

# Innovation Expert Dan Adams Reveals Three Ways a Company Can Restore Its “Builder Spirit” in 2024

*The best companies are those with a senior leadership team full of what he calls “Builders.” Dan Adams offers a three-step plan of attack to take next year.*

CUYAHOGA FALLS, OH, USA, December 28, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For many companies, 2023 was a doozy. Navigating a shaky economy, rampant inflation, labor shortages, and soaring interest rates has taken its toll. Dan Adams has a suggestion for struggling companies that want to turn things around in 2024: Set a New Year’s resolution to restore the Builder spirit.

“Every company was founded by a Builder,” says Adams, author of *Business Builders: How to Become an Admired & Trusted Corporate Leader* (The AIM Institute, 2023, ISBN: 979-8-854-42618-3, \$19.95). “Yet too many end up putting a different type of leader—a Decorator or Remodeler or even a Realtor—in charge later. From that point on, whether they know it or not, there’s a long spiral into mediocrity, irrelevance, or even nonexistence.”

The root of many organizations’ problems could be that they’ve got the wrong leaders at the helm, says Adams. His company did some [research that yielded two key findings](#):

1. Only one-third to one-half of companies are still led by Builders. The rest have leaders who are fixated on issues other than growth—say, presenting favorable financial performance to investors, or improving operational efficiency, or pursuing external alliances. (Adams labels these non-Builder types Decorators, Remodelers, and Realtors, respectively.)
2. Companies helmed by senior leaders he classifies as Builders consistently experience faster revenue growth than those headed up by other types of leaders.

Adams says the C-suite must have a hefty dose of “Builder spirit”—a passion for driving organic growth by delivering differentiated value to customers, a focus on innovation, and an insistence on thinking in years rather than quarters—to stay competitive in a fierce marketplace. Lose that spark, and organizations are prone to big leadership errors that squelch their own growth.

How can companies tell if they have lost the “Builder spirit”? Adams’ book explains more, of course, but a few red flags are:

- Revenue growth is sluggish.
- There's lots of talk about maximizing shareholder wealth (Adams calls this a "false goal").
- Customer-facing innovation is downplayed (or even neglected).
- There are lots of cost-cutting measures like spending freezes and mass lay-offs.
- In general, employees seem uninspired, disengaged, and unhappy in general, with the best and brightest future Builders jumping ship.

If any of this sounds (dismayingly) familiar, don't worry: Organizations can restore the Builder spirit, get back on track, and start ramping up growth. Adams offers a three-step plan of attack to take starting in 2024.

STEP 1: Start putting Builders in charge. When a Decorator is left in charge—someone fixated on making the company look better to investors—companies fail to inspire employees, and chase away future Builders. "But don't fire those who aren't Builders," Adams advises. "You need their help to improve operational efficiency, make acquisitions, or look good on Wall Street. You need them, but in supporting roles."

How to know if someone is a Builder? They should have market-facing innovation in their DNA, a desire to build skills and capabilities, a passion to make things better, a duty to leave the business stronger than they found it, and frankly, they won't be satisfied doing much else. (If leaders want to get real about their own mindset and/or that of other leaders in the company, visit <https://www.areyouabusinessbuilder.com/> for a quick and easy assessment.)

"You can't afford to hesitate with changes at the senior leadership level, but you can take more time with middle management," notes Adams. "Give them a chance to show what they can do. Establish new measures of success, starting with their 'duty' to leave their business stronger than they found it. Ask them for evidence showing they're strengthening their business's long-term growth capabilities and their plan to do more of this."

STEP 2: Create a growth capabilities roadmap. Building the long-term capabilities to become a growth powerhouse doesn't take place in a single year. Nor does it make sense to bounce from one initiative to another in a haphazard fashion. An organization needs a roadmap that is intelligently formed, embraced by the full leadership team, and communicated clearly and often to all employees.

Leaders can start by developing a list of capabilities their company needs for strong organic growth driven by market-facing innovation. For example: customer interviewing skills, competitive insights, R&D capabilities, new product launch, talent management, and culture of innovation (to name a few).

"Conduct an employee survey measuring your business's current capabilities," suggests Adams. "Then, for each capability, ask them to rate its importance and satisfaction. Prioritize improving capabilities with high importance scores and low satisfaction scores. Next, create a plan to boost

those capabilities most likely to impact your growth. Publish your results for all employees to see and make it clear that your goal is to understand and meet customer needs better than others.”

STEP 3: Attract new investors who get the benefit of long-term thinking. Publicly traded companies need patient investors who are focused on the longer term. If quarterly earnings in these companies take a dip while leaders stay focused on the future, these investors will understand. In fact, they don't want leaders making poor decisions that damage long-term growth.

When meeting with investors, try to assess if they're truly in this for the long haul with the organization. “Too many company leaders make the excuse, ‘We'd like to focus on the future, but investors won't let us,’” Adams says. “That argument doesn't hold up. In Amazon's early years, Jeff Bezos led it through seven years without showing a profit. Far from penalizing Amazon, Wall Street cheered it on. Its leader had communicated a vision of growth, and this is what you must do.”

One more thing: It's important for companies to carefully time when they start courting long-term investors. Do it too soon, and a company might seem like they've got a story without substance. Do it too late, and their stock will be punished when they make the right decisions judged by the wrong investors.

“I suggest communicating elements of your Growth Capabilities Roadmap when you can do so buoyed by early successes,” says Adams. “Examples of market-facing innovation that led to positive financial results will be well received. I've seen billion-dollar businesses completely reinvent themselves this way. It's not easy, and it takes several years. But as a leader, you won't be on your own. You'll have many very motivated employees coming alongside to join you.”

(Now that sounds like a 2024 to look forward to!)

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About the Author:

Dan Adams is the founder of The AIM Institute and author of the books *Business Builders* and *New Product Blueprinting*, as well as the blog *Awkward Realities* and video series *B2B Organic Growth*. He is a chemical engineer with a listing in the National Inventors Hall of Fame. Dan has trained tens of thousands of B2B professionals globally in the front end of innovation and works with senior executives on driving profitable, sustainable growth. For more information, please visit <https://theaiminstitute.com/>.

About the Book:

*Business Builders: How to Become an Admired & Trusted Corporate Leader* (The AIM Institute, 2023, ISBN: 979-8-854-42618-3, \$19.95) is available at bookstores nationwide and from major

online booksellers.

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