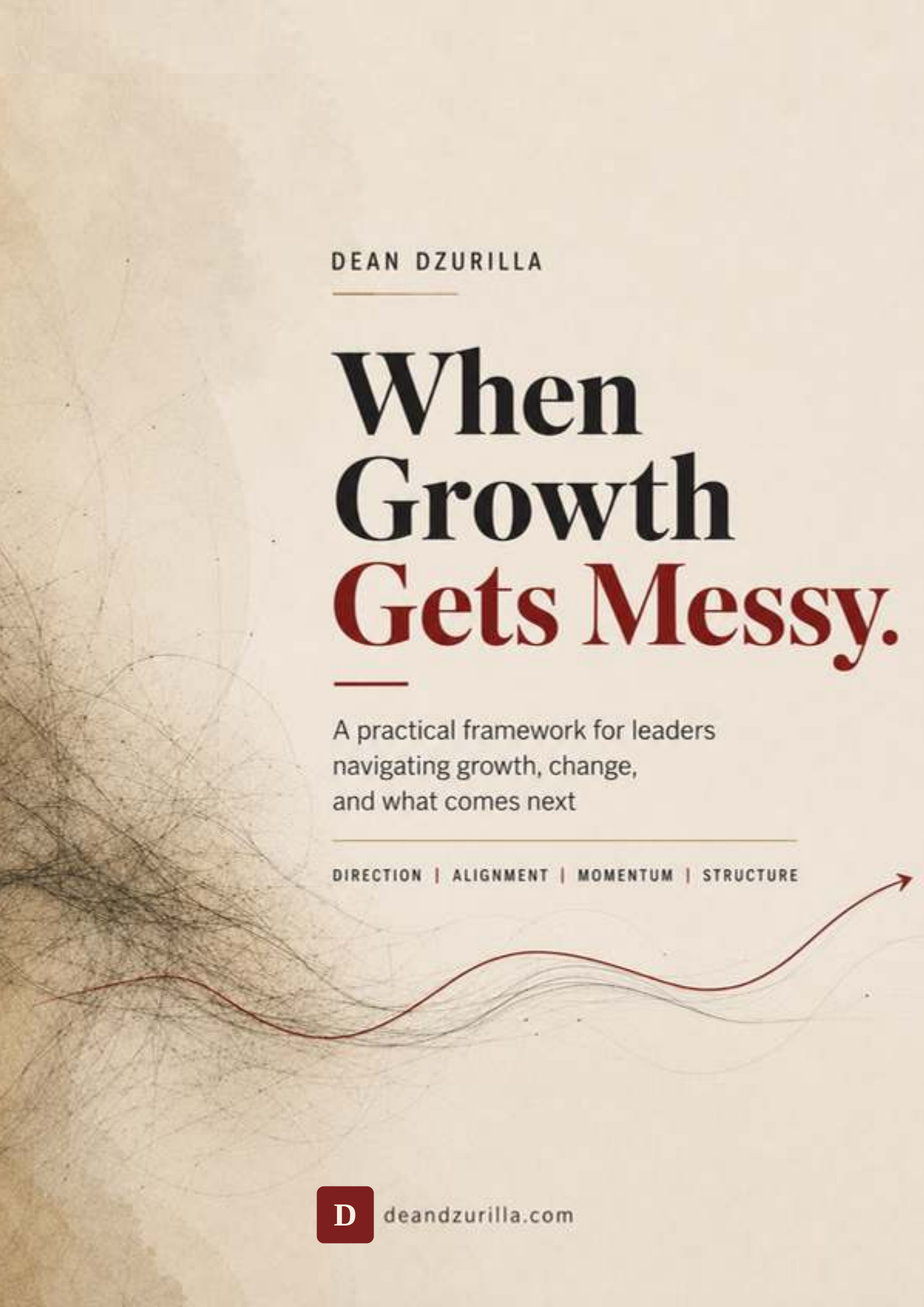


DEAN DZURILLA

When Growth Gets Messy.

A practical framework for leaders
navigating growth, change,
and what comes next

DIRECTION | ALIGNMENT | MOMENTUM | STRUCTURE



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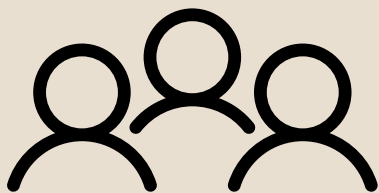
Growth is good.

Until it gets heavy.

In the early days, growth rewards speed, flexibility, leader involvement, hustle, and saying yes. The organization moves because people figure things out. The leader is close to everything. People get served. Momentum builds. The work feels alive.

Then the same things that created momentum start creating drag.

The leader becomes the bottleneck. Roles get blurry. Sales, outreach, or follow-through becomes inconsistent. Delivery gets stretched. People hear different answers from different people. The team is busy, but not always aligned.



**Everyone is working hard,
but the organization feels
harder to run than it should.**

That's not always a sign the organization is failing. More often, it has simply outgrown the way it's been operating.

The Core Idea.

What got you here can start getting in the way.

Early growth often depends on leader energy, speed, flexibility, personal relationships, informal communication, heroic effort, trial and error, and figuring things out as you go.

Those are strengths. Until they aren't.

As the organization grows, the same habits that created momentum can start creating problems.

Speed	→	becomes chaos.
Flexibility	→	becomes inconsistency.
Informal communication	→	becomes confusion.
Leader involvement	→	becomes dependence.
Heroic effort	→	becomes burnout.
Saying yes	→	becomes lack of focus.



