



How to Start & Sustain a Movement

An Executive Guide to Creating the Value-Added Organization

Movements begin as a vision and go viral as the movement maker engages the support and commitment of others. This whitepaper helps executives re-orient their companies around the value-added philosophy and start a movement based on creating value.

Note to the reader:

This whitepaper is for you to study and to share with others. Please make liberal use of the white space for your notes and discussion points with others.

How to Start and Sustain a Movement

By Tom Reilly, author of Value-Added Selling (McGraw-Hill, 2010)

Introduction

Do you want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life or do you want to come with me and change the world?

With this question, Steve Jobs recruited Pepsi-Cola executive John Scully to run the four-year old company that he and his friend, Steve Wozniak, started in a garage. Jobs made several attempts to recruit Scully but failed on each occasion to lure the respected executive to stamp his imprimatur on Apple and legitimize the brand to corporate America. During a follow-up interview, Scully reflected on Jobs' question: "I just gulped because I just knew that I would wonder for the rest of my life what I had missed." From 1983 to 1993, they worked together and delivered on the promise to change the world with their technology. Apple continues to change the world today.

Few of us have the opportunity to change the world as these visionaries did, but you can start a movement—a value-added revolution—in your company.

The Case for Urgency

There is a pandemic identity crisis in business today. Many companies have lost their oneness. Consolidation through mergers and acquisitions has left many companies without a common culture. Like blended families, these companies end up being a little of this and a little of that. What they call “culture” is an amalgam of their disparate histories and sometimes incompatible values. The farther that privately owned, entrepreneurial companies travel from the founder the less they look like the original company. According to one survey, 56% of employees could not describe nor would they embrace their company’s culture. As some corporate management teams obsess on financial metrics, they distance themselves from the core values upon which their companies were founded. Other companies are confused about their places in their industries, as reflected in their go-to-market strategies: “Should we compete as a low-cost seller or as the value-added, total-solution provider?” Some perform well as either low-cost or value-added provider. Those that attempt to do both fail.

The most immediate need for this whitepaper is to satisfy the myriad requests by my clients for a way to spread the value-added message throughout their organizations, at every level and in every department—from the shop floor to the top floor. They realize that Value-Added Selling is more than a sales course; it is a course of action—a new direction—for the entire organization. It is an integrated sales and operations process for designing and delivering value. Because it is a systems approach, organizational synergy replaces functional silos that plague most companies. Because it is a process, Value-Added Selling focuses on the acquisition of new business and the retention and growth of existing customer relationships.

Value-Added Selling is based on a philosophy: Do more of what adds value and less of what adds little or no value.

When an organization unifies around this common philosophy, it becomes a Value-Added Organization. To get a full return on Value-Added Selling, companies must become Value-Added Organizations, where all departments are focused on creating and delivering value.

Re-organizing and re-structuring have become emotionally tagged organizational buzz words in the past few decades. In many cases these attempts fail because they focus on structures, processes, and systems but lack a cohesive set of values or a philosophical core. Becoming a Value-Added Organization is about **re-orienting**, not re-

organizing, though some of that may happen. Sculpting an organization with an orienting philosophy like value-added is more than changing the way you do things. It changes the way people think and view the world. It is transformational change—it is a movement. Movements unify people and organizations.

The Purpose of a Business

You can transform your company into a Value-Added Organization by embracing the value-added philosophy and stamping it on everything you do.

If something adds value, do more of it. If something adds cost without value, do less of it.

Is this the right orienting philosophy for your company? Ask and answer this question: “What is the purpose of a business?” Consider your answer, and compare it to the following thought leaders.

Adam Smith wrote that the purpose of a business is to make money. Peter Drucker wrote that the purpose of a business is to create customers. W. Edwards Deming wrote that the aim for any organization is for everybody to gain. I enjoy reading the great thinkers because they ask and answer questions that others miss. In this case, I believe they all fell short of the mark, though Deming came close. I urge you to consider that **the purpose of a business is to create value**. This raises two follow-up questions: What is value and for whom?

Like beauty, value is in the eye of the beholder. For some, value is quality; for others it may be service; while others may define value as a cheap price. Pascal said, “The heart has reasons that reason cannot understand.” Though we may not know what is in their hearts, we can attempt to understand customers’ definitions of value. Value is a motivating force for people. People move in the direction of things that they value.

