

How to know when to hire a scale-up advisor

As your business goes from startup to scale-up you might not really notice the growth until you take a step back and look at your team size, how your operational needs have changed and how your business is finely solidifying its strategy and positioning with the market. But as your business enters this stage, it can be hard to determine what's next. You might not be as flexible and nimble as you once were at the startup stage and are in need of more guidance.

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When this happens, you'll need to think about hiring a scale-up advisor. Someone who's either come from a successful scale-up or has advised businesses of your size before, in order to help you take the right steps and have a clear direction of where the business is going. There are a few tell-tale signs you might need to hire a scale-up advisor, here are a few:

Strategic direction. If you find yourself questioning whether your strategy is the right one or need to move your company forward but aren't sure what's required to do that then it's time to hire a specialist scale-up advisor. Some of the best advisors will have a sector expertise (e.g. climate tech, fintech or femtech etc) and it's worth seeing what other businesses they've helped to advise and what they delivered in terms of results

Growth challenge. As a startup founder in the early days you may have been able to seamlessly manage your daily task list, keep on top of changing business needs and act as a manager to your small team. But

when a business becomes scale-up, you're no longer managing a team, but managing managers of your teams and trusting other people to own different parts of the business needs, such as business development, HR, marketing etc...

With this type of growth, you may have some scaling issues which can be detrimental to your growth. No longer should new hires learn the ropes as they go, they need formal training sessions and proper onboarding as well as a line manager and all the correct logins for various systems. Your system of using your email calendar to log employee holidays will need transition to an online HR management platform to help you keep track of all employee holidays and absences. Issues arise when your team is large but you're still doing everything 'the old way'. That's when you know you need a scale-up advisor to help you lay the foundations so your business can continue to grow, and small issues don't snowball and slow down productivity.

Execution focus. Even if you're running the day to day of your scaling business seamlessly, it doesn't mean you don't need help. If your investors are calling on you to meet some ambitious growth challenges and you're not sure how or when you'll get there, then it's time to call in an advisor. An advisor can show you different routes to growth whether it's through mergers, product development, or an industry expert who can predict future trends, so you can make a clear plan as to how you'll reach that next level in your business to continue growing and satisfy investor demands.

Directional change. Another reason to appoint an advisor is if your company is making changes to its core products or services, essentially making a pivot. This avenue should really be the last resort, and considered if money and time have been invested and there is little outcome. It can be the right route to better meet customers demands and boost sales. Hiring a scale-up advisor who has experience of working in or

for an organisation that has made a pivot before will certainly bring that expertise to the table, ensuring the changes you make to your business are implemented with ease and efficiency, to avoid disruptions to overall operations and customer needs.

New product launch. A good scale-up advisor will also be a great asset for your business ideas, whether it's launching a new service or a brand new customer product. An advisor who has experience of working with product-led businesses could provide invaluable knowledge and insight when you are working on the release of a new product. They can help you accelerate the launch of a product from initial product development and beta testing to market research, customer targeting, and sales enablement.

Depending on the size of your company it's not uncommon for a scale-up to have a team of advisors who they can tap into to get unbiased expertise, in fact, every successful company will have a board of advisors to steer them in the right direction, grow their business and provide support to founders.

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