At some point, the organization needs a new operating reality.

Not bureaucracy. Not corporate theater. Not a giant process for everything. Just enough clarity, structure, and discipline to carry the next stage.

A Few Facts Worth Remembering.

Growth is common. Sustainable growth is not.

In 2023, the U.S. had 5.58 million employer firms with fewer than 500 employees, according to Census Bureau data. Most businesses are not giant companies with deep benches, mature systems, and layers of management. They're smaller organizations trying to grow while still building the structure needed to support that growth.

Long-term survival is hard.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that only 34.7% of private-sector establishments born in March 2013 were still operating in March 2023.

AI has changed what small teams can do, but it hasn't changed the fundamentals of leadership.

McKinsey's 2025 State of AI report found that capturing value from AI requires management practices across strategy, talent, operating model, technology, data, and adoption at scale.



The lesson is simple.

Growth requires more than ambition. It requires clarity, leadership, systems, and the willingness to change how the organization works.

The Three Growth Modes

Every stage rewards something different.

Most growing organizations move through three broad modes. They aren't perfectly linear, but each one creates its own tension and calls for a different kind of leadership.

1

Sales-Driven Growth

Focus: Getting customers, clients, members, donors, or participants. The organization runs on speed, hustle, relationships, and figuring things out as it goes. That works for a while. The risk is believing hustle is the system.

2

Operations-Driven Growth

Focus: Building structure around what's already been created. The organization now needs clearer roles, better tools, stronger handoffs, and more reliable ways to deliver what needs to be delivered. The team is busy, but ownership may still be unclear.

3

Recreating the Organization

Focus: Recognizing that what used to work no longer does. New leaders, tools, or meetings can feel like the answer. Sometimes they help. But often, what's really needed is new clarity about direction, ownership, systems, and how the work actually moves.

The point isn't to label the organization perfectly but to recognize what the next stage requires.

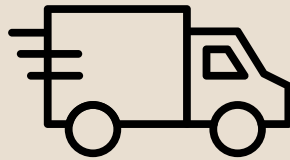
What Usually Breaks

Most growth problems are clarity problems wearing a different costume.

When growth gets messy, the symptoms usually show up in familiar places.



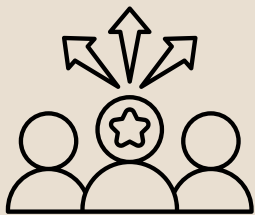
Sales & outreach are inconsistent.



Delivery feels stretched.



Managers & team leads feel unsure.



The team wants more direction.



People hear different answers.



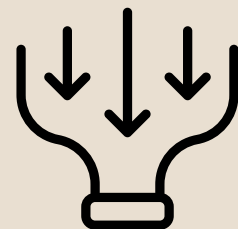
Meetings multiply, but decisions don't improve.



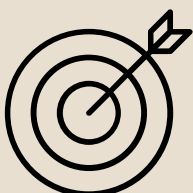
Morale gets heavy.



Financials don't tell the real story.



The leader is still the bottleneck.



It's tempting to label each symptom as its own problem. But the real issue is usually the same. The organization isn't aligned on how it works.

The Leader Shift

Move from doing to leading.

**Growth requires a different kind of leadership.
Not less work. Different work.**

FROM		TO
Doing the work	→	Leading the work
Having the answers	→	Building clarity for others
Controlling outcomes	→	Creating the conditions
Reacting to problems	→	Designing systems
Being the bottleneck	→	Building leadership depth
Short-term direction	→	Long-term direction



**You cannot delegate confusion
and expect ownership.**

Clarity is a leadership responsibility.

What Needs to Be True for Growth to Last

These are the non-negotiables.

- ✔ Clear vision and strategy
- ✔ Right people in the right roles
- ✔ Repeatable sales or outreach process
- ✔ Reliable delivery and client/stakeholder experience
- ✔ Strong management and accountability
- ✔ Healthy financial discipline
- ✔ Open, consistent communication
- ✔ A culture that supports performance & growth



**These are not exciting.
They are essential.**

They are what make the exciting possible.

A Simple Diagnostic

Use this as a mirror, not a scorecard.

Rate each area from 1 (struggling) to 5 (strong).

Be honest. This is for clarity, not judgement.

AREA	1	2	3	4	5
Vision & Strategy					
Sales or Outreach Consistency					
Delivery & Operations					
Management Accountability					
Financial Clarity					
Team Alignment					
Communication					
Customer or Stakeholder Experience					
OVERALL HEALTH					

The lowest scores usually reveal the highest leverage.

Fix the system, not just the symptom.

Where to Start

Small steps. Big impact.

You don't need a massive transformation.
You need the right first step.



Get honest about where you are.



Identify the biggest constraint.



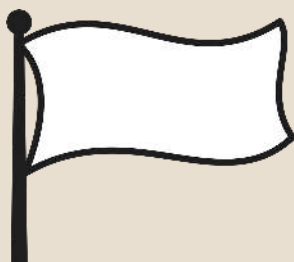
Pick one thing to fix or build.



Communicate the change.



Build momentum. Repeat.



**Clarity creates momentum.
Momentum creates confidence.
Confidence creates growth.**

Final Thought



**Growth is not the problem.
Disorganized growth is.**

**Leadership is not about
having all the answers. It's
about building an
organization that can
thrive without you.**

**Lead well. Build well.
Create something that lasts.**



Practical Help When Things **Get Messy.**

Clear thinking. Honest conversations.
Useful structure. Forward movement.

Let's talk.

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Advisor, Coach & Fractional Leader

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