

# A fresh start

How to reboot your company for innovation and growth **Interviewed by Meredyth McKenzie**

**R**ecent economic trends have had a negative impact across industries, slowing growth and leaving companies wondering when, if or how they can get back on a growth track. If your company is stuck in that rut, rebooting may be the answer. Rebooting helps you achieve growth by focusing on the important parts of your business and changing what is not working.

“Uncertainty in today’s economy is forcing people to rethink their business altogether,” says Dean DeBiase, chairman of RebootPartners.com and an alumnus of Northern Illinois University College of Business. “Good times can lead to big, fat, slow companies that tend to make more lax decisions. Lean times force companies to be more nimble, quick and reserved — but that is not enough. Rebooting helps you become more strategic about growing in slower periods.”

*Smart Business* spoke with DeBiase about how to reboot your company.

## Why should a company reboot?

It’s about reviving growth, both in good times and in bad. Although CEOs want more help when times are tough, the best time to reboot is before they need it. Most companies become big, fat and slow on the way to success, which is a comfortable condition. But when CEOs see what that leads to — irrelevance, obscurity and a decline in revenue, market share and morale — then big, fat and slow is not so comfortable.

That’s why smart companies reboot while they’re still healthy. Waiting for ‘the right time’ can be devastating and can force you to use a turnaround expert to fix your business. Managers need to operate in an ‘as if’ mode. As if they’re in a turnaround already. As if they’re under attack — because they are. Rebooting takes guts because you have to question the things that made you successful.

## What are the steps to a reboot?

Start by focusing on what you need next for growth. In good times, the goal is to keep companies away from the brink of obscurity, irrelevance and decline; in bad times, you may need to bring your group back from that brink. Reboots are not simple turnarounds. Reboots blend the best of both worlds — the speed, thrill and attitude of a hectic startup with the urgency, focus and results of a disciplined turnaround — to shift your thinking and approach.

There are three Reboot Zones proven to be



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impactful in shifting companies: People, Platform and Passion. Each zone has three core questions to help you dig into what’s most important now. By zeroing in on these, you can transform anything.

People Reboots challenge traditional HR by developing a better way of finding, attracting, building, optimizing, motivating and incenting collaborative teams. People questions are:

- Who should we get next? Find the next generation of talent.
- How can we organize to win? Optimize business models and structure.
- What do we want? Engage people with the motivation/compensation they want.

Platform Reboots attack big strategy and slow execution by focusing on what your company offers now and where it should go next by questioning everything from products and business models to innovation and global partnering. Platform Reboots are at the core of driving growth and competitive leadership, and the questions to ask are:

- Where can we redirect the organization? Reprioritize strategy.
- What must we develop now, and next? Re-energize offers, crush competitors.
- How can we enhance our market position? Regain share and restart innovation.

Passion Reboots deal with preventing ordinary performance by rebuilding your foundational culture with a strong sense of purpose

and energizing environments in sync with customers, revenue and key metrics that drive accountability. Passion questions are:

- What do we believe in? Reintroduce purposeful, fun environments.
- Why are we here? Focus everyone on revenue, customers, profits, etc.
- When will we know we’re successful? Tie everyone together with real-time metrics and accountability.

If you get people reinvigorated and reset the platform with more innovative, competitive products, passion makes you follow through, reconnecting everyone with what matters most for growth, starting with customers and clients. The hard part is not making changes but making the hard choices that can have the biggest impact on your business. It helps to have someone on the outside to give you a fresh perspective and guide you. Beyond consultants, you need people to help you execute and set up internal Rebooters who can help you transform and run the business.

## What are the risks and benefits of rebooting?

The risk is trying to do too much. Each of the nine questions has three Reboot Rules to address the future. Clearly, you can’t focus on all 27 rules if you want to be effective. Reboots can be dialed up or down. Some companies only focus on People Reboots, while others attack all three zones. Another risk is that not everyone may be on board. You’ll need to figure out how to get people to go along with you, or upgrade your talent quickly.

Benefits include increasing share, crushing competitors, improving profitability, boosting revenue and improving morale. Organizations can become better places to work, creating a more attractive brand with happier customers and employees who are more in sync with revenue, clients, partners, growth and innovation.

## What should you do after the reboot is complete?

Reboots aren’t a quick fix and should become a systemic part of your business so you don’t fall back into old habits. Make it part of your operating culture so it becomes the way you think and run the business. Every quarter, celebrate, analyze, communicate and ask, ‘What do we need to do next?’ Keep the energy flowing, live by the Reboot Rules and even create a few new ones of your own. <<

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