



Wake Up Eager Workforce Podcast, Episode 88
The Seven Stages of Growth
Produced by KWells Podcast Services

Transcript

www.pricelessprofessional.com/sevenstages

Suzie Price 00:00

Hi there. Today we're talking about the Seven Stages of Growth process with Steve Graham and Dobbie Newman. If you're running a small business with 500 employees or less, you're going to want to know about this process. Here's a little bit of verbiage from our conversation today. This is something that Steve and Dobbie share. One of the hardest things to do when you're running a company is to maintain alignment. You know, the more you move away from the details of the business, when you're trying to run it, the more you assume that people are doing what they're supposed to be doing. And then executives often say, Well, I just wish the people were doing what they were supposed to do, and we're excited about it. The outcomes of this stage of the growth process is that you gain alignment and engagement. The executives and all the employees know that everyone is focusing on the right things, and they're not on a different agenda. They have more energy behind the initiatives because they were involved and they know that they're tackling the right problems because our process has identified what they should be focusing on. They're all talking the same language and it makes such a difference to get the whole team aligned onboard and focus. It's like a breath of fresh air. Can't wait to share it with you, Michael hit it.

Intro 01:08

Welcome to the Wake Up Eager Workforce podcast, a show designed for leaders, trainers and consultants who are responsible for employee selection and professional development. Each episode is packed full with insider tips, best practices, expert interviews and inspiration. Please welcome the host who is helping leaders, trainers and consultants everywhere. Suzie Price

Suzie Price 01:41

Well, hello, hello, hello, this is Suzie Price. And you are listening to the Wake Up Eager Workforce podcast where we cover everything related to helping you and the employees and the organizations you work in. Build a high commitment, low drama, wakeup eager workforce. Bottom line, we help organizations make good decisions about their people. And those good decisions lead to a wake up eager workforce of people who are engaged, committed and eager to come to work every day, there's no dread on Sunday evening, when we've tapped into putting



people in the right seats. And we're leading and motivating and communicating with them based on their strengths, and having this good connection with our employees.

In this podcast. And in the work we do every day we provide tools, tips and expert interviews for the entire employee lifecycle. So we talked about hiring, onboarding, team building, leadership development, succession planning and conflict resolution, you have any questions or would like more information, or suggestions for us around the podcast or anything we do, you can reach out to me Suzie Price, we have contact information at pricelessprofessional.com/suzieprice.

So as you heard from the opening, today's topic is about the seven stages of growth and it's for small companies 500 or less, it's a great fit to our focus around creating a wake up eager workforce. It's episode 88. And the title is Seven Stages of Growth. And what we cover is we give you a discussion around the Seven Stages of Growth, what it is, you're going to be understood to understand the X ray process, which is this assessment process they use and its impact. They give some really good examples about how it's used and what they see. We're going to talk about different aspects of the process. So they have something called the builder protector ratio, three grades of focus the three phases of a leader, it really does put language to the seven stages of growth within a company and tells you exactly where you need to focus to gain the commitment and the leverage and the ability to go to the next stage which was meaning the company continues to grow.

One other thing this week throughout the discussion is talking about fear. You know the fear of a process like this putting an x-ray over your business and how it can help you gain alignment. The fear is something that is natural that comes around when somebody is going to be poking around in your business. These are great people. I know you're going to enjoy the episode. The way to find the show notes we have links to a lot of things that we talk about, you're going to go to pricelessprofessional.com/sevenstages. So seven is spelled out stages senses as always, for searching for things trying to find the show notes, you can always make sure it's lowercase and it's all one word. So it's pricelessprofessional.com/sevenstages.

Let me tell you a little bit about who I'm speaking with today at Steve Graham and Dobbie Newman and a little bit about Steve. He's the president and founder of the oval group. He spent 25 years in international domestic HR roles, and worked for several Fortune 50 companies. He founded the oval group in 2003 and they serve hundreds of US based clients, both domestically and internationally.

His career included being an executive Have an entrepreneur and a trusted adviser to CEOs presidents, executives and business owners and his experience spans multiple industries, including food service manufacturing, financial services and insurance. I know Steve because we are both part of TTI success insights where we're all certified. He holds a Certified



Professional Behavioral Analyst Certification, Certified Professional Behavioral Analyst, CPE HDA, which is the Certified Professional try metrics analyst. Steve and I were just in the masters of axiology program in February of this year, there's only 24 people in the world that are certified in axiology. At this level, the masters level and then he also handles emotional intelligence and has a certification there and then is trained in the tools and stages of growth, which is what we talk about today. His formal education is having an MBA, where he majored in organizational and behavioral marketing and a BFA in theater and television. He's an active member of the Society of Human Resource Management and American Mensa.

Dobbie Newman is the Vice President of the Oval Group. She's a marketing professional who honed her skills to 25 years of helping businesses formulate strategies that deliver results. She's built and led highly effective teams in the b2b b2c business and B to consumer market business markets. She markets consumer and durables, financial services, and packaging for consumer goods, medium size to Global Fortune 500 is Dobbie joined the oval group in 2015. And prior to that she was with Fortune 500 Packaging Companies. Her formal education includes an MBA, majoring in marketing and international business. And she has a lot of the same certifications that I talked about round disc and motivators and try metrics. And she's a great person, she and I are in a mastermind group with some other women. We call ourselves the Wonder Women. So we've gotten together over the years and meet once a week and have a mastermind so I know them well. We have their contact information in the show notes pricelessprofessional.com/sevenstages. Let's go to this discussion now. Thank you, Steve and Dobbie, appreciate you being here to talk about seven stages of growth. Good, good to have you.

Dobbie Newman 07:18

It's great to be here.

Steve Graham 07:19

We are thrilled to be here.

Suzie Price 07:21

Yes, yes. I love the work that you're doing. And I love this model. It's a brilliant model, around business growth. And I think it's so important that small companies know about this, I think I have seen and worked with companies who didn't have a model, and they're just kind of trying to figure it out. And like I said, this is brilliant. And it's the seven stages of growth for businesses under 500. Talk a little bit about this methodology, you know, what is it? How does it help, and just kind of give a framework for people who've never seen it or heard of it?



