people to buy your products and services as a direct result of each marketing channel. If you struggle here, you're not alone. Because [47 percent](#) of B2B marketers cite that they struggle to produce content that engages their audience.

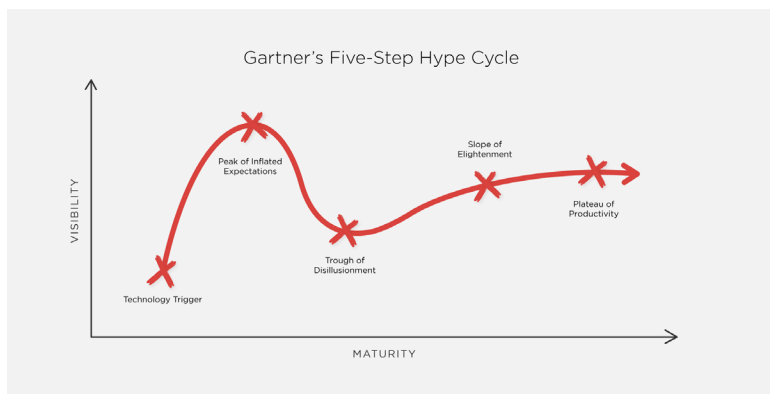
LIVING UP TO THE HYPE

Imagine walking into a marketing convention. Thousands of marketers mill about, going from one session to the next. Everyone is here, attending the same keynotes, learning the "new rules of marketing," and furiously jotting notes to execute these novel ideas. (The same novel ideas as the other 10,000 marketers.)

Oh, and one more thing...[93 percent](#) of them use content marketing. So, if you're using content marketing, you're competing with over nine-out-of-ten peers via the same mediums and methods. This marketing promised land loses considerable luster when we step back and behold reality. Marketers are up against staggering competition. And the numbers tell a story that success is the *exception*, not the *rule*. But that's not what the marketing books say.

They tell us, "Ads are dead! Content marketing is a panacea of value that will deliver traffic, leads, and an audience craving your delicious content."

Except, it doesn't happen. Content marketing doesn't live up to the hype. Instead of finding ourselves on top of the leaderboard, we've plunged into the "trough of disillusionment."



Gartner, leaders in business research and advisement, discerned a pattern in technology adoption for business use known as the "[Hype Cycle](#)." Though it's a cycle of new technologies in business, it applies with similar force in the world of marketing—especially with the confluence of marketing and technology known as MarTech.

What happens is something new hits the scene. It could be a new social media platform, strategy, or tactic marketers start using to achieve growth. It gets some press and the broader market finds out about this new secret weapon.

In reaction, expectations soar with the myriad success stories being blasted across the web. A sizeable portion of marketers jump on board and mime the techniques of the innovators. There's big promise because, well, all *those* people got results. The case studies speak for themselves.

(Just look at Sainsbury's!)

Then, crushing defeat. Numbers are stagnant. Leads trickle in at the same pace as before—if they don't dip, that is. And your boss starts asking questions. This new marketing hero fails to live up to the hype. And thus, we find ourselves plummeting into the trough of disillusionment faster than the big drop on a rollercoaster at Six Flags.

It's not a pleasant feeling.

Eventually, the cycle completes itself. Things incrementally improve and everyone gets on board when the new paradigm is deemed safe. But by then, the advantage has evaporated. Rather than giving an edge, this fancy new practice has become status quo. It's not something you do to stand out—it's something you do because you must. Otherwise you're behind.

This cycle is the story of content marketing. However, this isn't a book pronouncing it dead. Far from it. This is a book designed to help you actually achieve the growth that was promised. How? By equipping you to uncover the hidden path to success. And to get the results you're capable of achieving, but have been locked inside of you and are waiting to be broken free.

We're not going to do this by working through a formula that helps you copy and paste the success stories. We aren't laboriously crafting a marketing plan. Instead, we're going to lay out the raw material you need to innovate, move fast, and separate yourself from the crowded marketing conference floor. The 10x-Marketing Formula is the secret to unlocking the results that content marketing promised you in the first place.

MARKETING PLANS FAIL, TOO

So, where do these results come from? And how do you know this isn't another book promising Scrooge McDuck-style pools of gold while delivering pennies in return? We're going to avoid the trap of overpromising by starting with a new mindset entirely. Because to achieve growth, we must change both our medium and our methods. Growth requires more than subsuming a new channel or tactic into your marketing plan.

You see, marketing plans fail because they assume we know everything at the time we craft them. The truth is they aren't truly plans, they're guesses. Yet we live, work, and swear by them as if they're truth. In fact, there's a near univocal mandate for them.

