



parathink™

Nº 4

Organizational Optimization

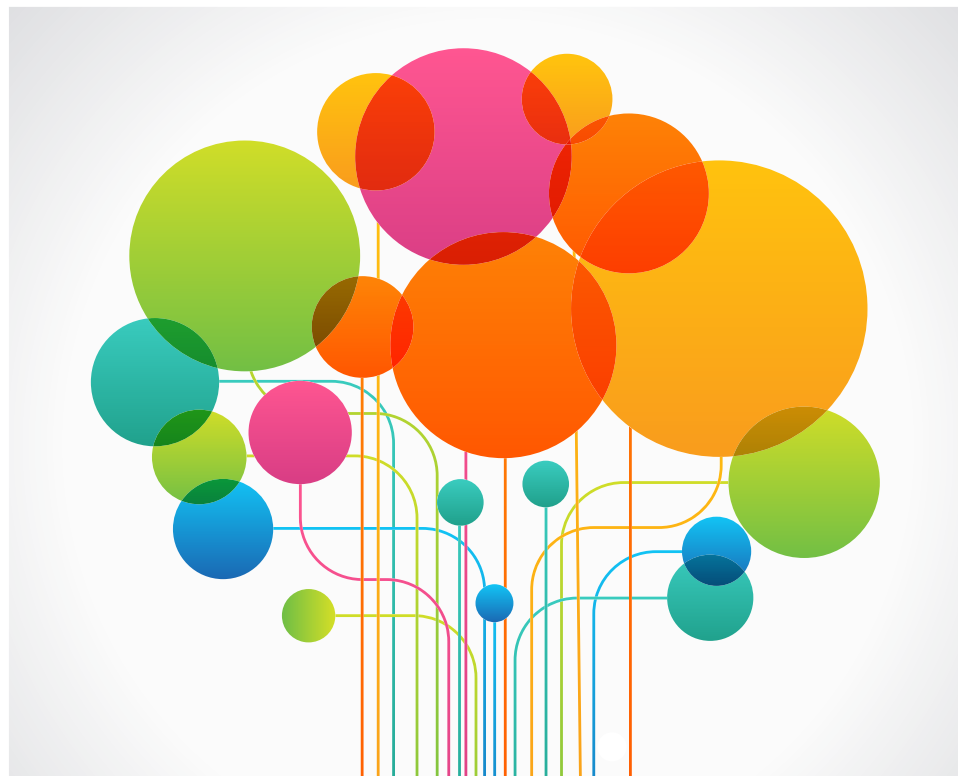
*How to re-energize, recharge, and
reinvigorate your business*

(A quick-reading *parathink* briefing for really, really busy people)

Robin Zvonek
Founder/President
Paragraphs LLC

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optimization
assessment
worksheet

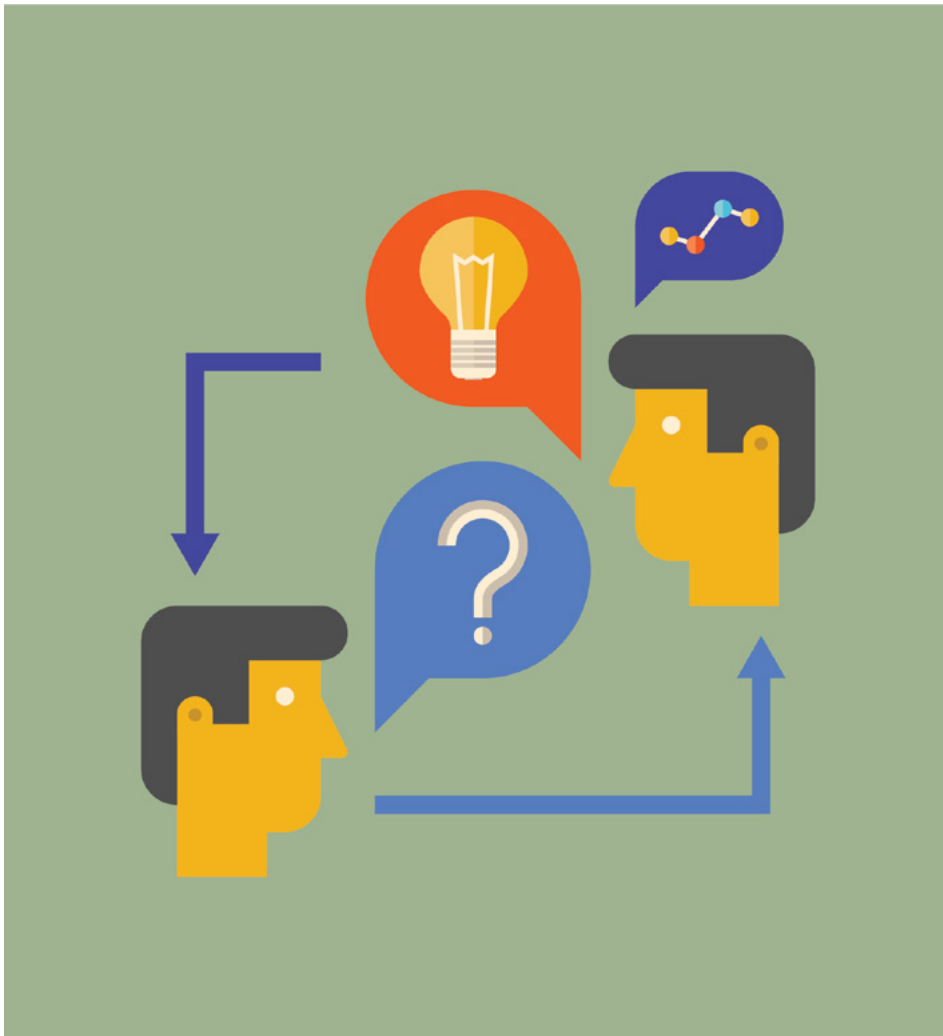
Paragraphs is an award-winning, strategic design firm specializing in branding and corporate communications across all media. Since 1984, we've helped leading companies around the world do one thing exceptionally well: build powerful brands that grow their business.



