



SurgePath
CONSULTING

Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth



Our Value Proposition

We're a business and product growth consultancy that provides custom guidance to small and mid-sized (primarily software) companies to fuel growth, scalability and next-level business success. Unlike most business growth consultancies, SurgePath has deep experience leading both strategic and tactical software product initiatives across an array of industry leading companies. We specialize in all areas of product growth discipline, including; **focus creation, product strategy, innovation, scalable execution, success measurement and market delivery strategies.**



About SurgePath

Background & Experience

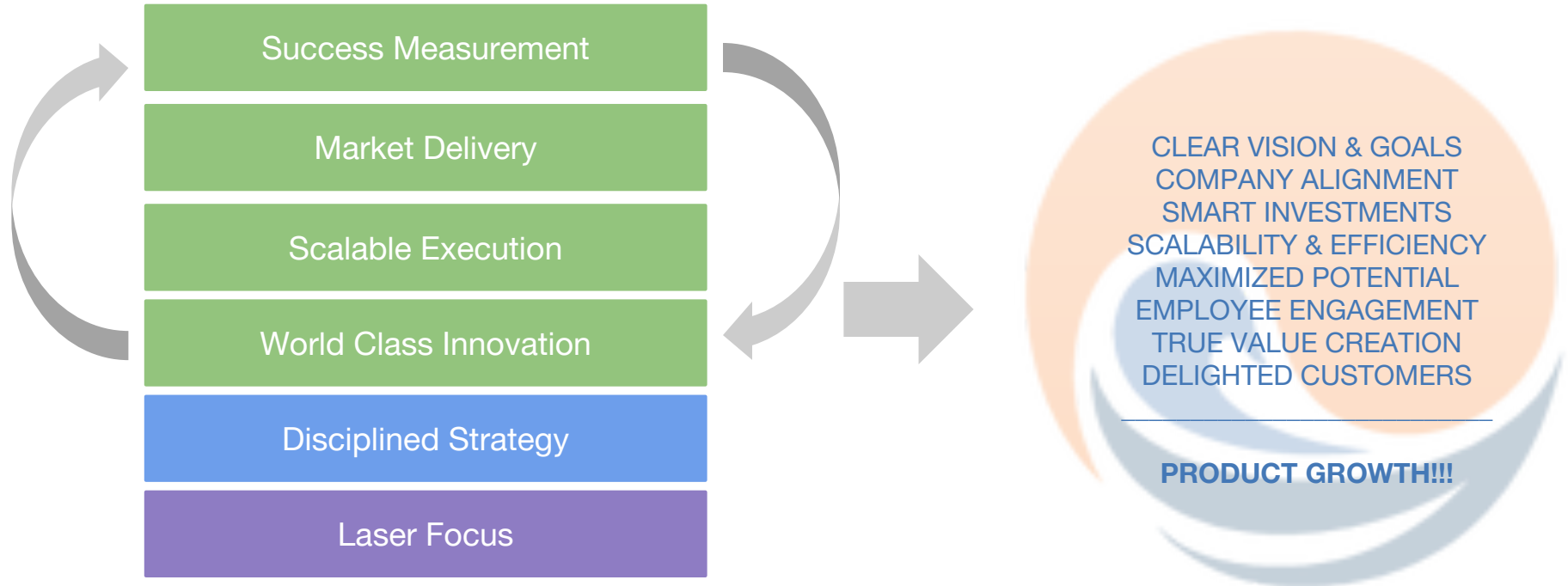
Leadership with near 20 years of experience driving world class product organizations and solutions. We have expansive product domain experience that includes; business intelligence, e-commerce / consumer websites, productivity tools, social marketing, and core technology innovation among others. We've led growth initiatives across industries such as real estate, travel, Web technology, sports and retail.





Building Blocks of Product Growth

FOCUS. PLAN. EXECUTE. GROW.



Top 10 Things (+3) Holding Back Your Product Growth



Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

(Runner Up) Getting Dragged Around By The Competition





Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

Getting Dragged Around By The Competition

Translation: Being too reactive and driven by competitive activity.

Problem: Focusing too much on your competition distracts you from your own strategy. Results in lots of starts and stops and becomes fatiguing for the rest of the team; especially debilitating for a small company.

Recommendation: Stay aware of competitive activity but think really hard about deviating from your plan simply because your competitor launched something cool. Stay focused, trust in your strategy and execute.



(Runner Up) Lights, Camera, No Action





Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

Lights, Camera, No Action

Translation: Ad-hoc, non-scalable and ineffective Go-To-Market program

Problem: Not giving great new innovations the best chance for success. First impressions are ruined, users aren't fully informed on new value, not set up to measure success / adoption. Lots of unrealized value.

Recommendation: Robust, repeatable GTM program that includes; pre-release beta program, user testimonial driven marketing, clear value proposition, support resources and success measurement



Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

(Runner Up) The Product Management Silo





Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

The Product Management Silo

Translation: Ineffective use of internal user / domain experts outside of the product team

Problem: Folks on the sales, support and account management teams are often a great proxy for what the user will want or think, and usually very willing to share and accessible...yet often ignored.