Businesses must create value for everyone—customers, sellers, suppliers, shareholders, employees, community—everyone. A win for one must yield a win for all.

This view of business defines *purpose* in a long-term, interconnected, and sustainable way that a 21st century organization must respect. Any executive that fails to view things in the long-term will not be around to witness the consequences of his or her short-term decisions. Any executive that fails to accept that organizations are inter-

connected systems will suffer the effects of functional silos and lose 3.6% of their top lines to inefficiencies in their systems. Any executive that fails to value sustainability will isolate his or her organization from the world.

Re-orienting your company around the value-added philosophy starts a movement in your organization to create sustainable value for all of the stakeholders with whom you connect.

The Movement

Every tsunami of change, great social cause, and watershed moment in history began as an idea that went viral and became a movement. The idea, a brainchild of one or two people, inspired a handful of early loyalists who became evangelists for the cause. Then, they engaged a cadre of supporters that would make up the first and second waves of a movement that would shape history. We have seen this in all walks of life.

Jesus Christ was crucified for upsetting the status quo of His lifetime by suggesting something as radical as “Love thy neighbor.” His movement, Christianity, changed the world for all of eternity. Martin Luther was separated from his church because he dared to challenge its hierarchy. His movement became Protestantism. Ghandi suffered as he waged a non-violent protest of the British government. His peace-movement philosophy became the foundation for the civil rights movement in the United States and the operating philosophy for Martin Luther King. Nelson Mandela opposed apartheid and spent decades in prison. His resistance helped spawn democracy in South Africa and earn him a Nobel Peace Prize. In the United States, President John F. Kennedy inspired a movement among young people by challenging them to consider what they could do for their country. The result of that challenge became a movement called The Peace Corps. U.S. President Ronald Reagan envisioned a more unified Europe and challenged his contemporaries to “tear down that wall” that divided east and west. His vision re-ignited a conservative movement in the United States. Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak envisioned user-friendly technology that changed personal computing. Herb Kelleher had a vision of a different type of airline and founded Southwest Airlines. His movement for low-cost air travel continues to fly and dominate today. Fred Smith had a vision of overnight package delivery and spawned a movement that became its own industry. His movement proved to be so profound that his abbreviated

company name, FedEx, became a verb. Willie G. Davidson had a different view of motorcycles and bikers, and his vision for Harley-Davidson spawned a global movement for the biker lifestyle that attracts people from all walks of life. All of these movements began with one or two people's idea that ignited the passions of others.

These movement makers were not always heroes or readily accepted by others. From death to prison to public discord, many of these movement makers suffered. Their ideas were radical, threatening to many, and faced tremendous push-back. Some were disruptive to the point of dangerous. Yet, through courage and persistence, they prevailed. Their ideas lived and made history. Now, their inspirational stories are the grist of legend's mill.

Movements threaten and excite at the same time.

You may not suffer life-and-death consequences from your movement to re-orient your organization around the value-added philosophy. You *will* experience push-back on your efforts. As you challenge the status quo, the status quo will challenge you. Guardians of the status quo are well-intentioned skeptics of anything new or disruptive. There will be those that just do not want to change because they resist all change. You may face peer pressure and ridicule from those who are personally threatened by your movement. It makes them painfully aware of their static interests. Remember, you are re-defining success; you are shaking the foundation; and you are stepping out from the pack. Be prepared for this push-back or your movement will fail.

Movements fail for a number of reasons. First, the leader lacks a clear, long-range vision of the transformation that he or she is proposing. There is no movement to start. Second, the leader lacks the words to frame this vision into a mission which can then be translated into action. There is no actionable movement to communicate, merely the ranting of a madman. Third, the leader lacks the ability to engage others' support in the movement. There are no followers to follow. Fourth, the leader lacks the personal commitment and courage to persist when things get tough. There is a disconnect between the movement and the movement maker—a sense that the movement maker does not walk the talk.

Notice the word “leader” and not manager. Change is the stuff of management. Movements are the domain of leadership. Managers attend to the process of change; leaders inspire change and ignite the

movement. You can lead a movement in your company and transform it into a Value-Added Organization. That is the purpose of this next section.