Executive Summary

What's the difference between an organization that thrives in today's changing world and one that's merely surviving? In many cases it's simply a matter of making what you have better, optimizing your business to make the most of its strengths and eliminate or overcome its weaknesses.

We've seen this kind of change happen in organizations of every size. If you're willing to bring the necessary commitment to the process, just about any company can become a more profitable, competitive, and satisfying place to work.



In this parathink briefing, we'll give you a quick overview of:

- How to identify areas where your sales and marketing strategies can become more efficient and effective;
- Smart strategies for evaluating the structure of your marketing process and conveying the value of your organization to the customer;
- What you can do to break organizational habits that may be holding you back.

9 signs your organization is ready for a tune-up

Many organizations are grappling with the need to optimize the way they do business today. In our experience, the best way to do so is to ensure that your sales and marketing machine can run at peak performance.

Here are nine common signs that your organization might benefit from reviewing the way these critical people in your company are operating:

1. Your sales are flat

Many organizations made it through the Great Recession by improving performance, cutting staff, and other “more with less” expedients. A certain amount of this is healthy for any business, but sooner or later the top line needs to grow. Stagnant or declining sales are a clear sign that new thinking may be in order.

2. You suffer from “innovation stagnation”

You may make the best widget in the world, but it’s a serious red flag if you haven’t introduced any new products or services in a while. Even if you don’t see any reason for your offerings to change, your market may have other ideas. Are you listening for the opportunities they could create?

3. You’re fighting downward price pressure

Just about every business faces some pressure to keep prices low these days, but that doesn’t mean you need to be controlled by the trend. Customers have money to spend again, and will part with it if you make a compelling case for their preference and loyalty.

4. Your sales people aren’t motivated

Re-igniting a grumpy or demoralized sales force can transform your company literally overnight. You’ll see immediate benefits as mixed signals disappear, especially if your staff buys into a forward-looking vision.

5. Your marketing is ineffective

Do customers see your company the way you want them to? Does your message encourage them to prefer your brand over the competition? Do they even know you exist? Eliminating bottlenecks in your organization or marketing process can make the answer to all of these questions an unqualified “yes!”

“We have seen the positive results of our integration efforts and branding initiatives. We continue to see improvement in our profitability ...”

Bill Goodyear
CEO

Navigant Consulting

“The program has been a tremendous success. Your ongoing work continues to reinforce a solid and sustainable platform that will be the foundation for our success well into the future.”

Andy Bosman
VP Communications
Navigant Consulting

See more at: <http://paragraphs.com/improve-your-results/navigant-consulting/>



NAVIGANT
CONSULTING

Optimization in Action: Navigant Consulting

Navigant Consulting, a professional services firm, was a holding company for more than 12 different consulting companies — each one a leader in their industry. Continuous acquisition and ongoing expansion was generating multiple identities and branding platforms. The multitude of identities caused significant external confusion. Paragraphs was hired to analyze the situation, develop a go-to-market strategy and ensure a successful identity launch and brand roll-out.

