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# ***The CEO's Role in Driving Growth with Innovation***

***By Katherine Catlin***



**CATLIN & COOKMAN GROUP**

*Mastering the Art of Corporate Growth*

*It used to be an oxymoron: To grow a company and keep the culture innovative and entrepreneurial at the same time was an impossible contradiction. But in today's turbulent world, innovating by continually creating and re-inventing new markets, products, services, business models, and organizational capabilities is absolutely critical for any business. These days, building an organization dedicated to innovation is actually a requirement for successful growth.*

*As the leader, how do you achieve this goal? The answer lies in using your classic entrepreneurial capabilities -- including your visionary outlook and ability to see possibilities where others don't, your passion and drive, your problem-solving skills, and your confidence about risk-taking -- to continuously re-invent your company -- and your own role as leader. Following this model, you can transform from a founding entrepreneur into an entrepreneurial CEO capable of maintaining an innovative culture that drives growth. Both you and your company will be set to stay around for the long haul.*

### **ADVICE FROM WINNERS**

This may sound like a tall order, but I've worked with numerous founding CEOs who have achieved it. Also, I recently re-interviewed some CEOs who demonstrate this model perfectly. When I first talked to these leaders a decade ago, the companies they had founded had just won awards for innovation in New England, and I wanted to explore how they built their organizations to encourage innovation in every part of the company. In the decade since, they have become industry leaders and I went back to see how they had used innovation to grow their companies while transforming themselves from entrepreneurs into entrepreneurial CEOs.

### **HOW IT'S DONE**

Here are the highlights of what they told me about what they have done in their roles as CEOs over the years to keep innovation in the forefront as the driver of profitable growth:

1. Be willing to keep re-defining absolutely everything about the business, including its mission, your own role, the make-up of the executive team, and how that team works together to plan and manage the company's growth.
2. Make sure people regularly and systematically gain customer knowledge, stay abreast of new technologies, constantly re-examine and re-think what they're doing and experiment with new ideas to move the company forward. By unleashing the creativity of everyone in the company, you will establish the innovative culture you need. Keep the environment fertile so you can keep differentiating your company from its competitors in myriad ways.
3. Understand that encouraging innovation through a "wing it" management style doesn't work; in fact, it actually stifles real innovation. Instead, develop an organizational structure with systems for measurement, accountability, and incentives that support innovation. As the leader, stand firm on using the processes and measurement systems you've put in place.
4. Keep alive your entrepreneurial thirst to create things that didn't exist before. Avoid complacency and enjoy the challenge of having problems that supposedly can't be solved. Keep your eye on the big picture.
5. Define your vision clearly and keep it constantly in front of everyone. Use it to challenge people to continuously search for new ways to deliver better quality products higher and value-added customer services.



6. Use teams for synergy, balance, and focus, with your executive team as the role model for all other teams. Teamwork induces innovation by bringing together different points of view. When diverse people work together to approach a problem and generate ideas, you will find solutions that are unique and creative, yet balanced and viable. Have off sites regularly to stimulate creative juices.

7. Change your role. In the early days, your role is the lead innovator, coming up with all the ideas. But as the company grows, it's essential to move out of daily operations and focus on the big picture issues like the next big trend to capitalize on, the right balance of process vs. innovation, organizational structure questions, and culture building.

8. Be personally dedicated to continuous learning. This enables you to evolve as the leader your company needs as it moves through the stages of growth. Use a coach and join a CEO peer group.

Sustaining continuous innovation to drive growth is challenging and takes a special kind of leadership, but it can be done. Focus on it as your top priority in every corner of your business. Demand continuous innovation from the top every day, not by merely talking about it, but by redefining the way the business works, leading major changes, and changing your own role in the process. This gives the rest of the organization the model it needs to make innovation a way of life, which, in turn, makes growth a way of life.

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## Catlin & Cookman Group: Corporate Profile

### *Building a Community of CEOs Who Are Growing Great Companies*

In today's fast-paced world, CEOs have the toughest job of all. While it's both exciting and rewarding, it can also be extraordinarily challenging. Where do CEOs turn for guidance? Since 1989, CEOs of emerging-growth companies have come to the Catlin & Cookman Group for our unique expertise and resources – proven methods and frameworks to plan for and manage growth and change. Our sole focus on the CEO experience sets us apart, and the highly targeted resources we offer – CEO forums, consulting processes and practical tools – are developed exclusively for CEOs who are committed to growing great companies.

#### **High-Growth CEO Forums™**

More than ever, CEOs need a group of peer advisors to help grapple with issues they can't discuss with their teams or Boards. Our unique Forums are tightly-knit groups of CEOs from similar stage companies who meet quarterly to discuss their business challenges, advise each other about critical decisions, and develop best practices for managing growth. Our focus on customizing agendas to address members' real-time, bottom-line issues keeps the group accountable and the payback measurable. And, through our licensed partners, we are growing the number of High-Growth CEO Forums worldwide, creating a powerful, wide-reaching community of over 70 venture-backed CEOs.

#### **High-Growth Consulting**

To succeed, CEOs must create a shared vision and strategy with the executive team – and then execute ... flawlessly. We work closely with CEOs to define their strategic vision and annual plans, build and align executive teams, and create the organizational design, operating system and culture for impeccable execution. Our systematic, proven frameworks for growth deliver measurable results.

