

Keith asked, "How can we best plan for future growth in a world that is unpredictable and full of change?" That is a fantastic question, Keith, as we look ahead towards the future on today's episode of Banking on Digital Growth.

Greetings and hello. I am James Robert Lay, and welcome to episode 216 of the Banking on Digital Growth podcast. 216, time is flying by. Today's episode is part of the Inside Digital Growth series, where I, James Robert Lay, your digital anthropologist studying the intersection of marketing, sales, technology, and human behavior, commit to continue to coach and guide you, guide your financial brand, guide your fintech along your digital growth journey as you commit to continue to guide people beyond financial stress that is taking a toll on their health, wealth, and wellbeing.

This was actually something that I talked about when I was out in Vegas last week, speaking from the big stage at the CU Leadership Convention, sharing one of the biggest opportunities going forward into the future, into a world that is full of complexity. That complexity leads to confusion. That confusion when you're stuck in that repeated state leads to increasing conflict. And when conflict goes unchecked, it ultimately keeps us trapped in chaos. The only way to escape that cycle of complexity, confusion, conflict, and chaos is to gain clarity. It is to gain clarity into a future that is bigger, that is better, that is brighter than where we're at in the present moment. That is why when you think about financial services, the opportunity is to coach people beyond their present state, considering the connection that a person has emotionally with their money is rooted deeply, deeply in their family of origin and their upbringing. I'm going to continue to expand upon these thoughts today.

In today's episode of Inside Digital Growth, answering a question from Keith, who's the CEO of a financial brand out on the East Coast. He asked, "How can we best plan for future growth in a world that is unpredictable and full of change?" These insights can also be applied through financial brands in fintechs to account holders. It's really a timely question from Keith, especially as we enter into the "strategic planning season." But first, if you have a question that is on your mind, a question that you'd like to gain clarity around, I invite you to text me your question to 415-579-3002, and my team will make sure that I get it so I can answer it for you on an upcoming podcast episode.

As I mentioned, being at the CU Leadership Conference in Vegas, it's been good getting back on the road, having just spoke there. And then a couple weeks before that was out in Nashville speaking at Total Expert's Accelerate Summit, and it was a great event. I'm looking forward to keynoting [inaudible 00:04:17] conference in September, as well as the Digital Marketing for Financial Services Midwest Summit. So do text me, 415-579-3002 if you'll be at either of these upcoming events, and it would be good to say hello to you in real life, in person.

So let's go ahead and get into Keith's question once again, who asked, "How can we best plan for future growth in a world that is unpredictable and full of change?" Now, for context, I am answering this question coming out of my favorite time of year, which is the month of July. And that's because in July we reach the summit, we reach the apex of awareness on Mount Mutatio. Now for context, Mount Mutatio or mutatio is Latin for change or transformation. And I'm writing about this perspective even more deeply in my second book, which is due out in Q1 of 2023.

When it comes to maximizing our own future growth potential, whether personally, professionally, digitally, we are all climbing mountains of change and transformation. Sometimes the climbs are easier than others, but the most important thing that we can take forward no matter where you are in your own journey of exponential growth, most important thing that we can take forward is to always keep climbing, always keep moving onwards and upwards. Or in the words of Dory from Disney Pixar's Finding Nemo, "Just keep swimming." So just keep climbing. Otherwise, we risk fooling ourselves thinking that it's better to seek solace and comfort in the cave of complacency.

The good news of all of this is when we reach the summit of Mount Mutatio, or the apex of awareness, we have an opportunity to stop, to pause, to review, to reflect on the progress that we have

made on the first six months of the year. This is why I love July, because we can reflect on the progress we have made as an individual, reflect on the progress that we've made as a team, reflect on the progress that we have made as a financial brand or fintech.

