



What's [Still] Killing Growth?

Beware the danger zones.
—Liz Willding Robbins



Most growth stalls, characterized by an abrupt or lasting drop in revenue growth, are, in fact, preventable. A seminal study, *When Growth Stalls*, published nearly 15 years ago in *The Harvard Business Review*, probed more than 500 corporations to identify root causes, such as faulty management decisions on strategy, organizational design and economic downturns. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these factors are still the primary inhibitors of growth a decade and a half later.

What should leaders look out for to head off a potential stall? **Here are three key areas that deserve consideration:**

- 1 Premium Position Captivity**
Having a strategy to respond is key, along with monitoring how customers value your product features.
- 2 Innovation Management Breakdown**
If product innovations are inefficient, it can produce systemic issues that may take years to correct.
- 3 Premature Core Abandonment**
Jumping into a competitive terrain too soon by misjudging core market saturation can be costly, creating operational issues that impact revenue.

Additionally, Insigniam consultant Greg Trueblood recommends empowering a group of new leaders to make intentionally bold proposals that inject new thinking. "Waiting for market to shift means that organizations must move quickly to adjust—something few excel at," he says. "Instead, leaders can deliver breakthrough growth by proactively disrupting themselves and incubating innovation." **IQ**

Meet the Metaverse

Curious about the internet's next incarnation? Here is what you need to know. —Mark Jost

Talk of the metaverse seems to be everywhere. Retailers, online game developers, tech stalwarts and many others—sensing a growth opportunity—are investing billions in this new virtual frontier. According to a report from Verified Market Research, the metaverse market was worth more than \$27 billion in 2020 and is projected to reach more than \$800 billion by 2030, though other studies put the 2030 figure even higher. Jensen Huang, CEO of metaverse player Nvidia, expects the economy of the virtual world to someday exceed the economy of the physical world.

But if you are not sure what all the talk is about and why you should care, here's a primer on possibly the biggest thing since the internet.

What is the metaverse?

No, it is not where the Marvel superheroes hang out. The metaverse is a collection of virtual worlds, available via augmented and virtual reality (AR and VR)—perhaps through a browser, smartphone or headset—that allows users to interact with the internet and each other. Imagine connecting on Facebook, meeting with your co-workers, gaming on Fortnite, attending a virtual concert and earning (or spending) non-fungible tokens (NFTs) in a variety of digital stores, all within a seamless 3D experience.

Who are some of the players in the metaverse (and what are they playing at)?

Alphabet/Google: Although Google Glass failed to meet expectations when it made its way to consumers in 2014, the concept of AR- and VR-capable eyewear is very much alive. Google has also invested nearly \$40 million in a private equity fund for metaverse projects, and its YouTube, Google Earth and Maps platforms could become important spaces in the metaverse.

Epic Games and Roblox: The video game and software developer Epic is known for its hugely popular online video game Fortnite. But what may be its real strength is its Unreal Engine, a commercially available game engine for developers. Roblox, another game platform and game development system, allows players to buy, sell and create virtual items.

Meta (formerly Facebook): As the metaverse evolves, Facebook must change with it or risk irrelevance. Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg has apparently gotten the message: He has renamed his company, invested up to \$10 billion in developing and improving its VR offerings, and invested in AR technology as well.

Microsoft: The technology behemoth announced in early 2022 its intention to purchase video game company Activision Blizzard for nearly \$70 billion. But Microsoft's metaverse plans do not stop at gaming. Teams, the company's business communication platform, and LinkedIn, its business and employment-oriented platform, provide more entry points to the metaverse.

Nvidia: This company is behind many of the graphic processing units (GPUs) that go into consoles, PCs, laptops and other devices, and its business touches cloud computing, data centers, artificial intelligence and more. It will likely be a key player in metaverse infrastructure.

Unity Software: The Unity game engine powers more than half of all mobile, PC and console games across the world, and in 2021 the company acquired Weta Digital, a digital visual effects (VFX) company, for \$1.6 billion.

