

If you've ever been to a DMV, you might have seen that old cartoon that says: "FAST, CHEAP, GOOD—PICK TWO." Conventional wisdom is similar when you start a company. People will tell you that you can't have fast growth, happy customers AND happy employees.

Those people are wrong. One of the most common questions I get as the founder and CEO is: Can a start-up delight customers, provide a great work culture, and see exceptional growth metrics? The answer is yes, you absolutely can.

I know this because at Globalization Partners we've done it—and part of our mission is to pass that know-how on to our customers. When I founded this company, my goal was to build a high-growth business that would enable anyone to hire employees anywhere, without the red tape traditionally associated with global expansion. But I also wanted to build a company people love— customers, business partners, and employees. Fast forward a few years and I'm happy to report we've had rocket-ship growth numbers, 96% of our customers say that they are "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with our services, but perhaps what makes me most proud is we're also able to regularly win awards for our company culture. We haven't had to make a trade off, and neither should you.

The secret to balancing this success is what I call the Triple Bottom Line: prioritizing happy customers, happy employees, and happy shareholders.

While a Triple Bottom Line may sound like an obvious formula for growth, it might also feel unrealistic. Its anathema to the typical blitz scaling mantra right now, which is "growth at all costs." But the reality is, companies who focus only on growth end up underpaying people and treating customers so poorly that growth is ultimately unsustainable.

I wasn't sure if the Triple Bottom Line would be achievable when I set out to build my business, but I knew I didn't want to be in business any other way. Now, Globalization Partners is proof that the Triple Bottom Line is an exceptionally good strategy for growth.

Here are some of the secrets to how we've done it:

Employee Happiness - Build and Maintain a Great Company Culture

1. Invest in the best. Hire, train, and retain only the best. We obsessively seek great talent, but we also keep an eye out especially for people who are passionate about our brand.
2. Onboard thoughtfully. When people come on board, on Day 1, we define the Triple Bottom Line of Success at Globalization Partners so that everyone on the team understands what success looks like for us as a team.
3. Organizational growth starts with individual growth. We also pay attention to what success looks like for the individual. In order to maintain a high-functioning work environment, we must not only celebrate our accomplishments but also give employees constructive feedback. Once a quarter, managers sit down with each employee to give feedback on three things that they're doing well and three things to work on. Most people want feedback when it is given in a constructive manner like this; they want to grow, and everyone needs support. With that in mind, we also invest heavily in training people - which gives them the opportunity to have a fulfilling career. Helping an individual navigate his or her career via coaching is an incredibly powerful way to build a team, and team spirit.
4. Prioritize positivity. [The executive team](#) and I have a mandate to avoid bickering among ourselves; to work with an attitude of positivity, and that all criticism is constructive. That has resulted in us having a great working relationship together, and culture starts at the top. By enforcing a positive company culture at the top, we ensure that the rest of the team feels the love too, and this helps us build a culture of positivity and gratitude. People work incredibly hard every day - building a fast-paced, high growth business out of nothing is incredibly difficult. We make it a point to celebrate our accomplishments, give each other high fives in the office, and notice when someone goes above and beyond.
5. Celebrate the whole employee. We also have a culture of recognizing people and what's going on in their lives. From things like celebrating the birth of a new baby, a move, or anything else, we often post videos and photos on our internal newsfeed. Keeping track of each other across remote locations is incredibly important.

6. Be human. I always say that “corporate life doesn’t have to suck” and I stand by it because as a Global Employer of Record, people are our business! So, when it comes to what we do, how we do it, and how we treat each other and YOUR global team, you’ll find that respect, dignity, and kindness are at our core.

7. Nurture your employer brand. Globalization Partners is built on the foundation of having a great company culture and we’ve been recognized for it: we were listed on Inc. Magazine’s “Best Places to Work in America”, received Entrepreneur Magazine’s Top Company Culture Award, and came in at #35 on their list of the Top 150 Company Cultures in America for 2018. Also of note, we’ve achieved exceptionally high Glassdoor reviews from our employees — we have a 4.4 out of 5 star rating; 87% of employees approve of the CEO; and 91% say that the company has a “positive business outlook.”

Shareholder Happiness

For shareholders, happiness generally comes down to reliability, profitability and trust. As long as shareholders see smart growth and are bought into the decisions made by the management team — who then delivers on what they say they’re going to do — shareholders are happy too.

1. Put integrity first: Investing is often a leap of faith. If you can show your shareholders you are building a scalable, profitable and efficient business that runs with integrity and transparency, they will sleep better at night.

2. Stand by your numbers and deliver like a boss: Shareholders will judge your performance based more on your reliably deliverable outcomes than your intentions. In other words, we say what we’re going to do, and then we do it. Our executive team sets goals and requests budgets that correspond to realistic goals, business conditions and timelines. Shareholders rightfully expect executives to deliver on those goals as planned. Related to this, we have a policy internally as an executive team to “not put lipstick on a pig.” When we fall short, we own it and immediately make sure shareholders know exactly how we plan to fix the problem.

3. Shareholders invest in people as often as ideas: Investors want to see the best talent at the table and often base their decisions on the quality of the team. That's why I have high standards for who we choose to work on our team. I am willing to pay people well, and in return, I expect their best. Shareholders usually feel the same. That's why I hire people who are passionate about our business, and I try to fuel their passion. This is another win-win-win. I like to say that we hire, train and retain only the best, but we are willing to create the best human employment experience we can in exchange. If you're willing to make the investment in people, then shareholders will be happier investing in you.

Keeping Our Customers Happy

Keeping your customers happy correlates with keeping your team happy. If your employees are passionate and highly motivated by their work, like ours are, they will want to keep the customers happy. Give them the tools and flexibility to make that as easy as possible.

It seems counter-intuitive that you could have happy customers while also running a high growth company, since keeping customers happy usually takes time. So how do we balance that?

Here are some key things we do to ensure we keep customers happy:

1. Invest in training the team. Our team members become experts in navigating the challenges of hiring and retaining staff in multiple jurisdictions. We invest heavily in training our team, starting with GP University, which takes place the first week of each new hire's employment, and continues thereafter.

2. Invest in software. As well-trained as our team members are, our customers don't necessarily want to pick up the phone and be able to chat with someone all the time. They want to be able to easily answer their own questions, with the click of a button or online access. We invest in software to make training our team - and answering our customers' most common problems - scalable.

3. Be responsive. When something goes wrong, fix it – and give your team the responsibility and the capability to do so.

4. Motivate your entire team towards all your company goals. At GP, we don't align one department against another. One P&L doesn't challenge another's – we know that we're all in it together. Thus, if we're doing a software launch one week, the customer services team picks up and understands that they might have to do more manual work “behind the scenes” to keep the customers happy, rather than just blame it on IT. Similarly, if sales is crushing it, the whole team celebrates – because we're all working towards growth.

5. A great relationship starts with a great sales process. Our sales team has been trained to sell exactly what we can deliver. We don't over promise and indeed tend to under promise, a bit, because we want our customers' expectations properly set when they come in the door. Our sales team never throws things over the fence and leaves the operations team to handle it. It's a huge credit to them, because it's easy to sell something you don't have to deliver, but training your team to avoid that temptation is key to happy customers. We can almost work miracles, but can't do everything!

Our journey is proof you can make a Triple Bottom line work for you. There's no need to choose between happy customers, shareholders or employees. Treating people well always pays off in dividends for the long-term success of a company. And even if you're not a new company, it's never too late to start!

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