In addition to reflecting, it is also a time to look ahead towards the future, to look ahead with renewed hope, with ever-increased optimism on the progress that we will continue to make as we move forward on our journeys of growth towards the back half of the year. I want to pause on those two words just a bit; hope and optimism. Because it is through hope that we were able to, number one, see, and the number two, share the light. Hope is where we see and share the light despite all of the darkness that might be surrounding us. And for many, the past couple of years have been pretty dark. The good news is, combined together, hope and optimism are key elements, they're key elements to gaining and protecting one's confidence. Because confidence is also like COVID has been, confidence is contagious.

When people are lost in the dark, feeling confused, feeling frustrated, and it doesn't matter if we're talking about digital transformation or financial transformation, when one feels confused, when one feels frustrated, particularly when it comes to financial situations here, financial stress does indeed take a toll on a person's health, their relationships, their wellbeing. The two things that people crave most when they are feeling confused, when they're feeling frustrated, when they lack clarity, when they are stuck in a constant cycle of conflict and chaos, the two things that people crave most are, number one, help, and number two, hope. And hope for many when they are stuck in a cycle of conflict and chaos, hope must come long before one is ready to receive help, as one must feel hopeful for the future. They must feel hopeful that there is a chance for them to escape the darkness, to escape the complexity, the confusion, the chaos, the conflict that financial stress brings.

This is where putting in place a practice of optimism can create exponential value, a practice where optimism begins individually with the self then spreads to the teams that we work alongside, and from the teams throughout the entire organization, and then from the organization to the hearts and minds of the people in the communities that we serve as financial brands in fintech. In fact, when it comes to finances and money, Frost Bank out of San Antonio, Texas believes better finances do, in fact, begin with optimism. It's a fantastic program, I highly recommend you check out Rooted in Research, that you can visit by going to www.optforoptimism.com.

Optimism, as Frost Bank defines, is a mindset. It is a mindset rooted in determination, resilience, and grit. And of course, when we look around at everything going on in the world today, there is no better time for optimism. There is no better time to share hope, to share light with others. But this is not some touchy, feel good stuff. Optimism can truly create value on the bottom line for your financial brand, for your fintech. Here's why. Through the research that Frost Bank conducted, they found that optimists are seven times more likely to experience better financial health than pessimists.

Optimists also experience 145 fewer days of financial stress per year than pessimists, and optimist have half the number of financial setbacks than pessimists. Why is this so important? How can optimism, as you think ahead towards your own future growth at your financial brand or fintech, how can optimism play such a transformative part of your future growth? Consider, particularly here in the United States because now the Banking on Digital Growth podcasts has spread to the ears of listeners in over 150 countries around the world, but here in the United States, 85% of Americans are feeling some sort of financial stress according to TD Bank. Fintechstash.com through their research notes that two out of every three people you know is losing sleep because of financial stress, and one out of every five people you know, they walk around with an extreme amount of financial shame.

This lack of sleep, this shame is taking a toll on people's health, their relationships, and the core of their wellbeing. I share all of this with you because as financial brands, as fintechs, if we are to share hope and optimism with others to provide a path, to light a path forward in their darkness, to help them escape drowning on a sea of chaos, hope and optimism must start internally before it can ever begin to spread externally. This begins with your mindset. It starts with your team's mindset. So, as we look

ahead towards the future, as we stand at the apex of awareness on Mount Mutatio, Latin for change, Latin for transformation, as we enter into the "strategic planning season", I do understand that the future can sometimes feel complex, that complexity leads to conflict, that conflict leads to chaos. I get it. I understand it.

The good news is there are two simple questions you can ask yourself, you can ask your team as part of the "strategic planning process", because it is these two questions that will empower you to transform confusion into clarity, to transform chaos and conflict into courage and confidence. Because like I said before, confidence is contagious. But before I share these two questions with you, consider this, instead of thinking about "strategic planning" as an annual event, instead of thinking about "strategic planning" as an annual event, consider the opportunities of transforming strategic planning into a quarterly process. We call this the 90-day growth method.