Going Viral With Clarity of Purpose

Every movement begins with a dream, vision, or notion. These ideas are big and small. They change the world or the way a department does something. In most cases, movement makers do not have to work hard to come up with an idea. It boils in a seething cauldron of passion, finding relief only in its expression. Movement means action, and movement makers do not wait patiently for the idea to take off. They launch it. With clarity of purpose, thought leaders start and sustain their movements.

Movements (a new direction, re-orientation, or revolution) take root from the seed of an idea. Clarity of purpose is the what, why, where, who, when, and how of your passion. What is your big idea? What burns inside you? What do you believe in so passionately that you want to tell others about it? What transformational change do you envision for your organization? What shared purpose will you submit to your team?

These questions can help you start and sustain any movement. Our focus is how you can start and sustain a movement to transform your company into a Value-Added Organization. A Value-Added Organization is in the business of creating value—for everyone with whom it is connected. Everyone gains: buyers, seller, stockholders, employees, environment, partners, and community. With clarity of purpose, you must conceive and communicate your vision for this movement. Begin with these orienting questions, and imagine what a value-added movement would mean to your organization:

- What would it mean if we adopted the value-added philosophy as our core operating philosophy?
- Can we compete based on our value?
- Why would we want to choose this path?
- How would our organization look five years from now?
- What effect would this have on everyone involved?
- What prompted this vision or what is driving this movement?
- Why now?
- How would I describe my vision of this movement?

With clarity-of-purpose, frame this message in a way that will resonate with others. What begins with clarity-of-purpose will sustain your movement as constancy-of-purpose. You will surround your team with this true north of your movement.

Engagement: Starting a Movement

As you prepare to launch your movement, there are some things you must know that will help you engage others. First, everyone wants to be a part of something bigger and better than themselves. That is why there are country clubs, motorcycle gangs, and everything in between. People long to belong. John Donne wrote, “No man is an island, entire of itself. Each is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.” Charismatic leaders know and use this to their advantage. Because they are charismatic, they naturally draw others to them. Leadership charisma, coupled with the followers’ need to belong, helps leaders recruit a close-knit group of supporters that are essential to any movement.

Second, people seek meaning from their work. People may show up for a paycheck, but they labor hard for the meaning they get from their efforts. There are few things as meaningful as shaping the landscape of the future by playing a vital role in a movement. Employees feel that they are doing something special and recognize that these opportunities do not come along very often. We all know someone who left a good paying job in pursuit of meaning from some place.

Third, people compare themselves with others as a way to test how well they are doing. There is a field of study in psychology, social comparison theory, dedicated to the study of how and why people compare themselves with other people. This bandwagon effect becomes especially important as you tell your story to attract allies and to share successes that others are experiencing in the movement.

Fourth, it is not so much that people resist change as they resist being changed. When they are told, “This is what you will do” and it represents a significant departure from the status quo, people push back. When they are invited to join the process and become part of shaping history, they approach change with a different attitude.

Once you conceive of your idea and are prepared to communicate it, select your core group, and expand your sphere of influence. Using Everett Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation Model, identify your target

market for this idea, and penetrate it as you would a market for a new product—in waves.

Wave One is close confidants. In marketing terms, these are innovators—the top 2.5% that welcome new ideas. If you are running a 100 person company, this will be your top management staff, maybe 2-3 inner-circle advisors. It is important that this group has operational knowledge of the business as well as knowledge of sales and marketing. Trust them to provide candid feedback on your idea. This close-knit group of advisors will help you shape, plan, and communicate your dream to the next layer of the organization. Share your vision with them, the compelling need for it, and the do-ability of the idea. Invite their feedback, especially perceived barriers. Ask them to help you sketch a plan to roll out this idea. Keep your planning conceptual and strategic at this point. Focus on these areas:

- What do we want to do?
- Why do we want to do it?
- How is this do-able?
- What will it take to make it happen?

You will need to assess your organizational resources, systems, and structures to make sure that your movement will work with your infrastructure. You cannot become a Value-Added Organization if you offer no value-added to the market. For example, you cannot brag about your technical expertise without experts on-staff to back up your claim. You cannot boast about your customer service when the average wait time to speak to a real person is five minutes. You cannot crow about your delivery success when you experience consistently high levels of backordered items.

Wave Two is top supporters and change agents. In marketing terms, these are early adopters—the next 13.5% of people that embrace new ideas. This next layer of managers, opinion leaders, and influencers make or break your efforts. In your 100-employee company, this is another 13 or 14 employees.