Moreover, many classes focus on creating a marketing plan or strategy as the final class project. But, how many greenhorns are going to have the chops to craft such a well-conceived, and all-encompassing, document?

Leading Publications

[Articles](#) from leading publications like *Entrepreneur* tell us:

How to Create a Marketing Plan

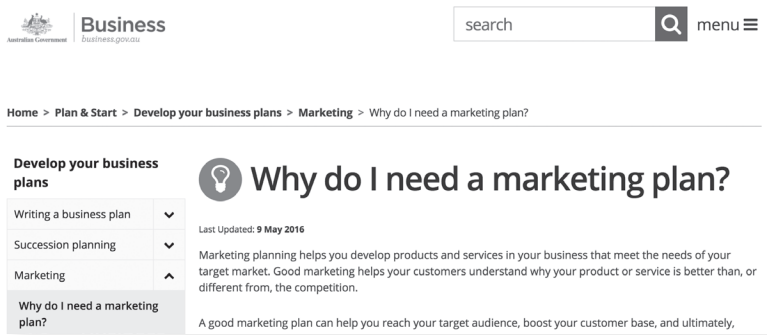


Firms that are successful in marketing invariably start with a marketing plan. Large companies have plans with hundreds of pages; small companies can get by with a half-dozen sheets. Put your marketing plan in a three-ring binder. Refer to it at least quarterly, but better yet monthly. Leave a tab for putting in monthly reports on sales/manufacturing; this will allow you to track performance as you follow the plan.

So, if your company is big, you need hundreds of pages to be successful. And if you're small, you need at least six pages in a three-ring binder to look at every few months.

Governments

Even [governments](#) tell us we need a marketing plan:



Here, we learn that, “The planning process helps you to understand the different factors that may affect your success. Instead of worrying about the future, you can actually have a sense of control over your business and livelihood.”

So, they also bestow a sense of security and control on the planner. This level of planning feels like productive work. But, planning isn’t the work of marketing. In reality, no real work has taken place yet. But should a marketing document be granted that much authority and weight to predict the future?

To be clear, we’re not rejecting any of the above ideas as worthless, per se. Smart business, marketing included, is based on wise decisions. Culture is vital and planning isn’t evil.

But, regardless of how much time we spend on our marketing plans, they’re guesses about what will happen in the future. They are big bets based on assumptions which are almost certainly flawed and unaccounted for in the great and powerful marketing plan.

However, the solution isn’t as simple as rejecting marketing plans. Even if our organizations don’t employ them, there is serious gravity to the same mentality. The danger is that we pick our proverbial horse and ride it without ever looking down. We choose methods based on a set of assumptions without considering the signals our results give us.

ANOTHER TIRED MARKETING METHOD

Another entrenched example is the request for proposal (RFP). We know, because we spent half-a-decade working at an agency that regularly bid on them. If you're unfamiliar, an RFP is an open invitation for multiple vendors to submit competing proposals for a project. In theory, they're about vetting companies to find the best fit for the project. But in practice, just like marketing plans, that's not really what RFPs are about.

Instead, they are a self-protective layer snuggled around the decision maker's shoulders. They offer the illusion of due diligence while granting plausible deniability. If you never go out on a limb, you can't get fired. With RFPs, fear of failure is the motivating factor. This means it becomes another tired trope with personal safety at its core. And this will be at the expense of differentiation and results. Why? Because each of these involves risk. They involve sticking your neck out and being personally accountable for growth.

Think of it this way. If a project fails, the person who chose the vendor via the RFP process has a fall back.

"Look!" they can say. "I have seven binders packed with budgets, evaluations, and portfolios. I did my homework just like I was supposed to. It wasn't my fault."

A check-your-own-ass culture is the risk of any profession. Through the likes of mandated marketing plans and RFPs, marketing has fallen victim. This means we spend a lot of our lives pursuing non-failure rather than results. And there is considerable infrastructure built around this pursuit.

We go to school, take notes on the lectures, read the books, and graduate "knowing" how it's done. Then we land our first job and quickly learn the real, unspoken goal of today's marketplace: if you fail, ensure it never looks like your fault. So, both RFPs and marketing plans exemplify the problem with the entrenched mindset. And they reinforce an old saying in Silicon Valley: "Nobody ever got fired for picking IBM."

IBM is big and expensive. It has a strong reputation as an enduring winner. While it's neither cutting edge nor inexpensive, it's proven to be

an incumbent in the marketplace. So, who would ever get in trouble for picking it? It's the safe bet, the one you're supposed to make. Thus, we come to the crux of our problem.