Optimization Strategy:

Research was conducted internally and externally — with existing, prospective and former clients. The confusion was real and the lack of a defined “sales” strategy was evident. Our recommendation was to restructure the organization by industry and service sectors and all legacy identities were dropped. To ensure the success of this integration strategic marketing materials were created to assist in the internal and external education process. The new Navigant Consulting visual identity was designed to reinforce attributes their clients prized most: innovation, professionalism, creativity, responsiveness and action-oriented professionalism. A new logo was designed to reflect these attributes and highlight Navigant’s focused, strategic approach.

All business units received new materials on “launch day,” including corporate brochures, service and sector brochures, direct mail, internal launch guidelines, premiums, case studies, PowerPoint templates, biographies, newsletter templates, intranet and extranet website activation and access to the graphic standards manual via the new intranet.

Results:

The new organizational architecture significantly increased efficiency, both from a budgetary and marketing standpoint. All information was shared between business units and most importantly, each business unit could “cross-sell” each others services. Navigant realized increased profitability and share price as a result of this optimization and branding process.

6. *Your customers are confused*

Customer confusion is often easy to correct by unifying marketing, enhancing service, and eliminating “silos” of information to stop conflicting messages. Unifying the communication your customers receive can boost their understanding of what you do.

7. *Your product or service has become “commoditized”*

One of the best ways to revitalize your business is to shift the conversation away from price. Make sure your offering has enough differentiating factors to rise above “apples-to-apples” comparisons. What benefits can you offer that only come from you?

8. *You have disruptive competitors*

It’s not “game over” when some upstart company changes the game — it’s just time for you to re-write the rules. Take action by improving your own mousetrap or shifting the conversation to your strengths.

9. *Key personnel are leaving your company*

No matter what kind of culture you’ve established, people are still the core strength of any organization. Look for ways to hold onto your established talent longer while empowering rising stars, and this type of change will happen more smoothly.

6 hurdles to improvement—and how to leap over them

Resistance to change seems to appear on all sides when you decide it’s time to change for the better. Here are six reasons why you should keep moving when the most common objections are raised:

1. *“We can’t afford to spend the money.”*

Focusing on cost creates a false mentality that growth and improvement are an expense rather than an investment. If your organization is stuck, failure to change is going to cost you sooner rather than later. In fact, the things that are holding you back now will probably be a lot more expensive to correct later.

2. *“It’s not worth the risk.”*

“Risk” may be a four-letter word, but there’s also no other way to achieve industry-leading success. If it makes you squeamish, remember that inaction is often a much bigger risk.

Smart companies handle risk by taking a strategic approach and getting as much information as possible before diving in. We’ll talk more about how to do this later on, but suffice to say that if you talk to your customers — and your own people — you may discover that the most dangerous risk you’re taking is sticking with what you’re doing now.

3. *“We don’t know what to do!”*

If you have all the facts but can’t see a way out, you’re probably too close to the problem. Take comfort from knowing that you’re likely ahead of the game and get some outside help. At least you won’t have to second-guess yourself about whether or not there’s a problem.

4. *“We have a plan, but no buy-in.”*

Meaningful change happens when everyone is on board, whether new initiatives are come from above or below. Someone with vision will need to take the lead, whether it’s committing to investment in the company’s future, selling a grassroots plan up the chain, or getting an outside partner to make sense of the data you’ve gathered.

5. *“We failed the last time we tried to change.”*

As discouraging as a past failure might be, you probably did the right thing by trying to improve. Innovators don’t always get everything right the first time. Most achieve greatness by trying new things until they succeed. Try something else.

6. *“What we do has always worked, so why should we change?”*

If your organization is stuck, what you’ve always done clearly isn’t working.

Optimization in Action: Quantum

Quantum is a Chicago-based marketing execution company. While their services have evolved over the years to include sophisticated technological capabilities beyond printing, the company was still marketing itself like a traditional printing company. Paragraphs was brought in to establish a cohesive, integrated brand and position for the “new” Quantum; and to lay the groundwork for organized growth of the corporate brand.

