

## Gut check

How Eric Hoffman's love for his job equals success at QuantaPoint Inc. **By Meredyth McKenzie**

**E**ric Hoffman enjoys his job. The CEO of QuantaPoint Inc., which uses laser scanning technology to digitize structures to eliminate project defects, loves coming to work each day and doesn't mind getting calls in the middle of the night to solve a problem.

Hoffman has also enjoyed watching the company grow over the years and seeing his 55 employees grow personally and professionally.

*Smart Business* spoke with Hoffman about how enjoying your job helps a company grow and succeed.

### **Q: What are the keys to growing a company?**

People, because as you grow, you've got to grow the people quickly. It's more than hiring new people, but the people you have need to be promoted into new positions and increase their management skills and knowledge.

Their personal growth has to keep up with the corporate growth. If you don't have the right people at the right time when you need them, growth plans fall apart quickly.

The second is cash flow and managing cash. If I grew my business 1,000 percent a year, if cash collections in available cash don't keep up with that, the business runs out of steam quickly.

Have a plan of what the growth is for. Growth for growth's sake is not a good thing. Have an objective in mind, a strategic vision. There are a lot of different reasons for growth, and a key is clearly figuring out with your management team what your goals are in terms of growth so that everyone's on the same page and running in the same direction.

### **Q: How do you manage cash flow?**

Don't spend more than you have, and don't let your eyes be too big. Sometimes, you have to put off things you'd like to do to grow because you may not be able to afford it.

Pick a growth rate you can manage,

whether by raising money or off of internal cash flow. It requires good financial controls, which may sound inconsistent to some with growth, but that's the sign of a sloppy CEO. Sometimes, the best way to grow is to have good financial controls.

Plan things thoroughly, understand where you're going to spend your money to get the best buck for it, and make some hard decisions.



### **Q: How do you plan for growth and set goals for growth?**

Decide who you're supposed to be in the world, what the company is about and stick to that. Keep reminding yourself of who you're going to be, at least in the short term. And have a reasonably good idea of who you want to be in the long term.

If you've got it pegged out too good, you probably don't have that much imagination, but you've got to know the direction of it.

You have to be fairly honest with yourself, decide what that answer is going to be for

you, and build a plan around that goal set. The plan is about the objectives and the strategies and tactics to achieve those objectives.

### **Q: How do you determine what your company is about?**

It's one the hardest things that you have to do; it can take years. It's sometimes those who have been with the business the longest understand why you're there in the first place. A lot of it is gut check. Look inside and say, 'What do I enjoy doing for a living?' If you don't enjoy what you're doing, then you shouldn't be doing it because you will just sour the company for everybody.

Ask basic questions. What am I good at? What can I make money at? What am I passionate about? Where those three intersect, that's what you should be doing.

You better be good at it, passionate about it and able to make money doing it. If you don't have all three, then you haven't found the spot. Once you find the spot, build your plan around it.

### **Q: What advice would you give to other leaders to grow their companies?**

Sit down and understand what you're about to do because it needs to be something that you enjoy doing. It can't be a job; it's got to be a lifestyle because it affects everything you do in your life. It affects your family, the people around you and your hobbies.

I don't think there is a day that I'm not on call somewhere. My wife has gotten to the point where she doesn't mind it, either, because it makes me happy, and she's been included in the process. It defines our lifestyle.

If you don't have that kind of support network, and if you're not ready for that kind of lifestyle, then jumping into a high-growth situation is probably going to be an uncomfortable, depressing experience, which then your employees are going to hate because you're going to project that.

**HOW TO REACH:** QuantaPoint Inc., (412) 653-0100 or [www.quantapoint.com](http://www.quantapoint.com)