



Avoiding Common Growth Pitfalls

If you combined a baseball game with a Broadway musical, that probably wouldn't draw a big crowd, right? Wrong... It is actually a great case study on how to grow a business effectively.

When Jesse Cole founded the Savannah Bananas in 2016, he didn't set out to build a baseball empire, he set out to create unforgettable fan experiences. From dancing players to banana-themed uniforms and viral social media antics, the Bananas turned traditional baseball on its head. And it worked.

As demand exploded, Jesse faced a choice. Should he expand like a typical sports franchise, or scale in a way that preserved the magic.

His guiding principle?

“Imagine what the best possible fan experience is and do that. Don't settle for the way things have been done before.” – *Jesse Cole, Founder of the Savannah Bananas*

Every decision, from keeping ticket prices consistent and accessible, to playing at larger venues was made with that in mind.

The Bananas didn't just grow. They **scaled with intention**, keeping their consumer at the heart of everything they do. But not every business makes that choice.

Let's explore three common pitfalls entrepreneurs face in growth mode and how to avoid them by thinking like Jesse Cole.

1. Slashing the Marketing Budget

When businesses start scaling, they often look for quick ways to cut costs. Marketing is usually first on the chopping block. But here's the reality: if no one knows you're growing, are you really growing? Although that expense may look like a big one on the P&L, effective marketing is often the biggest driver of your top line revenue.

Imagine if the Bananas stopped posting viral videos or engaging with fans online. Their stadium might be full one season and empty the next.

Avoid the trap: Marketing isn't a cost, it's a **connection**. Instead of cutting it, refine it. Focus on storytelling, community engagement, and platforms where your audience lives. Growth without visibility is like playing in an empty stadium.



2. Scaling Without Culture

As businesses grow, they often hire fast and build systems later. The result is usually a team that's misaligned and disengaged from the brand's mission.

The Bananas scaled by embedding their culture into every hire, every practice, and every performance. Players aren't just athletes, they're entertainers. Staff aren't just employees, they're experience creators for the fans. Each person in the organization plays a unique role in driving the vision forward.

Avoid the trap: Build a culture-first scaling strategy. Define your mission, hire for fit, and train for impact. Your brand's core values should get stronger with your size, not get blurred in the process.

3. Forgetting the Fan

Many businesses focus on logistics and revenue during growth and forget the customer. But the Bananas never stopped asking, "What would be fun for our fans?" That question led to innovations like all-inclusive tickets, surprise performances, and direct fan engagement.

When you scale, it's easy to prioritize efficiency over experience. But that's how loyalty leaks.

Avoid the trap: Keep your customer at the center. Use feedback, personalize interactions, and make every touchpoint memorable. Growth should amplify your customer experience, not dilute it.

Are You Building a Business or a Fanbase?

The Savannah Bananas have played in over 20 professional stadiums, with their largest performance drawing 148,000 fans. They didn't just scale a baseball team; they scaled a movement. So what is their secret? They never stopped putting the fan first.

So here's the question to you.

As you grow your business, are you focused on maximizing **profits**, or maximizing **impact** for your consumer?

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