Why make strategic planning a 90-day process instead of a traditional annual event? Well, through our ongoing research here at the Digital Growth Institute, along with the coaching and the advisory that we guide fintechs and financial brands through, we have found that it is around 90 days that "the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry." We were noticing this pattern where the best laid plans of mice and men go awry around the 90-day period long before COVID came and entered into the scene. That's because technology, competition, consumer behaviors even pre COVID, the world at large, they were all transforming very quickly.

But what COVID has shown us, technology, competition, consumer behavior, the world at large will continue to transform at an exponential rate. And that creates inherent risk in traditional annual planning so many financial brands and fintechs currently do. Risk for any financial brand or fintech is not a good thing. This is why I am sharing the exact two questions we ask financial brands that we guide, that we coach along their digital growth journeys, we ask these same two questions to them every 90 days. Because I want you, the dear listener, no matter where you are in the world, to continue to gain clarity as you commit to continue to move forward with courage and confidence along your own journey of growth. I want to give you a framework that empowers you to break free and escape the dangers of getting stuck doing digital so that you can create space, so that you can create time for yourself, for your team, for your organization to pause, to review, to learn, to think about how you can do even better over the next 90 days.

I get it, we are all busy. You might feel too busy right now to pause and stop, reflect, learn, and think every 90 days. You might feel overwhelmed with a never-ending avalanche of to-dos. But here is the good news, for you and your team to continue to gain clarity, to escape the confusion, to escape the complexity, to escape the chaos, for you to continue to gain clarity that increases your courage to commit to continue to move forward with confidence, with hope, with optimism, all you need to do is set aside one day every 90 days. And this one day every 90 days is split into two parts. One day, eight hours, in reality six hours, seven hours tops, split into two parts where your strategic thinking is guided by a mix of reflective writing that is further expanded on through facilitated dialogue, discussion, discourse, writing and reflecting or reflecting and writing as an individual, and then expanding on that writing, that thinking through facilitated dialogue, discussion, and discourse with your team.

Let's break this down. First off, we have the morning session that runs from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. This starts the day off by doing some business with the past, where we look at progress, creating far more value than what perfection can ever do. First off, the morning session, which runs from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM, starts out with doing some business of the past, starts out by doing business with the past, where we view progress is far greater than perfection.

We also explore the present moment by asking this one simple question: what has been going well for us this past quarter? What has gone well for us over the last 90 days? Now, well, W-E-L-L, is an acronym where the W stands for winning, the E stands for exciting, the first L stands for learning, and the last L stands for looking. I want to break down each one of these four elements that makes up WELL into

four strategic questions you can ask yourself, you can ask your team, not just every 90 days, but also every day as well. Because it is these four questions that empower you to continue to build your confidence, increase your hope, and further expand your optimism, starting internally so that you can then share that externally.

In fact, we are starting to work with financial brands and fintechs to establish coaching programs built around the what's going well framework to increase the confidence, the hope, and the optimism of their account holders every 90 days. But you must first master these four questions internally. And you can begin mastering them today when you grab a pen, when you grab some paper, and you work through these as a team, as an organization. So let's start with winning, break each one of these four questions down of the what's going well method, of the what's going well framework. Let's start with winning where you and your team reflect back over the past 90 days. I want you to write down and discuss the three biggest wins that you've experienced on your own journey of exponential growth.

So look back over the last 90 days in your mind, where have you been winning? What are those three big wins that you've experienced? Now, this can be personally. It can also be professionally. It probably should be a mix of both. It can also be where have you been winning as an individual, as a team, as an organization to give some different perspective here. In addition to noting what these wins are, it is also to think and write through why these wins are important to you.

Now, I want to shift our thinking from the past into the present moment and take a bit of time to explore what is exciting and energizing you right now as you think and write through this question. Thinking about everything happening around you, what do you feel most excited, what do you feel most energized about right now at this present moment in time? Just take two minutes, do a download. What are you feeling excited and energized right now at this present moment in time? Once again, this could be personally, this could be professionally, probably should be a mix of both, framed through the context the individual, the team, and the organization. In addition to jotting and noting and thinking and writing through what you're feeling excited and energized about, you could further expand upon this thinking, why do you feel this way about each one of these points?