Here's an example.

Imagine it's your job to pick winners from losers. Maybe you're buying stocks or picking a new vendor for a project. Or better yet, let's say your job is to run marketing that generates 1,000 qualified leads per month for your sales team.

Did a few butterflies just flutter in your stomach at the thought?

If your marketing sucks, you know the long, bony fingers of the CEO will point squarely at you. Problem is, nothing from your textbooks is working. You stare at a blank whiteboard with your job on the line. It's 1,000 leads per month or you're canned. So, what are you supposed to do?

Nobody gets fired for picking IBM. It's the right choice. The safe choice. The one you're supposed to make. This produces bureaucratic cultures rather than growth-oriented ones. Why, you ask? Because one time someone failed. So, cumbersome processes like marketing plans and RFPs cropped up to make sure no one ever fails again. But the victory is not in avoiding failure. You don't actually have control over failure—but you do have control over how you respond to it. How you learn from it. And how you use it to catalyze growth by different methods and mediums than your competition.

The 10x-marketing formula is about looking the 1,000-lead abyss in the face and saying: "Screw 1,000 leads, we're going for 10,000 and nothing's gonna' stop us. Now let's get to work."

10X RESULTS

This book's title tips off the premise: we're after 10x marketing results. This means the return we expect, and are resolved to achieve, is ten times over what we put in. We aren't looking for 10 percent year-over-year growth; we're laser-focused on blowing the roof off last year's, last month's, and last week's numbers.

To do this requires the mindset shift I've described. You can't expect 10x results from copying everyone else. What worked for someone else isn't a guarantee to work for you. This means drafting a binder full of charts and best guesses and calling it a marketing plan is doomed to fail. It's too crowded and the world moves too fast for "me-too marketing." We'll take a deeper dive into this principle next chapter, but it's worth describing here.

Imagine a sidewalk neatly laid out in a grid. People are intended to follow the intersecting 90-degree walkways to make their way. This represents the broken mindset we've described.

Now, think of this same grid, only instead of an orderly flow of traffic, there are a few people who blaze their own trail. They take off on a dirt path that shortcuts the "planned" course they were supposed to take.

This book is about finding those strategic shortcuts. It's about short-circuiting the path to jaw-dropping growth. You have to find your own way—and the 10x-Marketing Formula is that path.

3 MONTHS TO LIVE

The reason why startups matter to this discussion is because they cannot settle for less than massive growth. Their survival is contingent upon fast, revenue-generating actions. Without results, at some point, funding dries up. Investors want big returns on their money. And the startups that fail to deliver, fail entirely.

While the solution to growth isn't tucked away in the standard tool kit of marketing plans and RFPs, there is a secret found in the startup mentality. And it's simply this:

**Startups have an unlimited tolerance for risk
because they have no choice but to grow quickly.**

I've spent roughly a decade in marketing agencies. The first five years working for one; and the second running the agency I co-founded



**Strategic
Shortcuts**

with Justin Walsh, called TodayMade. In these ten years, I experienced both extremes.

At the agency I worked for, I trudged through in-fighting, RFPs, and a never-ending barrage of copy-cat ads. Really, I had gotten stuck in the cycle described above. I wasn't achieving actual results for clients—I was maintaining a status quo marketing ship. And this is exactly what changed when we started TodayMade.

We focused exclusively on achieving results for clients through web design and marketing consulting services. In fact, we so doggedly pursued results we only took projects where we believed we could make a difference. This was often to the detriment of our pocketbooks. But we thrived on growing revenue and generating real demand for our clients.

The more we helped clients hone their marketing, though, the clearer a problem became: it was extremely difficult to manage content marketing. We were experiencing great results, and so were our clients. But managing the process was frustrating. Our content calendars were a mishmash of spreadsheets, multiple project management apps, and an unwieldy number of usernames and passwords.

After building and teaching an entire course on content and permission-based marketing, we asked: "Wouldn't it be nice to manage and schedule our content and social media messages on a digital calendar?"

This lead to: "And wouldn't it be nice to simply drag-and-drop messages and pieces of content to schedule them?"

Which sparked: "And wouldn't it be nice to do this all straight from WordPress?"

And soon after, CoSchedule was born with a napkin sketch. We knew we had the solution to a major problem. So, we threw up a landing page to validate the demand before writing a single line of code. Overnight, there were interested marketers lining up to check it out. This theoretical piece of software had huge potential. So, we stopped taking on new clients at TodayMade and only serviced retainer accounts.

We were going to build and launch a product in just three months.