You have now engaged one-in-six employees to help you start a movement. This includes people who have operational, administrative, and marketing responsibility. Their perspective, input, and engagement are mandatory. Communicate your vision, translate it into a mission, explain why you are doing it and why now, roll out your strategic plan, and ask for their commitment.

Once you have secured their commitment, begin tactical planning with this group. They will drive change and help you lead this movement at lower levels in the organization. They know better than you know how to get their people to execute. The action plan should have their fingerprints all over it. They will most likely select another group of supporters from the ranks that will act as opinion leaders—employees whom others listen to. These informal leaders can add fuel to the fire or a bucket of water to the flame.

Wave Three is the rest of the company. In marketing terms, this will be the next two-thirds of the company that are responsible for the heavy lifting. For them to engage, you must communicate the vision and mission clearly and often. They must share your positive sense of urgency for action and optimism in the outcome. In communicating your vision, remember that employees do not necessarily get excited about a company's making more money unless they can see a direct benefit to themselves. They will get excited about being a part of something bigger than themselves and creating meaningful change. They will not get excited about returning more money to the owner or shareholders.

Reason makes people think, but emotion makes people act.

The “why” of your movement and the “why now” are important in creating a positive sense of urgency. Use a blend of rational and emotional arguments to make your case for the “why” and “now” of your movement. Humans are emotional creatures. We make emotional decisions. Neuroscientists have discovered through sophisticated brain imaging technology that 90% of the decisions humans make are emotional. This means 90% of the reasons others will accept or reject your movement will be emotionally based.

The power of story plays a major role in emotional connection. Big movements rely on parallel big stories and comparisons. Small movements rely on smaller stories to drive home the point. If you are trying to inspire a movement in your company, you are more credible if you tell stories of how other companies have done this versus retelling the story of Christianity. Scale affects the power of analogy.

As you communicate your vision and the mission that supports it, be clear on the metrics that you will use to measure your progress. This includes qualitative metrics like performance and behavioral changes, which are important in the early phases of movement, and quantitative metrics that demonstrate productivity gains from your efforts.

Discuss perceived barriers openly and encourage input to dispel doubts. Help them release their grips on doubt, uncertainty, and resistance.

Build confidence in the group by demonstrating the do-ability of the movement. People rally around ideas that they believe they can implement. Share stories of others that have achieved similar things. Build confidence in your team by investing. When you commit resources (people, money, and time) to the movement, you inspire others to follow you. They know you are serious and willing to risk to make the dream a reality.

Congruence between your movement and your organization's values make a credible argument. Demonstrate how this movement respects and builds on the values that people signed up for when they joined your company. People reject change that violates their fundamental sense of what they stand for.

Every time you present your dream, drill down on the tactical application of it. If it is not tactical, it is not practical. Engage people at the ground level. As Wave-Two supporters help carry the message and the movement to Wave Three, first level managers will define the behaviors they will expect from their employees that demonstrate their execution of the plan.

As you assign tasks, timelines and responsibility, people take ownership of the process and the movement itself. Once they begin acting this way, the movement is the beneficiary of a powerful psychodynamic called cognitive dissonance. When people act in a certain manner, their attitudes conform to their behavior. It is a simple application of "We believe as we behave." Once the behavior and the attitude are in place, the process self-reinforces. They have internalized the mission. Belief drives behavior which reinforces the belief. These evangelists take your vision and make it reality.

Your goal is to unleash a wave of maniacs on a mission.

You have made your case, shared the dream, explained the urgency for action, and outlined the plan. Now, it is time to close the deal. Invite this group to join you. Ask for their support. Ask for their commitment. Ask them to take ownership. Ask a Steve Jobs type question: "Do you want to continue on the path we are on, or do you want to join me and change our world?"

What about the remaining 16% of employees? This group will follow or resist. Some will leave; others will concede. You will not drive a movement with them. They will comply, with or without commitment. These laggards are the most resistant to change. They may complain, but the support of the other 84% overwhelms their resistance. At some point, they realize and accept the inevitability of the change, or they move on.

Reinforcement: Sustaining a Movement

Even though there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for starting and sustaining a movement, there are common denominators. Each situation is as unique as the movement itself. You start the movement with clarity-of-purpose and by engaging others. You sustain it with constancy-of-purpose, ongoing communication, and reinforcement.

To sustain your movement, take “Yes” for an answer. Specifically, this means two things. First, to change behavior (your qualitative benchmarks) you must initially reinforce the effort, not just results. To achieve the outcome that you want, you must get people behaving in a desired way. This is a fundamental principle of behavioral psychology. If you focus on results too quickly, people get discouraged when they cannot deliver on your request. As the behavior becomes automatic, you begin to see the results you desire.

Second, employ the small-wins strategy to achieve big victories. The small-wins strategy has been employed in every significant social movement in the past several decades. Karl Weick wrote about this in *American Psychologist* in 1984: “A concrete, complete, implemented outcome of moderate importance. By itself, one small win may seem unimportant. A series of wins at small but significant tasks however reveals a pattern that may attract allies, deter opponents, and lower resistance to subsequent proposals. Small wins are controllable opportunities that produce visible results.” Small wins work because they are small, and they are wins. These wins are more manageable and immediate. People achieve success over smaller goals and leverage that experience to create bigger wins.

When you construct your plan, list the immediate, next-best steps that your people can take to make this movement a reality. Each of these next-best steps is a small win and a step closer to total victory. You have the added advantage of experiential change. When people are part of the change process and experience these short-term suc-

cesses, they are motivated to finish the job. Reinforce this motivation and action with ongoing communication.

One study reported that 76% of employees involved in a major initiative for their company found it highly motivating to hear about their progress. Keeping employees in the communications loop enables them to monitor their progress vis-à-vis other teams. We have already established that people compare themselves with others.

Celebrating successes and heralding progress motivate employees. Encourage pride of ownership in a job well-done. Let them bask in the recognition that their efforts are contributing to the movement. In addition to the intrinsic motivation for doing good work, some extrinsic rewards help. This includes monetary reinforcement and recognition programs that celebrate their contributions.

Reinforce the effort and sustain your movement by demonstrating your unwavering commitment. This means continuing to invest in ways that support the mission. It also means remaining faithful to the cause especially during headwinds.

Anyone can support a movement when things are easy. Leaders support the movement when things get tough.

As a movement maker, it is not just about the quality of your efforts, it is also about the quantity and visibility of your personal commitment. Others notice how often you talk about the movement, how often you walk the halls, and how often you interact with them. Do not delude yourself into believing that you can delegate all of this to someone else. You must be a visible source of inspiration. People must hear and see you advocating often for the cause. Otherwise, they will feel you are being disingenuous—that you lack the personal commitment a movement requires. Your name and the movement must become synonymous. When one hears one, they think of the other. It is *your* movement that becomes *their* movement.

In sustaining your movement, use multiple sources of influence to surround followers with your message. This means employing various communication channels to connect with them—direct contact, voice mail, email, social media, written communication, specially designed collateral materials for your communications campaign, internal champions who will talk it up, outside experts that add credibility to the cause, feedback from customers on how the movement benefits them, supplier input and support, etc. You want to sustain the buzz throughout the movement.

At some point during reinforcement, you will begin to transfer ownership for the results as well as ownership for the process. During this ownership transfer, employees know that they have created something meaningful—that they were a part of something bigger than themselves. These loyalists are now advocates for the movement, champions for the cause.

Closing

Starting and sustaining a movement is a process. It is an evolution and maybe a revolution. Because it is an active process, you must be willing to challenge its viability at every step along the path. Only one-in-five corporate executives challenges the ongoing viability of their company's value proposition. Ongoing evaluation of your position, efforts, and results will allow you to make course corrections and adjustments as needed. Every flight plan has checkpoints along the route to allow the pilot and navigator to adjust for the winds they did not anticipate. Adapting to the forces of change will keep you on course.

The movement maker must come across as credible and committed, which are demonstrated more by their actions than words. Sincerity, passion, and empathy for the effect on others are personal characteristics that will serve you well in your pursuit of the dream.

A movement is characterized by action. It is fundamental to the definition of the word. Your movement is a work in progress. You are a work in progress. Keep progressing. That is the purpose of the movement—forward motion. You are building a movement culture and a culture of movement.



About the author

Tom Reilly is literally the guy who wrote the book on *Value-Added Selling* in addition to three other books on value-added. Since 1981, he has reached a global audience that seeks to compete on their total value-added, not simply price. You may reach him through his website www.TomReillyTraining.com.