Tiffani Bova: That's why sequence is such an important part of growth IQ. It's because timing is everything, and sometimes you have to slow down to speed up. If you just are always on 100 miles an hour, and you're just never pulling in for a pit stop, eventually the car will break down.

(Intro Music)

Robert Glazer: Welcome to Elevate, a podcast about achievement, personal growth and pushing limits in leadership and life. I'm Robert Glazer, and I chat with world class performers who have committed to elevating their own life, pushing the limits of their capacity, and helping others do the same.

Lenox Powell: This episode was previously recorded and published on the Outperform Podcast

Robert Glazer: Our quote for today is by novelist, Ellen Glasgow, and it is, "All change is not growth as all movement is not forward." Our guest today, Tiffani Bova, understands this sentiment quite well. She's the global customer growth and innovation evangelist at Sales Force, as well as the Wall Street Journal best selling author of Growth IQ, Get Smarter About the Choices That Will Make or Break Your Business. Tiffani, welcome, it's so great to have you on Outperform.

Tiffani Bova: Well thank you for having me. It's my pleasure.

Robert Glazer: In addition to your role at Sales Force, I know you've led large revenue producing divisions at businesses ranging from start up to Fortune 500, and you've also traveled the world helping companies solve a lot of their vexing and growth challenges. I'm curious, what are some of the growth pitfalls you see companies, especially growth companies, repeating and falling into?

Tiffani Bova: Oh, that's such a good way to start, so I'd say this, it's not ... Well, the first thing is the one thing is never one thing.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Tiffani Bova: Now I'm going to answer it multiple ways, right, because the first is that people tend to try to find this one fix. If we just deploy this technology, or we just hire more sales people, or we just spend more marketing dollars, or we just launch one more product, that's going to fix whatever they have in their business that's making them feel either one, that they're starting to see softness in how easy it is to grow, or at the growth rate they have been seeing historically is not as high as it has been. Two, they're in a full blown growth stall, which is where, my definition of it is sort of two to four quarters of flat to no growth. They want the one thing that's going to either get them back on track to the growth they were seeing previously, or two, get themselves out of a growth stall. I'm always the first to say that it's not one thing.

Tiffani Bova: The second thing I'd say is that many companies believe if they are growing, and kind of the Bill Gates quote, and I'm going to ruin it, but the net of it really was is success is the worst teacher, because unfortunately you feel like, well we've always been growing like we don't have a sales problem or a growth problem, or a marketing problem. We don't have a problem. We need to then course correct, and that's the worse thing they can do, because ultimately when you're in growth you have this ability that potentially your competitors do not, because they're feeling a softness, and maybe they're not growing, so when growing that's the opportunity to take that profitability that you're enjoying and reinvest it in the business for where you think you're going to need growth two to three years from now.

Tiffani Bova: I hear lots of companies go, "Oh, we've got 50 quarters of straight growth. We don't have a growth problem." That can sometimes set them up for being blind sighted by we just didn't expect that was going to happen, whatever that is.

Tiffani Bova: The third thing is we tend to turn the same dials when looking for growth. I mentioned them a minute ago. One, you have kind of hire more sales people, because with every head we get another million in revenue, takes them six months to ramp up or three months to ramp up, or two months to ramp up, so if we hire five people two months from now we'll have five million more in revenue, so let's just hire more heads because we can get more revenue that way. Two, we're just going to spend more marketing dollars because if we spend more marketing dollars, more leads will come in, and if more leads come in our sales people, or whatever engine, our eCommerce engine online, whatever it is that is selling will sell more. Unfortunately third, we're going to cut costs to growth, and my book actually does not cover the third at all.

Robert Glazer: Okay.

Tiffani Bova: Or MNA, right, so I guess the fourth would be we're going to go and acquire growth, so those last two I don't really talk about. The first two, those dials are not as effective as they used to be historically. Growth is just getting harder.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, I'm curious. When people talk about growth, I think you have growth or private equity growth, then you have this whole Silicon Valley lens that tends to jade a lot of how people think about, you know, grow baby, grow. Can you talk a little bit about what you see the difference between high growth and sustainable growth? I know it probably was woven into a bunch of examples you used in your book, but I think it's an important topic that doesn't get discussed enough.

Tiffani Bova: In what way?