Steve Graham 07:54

You know, I It's such a wonderful program, a template and a model for small businesses to learn what they need to do right now, you know, it would be helpful, probably just learn where it came from, you know, if you think about, certainly, you know, when we were in business school, during the 80s and 90s, the focus was on corporate America, you know, there were books like Good to Great Fifth Discipline, Peter saying, hey, you know, and everybody was focused on what are the corporations doing? Let's do that, too. And what they weren't thinking about was small business, you know, as you said, you know, companies with less than 500 employees.

So a man by the name of James Fisher said, I want to figure out what this is all about, went out and started to do some research. He really interviewed and worked with hundreds of small business owners to find out what made them successful, and what didn't. And his work generated the model for the seven stages of growth. And there's some, essentially some basic things about it. So first of all, he learned there were seven distinct stages that companies go through from startup all the way to, you know, a 500 employee company. One of the key aspects is what really delineated the difference between each stage was not how much money they made, it was how many employees they had, because what he learned was, the more employees you got, the more complexity you get.

And the more of a challenge that becomes you know, we, people that start businesses, they do it because they're good at it. It's something they love, it's real, something that makes sense. But nobody ever really taught them to go to school. They're not always taught how to manage the folks, how to manage the people and how to get that going. So this generates a template of what's important for each for success at each of the stages and it differs each time and there's a whole lot that goes into it. So I don't want to just run on. But essentially what it does is it provides a template that allows a company to compare where they are today at their stage of growth. goes against what the model shows you really need to be doing to be successful. So what are you missing? What haven't you done? Because we don't know what we don't know.

Suzie Price 10:09

That's brilliant. And I think it's because I didn't think it was so interesting that it's on employees not revenue. So that's interesting, because when you talk to any small business owner, what they talk to in terms of where their business is, it's about revenue. And so you know, so that's probably a change. But it's interesting that this research, I mean, I think it was like 30 years of research or something like that, isn't it?

Steve Graham 10:31

Well it was done about at least 20, maybe 30 years ago, now that he was doing the work. But he Yeah, he did it for at least 15, I think years 15 to 20 years, he worked with Laurie Taylor, at the origin Institute. And they put this together. And of course, we work with Laurie now.



Dobbie Newman 10:46

And one of the reasons for the employee definition, Suzie, is that the more people involved in an organization, the more channels of communication are required to keep everybody aligned and doing the right and appropriate work.

Suzie Price 11:01

And what I think is also fascinating is, so you've got that makes so much sense. It's so practical. And then what it also does is it tells you everything, like number of managers, number of executives, and the builder protector ratio, the focus, I'm just going to kind of read through what I'm, as I look at the model, I mean, it's not just it's a template, but it's a complete template of every aspect of the business. And like you said, Steve, it kind of ties to the people, how do they lead? How do they manage the complexity of the communication? Because it's, I mean, if you don't communicate, then you're not going to get the product out the door. Yeah, but sometimes all they do is focus on the product. It's like, okay, how do I communicate all of this? And, you know, the challenges that they face? It talks about that. I mean, it's just, it's an amazing roadmap, amazing.

Steve Graham 11:50

You're absolutely right. It's a process that we take companies through. And you know, it kind of starts with the CEO, or the owner, or the president, whoever the head, Person of the organization is, and their leadership team. And that could be any number of people. But what the key is here, as Dobby mentioned before, people don't, don't always understand what's going on below them. You know, there's something really interesting here, what happens in an organization is as you grow, you become separated from where the action is, you don't always know what's going on. But the people that work for you might. And, you know, even in meetings, people get together all the time and talk but they don't always talk about what they need to talk about, because they don't even know it's important. And what this does is it tells you here's the things you need to be able to get working to be successful. And what's nice about this program is it does start with a set of pretty simple assessments, business assessments that generate what we call a business X ray. And then in a two day workshop, we help that team come up with the top five initiatives or actions that they need to take right now to make a difference. Who's going to do it? When's it gonna get done? And what's it gonna look like when you're finished? Why will it make a difference?

Dobbie Newman 13:16

One of the things we've seen and working with our clients over the course of these two days sessions is just an incredible transformation in either how the leadership team as a whole sees the business, how they see their role, or if it's a smaller company, like, you know, Owner, entrepreneur organization, how the CEO, the owner, entrepreneur, has a moment, you know,



has space to breathe, and to actually focus and think about the big picture for their business, the dramatic improvements that our clients experience as a result of this work. To me, Suzy is breathtaking. Yeah, just breathtaking. If you'd like I can share a couple of examples.

Suzie Price 13:57

I was gonna say, saying more breathtaking makes me say, oh, I want to know more. Because I can imagine, and we always have to have a model, we need to carve out space to think about the business not you know, years ago, everybody loved the book, the E Myth, you know, and it was all about not working on the business. What was it? What is it don't work,

Steve Graham 14:14

Don't work in the business working on the business.

Suzie Price 14:17

You get some space, like what you were just saying. So yeah, tell me a little bit about some of the things you see. I mean, do you see results pretty quickly, once you've just done the survey? And you know, the two day workshop is that see does that sounds like that's transformational.

Dobbie Newman 14:32

It is transformational. And so we see results, first of all in the two day session in terms of the reaction of the leaders in the focus, but but let me just walk you through a story we just wrapped up the third X ray in a series with a client who when this this particular owner, took this company took the helm of this company when it was what we call a stage two company which is a company and ramp up it had 13 employees He's CEO centric, he really wanted to focus on growth at this point. And when that happens, it starts to move beyond the owner span of control. So basically, from when he took this business to when we started the initial x-ray, he had already moved from 13 employees up to a stage five organization, which is just under 95 employees, the integration stage.

