

# Take a framework, add an example to get mojo back

**PART 1** in the December/January issue of Upsize, “Why fast-track leaders lose their mojo, and how to gain it back,” described your dilemma as a leader of a fast-growing company. You feel strangled by the many issues associated with that rapid growth.

**Part 2** in the February/March issue of Upsize, “Peer groups are essential resource to regain mojo,” went beyond the traditional resources routinely used for advice and counsel. The intense and convoluted nature of the problems can be helped by a facilitated peer group of leaders, made up of fast-growing companies.

Horst Rittel describes such ill-formulated problems with confusing information, multiple clients and decision makers with conflicting values as wicked problems. Wicked indeed.

Entrepreneurs grapple with these ongoing and evolving issues through

a continuum of two extremes. On one end is academic work that can be long and frustrating for an impatient entrepreneur. They think theoretical stuff is for propheads.

On the other extreme is the urge to jump in without preparation. Please note that “Just Do It” is a slogan and not a successful strategy. Either way you are just flailing your arms in the dark hoping to catch the brass ring. Both lead to the same result: lack of success.

The middle path, a virtuous one, is a theoretically sound framework with practical examples. It helps you navigate those myriads of problems with specific decisions that you must make, on a timely basis. This is the subject of Part 3.

### Conceptual framework (café)

A conceptual framework is an orga-

nizing method for taking reality and putting it in a bottle. It is a powerful tool to organize ideas and, though generalized, make the concepts become clearer.

A framework, as with any theoretical idea, may not fit with each and every data point or precisely predict outcomes in every situation. It’s not physics!

However, a strong conceptual framework captures the essence of reality and does this in a way that is easy to remember and then to apply. It is a theoretical structure of assumptions, principles and rules that hold together the ideas, comprising broad concepts. Instead of a semester long class the framework provides you with the working essence.

Benefit from years of painstaking work done by researchers and academics. A mentor or a peer group can be your café.

## tips

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**Rajiv Tandon**

**Exemplar (X)**

All knowledge is based upon learning from those who have gone ahead of you. They have successfully applied the conceptual framework to their advantage. It makes your journey a little easier.

An exemplar (X) is a person who can serve as an excellent example of the given concept. A peer group can have several exemplars who have applied the framework and, with the benefit of hindsight, make it come alive.

Why conceptual framework with exemplar (Cafe-X)? Because entrepreneurial presentation without a conceptual framework is a fairy tale.

Numerous “get-togethers” have cropped up in the last decade. Every evening of the week, somewhere in your local area, a “successful” entrepreneur presents his or her story. Many of those are truly fascinating presentations. Some “get-togethers” are an actual business venture of a local entrepreneur.

Invariably you leave the session with some burning questions-“How does this apply to my situation.” “Does it?” “Were they always so smart?” “How did they know to take that particular action/”

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**Going beyond theory**

A conceptual framework, without live examples, is theory for textbooks.

Many academic institutions have programs that provide theoretical concepts, without a patina of real examples. They do not give the warmth of a flesh and blood entrepreneur, with warts and all. Just theory is a turn-off for you. Its low penetrating power does not engage you, let alone change your long-rooted biases. That is why many of you dropped out of formal academic programs in the first place.

Even if you do have a degree, the issues and problems of growing pains continue to evolve and morph with the life cycle for a very long time. There is a paucity of programs that fulfill this need. One for your consideration is the Schultz School of Entrepreneurship at the University of St. Thomas called Rocket Network. Full disclosure, I am a presenter of the program, but I believe it is one answer to a Minnesota problem and it is free.

According to Kauffman Foundation

research, Minnesota ranks very poorly (No. 47) in the nation, in terms of new venture health. Our large companies are aging and will not be able to continue to sustain the present healthy economic climate. Consider taking 2 ½ hours a month to find quality solutions to your wicked problems, re-frame your perspective and be inspired.



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