***Building the Profit Spiral®** Our foundation framework. Uncovers impediments to growth and helps CEOs and their executive teams create and implement strategic plans that include market focus, mission, values, vision, strategies, structure and culture — and an operating system to make sure the plan works. The result is the path to extraordinary growth.*

***Building the Executive Team as Leaders of Growth®** Defines the key responsibilities of the executives beyond their functional roles and develops a highly-focused and exceptionally strong team capable of leading the company to successful growth, breakthrough innovation and maximized profits.*

***Building the Awesome Organization.** Drives the strategic plan down into the organization – ensures that the critical metrics, operating processes, culture and activity alignment exist to execute the plan.*

#### **Thought Leadership**

Our deep understanding of the high-growth CEO experience is reflected in our books, articles and seminars – and on our website, [www.ceoexchange.com](http://www.ceoexchange.com).

***Books:** **Leading at the Speed of Growth: Journey from Entrepreneur to CEO** (Wiley, 2001) and **Building the Awesome Organization** (Wiley, 2002) by Founder Katherine Catlin and Jana Matthews.*

***Seminars and Speaking Engagements:** “Growing Your Company: The CEO's Challenge,” a two-year, 7-part series for the Massachusetts Software Council, “The New Breed of Leader” at the Future Forward Conference, “Planning Bootcamp,” and many other engagements.*

**Clients Include:** Anaqua, Antenna Software, aPriori, Authentica, Authoria, Avotus, Bluespec, Circles, Concord Communications, Constant Contact, e-Dialog, Empirix, eRoom Technology, Experience, I-Logix, Inmagic, iRobot, LiveVault, PeopleCube, Monster.com, mValent, OneSource Information Services, PanGo Networks, Pantero, Soundbite, Steelpoint Technologies, The MathWorks, VFA, Sevin Rosen Funds, Polaris Venture Partners, and North Bridge Venture Partners



# The Bottom-Line Impact Experienced by our Clients

## High-Growth CEO Forums™

“The job of the CEO is inherently and unapologetically isolating. The High-Growth CEO Forum offers a refreshingly honest and sincere source of support and advice from peers who live on similar quarterdecks. Its format and strong facilitation differentiate it from other groups I have seen. The Forum is one of the most effective feedback and personal development mechanisms available to a CEO. It has made me a more effective leader and a happier, more balanced human being.”

*Colin Angle, CEO of iRobot which had a successful IPO in November 2005 establishing a market cap over \$700 million. He was also E&Y Entrepreneur of the Year winner in 2003.*

"I am a strong advocate for the CEO Forum. I grew and sold my last company for 5X more than it was worth when I started as CEO. There is no way I could have done that without the Forum. The quality of the people and input I got from them along the way was invaluable. We are all dealing with the same issues, just different context and timeframes. As you know, a CEO's biggest challenge is prioritizing – especially his/her time. The fact that most of this team never misses a meeting speaks volumes about the value proposition! As an aside, my current company is less than a year old and our last round post money was already 5X the first!"

*Paul DiGiammarino, President & CEO of Anaqua. After a successful exit, Paul is again a Forum member.*

“The Catlin & Cookman Group community was my most valued sounding board when I was CEO of eRoom – no other constituency could offer the direct, trusted and knowledgeable feedback a CEO needs when in the line of fire. Not the board, not my management team and certainly not my spouse. The CEO Forum provided me the opportunity to step back from the trees, reassess my long-term vision and strategy and gain clarity on often difficult and complex issues – and over time I built some fabulous friendships.”

*Jeffrey Beir, former CEO eRoom Technology, and currently General Partner, North Bridge Venture Partners. Jeffrey was an E&Y Entrepreneur of the Year winner in 2003*

“The Catlin & Cookman Group’s High-Growth CEO Forum was a major contributor to giving me the ideas and inspiration as an entrepreneurial CEO that led to winning the Entrepreneur of the Year Award.”

*Dan Schimmel, former CEO of OneSource Information Services and an E&Y Entrepreneur of the Year winner in 2001.*

“Given my scars and collective experiences, I would have thought that by now there would be nothing I could learn from a group such as this, but I am amazed at the insights I get from experienced and even newly appointed CEO's... I don't recall ever making a similar endorsement.”

*Gene Robinson, CEO of I-Logix, Inc*

## High-Growth Consulting

“I’ve always been an entrepreneur, and one of the things I learned early on was that I couldn’t get any synergy in my business until I had a group of people working as entrepreneurs together. We have that now at Monster.com as a result of our work with the Catlin & Cookman Group, and we also have a plan in place that will guide our future growth while helping us preserve our unique culture even as we add more and more employees here and around the world.”

*Jeff Taylor, Founder and Chief Monster, Monster.com*

"The Catlin & Cookman Group has been an invaluable partner for Authoria - amazing people and processes for providing insight and peer-review, and for driving powerful ideas into action."

*Tod Loofbourrow, CEO of Authoria Inc.*

“When facing a difficult issue on my management team, or for the company as a whole, a quick call to my Catlin & Cookman Group consultant always provides an enlightened and unbiased point of view that helps bring clarity to the decision that must be made. I consider the Catlin & Cookman Group to be a vital member of my team.”

*John Rizzi, CEO of e-Dialog*