And just to be clear on that, just so that people understand what this means, the stage before in stage four, you built the beginnings of a leadership team, it's no longer CEO centric, now, you have to have functional leaders that can help you run this business. Stage Five is called integration, it's at 58 to 95 employees. And when you reach this stage, now the focus is on getting that leadership team to actually recognize that they are a functional leadership team, they're not working in silos, they have to think about the organization. And they have to literally run the organization because the CEO starts to think a little more outward at this point to become a little more visionary, as opposed to, you know, being in the detail of the business. And they think about the company as a whole as opposed to just their own functions. +



So when we first did the initial x-ray, and this was back in March 2022, so not that long ago, really, in the grand scheme of things, they were a very young team, some of them were more experienced in the business, some were brand new, some were quite young. And we don't think in the beginning of the conversation that they didn't all have their voices, I don't think they all had the awareness that they were actually responsible for the overall enterprise. And they as individuals had been experiencing just a ton of chaos due to the rapid growth. And they, you know, were barely getting their hands around things. And they had a very entrepreneurial CEO, who just had so many ideas, and so much that he wanted to do, and he loved to move so quickly.

Steve Graham 17:02

Well just saying to put it in perspective, they loved him. So whenever he came up with an idea, they were all gung ho to jump on the bandwidth. And let's go do that as a great idea. And before they knew it, they were just running in circles doing so many things. You know, it wasn't clear they didn't have real clarity. But what was important was going through this workshop, what you do is each person has an opportunity to candidly share what they're seeing in the business. And typically, they don't have those kinds of conversations. So it's what we call an open kimono discussion. You know, the information that you put, when you answer the assessments are information that you then speak to and say, well, here's why I said that. Here's, and here's what I'm seeing. And people go, oh, oh, you're seeing this. Tell us more about that. And now they're focusing on very specific things. And everyone gets to speak the same language.

Dobbie Newman 17:59

And we saw, some of them find their voice over the two days, we saw, you know, them have courage to challenge each other to speak openly, by the way, the CEO in these sessions really is not supposed to speak until last, you know, they're they speak last, if you will, because the CEO at this point is trying to hear what these leaders have to say. And if the CEO is dominant, then whatever the CEO says, Everybody follows along.

Suzie Price 18:26

Yep, that's a really good facilitation technique for any leader when they're doing any kind of group thing with their team being the last one to speak up. And that's so cool. How big is the team? Like it says here on your widget, this wonderful template, says integration, 58 to 95 employees, and usually the number of managers is 11 to 16. And the number of executives is 4 to 5. So there was about that size.

Dobbie Newman 18:52

Yeah so with the CEO, it was five. So when they walked in the room, and we started talking, we could see the weight that was on their shoulders, and some of the things by the way that they were experiencing at the time, high employee turnover week communication flows, they lacked



the people related processes and structure necessary to help them progress into a larger business. So through the X-ray process, we helped them understand, first of all, that what they were experiencing was normal, because they were literally about to move into stage six, which is the strategic stage, which is a whole other thing. And when you go from stage five to stage six, there's what we call this flood zone that happens where you're literally the team is drowning in work, and that's exactly, you know, and we could create that visual for them. And so it sort of gave them a sense of, oh, okay, this is actually normal, and it's fixable. So the team's in a completely different place.

Now, as part of this series of X rays. Recently, they conducted an employee survey and showed significant improvement in how they interact and engage with their staff. They now have structured and standard processes for regular employee manager check ins, they beefed up their employee review process, they beefed up their training and development, which by the way, were parts of the focus for the stage. They've added. Now in the last one we just did, they are in stage six. And they've added too much needed additional functional leaders, really important additions to the team. And they participated in this last X-ray. And the point here is so that the CEO can now start to spend even more time facing outward, and building the business for your future. So because when you're strategic, you have to be looking, outwardly lay, so involving more leadership in the strategic process. And by the way, they have dramatically reduced turnover, which is amazing, huge, huge, they're much more focused on the top priorities, their revenue and profits have improved. I mean, this all happened over 18 months.

Suzie Price 20:55

Wow, phenomenal.

Steve Graham 20:57

And what happens is, we do an x-ray at the beginning, we do it again at six months, to see how things have changed, and give the same input. And it's really fascinating, you know, because we have all of this research backed information so we can share, you know, what are the core master processes that a company should have in place by this time? And then they get to look at it and think, Oh, do we have that? Do we not have that? Oh, maybe this is something we should do? So they generate and get consensus on what's important. As a group, they really become a cohesive team through the process.

Dobbie Newman 21:31

Yeah. And you know, you ask, well, so what happens after day one? Well, that was the big picture. But typically, what happens is, then for those next six months, they are working these initiatives. And we are part of that process in terms of helping them with the check ins, the progress, helping them or it's correct, are just providing, you know, coaching and counseling through the process. In some cases, some of our, you know, additional services like the



employee survey, for example. So it depends, they're not always HR related topics that are the issue. But in this particular company, that was definitely the focus.

Steve Graham 22:07

Yeah, one of the things we talked about is the gates of focus, you know, there are three gates of focus through which you can see problems. It could be people, it could be process, or it could be profit, and we tend to look at one or the other, but it may be a different gate that's causing the problem. You know, if something's not working, is this a people problem? Is it because the process is broken or not in place? Or is it because you're not focusing on getting enough money or having the resources to get it done? Like what's causing? How do you get to the root cause of the problem? We say, if you can name a problem, you can fix it? Yeah, you know, and if you can get to the root cause, then you can focus on the right things.

Suzie Price 22:49

Yeah, yeah. And things are swirling around. And so you don't have the, you know, awareness of how to put words to what's going on, and you don't have like, what should be going on right now, which is what this model shows you like, so they were integration. So for example, you were saying the three gates of focus, so it integration, that out of the three grades gates focus, it says the first priority is profit, then people then process, but once they move to strategic, which gives them you know, more employees, and more managers, and more people, then the people focus is first above profit.