Robert Glazer: In terms of, you know, you can grow, as you said there are a lot of levers to pull to get kind of high growth, but a lot of ... You see companies 3, 400% and then have that complete stall that you were talking about. A lot of it's probably fueled by sales and marketing, but really more what is sustainable growth and not being addicted to growth itself.

Tiffani Bova: Yeah, well I think you nailed it. I think it's this we just don't have a problem, but it's all about preparation for the problem. If you're always in this mode of we don't have one, you're never preparing for when one shows up, or you're never even anticipating or looking for the early signs, kind of like the canary in the coal mine, that there may be a problem two to three quarters from now, or all the sudden, gosh lately in customer service we've been hearing this complaint a lot. Capturing that and correcting it, in an offensive way, is very different then we have a churn problem. We're losing customers and we don't know why, and now you're in defense mode. That's why I say if you're growing, and for the companies that are growing, there's a stat out there that's like 80% of companies at some point in their history will hit a growth stall. You know what I'm saying?

Tiffani Bova: We're like all of the sudden whatever happened, you know, manufacturing was impacted because of some natural disaster, or a regulation change that it took you a moment to course correct, or your funding or the business was your largest client has gone out of business. Whatever it is, where all the sudden it's some black swan event, or something you did not anticipate, 80% of businesses are going to hit some kind of stall in growth. Only a very small percentage of them ever make their way out of that stall, and a very small percentage of businesses are larger than five million.

Tiffani Bova: We always talk kind of about the Fortune 500, but the majority of businesses around the globe are smaller than five million, so the challenge is that any kind of big growth stall or something that impacts business is so difficult for small businesses to recover from, because they just don't have the capitol and the assets to invest in anything risky, because they have to make payroll, and so they're not able to make those investments. That's why paying attention to what's happening in your customers when you are growing to make sure you just stay a quarter or two ahead of where your business is, where your customers are, allows you to stay ahead of, hopefully, anything that shows up in that black swan category, where holy moly we just never thought this was going to happen, whatever this is.

Tiffani Bova: It is really a discipline, but I don't want to blow past the fact that for all intent and purposes, and one of the things that I ... It's sort of a term I coined many years ago, called the seller's dilemma, which is absolutely a play off of Clayton Christensen's Innovator's Dilemma, is anybody who's responsible for driving revenue, how do you transform the business, look for new ways to grow, try and fail in new businesses or new product launches, while at the same time you're responsible for hitting revenue? It's kind of like changing the tires on a race car, when it's going around the track.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Tiffani Bova: Very difficult to do. It takes a very special kind of leader, a very special kind of organization, and so I don't say it lightly that doing what I just described is easy. It is not, but you have to be committed to it, and so even if you have somebody on your team, who is paying attention to what's happening in the business, so that you can run the business today, and then the two of you can go after those plan Bs and test them in anticipation for the fact that 80% of the time people will hit a growth stall.

Robert Glazer: Well that is very common of the sort of visionary operator paring, right? Where the operator needs to make sure the trains are running and the visionary's trying to look around the corner and see what comes next.

Tiffani Bova: Yeah, and it requires, just from a pure time management, if you spend all day in meetings and you have no time to actually do the work you need to do, but if you spend part of your time in meetings, and then you're doing work out of the meetings, you're also not spending any time on thinking. To me, growth is a thinking game. It's flat out a thinking game. It's how do you out think.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, well actually that's a perfect seg way, so you've recently released your first book, Growth IQ, which has been lofted by Seth Godin, Tom Peters, Arianna Huffington, Dan Pink, among many others. I'm curious, how did you come up with the concept and how do you define growth IQ?

Tiffani Bova: The concept kind of organically showed itself to me. I had the opportunity and really pleasure of working at Gartner for a decade as a research fellow, and my area of coverage was sales transformation, go to market models, indirect selling, and then towards the middle of that decade it got more into the impact of digital and the way companies sell and engage with customers, and then really at the end, really started talking about experience being the new product, and what does that mean in a selling environment, and this new modern seller that was very social and relationship based, yet so much technology coming their way. There's just kind of a lot of moving parts, and it was pretty common.

Tiffani Bova: I mean why I started with the one thing is it's never one thing, is I would set in meetings with clients and it literally would be like, "We need to hit our numbers this quarter Tiffani, what can we do?"

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Tiffani Bova: It's like 30 days into the quarter. I'm like, "I'm not sure what I can tell you to do that's going to have impact in 60 days, outside of spending more marketing money, because even if you hired more sales people you can't ramp them that fast."