Recommendation: Periodic meetings with these groups to discuss recent complaints, innovation ideas, and work in process prototypes. Set up win / loss analysis with sales to get insight into why you're winning and losing deals.



Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

#10 - The Swiss Army Knife Strategy





The Swiss Army Knife Strategy

Translation: Feature glut. Broadening your functional scope too quickly. Trying to be everything to everyone.

Problem: More features dilute your value proposition. New features always carry a lot of validation, design, development and long term support overhead. You can likely make big improvements with your existing feature set.

Recommendation: Dedicate 80% of your bandwidth to improving existing scope, 20% on new feature efforts. Your customer would rather your product be awesome at a few things than mediocre at many.



Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

#9 - Teams Bigger Than “2 Pizzas”





Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

Teams Bigger Than “2 Pizzas”

Translation: Lack of lean, focused, cross-functional product teams; Need more than 2 pizzas to feed the team (© *Jeff Bezos*)

Problem: Past ~7 people, the team gets too big, folks become underutilized and start to check out. It's difficult for large teams to operate as one cohesive, nimble, goal oriented team. Market opportunity remains untapped.

Recommendation: Smaller, cross-functional (PM, dev, design, qa) teams that are dedicated to a specific area of the product with specific, ongoing high level KPIs to impact



#8 - Not Enough Domain Experts





Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

Not Enough Domain Experts

Translation: Lack of deep domain and target user expertise on the product side. Not enough qualified spokespeople for what the customer needs.

Problem: An ongoing, deep understanding of your target users and their most common, burning pain points are vital to create growth fueling innovations

Recommendation: Hire product managers, designers and developers with prior domain experience, if possible. There's no shortcut to gaining domain experience and it's vital to making savvy product decisions.



Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

#7 - Ad Hoc Opportunity Assessments





Ad Hoc Opportunity Assessments

Translation: Product innovation opportunities are subjectively prioritized through gut instincts, competitive activity, favoritism, last client conversation, last sales loss, last user request, etc.

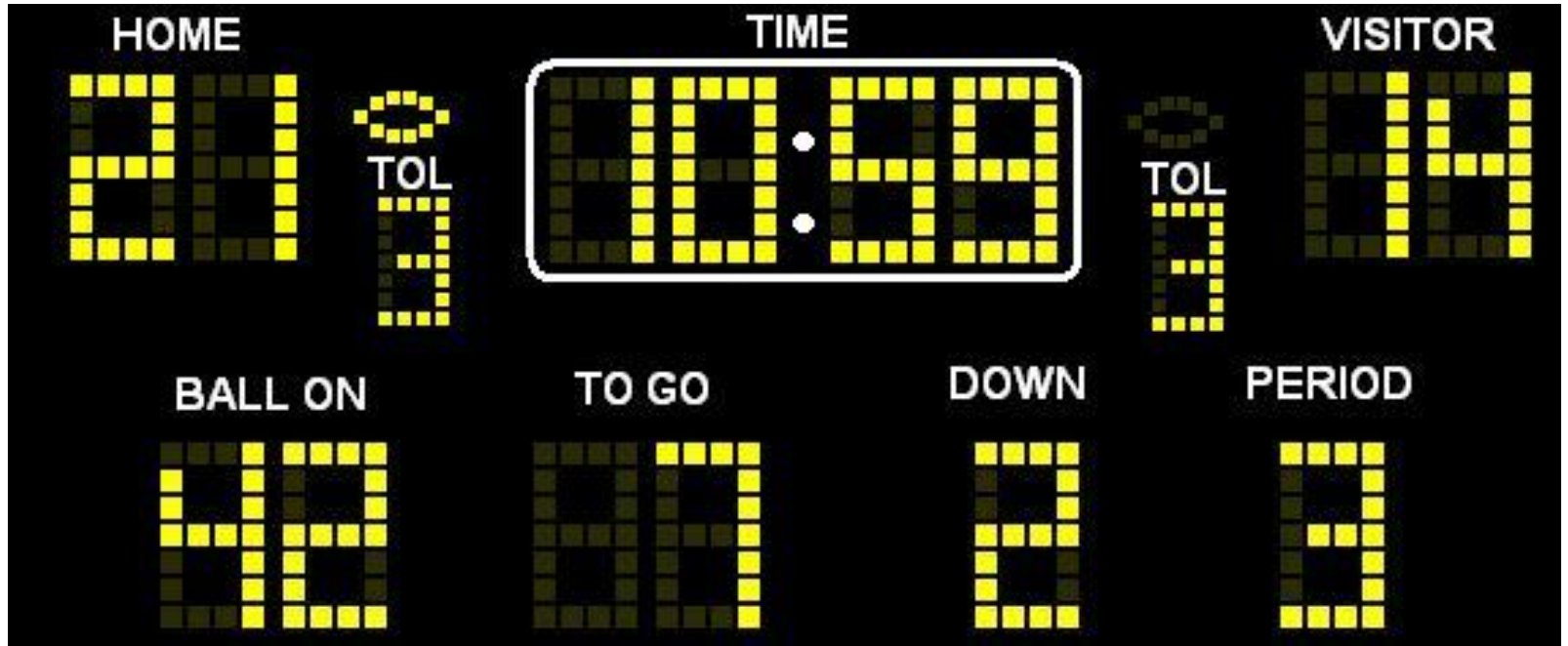
Problem: No rhyme or reason to priority calls, overlooked opportunities and weak ability to support decisions to rest of the company. Lots of mind numbing, opinionated prioritization conversations. Priority by authority.