And it really I mean, you know, with awareness, we can fix things if I know if I get on the scale, and I know that my way is, I mean, something as basic as that is more than I want it to be, which it is not right now. Good things actually hit New, good numbers today. Yeah, if you get on the scale, and you see it, then you can say, oh, that's where I'm at, you know, but don't ever can't get on the scale, or like an x ray, or X Ray says what's broken? You know? I have a question for you see, as much as founders and entrepreneurial companies that are growing and strong minded visionary CEOs could use this, I can imagine, because I know I've done in and gone in and have done not a whole program at all like this, but maybe they asked you to do a team survey or, you know, do individual things.

Sometimes they say they want it but they're fearful of it because they don't really want to be directed. I mean, I would think there'll be typically a lot of people who are high individualistic, political, and with their own company and want to run it and want to go it's like, yeah, kind of want to know, but you know, how much is this going to force me I know, you've got to I mean, underlining things that don't get said that that cause people to not want to expose I mean, to be under an x ray is to be exposed to get on the scale. I have to admit, oh, I've been eating cookies and ice cream for I haven't I have to say, You know what I mean you have so some people avoid



this scale because they just don't want to know, so you run into that I bet, don't you? I mean, that's a human dynamic. And you just have to lay it out in fear.

Dobbie Newman 25:07

It's fear, right? I mean, it's like any intervention, if you will, you can only help if the person is willing to be helped. Yes, yeah. And they have to be feeling enough pain to want the help. I mean, if the CEO, this has to be something the CEO wants for their business, yes, yeah. Because if they don't, it won't work. And you know, we wouldn't want to force it on somebody if they're not.

Suzie Price 25:33

You two would never do that. Because I know you both. So well. How do you get the CEO engaged? So the CEOs kind of, you know, said, Okay, I think I'm interested, but I really don't want to get on the scale, kind of, you know, push the ball a little bit. I mean, how do you help them get comfortable with those normal feelings? It's like, anytime you might take some assessment, you're like, oh, my gosh, I want to hear what you say. But I don't really want to hear it, because it makes me nervous.

Steve Graham 25:56

You know, that's really, really insightful. Suzie, I think there's a couple of things here. One is, the hardest thing to do when you're running a company is to maintain alignment, you know, the more you get away from the details of the business, when you're trying to run it, the more you assume that people are doing what they're supposed to be doing. But the CEO more than anything, and this is one of the outcomes of this process is you gain alignment on the focus for the business, you know, that everyone is focusing on the same things on the right things, and not on a different agenda. Number two is you get engagement from your folks. So what some CEOs will say is, I just wish the people are doing what they're supposed to do. And we're excited about it. Well, this, this gets that because it's their ideas that we're focusing on as a result of the discussion. And then you get to implementation. And going through the process. You know, what's going to be done, when it's going to be done? Who's going to do it, what it's going to look like? You're all talking the same language all of a sudden, makes it so much easier?

Dobbie Newman 26:58

Yeah. The three words that we use to describe the X Ray are alignment, engagement, and implementation.

Suzie Price 27:06

Yes, yeah. I just captured those. Yep. Three great words, you know, and how many times do you hear and I hear a lot, and I know y'all stick to I just want them to own their job, oh, this,



Dobbie Newman 27:18

they will have energy behind these initiatives, because they decided that they were important. And based on what they assessed, you know, which problems for the company.

Steve Graham 27:30

You know, I wish I had known what I knew from this, when I first started out in my business. And I wish I knew a lot of this when I worked in the corporate world because I have worked for corporations for 25 plus years. And you know, what I found the hardest thing to do when I was younger, was to learn how to delegate effectively. It's kind of like a myth, you don't realize the more you delegate, the more you get done. But but but only if the people that are doing it know what they're supposed to be doing. have clarity of direction, they know what it's supposed to look like when it's done. And you're all talking the same line. Yeah, that makes such a difference to get the whole team aligned on board and focus. It's like a breath of fresh air.

Suzie Price 28:13

What was the word you used? Dobbie? It was magical. Was it magical?

Dobbie Newman 28:17

breathtaking,

Steve Graham 28:18

breathtaking

Suzie Price 28:19

Breathtaking I should have written it down. You know why it is breathtaking? Because it so rarely happens?

Dobbie Newman 28:26

Yeah, yeah, I can't believe the results. That's why we're so passionate about this work, because we have seen the transformation. Oh, yeah, you know, we're also working with a stage one client stage one is a startup. But in this case, this company has been around for more than 30 years, and they're still on stage will probably never be larger than stage one, because they don't need more than 10 employees to do what they do.

Steve Graham 28:49

But over time, even at a stage one company, they end up going through and having to face all of the challenges that that have been identified as key for small businesses, there are 27 challenges that we look at, you know, one of the things we do is give people an opportunity to rank them and what are the top five you're having to deal with right now. And we know that at



each stage, the top five challenges change. And for each business, they might be slightly different. But there's, you know, we talked about four primary rules that go along with the seven stages of growth. And one of those that's really important is, you know, whatever you don't do in one stage, it doesn't go away. It's going to come back to haunt you if you don't do it. So you need to go back and look at what you haven't done and make sure you've got, you know, the things in place that will prevent you from getting in your way as you try to grow moving forward.

Suzie Price 29:51

That's awesome. So I want to come back to the four rules and heavy list those but what I was going to show it read through is I've got the model in front of me so Which startup I was just going to read through it. And then maybe you can talk to any piece of this. But so for example, in a startup, its number of employees is one to 10, number of managers, zero number of executives, one, builder protector ratio four to one. What's the builder protector ratio?

Steve Graham 30:16

Great question. The Builder Protector Ratio. A builder is somebody who is looking forward to growing, coming up with new ideas moving forward all the time. The protector is somebody who is trying to make sure you keep what you got. So it's also sometimes called a confidence caution ratio, and you need a certain amount of confidence. And you also need some caution. So you don't make mistakes. So at each stage, it's different from stage one, it's four to one meaning, if you got five people for them they should be builders. One of them should be a protector.