Robert Glazer: Right.

Tiffani Bova: Right, they might have a nominal impact in quarter, but the only thing you possibly could do would be to send more leads, uncover more business opportunities for your existing sellers, and so they're like, "Great, we'll just drive more leads," and then they get ... It became this habit, which is why I said you hire more sales people, spend more marketing money, cut costs. That became the hamster wheel, and I knew that there had to be a better way.

Tiffani Bova: I started to see those companies that were growing and growing consistently had some common patterns within them, and it was this combination of things that they were doing, but more importantly it was the sequence in which they were doing it. That became the foundation for Growth IQ. Then I said, "Well, I don't want to try to launch this new concept." The four Ps, it's now going to be the eight Rs, like I didn't want to do that. What I did was I said, "What are tried and true ways companies have grown for the last 100 years?" I want to modernize that knowing now we have social, mobile, cloud, big data, AI, IOT, you know what I mean? We have all these things that we didn't have with 20th Century businesses outside of sort of the 90s kind of, maybe a little bit. I was doing eCommerce sites in late 97, 98, 99, so it was there, but very small. It was a very small sort of segment of the market if you will.

Tiffani Bova: The 20th Century businesses were built for heavily asset intensive, we're going to go build data centers and we're going to R&D all this stuff, where the 21st Century is like, we don't own buildings. We're just going to do we work. We don't own cars. We're just going to do Uber. We don't own manufacturing plants. We're going to do Kylie Cosmetics and build a billion dollar business in less than three years, where it took L'Oreal 50 years. Do you know what I'm saying?

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Tiffani Bova: At the end of the day, it just was not the same, there were not the same chess pieces on the chess board, when it came to growth, so I came up with the ten as a modernization of things people knew. First couple of them were really a homage to the Ansoff Matrix. Sell more to your existing customers, sell different things to new customers, you know that everyone was familiar with, and you'll still see case studies today about how big brands are using the Ansoff Matrix. That was written in 1957. We're in 2018, so was it still applicable? Yes, but the way we used to do customer based penetration in catalogs, i.e. Sears Roebuck's catalog, or mailers or knocking door to door, or the car salesman, like you can sell more to your base, but using technology you can do that at scale, much more personalized, much more quick, in multiple channels simultaneously. You can test, turn stuff on, turn stuff off. That's a different game.

Tiffani Bova: Growth IQ was really a modernization of things people have been doing, one, which were the ten growth paths. Well really nine, the tenth doesn't fit into that category because that was one that I think has just raised new awareness, which we can talk about. Then the other two is this really combination and sequence, and that was the secret sauce to me. The ten were interesting because it gave them something, the reader, and gives me something that's digestible. Ten is manageable. Ten is something people can understand, but combination and sequence, and context were really the crux of the framework.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, and the case studies are really interesting in terms of looking both at the sequencing and what people did. I'd love to dive into a few of those that I wanted to get a little more of your feedback on. The first one was churn, I think, which was path seven, because again if you think about, particularly in the Silicon Valley growth world, so this was, this one was Blue Apron. I sort of remember seeing it at the time, and particularly a the business where the economics weren't that great, but you really went into this.

Robert Glazer: You talk a little bit how, you know, what does it look like when they're pouring in the front door, and just as fast out the back door, and is this sort of the Silicon Valley giving people marketing dollars trap, or how do companies ... That just seemed to me like the perfect example of addicted to growth for growth sake, and not because the customer is taking you there.

Tiffani Bova: Yeah, well there's a couple of things on that when you unpack it. The first is that churn, as I said a few minutes ago, tends to be viewed as a defensive strategy. Something's wrong, we have to fix it. I tried to flip that on its head and say, "No, if we can use this as an offensive strategy to fix whatever it is, or to understand whatever it is, to never have churn." Those are two very different things. The only way you could do the latter is to really be looking at the data through the lens of analytics and intelligence to tell you patterns, to start to see things that are going on, so that you could say, "Hey, we've really noticed that customers that we acquire from this particular source are churning three times faster than everybody else. Either we need to not acquire customers from that source anymore, because we're spending an acquisition cost. We're never paying ourselves back and the lifetime value is very short. We either need to kill that or we need to figure out why they're churning."

