Growth Isn't One Sided: How Innovation and Scale Work Together

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Introduction: How Lyft and Uber Taught Me to Think Differently

"Growth is never by mere chance; it is the result of forces working together." - James Cash Penny, founder of J.C. Penny

If scale is all that matters in business, then why do we see companies fail despite massive growth? Scale is important, but scaling alone isn't enough. The key to sustainable growth lies in how you navigate the messy, unpredictable opportunities that challenge assumptions and defy the neat logic of spreadsheets.

During my six years at Lyft and Uber, we didn't just play it safe; we took risks, embraced uncertainty, and redefined entire industries—from rideshare to food delivery to insurance. That kind of growth doesn't come from following a formula. It's the result of knowing when to focus on efficiency and when to embrace bold experimentation. It's about blending precision with judgment, structure with creativity, and innovation with consistency.

Success requires different ways of thinking. Thinking like a manager delivers consistency and refining what works. Thinking like an entrepreneur creates new paths for growth. And there's a third, less familiar, way of thinking — one that harmonizes the two in order to adapt to the real world's complexities.

This "minibook" dives into how to blend these different ways of thinking. It's about understanding that our world isn't a perfect equation to be solved—it's dynamic, messy, and human. Scalable solutions are necessary, but they aren't sufficient. True value comes from addressing the unique opportunities that lie in the gaps between what's predictable and what's possible.

Drawing from my years on the front lines of two of the most disruptive companies of our time, I'll share insights, strategies, and real-world examples including:

- How incentives matter based on the types of work being done
- How to avoid the pitfalls of over-relying on metrics
- How growth requires more than scalability
- How managers and entrepreneurs think and solve problems differently
- How to cultivate "Harmonizers" within your organization—individuals or teams who tackle messy problems and drive big breakthroughs.
- Why these Harmonizers will shape the future business in an AI-driven world

Without people focused on these messy problems, companies risk chasing only scalable solutions.These are great, but rare. They are leaps forward, but you also need steps between those leaps. Building for today and tomorrow means addressing immediate challenges while being on the lookout for the future.

With AI taking over routine and scalable tasks, the future of work is changing. Your employees' day-to-day tasks will evolve, but the human touch is still irreplaceable for navigating the unpredictable and innovative.

Whether you're a CEO driving growth, a manager optimizing operations, or a founder ready to disrupt, this minibook offers actionable insights you can apply to your business. These lessons aren't just for the tech giants—they're for any organization that wants to thrive in a world where the only constant is change.

If you're ready to move beyond the conventional wisdom of "just scale it," and start building real, lasting value, buckle up and enjoy the ride (pun definitely intended).

A Short Aside: We learn by doing (and accomplishing), and in my six years in the rideshare world we did (and accomplished) a lot. These lessons and learnings stem from combining lived experiences with broad-ranging study and research. I'm an economist that masqueraded as a start-up operator for 6 years. In sharing these ideas I am inspired by values in found in the *Lyft Guide to Making It Happen* (*Disagreeing and Committing*, *Diving Deep*, and *Creating Fearlessly*) and the core OG values at Uber (*Be an Owner not a Renter*, *Let Builders Build*, and *Principled Confrontation*). This work is rooted in a love for my teammates and what we built together.