

Business Terminated

How an employee lawsuit drove one CEO into bankruptcy

Convincing employees to follow your lead

Vision Setting

Beyond 8(a)

Will these contractors survive the transition?

January 2011

WASHINGTON

smart

required reading for
growing companies

CEO

FUTURE 50

Greater Washington's
Fastest-Growing Companies



FUTURE 50

Europ Assistance USA

President and CEO: Guillaume Deybach
Bethesda, MD



Have you led the company through a major shift? If so, how has this change affected the success or profitability of the organization? After many years of offering our core travel assistance product that was becoming commoditized and less profitable, Europ Assistance USA successfully created and launched an innovative new service that helps customers face the growing crime of identity theft. Launching transformative new products largely contributed to the tripling of our sales and increased profitability over the last five years. Product innovation and following a “blue ocean” strategy are key growth factors for Europ Assistance USA.

How do you and the executive management team effectively plan and measure the company’s growth and communicate that growth trajectory to the company? Europ Assistance USA’s executive team defines a five-year strategic roadmap for the company, establishes yearly quantifiable targets and shares with the entire staff in quarterly “town hall” meetings the organization’s performance.

Describe your biggest leadership challenge. What lesson did you learn from that experience? Our company was growing organically by more than 30 percent per year for three years in a row and hiring at a fast pace when we started facing increased customer service issues. This lower client satisfaction came as a result of challenges in hiring, training and managing talent. This experience confirmed that any service company’s successful growth starts and ends with the quality of the individuals on its team and that an organization’s growth is dependent upon bringing the right people on board and then on-boarding them well.

What defines a great leader? A great leader must develop a compelling vision and assemble a talented team to define and achieve a collective ambition.

Describe the most important growth decision you have made for the company. The most important growth decision I made for Europ Assistance USA was the identification and selection of the companies our group acquired to accelerate our growth in the U.S. marketplace.

INDUSTRY: Travel assistance
IN A NUTSHELL: U.S. branch of Europ Assistance, helping travelers in emergency situations
FOUNDED: 1963

What is the most crucial element of a growth plan? Flexibility – we need to demonstrate optimism in our vision while staying tuned in to reality so that we can change course when the business environment evolves.

How do you determine when to turn down an opportunity that has potential to grow your company? We will turn down any business opportunity that does not contribute to our company’s mission of providing services that make our customers’ lives simpler and more secure. We will also turn down those opportunities where we cannot reasonably build a sustainable competitive advantage.