



Building Strategic Growth

Re-defining strategic horizons

Context

The business had built its success on long-term contracts and a volume-driven model, earning margin through scale and repeatable delivery. But as customer expectations shifted toward greater agility and innovation, it became clear that the old model wouldn't be enough. Without a change in direction, revenues and profitability would decline significantly as legacy contracts matured and follow-on platforms entered a lower volume of support requirement early within their lifecycle. New opportunities demanded different capabilities.

The underlying structure of the business reflected its past: capability was built contract-by-contract, creating operational silos and limiting the efficiency and flexibility needed for sustainable growth. International presence was limited, and most revenue remained tied to the UK market – exposing the business to concentrated risk at a time when diversification was becoming essential.

This wasn't just a commercial challenge; it was a strategic inflection point. The organisation needed to reimagine its capabilities, restructure how it thought about growth, and build a business model that could defend its current position while creating new, sustainable opportunities for the future.

My Role

As Managing Director, I set the strategic direction for the business, recognising that sustainable growth would require more than contract wins – it would demand the development of new capabilities and a more deliberate approach to the markets we served. I defined the structure for growth around five distinct channels: Defend, Grow, Export, Second-Owner, and Adjacent; providing clarity on where we would compete and how we would build the capabilities needed to succeed.

Working closely with the growth teams, ensuring the development of new solutions and capabilities were aligned to customer needs and market dynamics.

Approach

We approached growth with deliberate structure and intent. Using an adaptation of model for futures thinking over three horizons, we ensured focus remained balanced; defending and delivering today's commitments, developing capabilities for emerging markets, and investing in future opportunities that would sustain long-term growth. Each of the five channels was shaped with clear criteria to focus effort where it aligned with the business's evolving strengths and strategic ambitions.

Integrated Business Planning (IBP) and Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) provided the operational backbone. IBP created transparency between strategy and delivery capacity, ensuring that investment decisions were balanced, and that we could meet the needs of today's contracts while building the capabilities required for future growth. SWP enabled us to anticipate and develop critical skills and leadership pipelines, not just for the near term but for the emerging opportunities on the horizon.

At the same time, I maintained a clear governance framework, working alongside my Finance Director and Commercial Director to manage business performance, ensuring the strategy remained aligned to financial and commercial realities as the market evolved. Strategic Workforce Planning and Integrated Business Planning became critical tools to ensure we had the right capacity and capability to deliver today while preparing for tomorrow.

Throughout, my focus remained on building a business that could grow with purpose – ensuring that every opportunity we pursued strengthened our ability to deliver, not just in the immediate term, but sustainably into the future.

Throughout, we remained disciplined. New solutions were grounded in credible, deliverable capabilities, avoiding the temptation to sell concepts that couldn't be realised. We focused on developing Minimum Viable Products (MVPs) and solutions that could be scaled and adapted as customer needs evolved, ensuring that every new opportunity was backed by tangible capability and operational readiness from the outset.

Growth was never pursued for its own sake; each opportunity was assessed against the capabilities we had, or were deliberately building. If a contract or market didn't fit, we were prepared to step away, even when that meant moving on from long-standing customer relationships. Building sustainable growth meant growing with purpose, not simply chasing scale.

Outcomes

The growth strategy delivered both immediate results and a stronger foundation for the future. Key contracts were successfully defended, with all existing obligations met or transitioned collaboratively where required. Where contracts were returned to customer organisations, transition planning and TUPE processes were completed smoothly – maintaining strong customer relationships and protecting our reputation.

New opportunities were secured across multiple channels, including significant international contracts that expanded the business's footprint beyond the UK. Investment in adjacent markets and second-owner support further diversified revenue streams, reducing dependency on legacy programmes and improving resilience.



Five Channels, One Strategy

Defined and operationalised five distinct growth channels – Defend, Grow, Export, Second-Owner, and Adjacent – to diversify opportunity and build sustainable capabilities.

Financial performance improved significantly over the period, with more sustainable, capability-aligned contracts underpinning future growth. A strong five-year strategic pipeline was established – built on real capabilities, credible solutions, and a business model designed to adapt and thrive in evolving markets.



Retention and Expansion

Successfully retained key contracts, secured new domestic and international opportunities, and delivered seamless transition planning for contracts returning to customer organisations.



Stronger, Sustainable Performance

Improved financial performance, reduced operational risk, and built a sustainable growth pipeline aligned to a five-year strategic plan.

Reflections

Leading growth through capability development reinforced that certainty in revenue, while valuable, can also mask strategic risks. Long-term contracts provide stability, but when assets are retired, or customer needs change, they can leave a business exposed if capabilities aren't adaptable and relevant for the future.

Delivering support to Royal Navy platforms highlighted the importance of aligning growth strategies to asset lifecycles. As assets were removed or replaced, support needs shifted, and success depended on developing capabilities that matched not just today's requirements but anticipated tomorrow's.

It was critical to establish clear criteria for opportunity selection. Pursuing work that no longer aligned with our strategic capabilities would have stretched resources and distracted focus. Sometimes the hardest – but right – decision is to step away from legacy opportunities that no longer served the business's future.

International growth brought further lessons. Success abroad required more than exporting a UK model; it demanded localisation. Understanding different commercial environments and adapting contracts, operations, and risk management approaches accordingly.

Above all, the experience reinforced that sustainable growth is built on investing in real capability – meeting today's needs while deliberately building relevance for the future. That balance between present performance and future resilience continues to shape my leadership approach today.

Building sustainable growth meant more than securing new contracts - it meant developing real capabilities, aligning strategy to future markets, and creating the foundations for resilience and long-term success.