Launching CoSchedule meant we made the coveted transition

from a service-based company to a product-based company. This was great. But it also meant we literally had three months to live. We were betting it all on CoSchedule with just a few months of runway. At launch day, we had one quarter to go from zero revenue, zero customers, and a small following to a minimum of 300 paying customers and a flourishing audience.

It was 10x growth or lights out.

When you're staring at zeroes across the board and you have both a team *and* your family counting on you, the stakes are as high as they possibly can be. Failure is a real possibility. It becomes tangible, constantly nipping at your heels. So, you either make it happen and generate revenue fast, or you and your entire team are out.

We froze our agency work and launched a startup. When you do this, there's no fallback system. There's no one to pick up the slack. And minimal returns on sales and marketing activities aren't simply a disappointing quarter, they're doom. In a large company, growing revenues, audience, or a similar metric by 10 percent may be acceptable. But in a startup, numbers like that are your death writ.

However, being on the cusp of failure was exhilarating. At TodayMade, we experienced real victories for our clients by generating actual growth for them. So, we knew we could do the same for ourselves at CoSchedule. It simply needed to be fast and furious. This meant the status quo had no place in our company.

The marketing abyss stared us right in the face and everything was on the line. It was results, or die!

RESULTS , OR DIE!

Consider this scenario. Imagine your boss saying to you: "You have three months to grow our email list from 10,000 subscribers to 100,000, or I have to let you go." Would you know what to do if your job was contingent on achieving 10x growth?

Before you roll your eyes at this scenario, remember, startups

fight for survival every single day. And they're not fighting to keep their manager off their backs. They're doing everything they can to stay in business. If they don't win, they die.

I've lived this reality.

Only five to ten percent of startups today will land a second round of funding because the majority have closed their doors by then. Investors aren't going to pony up the cash unless they think you're the next Uber. They don't invest for double... They're hunting for 10x returns.

The only metrics good startups track are growth oriented. Enough money to pay the bills doesn't cut it. Acquisitions and additional rounds of investment only go to those who scale quickly.

The "Risk vs. Reward Profile" illustrates the dynamic between risk and growth. In the beginning of any new venture, risk is high and reward is low. The potential for reward might be high, but it's unrealized.

Over time, reward increases and risk decreases. You figure out what works and what doesn't. Then, at some point, there is a critical juncture. You can either assume more risk to grow bigger and faster, or you can maintain the status quo. Sure, your risk will decrease, but so will growth.

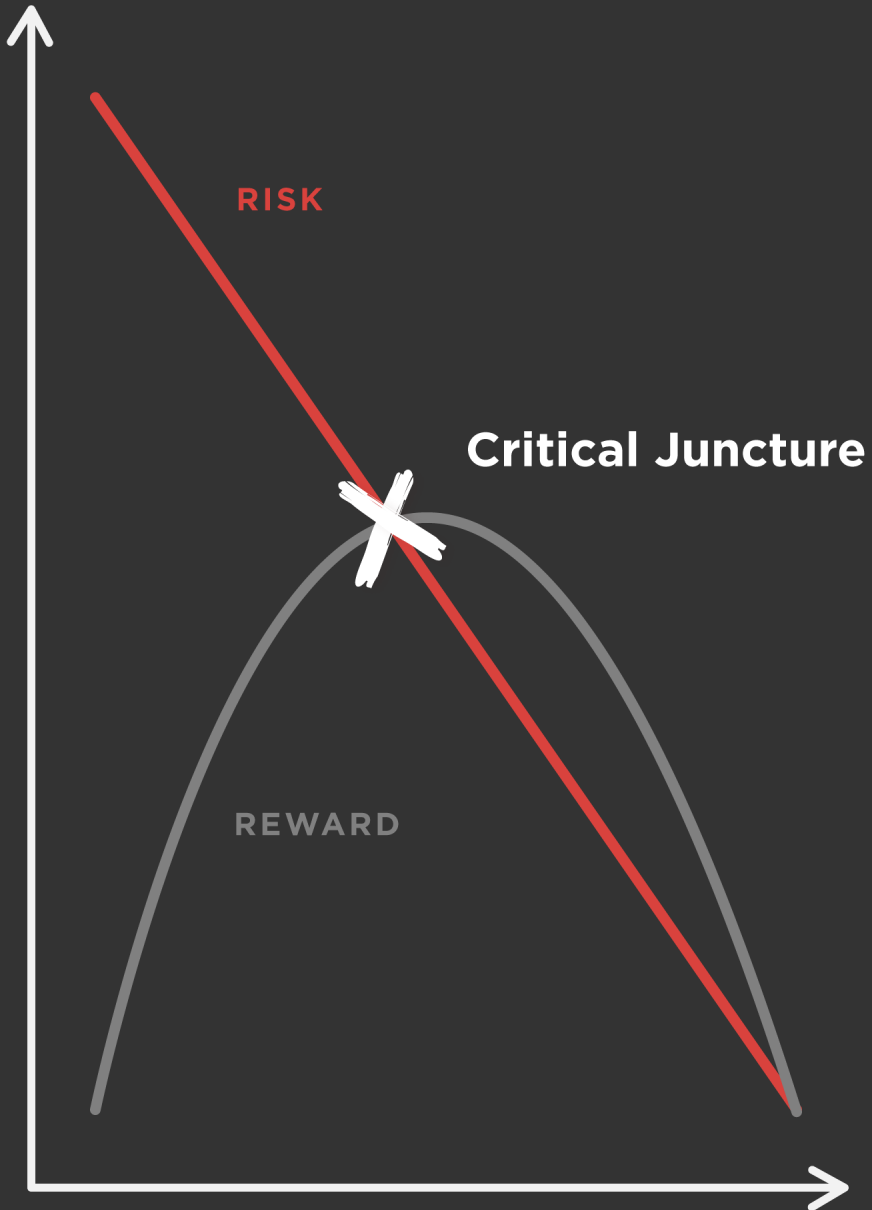
THINKING LIKE A STARTUP

The solution is for marketing teams to ditch playing follow the leader and start thinking like scrappy startups. Why? Startups fight for survival at all costs because those are the stakes.

There's no fallback. It's just you and your team. There's no one to pick up the slack because you're it. The exciting news is this is where the victories live for every marketer today, not just trendy SaaS companies from the Valley. Not simply for the Sainsbury's and John Deere's of the world.

Embrace the reality that failure is a frequent companion to innovation. Like Elon Musk, founder, CEO, and CTO of SpaceX and CEO of Tesla, [said](#), "Failure is an option...if things are not failing, you are not innovating enough." And we're sure he repeats that phrase every time

Risk vs. Reward Profile



one of his SpaceX rockets plummets into the ocean.

Without innovation, we get stagnation. And innovation only happens when risk is involved. When failure could actually be—*gasp*—someone's fault. When people are responsible for both good and bad results.

So, the first step in the 10x-Marketing Formula is pressing the reset button on your mindset.

RESET: THINKING LIKE A STARTUP

As a startup, it's not simply "ship or die!" It's "results or die!" If you don't get real results with dollar signs and zeros attached, it's the ultimate death march. You die at the end. But those stakes are exactly why startups are the perfect blueprint for marketers.

Most marketing sucks. It looks like marketing, smells like marketing, and acts like marketing—but there are menial returns. It mimes the techniques around them, creating an advertising echo chamber. Everywhere you turn, it's more of the same.

This book is your guide to pressing the reset button and learning to think like a scrappy, results-or-die! startup. Before you read on, adopt the three-month runway position.

In your wildest dreams, what kind of growth could you accomplish in the next quarter? If you had your pick, but could only choose one, which metric would you apply these kinds of results to?

Now, your wildest dream is going to take a risky turn. Put yourself squarely back in the three-months-to-live scenario. Imagine that hitting this 10x metric within the next 90 days will result in staying afloat or going belly up.

What would you do? Where would you start? Who would you go to for advice?

The zero-fluff formula for executing 10x growth is what you'll find in the rest of the book. But before you press on, commit to the paradigm shift of the startup-mentality framework. This results or die! lens is key to

achieving serious growth.

Here are the obstacles you are likely to face:

Pushback

Office bureaucracy will rear its head—especially if you work in an established company. You will face pushback to new ideas that are high-risk, high-reward. And will likely hear statements like:

“Our company does it ‘this’ way. Always have, and it’s gotten us to where we are today.”

***Reset One:** Are you willing to fight through to pursue 10x growth via risky, failure-fraught avenues?*

Status Quo

Startups that get comfortable are the ones that suffocate from lack of results. Getting scrappy and moving quickly is uncomfortable because it forces you outside of the status quo. Beyond pushback from others, you must embrace taking different actions than ever before.

Here’s the truth: to get different outputs, you must try different inputs. Trying more of the same things will not lead to 10x growth.

***Reset Two:** Are you willing to get uncomfortable and work in radically new ways?*

Put Everything on the Line

Thinking like a startup requires that you put everything on the line. In a new venture, there is no fallback system. There is no one else to do the work.

***Reset Three:** Are you willing to attach your name, reputation, and even career on achieving your 10x-growth goal?*

Now, let’s go.

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