

uplift

# Founders' Guide

Ingredients of a  
high-potential business

# Introduction

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As a founder, you wear many hats, often juggling sales, finance, marketing, and HR. So, it can be hard to find the time to step back to take stock of where the business is heading, to build robust teams, sharpen your go-to-market strategy, and unlock long-term growth.

But it all might be easier than you think.

Uplift Founders' Guide is here to help make that journey easier. Drawing on **our team's** experience with hundreds of Europe's niche software businesses—and insights from our expert **Advisory Board**—we provide practical, actionable advice to help you take your business to the next level.

In this first chapter we examine what the foundations of long-term growth traits your business will likely possess already.

Whether it's refining operations, improving customer retention, or leveraging Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A), our Founders' Guide will take you through how to thrive in today's competitive software environment. We hope you find it valuable.

## **Alex Myers & Michael Hammerström**

**Co-Founders & Co-CEOs**







# Is yours a high-potential business?

This first chapter dives into the key ingredients that set high-potential software businesses apart. Of course, strong financial performance and profitability are essential. But a truly high-potential business also has a strong sense of identity, a cohesive culture, and deep customer relationships.

How do you measure up? You might have a commanding share of your market and great customer retention. But perhaps continued long-term growth looks difficult, and M&A is too challenging. The high-potential business scorecard at the end of this chapter will help shine a light on how well-positioned for growth your business is. The subsequent chapters will help you take the next steps with confidence.

## What is a high-potential business?

Niche software businesses with the best growth potential don't necessarily need to be the fastest growing, the most sophisticated, or the most profitable.

While financial performance and profitability matter, high-potential businesses are well-regarded by their customers, have a strong sense of self, and have a culture that brings their people together.





## Ingredients of a high-potential business

The best niche software businesses have successfully worked out how to support complex processes in industries like Financial Services, Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals, Energy & Utilities, and AgriTech.

Their success is down to a combination of factors:

- **Product strategy.** They have deep expertise in delivering products that meet real business needs and solve genuine pain points. Their customers depend on them. They are the de facto standard in their chosen niche market.
- **Customer focus.** They're customer-centric, build close relationships, and

deliver high levels of customer care. That adds up to exceptionally high customer retention levels.

- **Operational and commercial.** Their cross-functional teams – marketing, sales, finance – are high performers constantly looking to learn and improve.
- **Culture.** They have a culture where employees are well-motivated and happy in their work, customer relationships are prioritised, and decisions align with core values.

Perhaps you have already mastered these ingredients. That means your next move might need to be a bold one.

Is yours a high-potential business?

Fill out our scorecard at the end of this chapter to find out.



## High-potential business scorecard

Is yours a high-potential business? How many of the foundations of growth do you have in place?

Use the scorecard below to assess how your company is positioned for growth.

For each question, rate your business on a scale from 1 to 4:

- 1 - Weak:** This area is a significant challenge
- 2 - Needs improvement:** Some progress, but inconsistencies remain
- 3 - Strong:** Performing well with room for refinement
- 4 - Excellent:** A core strength of the business

At the end, add up your scores and discover your growth potential.





Ingredient	Score
<b>Vision and mission</b>	
All our employees are aligned with our company's mission and values.	1 2 3 4
Employees can clearly articulate what we do and who our customers are.	1 2 3 4
<b>Culture</b>	
Our employees love coming to work, and they feel engaged and valued.	1 2 3 4
New employees consistently describe our workplace as positive and supportive.	1 2 3 4
<b>Product strategy</b>	
We have a clear, regularly updated product roadmap shared with employees and customers, and ensure key milestones are met.	1 2 3 4
We assess product-market fit regularly and identify gaps in our products and services to find new opportunities for growth.	1 2 3 4
We have identified potential M&A opportunities to accelerate growth.	1 2 3 4
<b>Customer focus</b>	
We have a clearly defined Ideal Customer Profile (ICP).	1 2 3 4



Our customers see us as partners rather than vendors: they talk to us about their business challenges, not just their software needs.	1	2	3	4
<b>Operational and commercial</b>				
Our sales team has defined targets and territories, and incentives relating to those targets.	1	2	3	4
We have an annual marketing plan with a budget and clear lines of responsibility.	1	2	3	4
We have a customer relationship management (CRM) system that is actively maintained and used.	1	2	3	4
We benchmark our revenue growth against our competitors and wider market.	1	2	3	4
Pricing strategies are reviewed regularly and adjusted based on market conditions.	1	2	3	4
Our regular leadership meetings include discussions on key issues and KPI performance.	1	2	3	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>_/64</b>			