Now, moving on to the third question. We can stay in the present moment a bit as we think and write through this question. Looking at learning, reflecting on what you've read, what you've watched, what you've listened to, what you've experienced over the last 90 days, what are the greatest lessons that you've learned along the way? And once again, why is it important to note these lessons?

Finally, we can wrap things up and begin to look ahead towards the future, the second L in the what's going well framework. We can look ahead towards the future as we think and write through this question: what are three things you are looking forward to most over the next 90 days as you continue to move forward and make progress along your own journey of exponential growth. Simply taking time to think and write, and really two minutes per question, to think and write and then discuss and dialogue through each of these four questions. The discussion and the dialogue can be maybe 10, 15 minutes per question, groups of two, maybe three. It provides a tremendous amount of clarity of where you've been, where you're at, and where you can continue to grow next on your journey of growth as an individual, as teams, as an organization.

When you think, write, discuss through each one of these questions, I guarantee that you will build the confidence of both yourself and your team as you will look ahead towards the future with ever-increasing hope, with ever-increasing optimism, with ever-increasing confidence. Why? Because you have reviewed where you've been, you've explored where you're at now, and you're always looking forward to making your future far greater than where you're at right now in the present moment.

Once you think through and discuss each one of these four questions, you can continue to guide the thinking of your team to bring the future into the present moment of the mind as the afternoon unfolds from the 1:00 PM to the 4:00 PM time slot. And once again, these three hours can be framed

around one simple question that unfolds over the course of these three hours. Because this one simple question has three sub-questions, with each one of these sub-questions being the framework for each of these three hours. And that simple question is this: as we look ahead over the next 90 days, how do we want to grow most over the next quarter. And grow is another acronym, G-R-O. It is an acronym that stands for goals, roadblocks, and opportunities.

Each one of these goals, roadblocks, opportunities, each one of these elements has a very specific question, once again, that you can think and write through as an individual to then discuss and dialogue through as a team to gain further clarity as you bring the future into the present moment. And that begins with this one simple question, starting with your goals for growth. This gets framed up like this: we're having a coffee, we're having cocktails, it's your choice. We are in a really good place. Now, I want you to take a sip of your coffee, I want you to take a sip of your cocktail, and look back to today's conversation in your mind. So leap ahead 90 days in your mind, take a sip of your coffee, take a sip of your cocktail, and look back to today's conversation. Make this as real as possible, even envisioning what you would be drinking 90 days from now, whether that be coffee, what type of coffee, how is it made? Or a cocktail, what cocktail, how is it made? Take a sip of your drink, look back to this conversation, and think about what three things must happen between now until then for you to feel good about the continued progress you are making on your own journey of growth.

Write that down. Once again, it could be two minutes worth of thinking and writing. And it's amazing what will come out of the subconscious mind and be put on a piece of paper when given a very simple time constraint that is facilitated by an extremely powerful question that truly does bring the future that you want to create into the present moment. Because once we have clarity on the future that we want to create in our mind, and it moves from our mind down our arms, through pen or pencil onto paper, we begin to make that future that once existed in our mind, we begin to make it real in this physical reality.

And as Napoleon Hill has written, when two individuals, or three, or four, or five come together with a common cause, Napoleon Hill refers to this as the mastermind. This was writing from the 1930s, so it's not new, it's about 100 years worth of thinking. When 2, 3, 4, 5, sometimes 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 people come together sharing a common cause that is far greater than the present moment, this is what Napoleon Hill refers to as the "mastermind". Because when you bring minds together to think beyond the present moment, to bring the future into the present, there is an exponential factor that comes into play. Because our minds, through the writings of Napoleon Hill, as Napoleon explains, they're like a battery. We get an exponentially greater charge when we're all thinking about something far greater, a cause that is far greater than the present moment.