Dobbie Newman 30:53

Yes, it is but it is important to note and this one company, the CFO said, Well, I'm the protector. Yeah. But it's not functional. It's a mindset. Yes. Yeah. So you could be a builder at some point in time. And then you could be.

Suzie Price 31:08

Yeah, exactly. So kind of your focus. Yeah. And if you look across, once it gets bigger, you know, and it changes, it's one to one ratio at some points, and three to one ratio, two to one ratio, depending on what stage you're in, which is sedating. What if you know that then you know, that's the mindset I need to have? Okay, so then I'm going to keep going. Three gates of focus, which we already talked about for a startup, it just makes so much sense. Its profit is the number one priority, then people then process. And then this is interesting, CEO modality, right. Manager modality staff modality. So this must be how they must need to be

Steve Graham 31:44

It's yeah, it's a it's a, it's a way of showing up. So you know, are you dominant? Are you supportive? Or are you facilitative? You know, if somebody who's dominant is going to be in



charge, they're going to set the direction, they're going to make sure things happen their way or the highway? I mean, they're in charge, right? Supportive is somebody who says, How can I help you? How do I help you make this happen? And facilitative is making it work? You know, just getting in there and doing it? So you make it easy? Yeah, exactly. And that changes each stage, the CEOs role in the manager role and the staff role.

Dobbie Newman 32:19

Yeah, yeah. So for each stage, the CEO has one of those roles, the management staff has a different role. And the support staff has the third one. So the three are always present. But who takes on which rule changes as the, you know, as you know, yes.

Suzie Price 32:38

How brilliant, that is, that's brilliant.

Steve Graham 32:41

Yeah, I tell you, you know, and it's so interesting, because the names of the stages are really indicative of what people are going through at that stage. You know, stage one is called startup and you know, the dot the company Dobby talked about, that we're dealing with, they're not really in startup mode, because they still have less than 10 employees. But a startup is where it really is CEO dominant, you know, it's somebody's got this idea that bringing building it out of dust, and you know, they are really holding up the banner and saying, let's make this work, you know, get it to market let's, let's make this a reality. And that those are the things you have to do as you grow. You know, the big, big one of the biggest changes happens between stage two and stage three. In stage two, that's when you go from 19 to 20. It's that 20 employees, it's amazing the difference it makes because stage two is called ramp up, you know, you're now you know, you're gonna make it but now you want to get bigger, you want to grow, you want to move to the next level. But stage three is called delegation. And here's the reason it's because the company moves from CEO centric in stage one and two, to enterprise centric. In stage three, it's the hardest thing for a CEO to do is to let go, and you gain.

Suzie Price 33:55

I've seen that.

Steve Graham 33:55

Oh, I've lived through that. And you have to be able to put people in place who are in charge of what they're doing, who are and, and let go and let them do it. And it makes a big difference. And that's why people become primary data focus, because, yeah, you're changing, and then it's profits still profit, and then it's processed. And the CBO becomes more facilitative at that point, as opposed to dominant because he's got to help. He's got to figure out how to get these people that are running the various functional areas. Has he delegated that authority, the



responsibility and the me count. You can't delegate accountability, but you delegate authority and responsibility, come on, make it clear what they have to do.

Suzie Price 34:40

Is this about the time when the founder ends up getting replaced by somebody else,

Steve Graham 34:45

you know, sometimes? Right?

Dobbie Newman 34:48

Yeah Laurie Taylor told us a story of a session she facilitated where it was a stage three, and they all did the X ray and when she walked into the room The Tuesday session the CEO said, I have learned that I should not be the CEO anymore. Yes. volunteered. Yeah. Said I'm not ready. This is not my wheelhouse. I am not. Yeah, this is not me.

Suzie Price 35:13

Yeah. Yeah. Because yeah, which I think is interesting, because we know what we know, in regard to, you know, the assessments that we use, we know that playing to someone's strengths, and somebody strengths being a match for the role. Some people are more flexible than others. And that's what I was thinking, as I looked at this, it's like, Oh, that explains a lot, you know, when the, but it sounds like I mean, sometimes people can can some people, some CEOs go all the way through the process, because of how they're built. They're a little bit more flexible.

Steve Graham 35:41

They can grow. Yeah, people can grow, they can change.

Dobbie Newman 35:46

In fact, the CEO has to grow and change in terms of their skills, you know, their focus through the course of the stages, if they already grow with the company.

Steve Graham 35:56

One of the biggest challenges I've seen for leaders to take on is the ability to realize they don't know what they don't know. Yeah. And they don't have to have answers. Yeah, yeah, it'd be hard to let go of that. Control. It when you start a company, and it's your baby, yeah, you know,

Suzie Price 36:14



Oh, yeah. Yes. I could totally see that. And you see that in the news, you see where CEOs get, you know, bumped out, and then we see it in the businesses we were with. So I'm gonna go through the rest of the startup because I started it. And then I want to come back to the four rules. But so we said CEO modality. And we talked about dominant, supportive, or facilitative. And it changes for the different staff modes, three phases of a leader, that's the thing where they get a percentage, When are your visionary when you are manager, When are your specialist? So that's more guidance for the leader. I mean, so you're given the CEO tools to say, this is how you need to drive right now.

Steve Graham 36:50

That's exactly right. Now, at some point, the CEO is visionary. They're at several stages, you know, they are visionaries most important for them. And, you know, the visionaries, sets the direction says, here's where we're going, keeps me clear on what you're looking for

Dobbie Newman 37:05

the future, exactly, and then start to face more outward, right?

Steve Graham 37:09

Where the managers have more action focus, they keep people focused on the right things. The specialist is the technician. It's, you know, sometimes in a startup, the CEO is multiple things. They're also specialist specialists. They're the ones that know how to make this widget work. Do you know?