Recommendation: Framework for assessing and prioritizing opportunities. Try picking the top 5 most important factors driving a great opportunity and even weighting each factor. Rank opportunities using this method as a start.



Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

#6 - No Clear Scoreboard





Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

No Clear Scoreboard

Translation: No clear way of tracking ongoing product success.

Problem: Lots of innovations don't have a direct revenue impact and even revenue is a lagging indicator. Without a clear way to track weekly / monthly progress, adjustments can't be made until it's too late.

Recommendation: Assign a few KPIs to each product team that they are charged with impacting. Set up public scoreboards to give timely insight into progress and raise clarity within the teams and across the company.



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#5 - The Headless Product Org





Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

The Headless Product Org

Translation: No formal product management leader / org / discipline within the company

Problem: Strategically, there's no ownership of the ongoing success / growth of the product and an expert on the customer / domain. Tactically, nobody to own the discipline of shepherding innovation to successful market delivery.

Recommendation: Hire a product leader to own this critical discipline. Or, hire a consultancy like SurgePath to help you with this transition.



Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

#4 - Operation “Innovation Air Drop”





Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

Operation “Innovation Air Drop”

Translation: Top down innovation; company leadership, executives exclusively defining specific new features to implement

Problem: Most of the company is not involved in innovation. Product team members are much less engaged. Talents across the team are underutilized. Quality and velocity of innovation suffers. Trust is required to grow.

Recommendation: Hire top notch people. Define the anatomy of a great idea and the ultimate goal(s). Involve everyone in sourcing new ideas. Validate promising ideas quickly in the market. Trust in your team to execute!



Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

#3 - Polishing Apples





Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

Polishing Apples

Translation: Spending too long trying to perfect new innovations before getting market feedback.

Problem: Engineering is your most expensive resource. The longer you spend developing in a certain direction without feedback, your risk of rework continues to increase. Most polishing doesn't impact customer value anyways.

Recommendation: Agile development process (MVP mindset). Customer advisory boards. Lighthouse customers. Flexible capabilities to release anytime and turn new functionality on / off per client and user. Beta programs.



#2 - The Noise Before Defeat

“Tactics without
strategy is the noise
before defeat.”

Sun-Tzu





Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

The Noise Before Defeat

Translation: The lack of a strategic product plan. Mistaking busy-ness and cool new features for true strategic progress.

Problem: It's easy to let the momentum of the market, emerging opportunities, competitive activity, etc. become your strategy. Next thing you know, you're drifting with the current. This can be deadly for small companies.

Recommendation: Strategic product plan based on top level business goals and supporting components with measurable goals. Sets the table for product roadmaps, scalable innovation / execution and overall team trust.



Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

#1 - No “North Star”





Top 10 Things Holding Back Your Product Growth

No “North Star”

Translation: The lack of a simple guiding light for the company to follow. The one thing anyone can rally around no matter their role.

Problem: Without this, you don't have a solid foundation for your strategy. You also haven't equipped the rest of the company to drive ground breaking innovations and make effective day-to-day decisions.

Recommendation: Set a clear company focus; etch the vision in everyone's minds. Over communicate it. Come up with a catchy analogy that is sticky and accurate (e.g., “We want to become the Flickr for video” - YouTube)

SurgePath Can Help



Common Product Growing Pains

FOCUS

Unclear vision, shifting goals

Who are we, really?
How are we special?
Who's our target customer?
Where are we going?
Difficulty allocating resources
Teams spread too thin
Lots of #1 priorities
Busyness w/o business results

STRATEGY

Fuzzy plans of attack

Lack of a focused plan
Plans not aligned to biz goals
Difficulty ID'ing opportunities
Difficulty prioritizing opportunities
Can't scale decision making
"Strategy of the Week" syndrome
Plans not based on market pains
Data not driving decisions

EXECUTION

Slow, ineffective delivery

Inefficient development process
Long release cycles; poor results
Top down innovation
Lack of trust among teams
Solutions not matching plans
Underwhelming market delivery
Lots of unrealized product value
Not defining / tracking success



Example Roles We Can Fill

Product Management Shepherd

Partner to assess, plan and implement formal PM disciplines and organization within the company

MVP Champion

Drive a specific minimum viable product through agile discovery, prototypes and market feedback

Strategic Counselor

Help to organize a focused, goal oriented and well thought out product strategy

Scoreboard Creator

Partner to create a framework and product scoreboard for assessing ongoing success

Market Opportunity Evaluator

Establish scalable frameworks for identifying, assessing and prioritizing market opportunities

Product Missionary

Short term PM stop gap for a specific product mission related to growth



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