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The Marketing Scaleur's
Secrets to Successfully
Growing a Business

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Think Big, Scale Fast
The Marketing Scaleur's Secrets to Successfully Growing a Business

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Preface

In the business world, performance management is driven by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), those ubiquitous metrics that gauge whether a company, department, team, or individual is meeting its goals — or falling short. KPIs are useful because they compartmentalize performance into discrete, often-quantifiable categories and systematize their evaluation. They make it possible to make sense of the nebulous, dynamic, frequently chaotic “system” of an organization or an employee. KPIs provide clarity about where we are and where we’re going.

The language of KPIs is unabashed corporate-speak; you probably wouldn’t use them to evaluate a first date (although it’s not the worst idea!). But there is a way to apply the same kind of KPI-based evaluation to our own lives.

One of my most significant personal and professional breakthroughs — which partly inspired me to write this book — came when I started thinking about my life in KPI terms, just as I had for so many years in the organizations where I had worked and excelled.

The epiphany came one night when I was on a business trip, consulting with a client about how to expand their operations into new markets. As I was relaxing in the hotel room after a long day of meetings, I had a stroke of inspiration. I set the hotel notepad in front of me and began writing, listing KPIs for my own life — at work, home, and play. These were criteria I would

use to measure whether I was on the right track; objectives that, once accomplished, would signal that I was making optimal use of my time, energy, and intellect.

The list was varied, from professional goals (attain a top managerial position by X year; launch my own company by Y year) to intellectual development (read two books a month) to fun “bucket list” experiences (eat sushi in Japan; smoke a cigar in Havana).

Although these “life KPIs” were diverse, a common trait linked everything from skydiving to founding a startup: a great eagerness to constantly be learning, developing, and improving. That’s the trait that has kept me going my whole life.

In essence, I realized, the KPIs were secondary to a more important revelation: I was seeking to “scale myself.”

The concept of scaling was not new to me. For a long time, I had been helping the firms that employed me do just that. But now I saw it in a more personal, emotionally resonant light. In this book, I’ve synthesized my “life-scaling” methodology — formulated during a successful career in marketing at some of the world’s top firms — into a complete guide for *scaleurs*: entrepreneurs who wish to scale their businesses, and especially their marketing activities or the marketing departments of their companies.

As a global scaling professional and expert in brands and marketing, I possess a finely honed aptitude for building things, a trait that was evident from an early age, when my strong affinity for Legos provided an outlet for assembling small pieces into perfect, whole forms.

This talent served me well at Lantmännen Unibake, the global frozen bakery company where I began my career before being promoted to senior category manager. That position put

me in the driver's seat to launch products for various channels, with the responsibility of making the category profitable. As I started to listen to salespeople, visit customers, and confer with managers in the firm, I discovered what was missing in the business: a way to buy or trade finished goods that we needed to develop our products but could not produce ourselves in our own bakeries. Before I knew it, I was working to create a trading department within Unibake to address this gap and ensure a full-scale portfolio.

I envisioned a trading company that would provide a one-stop shop for customers. By adding new products to our portfolio, we could expand our clientele and then our market share.

Internally, I faced opposition because the prevailing mindset was that this wouldn't be profitable because it meant buying a product from a third party, which marked up their price, and then selling our resulting product through a wholesaler. Moreover, the managers thought that expanding our portfolio would create extra work and raise quality control issues, because we would now have a new line of products to monitor.

There was some merit to these objections, but the main issue was overcoming resistance to change and being open to trying new things (a necessary mindset if you're going to scale your marketing department or business). Ultimately, the trading company was established — and ended up being more profitable than the business as a whole. It was a great example of scaling. The lesson learned was that small efforts, standardized systems, a solid strategy, and the addition of new products could result in serving far more customers — as long as you had the essentials in your product portfolio.

I set my sights on the international market and persuaded the higher-ups to revamp our export department. At the time, we focused on the regional market — our own country of Belgium, plus the Netherlands, France, Italy, and Spain. We expanded to Croatia, Denmark, Norway, Poland, and the United States.

After daily flights to talk to lots of customers, and inviting them for product demos, I learned what customer centricity really meant: truly understanding your customer's gains and pain points. In one year, sales — my core responsibility — increased from \$36 million to \$40 million. As a result, I had the opportunity to move to one of our sister companies in Chicago to be part of the marketing team and scale their business in similar ways. Without hesitation, I packed up and left Belgium, ready to tackle whatever cultural and workplace differences awaited me. In the Chicago office, I focused on reviving a stagnant digital marketing department and evolved into becoming a digital marketing expert.