Suzie Price 37:26

Yeah, that would be my business. Yes. I'm the visionary and a specialist right there. Yeah. So interesting there. 40%, the visionary, the see the three faces of leaders, visionary, startup is 40% ramp up is 40%. Then He goes to stage three and has to go all the way back. She could be she, of course, yeah, of course. But I keep saying he, but delegation. 10%, that's that phase, or that state, that professional there 10% visionary, then they ran back up to integration, which is 30% visionary. And that's when you have up to 95 employees, then they're going higher, they're back to being visionary, again, strategic to 160 employees. And then once they're in the visionary stage, which is stage seven, that's up to 500. They're back there. 75% visionary, so cool roadmap. I mean, I think that's how fascinating it is.

Steve Graham 38:18

It is really working, and it works.



Dobbie Newman 38:21

And you know, some when you look at it, you start to learn it, it seems obvious, but you know it, it's all there in one place. And it and the rules are defined for you. And this stuff is right. That's the crazy part, like Well, yeah. Visionary, you know, start up and ramp up to delegation, your, your become 60% of your time is spent being a manager because you have to train the people under you to do the things that you were doing so that the company can grow because you only have so much time in a day to do the things you were doing and startup.

Suzie Price 38:56

Yep. That's fascinating. Talk about the four rules, because I think that they're really instructive.

Dobbie Newman 39:02

Sure yeah. So there are four rules that govern the seven stages of growth. First one is the movement from one stage of growth to another begins as soon as you land in any stage. So if you are a company on a growth trajectory, and you are going to continue to grow your employees, once you've landed in a stage, you are already preparing for the next because when you get there, the floor is going to drop out unless you have those things ready.

Suzie Price 39:29

So you gotta be pre paving, always looking ahead, which is great. It keeps people who aren't maybe naturally futuristic focused, to be futuristic focused and they know what they need to focus on. That's amazing.

Dobbie Newman 39:41

Okay, exactly and then the second rule is, as Steve said, what you don't get done in a specific stage of growth does not go away. In fact, in many of these x-rays, you know, this recent company, they had a new issue, a new top five challenge came up for them that was actually in stage four and it just had been there all along. But it hadn't been recognized because there were so many other things that had to get done before it showed up. And it showed up in the employee survey. So that was a huge eye opener for them. And so you really have to get the things done in the earlier stages at some point in time or another or they will come back to bite you.

Suzie Price 40:18

Yeah, that's a great rule.

Dobbie Newman 40:20

The third one is time will make a difference. So if you are speeding through stages, you are going to be trying to catch your breath. Because there's so much that has to be done at each



stage to really, you know, you're building a foundation for your business, that's really the way to think about it, you know, if you have a house and the foundation isn't solid, you're gonna have cracks, you're gonna have problems. And if the earth shakes. So when you have time, you have more time, but if you're going quickly, it just speeds up the acceleration to put things in place. And so it's really just an indication of pace. And if you aren't growing, you're dying. And this is one of the fundamental theories. That's the fourth rule behind stages of growth. It's, you know, they, James Fisher used to talk about the, you know, the lifecycle of the caterpillar, you know, if we think about an organization, you know, there's the, the chrysalis that forms in the spring, and ultimately, new development happens. And then, you know, the butterfly is, is born, and every company goes through those kinds of transformations, you know, you think about any development in any self help, for example, you know, you always have to sort of go inward, and take some time to, you know, learn new things, build new strengths before flying. And that's sort of the, the imagery around the seven stages of growth, this, it's worth investing that time to regroup and reform and regenerate and build straight

Suzie Price 41:51

Great analogy. That's a great analogy. Yes, that's awesome. We're going to come to a close with some of our get to know you questions. But I love introducing this model. I love making sure that people who are in smaller businesses are aware of this and are aware of you because my objective is to refer people to you for this work, because I trust you. I've known both of you for many years, Dobby and I are a mastermind together, Steve and I went through training together for our master axiology. And just just and I've known you for years. So I know that they're in good hands, if they reach out to you. So just thank you for sharing this part with us. And I think you have a quiz that we're going to put on our website that people can go to, it'll be linked to in the show notes. But it's a quiz where they can kind of go through and complete the 27 items just for themselves. Yes. So it is a little bit about that.

Dobbie Newman 42:45

Yes. So there are 27 challenges in this model. And, you know, I think we've talked, you know, through there typically five that are the primary common challenges in any stage of growth across, you know, the research that was conducted.

Steve Graham 43:00

And so what we ask people to do is look at this list, it's very simple, doesn't take very long, you look at the list, you pick what you think are the top five that you're experiencing right now. And, and what we'll do is if they, when they complete, that we'll let them, we'll show them how they relate to what the five challenges should be at their current stage of growth. Interesting. And, you know, because what you'll see, and what we have seen in the past is sometimes the issues people are facing, were from a previous stage of growth that they never fixed. You know, it's not



that second rule, what you don't fix, don't go away, you know? Yeah. So it's really, it's a real eye opener.

Dobbie Newman 43:43

Very simple exercise. It's fun. And, you know, just even reading through the 27 challenges can be eye opening for somebody to say, Oh, I hadn't realized, you know, this, this might be an issue. Yeah. Now that I think about it.

Suzie Price 43:56

Yeah. And

Steve Graham 43:57

Part of what we do in the X-ray is give the whole leadership team a chance to actually do that, independently look at it, and then we look at all the answers and see, all right, so where is the company from the perspective of all of the folks, not just the CEO? And the CEO also gets to see how it is different from what they thought.

Suzie Price 44:15

Yeah, Fascinating, because I think it so anybody could, whether they're the CEO or not, they're just interested in this process or thinking about this will be a bit for us. If they go look at the quiz, they'll get some feedback from you. And they'll just have a better idea and kind of can examine, you know, whether this is a fit for something in the future for them. Exactly. Okay.

Dobbie Newman 44:37

Yeah, and I did want to mention Suzie, you know, for people that are listening to this, if you feel like there's excessive chaos in your organization, you know, if you feel like you're drowning, if you feel like you just have, you know, lack of clarity of focus. It's worth evaluating this as an option.