Tiffani Bova: If you just kind of say, "Well our churn rate is 3.2 or 5., or 10," whatever it is, and you don't know what I just ... Like as an example, that is an offensive strategy of getting ahead of it, so if you just completely eliminated that source of new customer acquisition, you should see positive result on your churn rate, right? You can reallocate those dollars to whichever channel is giving you better lifetime value, and allowing you to pay back the acquisition costs much more quickly, so wouldn't you do that? Instead of focusing on, "Well they're churning. Let's just constantly figure out, well let's just save those customers," and no one's going, "Hey, did anybody realize it was all from the same source?" We're saving these customers and we're doing it by saying we'll give you three months free, so now you're actually costing the company more money. They're nowhere near profitability, like profitable customers, so that's a very different approach to it.

Tiffani Bova: I would agree with you that this tends to be a recurring revenue conversation in the as a service model, so software's a service, infrastructure is a service, platform is a service. Whatever, as a service, and really born out of the cellular industry. There's so many things that accruing revenue, but one of the things that I pulled out in that chapter is it doesn't have to be a recurring revenue business. I always buy coffee and donuts on Sunday at John's Place on the corner. Four times a month, every Sunday I give them $20.00 basically.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Tiffani Bova: Well now I don't go anymore, so it wasn't a recurring revenue business, but now he's lost $20.00. Now why don't I go anymore? Well, it's not clean anymore, or like the people behind the counter aren't very friendly, or the coffee isn't good anymore, so now I've gone over to Bob's, and I'm giving him $20.00, and so there are ways in which you can actually lose repeat business from loyal customers, even if you don't have a recurring revenue model. You don't want to do that, the first coffee house and selling donuts, you don't want to do that because ultimately I would say, "How do I get me as a customer to not only spend $20.00 on Sundays, but to come and show up on Wednesdays and buy donuts for my staff meeting?"

Robert Glazer: Right.

Tiffani Bova: In that case it gets a lot more difficult. I'll be really honest here, you get a lot more difficult to track that example I just gave, because you don't know who I am. There's no loyalty program, like I walk in, I don't walk in, you don't know. There's no way to capture that, so I get that's a little bit more difficult, but then what does that say? Should you have a loyalty card? Should you think about having an app? Should you do something that allows you to get that connection with customers so you can know what was going on in the business?

Robert Glazer: What happens when the problem is fundamentally the product itself, or a demographic to whom the product is not a good fit? I'll give you the example, my example with Blue Apron is I have three kids, and we ordered it, when the whole meal thing was coming out. It sounded like great, it was going to save us all this time, and we get these kits and it was like I make four hamburgers that use seven pans, and it actually was more work. It was too fancy for a weekday meal for a family. That had nothing to, problem to do with the quality of the product overall, however it was just not the right demographic to be solving. I think that is an important point too. Sometimes you're just, maybe are you turning on the gas when the product's not right, or the product market fit's not right.

Tiffani Bova: Let's go back to what I was just saying. I don't know the answer to this, so I'm just making a big swag statement, but let's just say that particular supplier, which obviously I cover in the book, but let's just say that they realized when someone buys meals from us, and it's a serving for four, because you have to say how many people that are going to eat, because they need to give you enough food. They can say, "This is probably a family and we've noticed families are churning more than a single person, so maybe we shouldn't try to be acquiring families." I'm totally making this up, right, but as an example.

Tiffani Bova: Ultimately that's what I mean by well you ended up churning out, so they spent X amount of dollars to acquire you. They had you for Y amount of months. They probably gave you Z amount of free foods or discounts in the first couple of orders. They spent all this time, and then you're just, poof you're gone. Then they may send you an email and say, "Hey, we really want you back. We'll give you a week free." Now they've invested another $100.00 in trying to get you back.

Robert Glazer: Rather than asking why I left, right?

Tiffani Bova: Rather than asking why you left, and so that's what I mean by that's a great example, and in that particular case they were used as the churn example, and so ultimately there was all kinds of things. They overstretched the business itself and their people, and the infrastructure and the supply chain, and so quality was impacted. Timing was impacted, all kinds were impacted and so people were churning because they were scaling too quickly, and so that's why sequencing is such an important part of growth IQ. It's because timing is everything. Sometimes you have to slow down to speed up, and if you just are always on 100 miles an hour, and you're just never pulling in for a pit stop, eventually the car will break down.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, well that's a true lesson. Now flipping, and now diving into another one, I mean one of my favorite stories is, and I know a lot about it, but there was a piece of it I did not know, which you illuminated, is Netflix and how they ... Very few companies have been able to do what they did, which was put their own DVD business out of business, but not as we get to pivot, and then see that the change again was going to be original content and decide to really re-pivot their business.