Even as I thrived in this role, I never lost my passion for “scaling myself.” I made amazing friends, established a flourishing network (both personal and professional), and took the opportunity to see a large swath of my adopted new country. On the academic front, I earned a digital analytics certification from MIT. This supplemented my master's in management from the Vlerick International Business School in Belgium, as well as a masters in Economics in Ehsal Belgium, an EMBA from Hult International Business School in London.

Throughout my career, an insatiable drive for learning new things has contributed to my personal growth mindset, which is an essential ingredient of being a scaleur.

At this point in my career, I made my own move. Encouraged by my mentor, I started my own company, called P-Poka, which means “popcorn” in Portuguese. I chose that name because my brain is like a popcorn popper — tons of ideas pop into my mind, and when my mind fixates on something, I become hungry and curious to figure it out and solve challenges until achieving my goals.

Six months after starting P-Poka, I launched Marketing Scaleurs Inc. in Chicago, as a subsidiary of my Belgium company, P-Poka. After just three months in business, we had a team of four people and six large customers.

In starting Marketing Scaleurs, I was eager to build processes that were scalable, put the right team together, make a strategic roadmap for the company’s long-term outlook, and have fun while doing all this. When a job is fun and you get excited about it, you will go the extra mile.

I hope you can learn to find your passion and how to scale your business, too. You don’t have to go it alone. I’ll share the lessons I’ve learned so scaling doesn’t have to seem like an impossible dream, but a feasible goal any scaleur can achieve.

Introduction

Every entrepreneur wishes for more of two things: time and money. We yearn for more time because balancing any semblance of a career with the demands of a family life, friends, and other interests becomes overwhelming. We desire more money so we can run ads or expand our marketing operations, and do everything else in between that leads to success. Yes, having more time or money would be great, but they are both wasted if you don't know how to spend or properly invest them in marketing or growing your business.

Of all the challenges small-business owners face, scaling their business is one of the hardest. Marketing organizations — whether a department or a single-service company — are under a tremendous amount of pressure to perform, yet budgets aren't growing even while expectations are. How do you do more with less, without compromising on quality? You also want to capitalize on your success, but you fear you won't be able to consistently offer the personal touch that customers rely on, or you'll compromise quality by bringing on additional staff, or you'll dilute your brand if you grow too quickly.

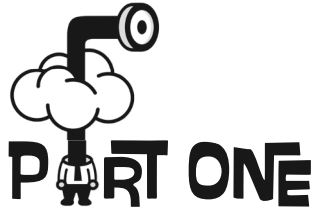
On the other hand, demand for your products and services is steadily growing, and you see even more opportunities — if you could just figure out how to scale.

Scaling a business means setting the stage to support growth in your company. It means having the ability to grow without being hampered. It requires planning; some funding; and the right systems, staff, processes, technology, and partners.

For marketing leaders at growing companies who are ready to expand their programs, scaling marketing is a top priority. But doing so comes with major challenges: Coordinating different teams while managing priorities, resources, and metrics in a way that doesn't slow everyone down is no easy task. Bigger doesn't have to mean slower or less effective, though. By scaling your marketing, your growing organization can stay lean and agile while continuing to deliver campaigns that impress customers and fuel business growth.

While there are a lot of books and blogs about the challenges of scaling a small business, we'll focus on scaling your marketing. This will put you in a position to scale your business, saving more time *and* more money.

Congratulations — you've made the decision to grow your business! Get ready for the next challenge: how to scale your business for growth.



Are You Ready to Become a Scaleur?

Before moving on, I want to ask you an extremely important question, one that very few business owners ever ask themselves: If you were hit by a bus tomorrow (or otherwise incapacitated), what would happen to your business?

The unfortunate reality is that most business owners build a job for themselves, not a business. Their companies depend on them showing up to run them, day in and day out, and most founders lack a defined exit strategy. In fact, many successful entrepreneurs are so busy with daily operations that they don't have the time or energy left to grow and develop the business. If they aren't present each day, their businesses suffer — in many cases grinding to a halt.

Entrepreneurs launch their own businesses to have freedom, but are you really free if you don't control your time and what you do with it, even though you own the company? Isn't that one of the foremost reasons you became an entrepreneur: to control your own schedule and enjoy the time and freedom to do what you want, when you want?

To scale your marketing efforts, you will need to build a *business*, not a *job*.