Suzie Price 44:55

Yeah just as you said, those descriptors, I thought, oh, I need to tell them about sessions. Is it your company? Because I'm working really closely with the HR director? And it's like, yeah, that's happening. Drowning lack of chaos, not alive. Yeah, it's obvious, but I didn't think of it until just now when you said that. So those are really good. Good. Well, one other thing that I think people are probably thinking is not financial commitment, because that's private. But how much commitment do you get for the two day workshop? Get the X ray, what? Are you with them forever? Are you with them as much as they want? How does it work? I mean, because I would think that people are thinking that now it's like, okay, if I even go take that quiz, what am I stepping into even to examine this? And so we want to answer that so people know how much flexibility there is or isn't?



Dobbie Newman 45:47

So that's a great question. The first there's the first X ray and the initial two days, and after that, it's a six months process. So there's a second x-ray after six months. So during that six month time period, the team is working on the initiatives, we do an initial check in, and then the check ins will depend on the team. When they need us, sometimes it's with the whole group, sometimes it's with an individual with a specific initiative where we can really help. So it really depends on the company and how much help they want. Some of our clients prefer more help than others. It depends on what stage you're in as well, if you have the functional expertise to complete the initiatives, boundary. So what's a six month window after six months? That may be it? It just depends. If you know, like with this company that I talked about. We did this the second x-ray, but they had gone from stage five to say stage six over that six month period. And so they felt like, gee, we just entered stage six, let's go another six months. Okay. Yeah. And so, yeah, yeah,

Suzie Price 46:56

I would think that would appeal to the entrepreneurial listener. And the owner is like, Okay, I want to be able to get your support, but I want to flex how much I do or don't do it, you know, so I didn't know how to set and want that to be a stumbling block. If somebody is interested in this model, we'll have a link to the model the image of the model in the show notes, too, if that's okay with you guys that so people can see it what we spoke to because I was speaking to, but I just think it would be interesting to people to see that. So that's great. So thank you for sharing all of that. I'd love for people to know more about both of you. So let's take a few minutes there and talk a little bit about one thing that I'm passionate about is waking up eager and waking up eager is about not just in the morning, I'm waking up. But it's that whole thing about having self direction and, and you know, knowing who I am, where I'm going and what my worth is when I put my feet on the floor, I know what I'm going to do every day, having that kind of vibe. And so I thought you both could share a little bit about mind body spirit. Because I think it's instructive for people. What you are doing right now to help you have more of that sense of self direction and feel good days in mind, body and spirit. What are some of your favorite things? Who wants to go first?

Dobbie Newman 48:07

Yeah, I'll go first. So for me, first of all, sleep, I find sleep as the best activity for my mind. Because that physical rest, and I typically do like a good seven, eight hours a night, because it helps me refresh.

Suzie Price 48:24

The second specific thing you do to make sure you get good sleep. Because some people are struggling with sleep.



Dobbie Newman 48:29

Honestly, there are some nights where it's hard to shut my mind off. And techniques that often work for me or just reading. You know, it helps you focus your attention on one thing, and you get lost in the story or whatever it is that you're reading, I turn the lights off, I have a Kindle and I have it on low light. So I don't have a lot of, you know, distractions. I like to keep the noise low, and just get into a quiet state. Nice. And that usually helps. Sometimes I fall asleep holding the book.

Suzie Price 48:59

Oh, that's good. Well, the Kindle didn't give you that blue light, which they sent us with our circadian rhythm or something. So cool.

Dobbie Newman 49:05

Yeah, so and then the next most important thing for me is exercise. And I try to do that five times a week if I can, and I mix it up, you know, between walking, cycling, strength training, hiking, anything that I can do to be moving my body because that's also very good for the mind as well as the body. And I have done that my entire life. That never changed for me. And the third thing is eating high quality clean food. We cook most of our meals from scratch, you know, there's not a lot of processed food, buy locally, go to the farmers market, buy organic, you know, well treated proteins. And just what you put into your body is really really important. So though for me, those are the three things.

Suzie Price 49:50

Love it. Love it. Steve, what would you say for you?

Steve Graham 49:53

For me? You know, the mind, really for me, is like mental clarity. I love to do puzzles. I do wordle daily love. Yeah, I love to do crosswords, I just like to keep my mind active. I'm an avid learner, constantly reading and researching. And that's really important to me. But it's also I find, you know, I don't know who said this, but I would love to be able to, you know, attribute the quotation, but if somebody wants said, you know, do watch a live, hey, that's freedom, but liking what you do, that's happiness. So make sure you choose to do something you like and make time for that. So, you know, I like to work, I like to build things, I like to work in the woodshop. And being by myself, it just brings me back to a sense of clarity. You know, having some personal time carving out those moments when you can do those kinds of things really makes a difference for me. I would say spiritually, family first, you know, and helping others is really important. Just making sure that part of what we do is helping people. That's why we love this work, because it's just so rewarding to see the difference and to hear the positive feedback you get from folks.



Suzie Price 51:15

Yeah, y'all are what I would say. And that's why we're part of the same inner circle I think are real go givers. And your intention is to serve your practical and all that. But your intention is to serve, you know.

Dobbie Newman 51:31

Both highly intentional, yes, yeah. Yeah.

Suzie Price 51:34

That's wonderful. That's beautiful. Okay, so what advice would you give your 25 year old self?

Steve Graham 51:40

I'd say buy Microsoft and Tesla.

Suzie Price 51:46

Was Tesla around 25 years ago?

Steve Graham 51:49

No, what I would tell myself is trust yourself, you probably have good instincts don't get swayed. I wanted to buy Tesla stock many years ago, and everybody said don't do it. It's overpriced. I should have done it.

Suzie Price 52:06

With Tesla and everything else, yeah. Yes. Okay.