Robert Glazer: One of the things that you noted in the book, and I think you mentioned this earlier, really goes to that about how do you sort of invest and stay the course at the same time, was that they still have X millions of DVD subscribers and it is the most profitable division. It is actually funding these growth channels. You don't shut it down, you just stop putting all the sales and marketing to it, which puts 25 points of margin on it. That was a really interesting piece of the story that I didn't know.

Tiffani Bova: Yeah, and I use that example a lot, and that's a great example around sequence, because ... I don't know if I've got deep enough into this in the book, just because of the limitations of how much time I had, right, or how much space I had, but ultimately Blockbuster had already gone down the streaming angle with Enron, and why didn't it work, so there was a couple reasons. Once again, I'm making, look back at assumptions here, but ultimately the timing was wrong. Not everyone had a Smartphone in their hand, Wifi was not everywhere, bandwidth was not inexpensive, and bandwidth was not everywhere, right?

Tiffani Bova: The challenge you had is that people might have wanted it, but couldn't have accessed it. It wasn't available to everybody the way I can drive to a Blockbuster was, and so what Blockbuster could have done was, instead of go to streaming was, we'll just get it to the mail delivery because one of the biggest things for them, what the pain point was, you show up to a Blockbuster and they don't have the movie you want, or two, you have it for a day or two, and then it sits in the back of your car and you end up spending more on the late fees then you could have just bought the movie. Then you have to go out of your way, so they could have done it in saying, "Look, we know we already have our customers, why don't we just mail it?" They never did that pivot, and so had Netflix in the U.S. just started at streaming, it wouldn't have probably survived because of what I just said.

Tiffani Bova: We weren't streaming to phones and iPads, and bandwidth wasn't ubiquitous, and Wifi wasn't free in every coffee shop. You know what I mean? People just couldn't ... On airplanes and you were streaming stuff on airplanes at this point. It's a totally different game, so it was a mistake going back to the thinking, and that's a sequence and a timing thing. They had to wait for the market, so when the market started to make that pivot, they started offering up streaming and changing the model. To your point, they're still 700, 800,000 people that do mail order, and it's the most profitable part of their business, one of the most profitable parts of their business. It's fueling their new growth path, which is original content.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, if you asked 100 people, they would get that wrong. What is the most profitable part.

Tiffani Bova: Yes.

Robert Glazer: That was eye-opening for me. I think it's the BCGers, the 2x2 matrix, you use the cash cow to fund the growth star.

Tiffani Bova: Yeah, absolutely. That's why I say growth is a thinking game. Growth is a thinking game, and the challenge people have is, in many cases, they're either very product centric or customer centric, and if you're very product centric, all you're thinking about is what your making. We do two things, we make stuff, we sell stuff. What else are we doing? Well, in the customer centric business, it's hold on a second, what's the context in the market? Who's our customer? Let's go back to this example, Netflix or Blue Apron or whomever. Who's our customer, or Kylie Jenner, who's our customer? Teenage girl, just starting her journey of wearing makeup, trying to learn how to wear makeup. Doesn't know how to wear makeup, so I'm not just going to ship the makeup, I'm going to wrap it with all these videos of how-tos, across the channels of where they go, and where they consume things.

Tiffani Bova: I'm going to take them on this grow up to be a woman journey with me, through the good and the bad, and I'm not going to then launch something that is for a category of people that is not my target audience, or in all the other examples that I've given. I think that's why I say it's thinking, and we just don't take enough time to pause and think.

Robert Glazer: One of the other, the last two things you talked about were really interesting because I think we see a lot of this more, particularly when solving big problems. Can you talk a little bit about the difference between partnership and co-optician, and when you would lean towards one or the other?

Tiffani Bova: Yeah, so partnerships, to me, the great news about this is, this is where I really sort of cut my teeth, and being a sales leader was on the indirect side selling with and through partners, especially on the technology side, and so partnerships are near and dear to me. As competition has gotten more heightened, very rare do you see a company able to solve something all on their own. It used to be, "Oh well we have outsourcers," so that was a form of partnership, or you may have some venture money, well that's a kind of partnership.