Scaling vs. Growth

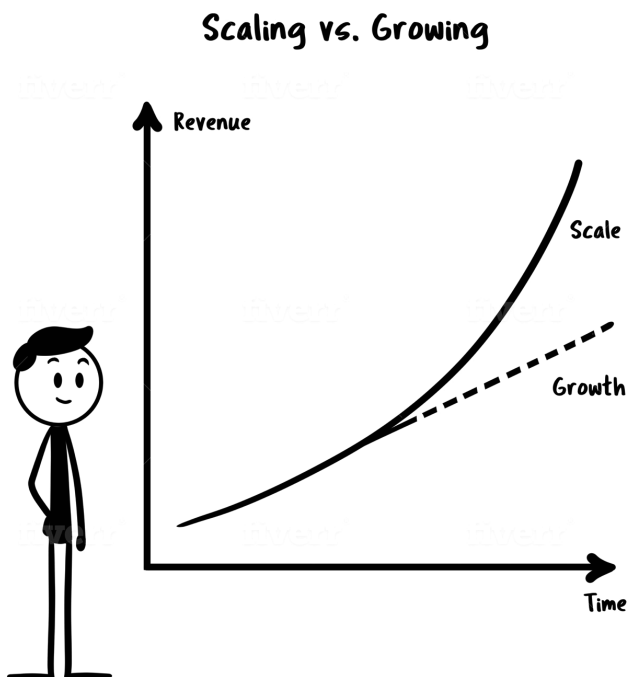
After the technology boom of the past decade, the most successful companies have shown that the path to success isn't all about growth — it's about scaling. They've learned how to create business models that easily scale to generate massive revenues without adding massive costs and resources along the way.

Many entrepreneurs are often confused by the difference between growth and scaling. Growing means a department or entire business adds new resources (capital, people, or technology), and its revenue increases as a result. For instance, a marketing department may gain \$50,000 in new revenue, but to do so, they have to hire a new marketing person with a \$50,000 salary. The company's gains and losses are equalized, so although the company is growing — by one new employee and a corresponding uptick in revenue — it really hasn't gained much value. At least, not at first.

Scaling, on the other hand, is when revenue increases without a substantial increase in expenditures. Processes can be "scaled" in a cost-effective manner. Scaling is the process of growing exponentially. A marketing department that spends \$5,000 on automation tools to allow more-efficient marketing to a wider audience — gaining \$50,000 in new revenue as a result — is scaling. The company's gains outpace its losses, allowing it not only to grow but also to scale.

Other examples include being able to go from handling five clients to 500 or sending out emails to 10 people vs. 1 million — without a major increase in cost or labor. Figure P1.1, "Scaling vs. Growing," illustrates such an expansion.

Figure P1.1: Scaling vs. Growing



Marketing for your business scales when it can cope with an increase in work while maintaining or increasing its efficiency.

When it comes to scaling your marketing, there are some great factors in success.

- **Automated processes:** Do you have a standard out-bound and/or sales process and system in place? When you reach out to new customers, do you have a playbook that describes what you need to say on your first call vs. your third call? The same goes for LinkedIn messages or emails, responses to your website, and related activities. The message is clear: Make a playbook to optimize

your process, in part so you don't have to reinvent the wheel at every growth point. The playbook tells everyone what to say and what to do.

- **Subscription-based services:** Do you have systems in place so every year, you start with money in the pipeline? One example is when customers can pay for your service/tool with an annual or monthly subscription.
- **Diverse income streams:** Don't bet on only one income stream. You can get money from a product you offer, a service/consultancy, or training/an academy, etc.
- **High customer retention rates:** For most businesses, 20% of your customers produce 80% of your sales. Repeat customers spend more, generate larger transactions, and bring in additional business by word of mouth.
- **A value ladder of products:** This allows you to cater to your customers' needs (e.g., at the very bottom of the value ladder, create free content in exchange for customers' email addresses). As clients ascend the ladder, the value level increases, as does the cost to play (e.g., give away a downloadable PDF about the five biggest mistakes scaleurs make when scaling their marketing team, then offer an ebook, such as *How to Reach the Scaleur Mindset*, for \$19). Farther up the ladder, you can market an online training course, like "How to Scale from 1 Lead to 1 Billion," for \$99. From there, you can pitch a one-year program for \$999, ultimately ending with coaching for \$2,500 per year.

- **Dedicated KPIs you can track on a dashboard:** This is your visual success panel for the company. Focus on key indicators, instead of tackling everything at once.

Companies scale their marketing activity when their revenue increases and their marketing and operating costs remain static. If a company increases their revenue but increases their costs at the same rate, then that business is not scaling.

To find scalable aspects in your marketing model, you must locate the aspects of your marketing business that can be replicated quickly and cost-effectively, while still building a strong marketing organization.

When Is the Right Time to Scale Your Business?

There is no magic formula for identifying exactly the right time to scale your business. However, there are many things you should have figured out before you decide to take that step.

Scaling is all about using rapid-growth strategies to add new customers and grow your revenue. Scaling a business or its marketing department mainly depends on two factors: capability and capacity. Ask yourself:

- Is your business capable enough to grow?
- Does it have the capacity to accommodate growth?

In the context of business, scalability describes the ability of the business to grow without being hampered by limited resources when production increases.

Technology is an important component of the equation. You need to assess your current technological capacity and technological needs in the future as you scale.