So once we have clarity on the future that we will create, we can begin to shift our focus to the roadblocks that exists now in the present moment. And after conducting this type of thinking, facilitating the thinking of thousands of financial brand leaders over the years, this one question around roadblocks is truly transformative in the "strategic planning process." Why? Because it's very easy to think about all of our goals... And I have seen through experience that sometimes strategic planning, the end results is nothing more than a checklist of items that need to be executed against. But there's no real future visioning, there's no real future purpose greater than the present moment. And it's just more of the same. The future, at that point, becomes the predictable present informed by the past. But when we get clear on the future that we can create, the next thing we must do is identify the roadblocks that stand in the way.

So the question to think, write, and discuss as a team is this: what are the three biggest roadblocks or challenges you see right now in the present moment that stand in your way and can prevent you from moving forward and making progress towards your goals for growth? The reason that I say three here, and the same it could be true with goals, three goals, three roadblocks, because we can take ancient wisdom, omne trium perfectum, all good things come in threes. So what are the three

biggest roadblocks? What are the three biggest challenges you see right now in the present moment that stand in your way that could prevent you from moving forward and making progress towards the goals for growth that you thought and wrote through and discussed in question number one, framed around the larger question, how do you want to grow over the next 90 days?

Finally, we can explore opportunities available for you either to create or capture something new along with the strengths you have presently available to further capitalize on that allow you, empower you to work around and overcome the roadblocks standing in your way so that you do, in fact, move towards your goals for growth with courage and confidence. So think about it, three goals, three roadblocks, three opportunities to overcome those roadblocks to move towards your goals for growth with confidence. And once again, why identify the roadblocks and then begin to immediately think through the opportunities to overcome those roadblocks? Because the mind is built to solve problems. And so, when we identify roadblocks, once again, ancient thinking here, stoic wisdom if you will, Ryan Holiday has written prolifically or about this through his book called *The Obstacle is the Way*, when we identify roadblock standing in the way of our goals for growth, we can begin to immediately think through the opportunities that we can create, capture, or capitalize on to work around or overcome those roadblocks so that we move towards our goals for growth with courage, with confidence.

These three simple yet truly powerful and transformative questions when thought through the context of omne trium perfectum or all good things come in threes, do provide a tremendous amount of clarity, amount of focus while reducing confusion and the complexity and the conflict and the chaos that so many feel right now in today's world. And as I mentioned before, what's going well, you're focused on where you've been winning, what you feel excited and energized about, what you've been learning, and what you're looking forward to. And then transition that into how do you want to grow over the next 90 days, where you gain clarity into your goals for growth, the roadblock standing in the way, and the opportunities to create, capture, or capitalize to overcome those roadblocks to move forward towards your goals for growth.

These questions, yes, can be used every 90 days as an individual, as a team, as an organization. Doesn't matter if you're in marketing, sales, technology, doesn't matter if you're on the leadership team or at the board level, these two simple questions can not only transform your organization, but they also can transform the lives of people in the communities that you serve. When you sit down and ask them, ask account holders, "What's been going well for you?" Where have they been winning? What are they excited about what? Have they learned? What are they looking forward to? While at the same time asking them how do they want to grow over the next 90 days, over the next year, over the next three years, five years, over the next decade. What are their goals? What are their roadblocks, and what are their opportunities?

As you think about the opportunities available through these two simple questions, think beyond the value you can create for yourself, for your team, for your organization. Think about how these two questions might empower you, your financial brand, your fintech to continue to put the transformation people beyond the commoditized transaction of dollars and cents. How might you use these two questions to coach them, to guide them beyond the confusion and the complexity, the conflict and the chaos of financial stress? This is where I see some of the greatest opportunities for financial brands in fintech, looking beyond just technology, but putting people at the center of all of our thinking and all of our doing.

As you continue to look ahead towards the future of growth at your financial brand or fintech, please do text me your questions. Text me your questions, digital marketing questions, digital sales questions, digital leadership questions, strategy questions, text your questions to 415-579-3002. And I do look forward to answering them for you on an upcoming podcast. Until then, and as always, be well, do good, make your bed.

Speaker 2:

