

## The Journey from Entrepreneur to CEO

By Ann N. Gatty, Ph.D.



Many companies start from one person's idea that becomes transformed into a tangible reality. That person, known as an entrepreneur, creates the new business, bearing most of the risks and enjoying most of the rewards. As the business grows the leadership needs change. While there is no set road to success, how the entrepreneur navigates through this growth journey, impacts the likelihood of success. Ultimately the entrepreneur transitions into the role of CEO as the company grows and expands.

We have identified 5 stages that individuals experience as they move from the role of entrepreneur to the role of CEO. Each stage has a distinct mindset that when embraced provides a comfortable perspective for accomplishing the needed tasks. The sequential movement through the stages includes a learning process allowing for personal and professional growth.

### THE CREATOR

In this stage the entrepreneur is the visionary who determines the initial trajectory for the business. Envisioning will always be a key responsibility of the business owner. However, in the initial stage of the business development, the owner spends a lot of time focusing on day-to-day operations to establish the work process. During this time the vision for future growth and purpose is clarified and verified.

### THE BRIDGE BUILDER

As the business continues to develop, the owner must solidify that the business is the bridge providing what the customer wants and doesn't have or what problem the customer has and doesn't want and that the business provides the solution(s). Without customers there is no business. Cash flow should begin to become more consistent at this stage. In order to cross from ideation to a sustainable company, entrepreneurs must balance their passion for their idea with the practical reality of "what the company will look like in 10 years."

## THE CULTURE WEAVER

To really solidify the growth of the business, the owner begins to assume responsibilities found on a CEO job description. During this stage the owner builds out the org chart and learns to hire strategically. The owner learns the importance and benefits of delegation. In this stage the mastery of leadership skills is essential. There are people being added to the team who can shape the direction of the company's trajectory and those that can implement the process.

## THE EXPANSION ARCHITECT

In order to grow the business past the survival mode to the thriving mode, business expansion becomes a necessity. If the owner has been watching the financial patterns in the business, it is easy to identify the products and services that provide the lifeblood for profits. Automation can be found in every function of the business model, from marketing, through productivity, to distribution. Automation is one of the key ingredients for any type of scaling. In this stage the majority of the owner's focus is on expanding the organization and is removed from the day to day operations. Fund your journey wisely.

## THE CHANGE CATALYST

In this stage the owner, now fully engaged as the CEO wants to ensure that the organization enjoys continuous and sustained growth. The owner looks for ways to create a long-lasting legacy where the purpose for the business is understood by all who are associated with the business, either as employees, or stockholders.

The journey from entrepreneur to CEO can be arduous. However, the individual who sets out to make a positive impact and follow a passion, will find the rewards worth the effort if the entrepreneur is willing to continuously learn and adapt to change.

### About the Author

Dr. Ann Gatty is a business development strategist. She helps her clients clarify the vision for their businesses, boost their leadership capabilities and add quality talent to help the clients reach their goals. Through a collaborative mentoring process, she and her clients create workable strategic business plans and success initiatives, while improving their workplace processes. Dr. Gatty is a frequent writer and contributor [www.AllBusiness.com](http://www.AllBusiness.com), [www.MarketingInsiders.com](http://www.MarketingInsiders.com), and [www.WomenOnBusiness.com](http://www.WomenOnBusiness.com). Her interactive speaking engagements assist participants in discovering new-found talents and skills that they can immediately apply in the workplace. Join her [Facebook Group, Strategic Thinking Summit Elites](#) for strategies you can implement to grow your business success and enjoy camaraderie with others entrepreneur members.