Optimization Strategy:

Based upon qualitative and quantitative research findings, Paragraphs created a new category for the services Quantum offers: Enterprise Marketing Execution (EME). The company’s vision, mission and values were clarified and vertical markets defined to organize the selling process — making it easier for both the sales staff and customers to understand the firm’s offerings. Technologies were productized, named and defined.

The new Quantum brand identity provides a unified verbal and visual platform for marketing. The “Leap Ahead” content marketing program will help to solidify Quantum’s leadership position by providing critical marketing expertise to assist their clients in their marketing execution efforts.

Results:

Quantum overcame a company-wide feeling that the obstacles to change would be insurmountable, achieving its goal of a new brand launch within 6 months. When Quantum’s EVP of Sales and Marketing presented the new program internally, the staff rose in a standing ovation.

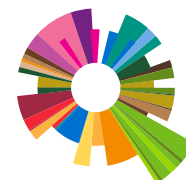
As this briefing goes to press, the Leap Ahead concept is being rolled out with the eager support of employees who have discovered new-found enthusiasm in the company. The new website is generating new client leads on a weekly basis. Within 6 weeks of the launch, website traffic increased by over 120% and the average length of time spent on the site went from less than 60 seconds to more than 7 minutes!

“Given the task to look inside the Quantum Group and reenergize and optimize our organization was no small feat. Knowing it would require a new go-to-market sales strategy, the development of our first ever thought-leadership strategy, a complete rebrand including a new website – the challenge and the time frame was almost impossible.

As a sales leader there is nothing more rewarding than an entire sales team requesting our new marketing collateral for prospecting, or a client visiting the new trade show booth with a WOW expression and an immediate understanding of who we are and what we do, or receiving new client leads on a weekly basis from the Quantum website.

It is in those moments the Quantum leadership team understands how pivotal the decision was to partner along-side Paragraphs to optimize our company.”

Betsy Davis
EVP Sales & Marketing
Quantum Group



Quantum
LEAP AHEAD

How to prepare your organization for optimization in 5 easy steps

“Okay Paragraphs,” we hear you saying, “it’s easy for you guys to sit there and tell us we need to change, but making it happen is a whole different ball game.”

There’s some truth in that statement, but we’ve also helped to guide many organizations through this process successfully. And while every company faces different challenges, there’s a tried and proven process that works for companies that are willing to commit to it.

Step 1: Strategic navel-gazing

Individual people, from the CEO down to process-level workers, probably know their part of the company really well, even if they’re not sure what the rest of the organization needs. So step one is a strategic “inner-look.” Find

out what’s going on in every level of your organization, not just the people in your immediate circle.

Talk with people at the C-Level, in the executive corps, the sales force, and on down the line. Find out what’s working, what’s not, and what can be done to make it better. Look for the things people grumble about and listen carefully to their comments, especially if they tell you things you don’t want to hear. Think hard about what you “don’t hear.”

Step 2: Reach out

External interviews are of vital importance in conjunction with the internal analysis. Together they’ll give you the most complete picture of where your organization is today,

the direction it needs to move, and if it’s possible to get there with your existing organizational structure.

Don’t just talk to the customers you have today. Seek out the type of people you’d like to convert more often and find out what it would take to win their business. You’ll also want to track down past customers to learn how you might have served them better. Information may not be the only benefit you get — reaching out in this way can give you the opportunity to win some of them back.

These interviews are the ultimate ace in the hole for whoever ends up driving the “change bus” in your organization. Leaders who aren’t convinced by internal recommendations are far more likely to sit up and take notice when their customers talk, even if they’re saying the same thing.

Another tip: when internal and external findings don’t agree, trust the customer.

Step 3: Case the competition

Whether you’re the current market leader, trying harder because you’re number 2, or a “fast follower” chasing the pack, you need to know what the competition is doing. Are they positioning themselves to attract a particular niche or trying to be everything to everyone in your industry? What’s working for them? What’s not? Is there a way you can change the conversation to make your organization the most attractive brand on the market?



Step 4: Perform a marketing and organizational functionality audit

Take a look at everything your company is saying about itself, from any source. Reviewing your full suite of marketing communications and “who’s responsible for what” will highlight issues that create consumer confusion, send conflicting messages, or fail to comply with your branding strategy. Is marketing in sync with sales, product development, and customer service? Does the right hand know what the left hand is doing, saying, and promising?

This exercise will give you a bird’s eye view of how you’re positioning yourself internally and externally. The results are likely to amaze you—especially if you do business globally.