## How did you score?

**Over 40:** Your business is well-positioned to unlock accelerated growth.

**30-40:** You have strong foundations in place. Targeted improvements could unlock your full potential.

**20-30:** There are some important gaps to plug to reach your full potential.

**Below 20:** Some significant challenges exist, but strategic adjustments can help create efficiency.



**Some businesses break through—others plateau. Where does yours stand?**

The scorecard is not just an assessment of the strength of your business today; it recognises that growth is a journey. A lower score simply suggests there may be a few immediate things to do to position your company for long-term growth.

Stay tuned for practical tips, expert advice, and actionable insights. The Uplift Founder's Guide is designed to help you make strategic improvements and unlock your business's full potential.

We're drawing on the expertise of our team and Uplift's Advisory Board—leaders with decades of experience across Europe's software industry. They've helped countless businesses like yours achieve sustainable growth and thrive in their markets.

Talk to us about how we can help you and your team quickly move from the status quo to growth.





# The Uplift Advisory Board – Providing Actionable Advice

## Bernd Mährlein

### Expertise: Go-to-Market & Operations

Bernd is a seasoned revenue leader with a proven track record in establishing and expanding European operations for mostly US-based technology companies.

He currently leads the EMEA expansion for eCommerce Product Discovery Platform Constructor.io and previously built Cloud Security Scale-Up Lacework in Central & Southern Europe. Bernd's software Go-to-Market career began with direct sales roles at SAP HQ and M&A data room provider Intralinks. Currently, he collaborates with select SaaS CEOs to build and evolve their GTM operations.



## Bruno Tourme

### Expertise: M&A

Bruno Tourme is a seasoned and versatile business leader who specialises in technology mergers and acquisitions (M&A). Bruno has a strong background in corporate strategy, focusing on positioning, research analysis, financing, exit strategies, and governance for European tech businesses. He is known for his work in advising companies on building visibility and attractiveness abroad, particularly in the UK and Europe.

Recently he co-founded an exclusive network of CEOs of Spanish tech companies giving them access to the global tech investment and corporate world.



## Fred Hessabi

### Expertise: Go-to-Market

Fred Hessabi is a seasoned technology executive with over 25 years of sales experience in the industry. He has held leadership positions at prominent companies, including SAP, Siebel Systems, and C3.ai. In his role as Chief Customer Officer at HERE Technologies, Fred led the Global Sales & Professional Services team, focusing on expanding the company's international business and customer base.



## Onno Krap

### Expertise: Finance

Onno is an International Finance Executive (CFO) with extensive experience in public, private as well as PE-backed companies. Combining innovation and technology into sustainable value creation has been his passion throughout his career.

He was previously CFO of Exact Software in the Netherlands, while the company was taken private in 2014 and subsequently successfully transitioned through various ownerships cycles. More recently, Onno was the CFO of Kinly Holding BV, an international visual collaboration company.



## Phill Robinson

### Expertise: Leadership, Growth & Marketing

Phill Robinson is a prominent figure in the European software industry, known for his extensive leadership experience. He has held key positions at major software companies, including Oracle, Siebel Systems, Salesforce.com, IRIS Software Group, and Exact Software. In April 2022, he founded **Boardwave**, a networking community aimed at connecting software leaders across Europe to share knowledge and best practices.



## Sion Lewis

### Expertise: Customer Journey & Go-to-Market

Sion Lewis is a seasoned executive with over 20 years of experience in the software industry. In 2023, he became the Chief Executive Officer of Ciphre, a leading UK-based SaaS HR software provider. Before this, Sion served as the General Manager for EMEA at GoTo, shaping international strategy and enhancing the brand's European presence. Prior to that, he was the CEO of the Accountancy & Education Division at IRIS Software Group.





## About Uplift

Uplift is Europe's leading permanent equity investor focusing on niche European software businesses. We're software industry experts who work with founders to create better deals for better companies. We make long-term investments that unlock growth potential and enable founders to fully or partially exit, while preserving their business' brand and culture.

For more information, visit [www.uplift.com](http://www.uplift.com)