

THE RINGER ZONE: IDEAS, STRATEGY AND GROWTH

In most organizations, you'll find more people whose expertise is focused on a specific and narrow field than there are who know how to employ these experts to their maximum effectiveness — more people who are highly trained and skilled producing short-term wins than there are at determining if the company is even in the right race.

It is given you need both to succeed, but most organizations have an abundance from the former group—those who can forge ahead and finish their tasks—and a severe shortage of big-picture thinkers who effectively plan ahead. The problem here is that while your organization may be tactically proficient, most likely your competitors are as well. If you are not thinking strategically about the direction your tactics are taking you, your competition will defeat you on your own battlefield.

Therefore, as the executive, you must understand how the core components of ideas, strategy, and execution function together to produce business growth. The “Ringer Zone” provides you the information needed to set appropriate priorities, understand the nature of the marketplace, how you fit in it, and how to ruthlessly act on your top priorities to achieve what your competition cannot.

ringer

noun | ring-er | \ 'riN-Gər \

A person who is highly proficient at a particular skill or sport and is brought in to supplement a team or group of people.



I freely admit to the play on words & on my name, which I've never much liked.

All companies have some advantage, somewhere, over their competition, or they would be out of business.

Your key role, as the executive in charge of growing your business, is to find your “Ringer.” It could be a person, group or division, and fully unleash their talents to boldly grow your organization.

IDEAS. STRATEGY. EXECUTION.

The Foundations of Business Growth

1 SPINNING WHEELS

This is the quadrant that most of the firms with whom I've worked find themselves. They have good and even outstanding ideas and strategy, brilliant, hard-working employees, a loyal base of customers and partners, and sufficient financial circumstances. Yet, they go nowhere, or worse, backwards. They lack the knowledge and the will to execute on their ideas and strategic direction.

The managerial expertise and business discipline is insufficient to create and sustain a successful organization.

2 NO FOUNDATION

In zone two, strategy is built on a foundation of "sand." The sand is composed of poorly founded ideals, poor ideas, and plans without sound backing by customer or market needs, or by the knowledge of your experts. Businesses built on such unstable platforms will eventually slump or topple for the lack of a sound business or technical reason for existence.

3 NO DIRECTION

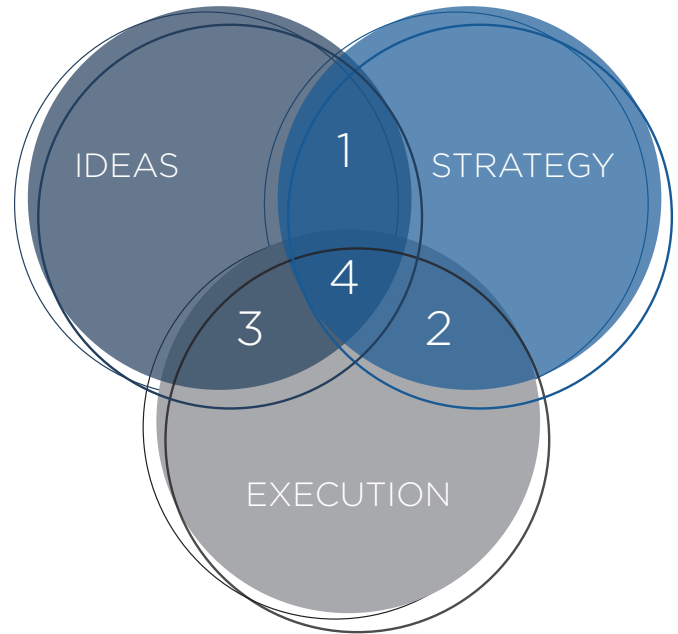
This is a common problem. Ideas sufficient for success coupled with even outstanding execution produces a growing company, for a while.

The problems arise when the lack of a coherent strategy, or direction, disperses and diffuses the energy of the ideas and execution. This creates a business that is unfocused. This lack of focus squanders the organization's power causing it to meander—never reaching its growth goals.

4 RINGER ZONE

The Ringer Zone exists where the three core areas of Ideas, Strategy, and Execution intersect and overlap.

When these three areas mesh together properly, the capabilities, energy, and opportunities of the whole organization are fully available to create a successful, growing business. The Ringer Zone frees your organization's power to flow through all four zones. This flow carries the energy of your ideas, your strategy, and your operating and execution prowess throughout your organization; empowering all levels to greater levels of achievement and greater overall success for your organization.



IDEAS ARE:

- FOUNDATION OF THE BUSINESS
- THE RAW MATERIALS

IDEAS FROM:

- CUSTOMERS
- COMPETITORS
- IN-HOUSE EXPERTS

STRATEGY IS:

- GENERAL DIRECTION OF THE FIRM
- FORMALIZED IDEAS
- FREQUENTLY REVIEWED

EXECUTION MEANS:

- ORGANIZED FOR SUCCESS
- EXCELLENCE IN MANAGEMENT
- THIS IS THE TYPICAL FAILURE POINT

8 WAYS TO THE RINGER ZONE

Can you identify which of these zones your organization occupies?

If you did not choose the Ringer Zone, here are eight ways to guide you into it.

1. CREATE COLLABORATION

Humans are social beings and collaboration comes naturally to those who are inclined, and freed, to do so.

HOW: Make sure people know it is okay to congregate and think together. People collaborate in various ways. Some want to talk things through and strive to make sure everyone is contributing. Others are quiet and observing while their minds are actively working the issue.

Make sure there are challengers in the groups. Without challengers, group-think sets in, and before you know it, your teams are heading down a rabbit hole.

2. ENCOURAGE PRUDENT RISKS

Management teams should fear making errors less than they fear missing goals. Risk aversion is a highly contagious disease infecting many organizations. Managers and employees who won't take prudent risks will never propel you to the Ringer Zone.

HOW: Management review of plans and of progress toward these plans must be frequent and include a discussion about what is going well, what is not, and how to resolve it. Monthly reviews are too infrequent and at too high a level. Low- and mid-level review and analysis keeps projects on track and builds confidence at all levels. Once trust and confidence are built, taking prudent risks becomes more natural.

3. IMPROVE HANDLING OF AMBIGUITY

Ambiguity is uncertainty of future events, and how well it is handled follows right behind encouraging prudent risk in its importance to growth. Poor handling of ambiguity frequently halts

progress while the situation is “studied.” While we “study,” the competition is moving farther away.

HOW: Teach your teams to trust in their own judgment by stating and showing you trust them. If they are fixated on the “unknowable unknowns,” have them document all of the related items they know and the ones they are fairly certain of. This will build confidence and the thought exercise might show them a path forward.

4. BROADEN DECISION POWER AT THE LOWER LEVELS

The single biggest advancement in productivity a firm can make is to increase the decision power of its employees. This change moves decisions to the level in the organization where opportunities for improvement are located, and will increase the velocity of change within the company. I call this “action velocity” the speed at which ideas are formulated, discussed, modified, and finally implemented. The higher the velocity, the less time it will take to enact change.

5. FOCUS ON ADDING VALUE YOUR CUSTOMERS CARE ABOUT

Organizations typically have a much greater love for their products than do their customers. Investments in mediocre product additions are justified by believing it is better than the competitors' offering, or that customers will like it because it is “so much more powerful” than our last model.

We rarely ask if the customer will care, or even notice.

HOW: Make sure you have team members vet new products and features.

This “ugly baby” committee's job is to tell the design team their product needs help.

6. REVIEW STRATEGY FREQUENTLY

The days of three- and five-year plans are over. In this fast-paced world, strategy can be developed in a matter of days, or even hours. What must follow strategy creation is a relentless focus on measuring progress toward goals.

7. FOCUS ON EXECUTION

The importance of focusing on execution cannot be overstated since this is where strategy falls apart. “Strategy development” exercises wind up in the rubbish bin more often than not because there was never a plan to implement it.

HOW: There are three steps:

- Assign authority to enable action
- Define metrics for success.
- Define who will “hold their feet to the fire.”

8. ASSIGN ACCOUNTABILITY & REPORTING

To attain the Ringer Zone, managers, executives, and front-line employees must hold one another accountable. Reporting is the mechanism.

HOW: Great management is at the heart of successful execution. Assign appropriate areas of responsibility to executives, managers, and front-line employees, agree to a reporting format and frequency, and assure it happens. Reward success.



IN CONCLUSION

The mark of a successful business is the ability to grow regardless of external forces. As the executive, your role is to understand how the core components of ideas, strategy, and execution function together in your company, or department, to produce business growth.

Positioning your organization in the “Ringer Zone” provides the necessary information to set appropriate priorities, understand your customers and competition, and to ruthlessly execute on your top priorities. When done effectively together, you will be able to achieve your goals of growth, regardless of industry, economic, and market conditions.

DOUG RINGER has led numerous R & D, Manufacturing, Operations, and Marketing teams with Fortune 100 and Global 500 companies such as General Electric, Ericsson, Honeywell and Schneider Electric, as well as in small-market firms in the industrial manufacturing and home health markets.

He’s learned what it takes to build strong and productive teams that consistently deliver profitable results. Interestingly, great results are not from great leadership, it comes from employee empowerment and autonomy.

TYPICAL RESULTS INCLUDE:

- Generating profitable results through dynamic relationships
- Aligning vision, accountability and people for outstanding results
- Greater collaboration across department lines
- Improved organizational agility
- Leaders and leadership teams inspiring confidence and engagement
- More effective relationships, increased empathy, and better results
- Productive stakeholder relationships

CONTACT DOUG RINGER:

PO Box 271663
Fort Collins, CO 80527

E: doug@dougringer.com

P: 502.509.9746

W: dougringer.com