Dobbie Newman 52:10

Yeah, for me, I don't work quite so hard. You know, I did take five years off when we had kids, which I am very grateful for. But once, you know, I went back to work, I put it into overdrive. And I just wish I had spent more time, you know, with my family. During those years, I just had, you know, a lot of ambition and a lot of things I wanted to do. And now I've got a really great quality of life and balance. And I just wish I'd known more that it was okay to do that. That's, you know, yeah, yeah, I understand that. Two more questions. And one is a kind of a, what do you think and kind of question, but it is, if you could put a billboard for the world to see, where would you put a billboard? And what would you say about it? So I had a really hard time with the place, but I finally decided on the busiest airport in the world, because there would be a lot of people who would see a lot of traffic, and it would say everyone has something worth appreciating, find it.



Suzie Price 53:13

I love that everyone has something more worth appreciating. Find it? Yes. What a great mindset. What if we looked for that every minute of every day? And everybody we met.

Dobbie Newman 53:23

instead of the negativity? Yes. Fine, because that's what we do. Right? In our work, like with design and driving forces and everything. Yes. Does everybody have something to offer?

Suzie Price 53:35

Yeah, yes. Yes. And you know, many people get their report that first thing I mean, this is how ingrained it is, in our culture. The first thing people do when they get their assessment 90% of the time, is look at where something that they said they think is negative. And that's what they focus on. Yeah, yeah. Because we're so oriented that way. So yeah, I like your orientation. Cool. What about you Steve?

Steve Graham 53:56

To get the best reach, it would definitely be a digital billboard, somewhere in the ether where multiple people can see it. I would tell people, you know, there's a real tendency to focus on the negative for some reason, you know, we always look at what's wrong, what isn't working, I would turn it the other way around and find an optimistic answer when you when you got an issue, figure out what the positive side is, don't look for the negative purposely look for what is good and positive about what you're dealing with, as opposed to the negative side and trying to reverse it.

Suzie Price 54:33

Yeah. It's interesting from the positive too, and you can now start to see solutions that you didn't see, when you're saying this is wrong. This is wrong. You kind of just get stuck in what's wrong. I think that's my experience. It's true, sir. Certainly always having to remind myself to reorient but Yes, awesome. I love your billboards. So we'll close with having each of you talk about advice or wisdom you would want leaders to take away from this discussion about seven stages of growth and growing their business.

Dobbie Newman 55:03

Yeah, so that's an easy one for me. And it's whatever challenges you are facing right now. Someone else's face before. So ask for help, chances are, the X ray process can help you overcome them.

Steve Graham 55:15

That's, you know, it's not that different from what I was gonna say, it's interesting. You know, maybe it's human nature. But when someone takes on a new role, people think, because they



have the title, they should know what to do and have all the answers. But hey, you've been doing this for two minutes. And that's, that's especially true for leaders. You know, you don't have to have all the answers. You have to be able to ask the right questions. So surround yourself with clever, capable people who learn to get comfortable asking for help. And having a template, like the stages of growth that's already figured out, can help you ask the right question, because you don't know what you don't know.

Suzie Price 55:55

That's right. I think we've said that a couple of times today. Hmm. You know, that's our theme. But we know we can know because we have The Seven Stages of Growth and Dobbie and Steve to help.

Steve Graham 56:08

And we love the work.

Dobbie Newman 56:09

Yeah. And we've really enjoyed talking with you, Suzie, this has just been really fun this morning.

Steve Graham 56:14

Yeah, this has been a very easy conversation.

Suzie Price 56:16

I knew it would be great. That's why I want to be here and share your wonderful cell. So thank you so much for the good work you're doing and thank you for sharing your goodness with the Wake Up Eager Workforce, listeners. Appreciate it.

Steve Graham 56:30

Thank you for the opportunity. It's great.

Suzie Price 56:33

I hope you enjoyed this introduction to the Seven Stages of Growth and could feel the passion and excitement Steve and Dobbie have around this process. I like the examples that they shared. And we've got an image of the Seven Stages which we talk about where you can see it in the show notes. So go to pricelessprofessional.com/sevenstages. You can see how comprehensive it is and how it clarifies what companies should focus on in each stage of the growth as though it is like a breath of fresh air. It is beautiful with some of our languages. And our discussion, because it's just it's such clarity, when you have a model is really helpful because it can help you make sense of what's next. They're not always all perfect, but they are



super duper helpful. I mean, I love a good model. And I think if you're a business owner or in a business with less than 500 employees, you're gonna want to go look at that model, and perhaps reach out to Dobby and Steve, they have a Seven Stages Quiz that we will have in the show notes that you can take and there's no obligation, but it's an opportunity for you to kind of see the questions and think through you know, and I think they will get with you and go through it if you're interested to see how you scored and get more information.

So if you feel like there's excessive chaos in your organization, if you feel like you're drowning, you feel like you just have lack of clarity of focus or want more focus, it's probably worth evaluating. And looking at the Seven Stages. I know a lot of different organizations over the years who have used it so pricelessprofessional.com/sevenstages for all the good information, you can see our latest episodes at wakeupeagerworkforce.com if you check that out, it will also point you to our directory and the bottom of that page is an opportunity to sign up for our newsletter where we kind of do monthly notices very quick kind of highlight of some of the things that we're doing and some of these episodes.

We always love it if you love any episodes that we do, or you find it useful or helpful to leave us a review. If you don't mind doing that it helps other people find us and helps us know that somebody's listening and somebody's engaged and likes it. Because we try to put good energy and good thought into what we're providing so that you really are getting tools to create and build a wake up eager workforce. And so that is our focus not just tools but inspiration, motivation, the knowing that it is possible and that other organizations and other people are finding their way towards this idea of like a bigger workforce of people that are engaged and committed and want to be there and want to do the work with low drama.

So it is our directories at wakeupeagerworkforce.com Our app is at pricelessprofessional.com/review pricelessprofessional.com And if I can help you if you have any suggestions for other episodes or questions about anything that we do over at [priceless](http://pricelessprofessional.com) give me a shout at pricelessprofessional.com/Susioe s u z i e meanwhile, do what you can today to have a great day do what you can today because everything that you do today builds up to what's happening next. And great days in a wake up your life began with day by day having effective productive days, days that feel right to you. And so you just take care and keep waking up bigger

Outro 1:00:01

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