Step 5: Quantitative Research

The first four steps of this process produce results that can be interpreted subjectively, so it’s always helpful to gather some hard data as well. For example, one of our clients was motivated to take decisive action when they discovered that not a single company surveyed included them in their list of the “top 10” service providers in their field.



Optimization in Action: Paxall Ltd.

Paxall Ltd. was a holding company for 18 companies that manufacture packaging equipment machinery. Each company was an independent subsidiary with different names, marketing efforts, and sales forces. Paragraphs was hired to create a corporate brochure to help Paxall Ltd. present themselves. Prior to the creation of this piece, interviews were held with senior executives. Paxall did not need a brochure, they needed to rethink how they went to market. Our research results led us to a complete restructuring and renaming of the corporation.

Optimization Strategy:

By restructuring the organization, we created an opportunity to sell in marketing groups and thereby cross-sell all the equipment Paxall engineered. We created a corporate-dominant system with Paxall as the parent company. Each business unit was grouped by key industry targets — food, pharmaceuticals, and consumer goods.

This new architecture and nomenclature system unified the company under one corporate name while maintaining the heritage of the key corporate divisional names. A new corporate identity was established to present Paxall’s new face to all audiences. The logo conveyed the technical and engineering aspect of the packaging business — reflecting precision, proficiency, excellence, quality, and integration. Complete rollout and graphic standards were developed to educate both internal and external audiences alike. The integration of communications and marketing efforts saved Paxall unnecessary duplication of marketing dollars and led to better allocation of budgets for increasing external awareness.

Results:

By restructuring the sales organization/process and integrating the company’s complementary businesses under one common banner, Paxall established credibility and visibility, increased sales and tripled market share. Where one business unit sold a piece of equipment, it was now selling three units to complete the line. Paxall tripled its business by reengineering it’s structure and enhancing the organizations ability to cross sell into key vertical markets. It’s an example of optimization at its best.

What makes change work?

Once your organization has completed the five steps of preparation, it's time for analysis and recommendations. This is where the magic really happens if you have set the process up for success.

Time and time again we've seen that reinvention is successful only when three key components are fully integrated under the same team: fact-finding, analysis and strategy. Many organizations — internal and external — have multiple teams handle different aspects of the process or only focus on one component.

These are three different arts, but whoever takes on your optimization needs to be a master at all of them. Whether you do it yourself or work with an outside partner, you need to get analysis, strategic planning, and recommendations through a cohesive process.

The best tactical solutions work because your team has done their strategic work. You should know what your competition is doing, what their weak points are, what you need to restructure and what you need to fix internally before you can develop an optimization

strategy that's effective, and most important, believable for your organization.

Making what you have even better

The process we've described in this parathink briefing is designed to optimize and re-energize your organization. That may be as simple as "rearranging the furniture" to get rid of policies or cultural elements you no longer need.

Whatever your challenges, your optimization solution will be unique to your company. It doesn't have to be an "extreme makeover." The process works for organizations of any size or scope and can even be done at the divisional level. What matters most is uncovering the opportunities that are already hiding in your company and capitalizing on them to become more profitable, more effective, more efficient, and create a culture of productivity and performance.

A message from the "other side"

Many companies only start optimizing when something reaches the breaking point, but it doesn't have to be that way for you. We've seen countless organizations begin this process when literally no one in the organization wanted to do any of it. We've partnered with companies of every size and coached them through the strategic and tactical phases.





Every organization that takes this on asks the question “is this really going to be worth it?”

The answer is yes. We’ve seen organizations who’ve gone in kicking and screaming emerge on the other side saying “why didn’t we do this years ago?” We’ve seen entire company staffs rise in standing ovations when their optimization plans were unveiled. We’ve seen demoralized employees discover new-found faith in their companies because their leadership had the courage to made the commitment, stick to the plan, and create positive change.

It’s worked for them, and it can work for you.

Optimization strategies you can use today!

Ready to rev up your own organization? We’d like to give you an insider’s look at the process we use to get the optimization process rolling with our optimization readiness worksheet, featuring thought-provoking questions to help you start the process of fine-tuning your own organization. Just [click here](#) and we’ll send it to you via email right away. There’s no obligation whatsoever. Consider it our way of saying “thanks” for taking the time to read this briefing.

Want to chat about optimizing your organization? Contact us to set up a complimentary 30-minute strategy session! Just call [312.527.4722](tel:312.527.4722) *Ask for Robin*



Got a burning topic you’d like to see in a future briefing? Drop us a line at think@paragraphs.com.