Growth Readiness Framework

Growth is exciting, but growing fast on weak foundations can break a company. The Growth Readiness Framework is a practical checklist that tells leaders whether a company or a team is ready to grow. It is not the work of one author; it combines well-known ideas about how organisations grow. The management scholar Larry Greiner showed in 1972 that growing companies pass through phases, and each phase ends in a crisis. Later, Verne Harnish, in his book Scaling Up, grouped the key decisions of a growing company into people, strategy, execution and cash.

1. Market: Proven, Repeatable Demand

The first area asks whether customers really want what we sell. Demand should be proven, not just hoped for: customers buy, come back and recommend us. Sales should also be repeatable, without the founder in every deal. If each sale depends on luck or on one special person, growth only multiplies the problem.

Example: a home baker whose friends' friends now order too has demand beyond one small circle.

At work: Amal manages a catering company that wants to open in a second city. She checks that most orders come from repeat clients and from a sales process her team can follow without her.

2. Operations: Processes That Scale

The second area looks at how the work gets done. A small company can survive on heroic effort, but more volume exposes every weak process. Key processes should be written down and repeatable, and systems such as software, suppliers and equipment must handle more work. A useful question is: what would break first if orders doubled tomorrow?

Example: a restaurant that takes orders on paper copes on a quiet evening, but a busy night turns small errors into long delays.

At work: Amal sees that the kitchen schedule lives only in one chef's head. She asks the team to turn it into a simple shared system before any expansion.

3. People and Leadership: Capacity and Skills

The third area is about the people who will carry the growth. Leaders need time to lead, not only to fight daily fires, and the team needs the skills of the next stage. Greiner described how the hands-on style of founders often leads to a crisis of leadership as the company grows. A hiring plan and a back-up for every key role keep the business moving as it grows.

Example: a good football coach prepares young players to replace the stars who will leave.

At work: Amal approves every menu and every price quote herself. She trains two supervisors to take over these decisions and starts recruiting chefs early.

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4. Finance: Cash and Unit Economics

The fourth area checks whether the money can support growth. Growth usually eats cash before it brings cash back, because new staff, stock and marketing are paid for first. Readiness means enough cash or funding to cross this gap, and healthy unit economics, where each sale earns more than it costs. If every sale loses money, selling more simply loses money faster.

Example: a family moving to a bigger house checks the new rent, the moving costs and a few months of savings.

At work: Amal calculates the profit on a typical event after food, staff and transport. She also plans the cash needed until the new city pays for itself.

5. Culture and Governance: Clear Decisions and Metrics

The fifth area is the foundation under the other four. Everyone should know who decides what, so that decisions do not queue on one desk. A small set of clear metrics, reviewed regularly, shows problems early, and a strong culture guides new employees even when no manager is watching. Without this foundation, growth adds confusion faster than it adds results.

Example: a school with clear rules and a clear timetable can welcome many new students without chaos.

At work: Amal writes down who approves prices, hiring and large purchases. She also starts a short weekly meeting to review orders, complaints and cash.

6. Score, Fix, Then Grow

The final step turns the checklist into action. Leaders score each area green for ready, amber for partly ready, or red for not ready, using facts rather than feelings. The weakest area sets the limit, just like the weakest link in a chain. So the red areas are fixed first, then the amber ones, and only then is growth pushed hard. The scoring is repeated every few months, because a growing company keeps changing.

Example: before a long road trip, a careful driver checks the tyres, the brakes and the fuel.

At work: Amal's team scores market green, operations red, people amber, finance green and governance amber. They fix the kitchen system first, strengthen the amber areas, and then open in the new city with confidence.

Conclusion

In summary, the Growth Readiness Framework asks one honest question before growth: are we ready? It checks five areas: market, operations, people and leadership, finance, and culture and governance. Each area gets a green, amber or red score, and the weakest links are fixed first. This approach does not stop growth; it makes growth safer. Growth built on strong foundations lasts longer than growth built on hope.

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