Tiffani Bova: Franchise models, well that's a partnership and you know 70%, 80% of McDonald's are franchise owned, so that's a kind of partnership. Then you may have partnerships where it's sell through. You can't buy Sysco products on Sysco.com. It's not possible, and Sysco is in the networking company, out of the food company.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Tiffani Bova: Even the food company, you can't buy Heinz Ketchup on Heinz.com either. You have to buy it from a third party, so partnerships are really important, especially in the supply chain, sell with, sell through, as well in sales and marketing and support.

Tiffani Bova: What co-optician is, really the best story in tech was Wintel, and it was inputting Windows and Intel together, but for this generation I like to say kind of the USB is probably a great example.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Tiffani Bova: That regardless of what airplane you're on, what car you're in, what laptop you use, what desktop you use, what television you use, the USB works.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Tiffani Bova: It works. Dell had to work with HP, who had to work with Lenovo, had to work LG, had to work with Samsung, had to work with ... You know what I mean? Everybody had to work with each other in some way to say, "This is going to be an industry standard," so just because Belkin sells the cable, it's being used in a Dell device, or Dell is selling a monitor that's being connected to an HP tower, CPU tower, so at the end of the day that's a form of co-optician working with people that you otherwise would not have maybe wanted to work with. We really see it happening now in the auto industry around autonomous driving, around AI and intelligence, around everything that's going on with natural language processing, commerce via voice, and all that's happening in that space. Making everything work together is a great way to define co-optician for people who aren't very familiar with it, but ultimately it has to do with either unlikely characters, so Red Bull and GoPro, it's more of a partnership.

Robert Glazer: Right.

Tiffani Bova: Right, if you have Sales Force working with Google, you'd say, "Well that's definitely a partnership, but co-optician as well because they have word processing and we have Quip, and that's kind of word processing," you know what I mean? You could say, "Well, why would we work with someone who sells something in our category?" Well because the customer who is going to be using both of our technology will want it to be seamless. It's really important for people to not make partnering decisions based on what they, who they think their competitor is, but more over think about who is their customer and what does their customer want. Think USB, like think the USB.

Robert Glazer: That's a great example because you have USBC now coming out, which is the standard that will change everything, but Apple is actually finally come into it, rather than trying to develop their own version. It's the first time that's been reciprocal so that's even a battle where they've decided not to go proprietary anymore.

Tiffani Bova: Yeah, and really this is, when I hear people say, "Oh yeah, we would never work with them. They're kind of a competitor," going back to the very first question you asked me was one of the big mistakes people make is they benchmark their competitors. They spend a lot of time and energy benchmarking their competitors. They don't spend that much time talking to their own customers, so they worry about what their competitors are doing, much more so than they actually care about what their customers want and need from them.

Tiffani Bova: If you were spending that much time talking to, and listening to the voice of your customer, you may make very different decisions. In this very conversation around co-optician or partnerships, if your customer says, "God, I just wish you'd do this," and in your head you're going, "Well we have two choices. We're either going to completely stand up an entirely new product and everything that goes along with that, or we go partner with someone who does it," and the reason I keep pivoting back to Kylie Jenner, and I think people get a kick out of the fact that in a book, there is in the same chapter, two stories, Kylie Jenner and John Deer, could not be any different.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Tiffani Bova: That was on purpose.

Robert Glazer: Not a likely partnership.

Tiffani Bova: Not a likely story to be told, I guess, right? The reason I tell that one is because she could have stood up her own R&D lab. She could have stood up her own supply chain and distribution facility. She could have stood up all these things, and instead with less than 15 employees she's built almost a billion dollar business. Ultimately you say that's a lot of partnership hands down.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Tiffani Bova: Nike finally opening a Nike branded store on Amazon, or Best Buy and Amazon selling Fire TVs. Well don't they compete, or Amazon working with Kohl's for return items for their customers. You know what I'm saying? That is all about if they customer finds it easier to do something in brick and mortar, and I'm only online, how do I make that happen? If I'm only brick and mortar and I don't have, or my footprint in brick in mortar is declining, like who can I partner with to help me, versus saying, "No way, unless it's in our own branded store," which is what many of these brands have done historically. They've fought against the machine and they didn't win.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, and you know it touches back to what you said earlier, which this customer centric view of growth, which is instead of a company, a bunch of men and women sitting around a room, saying, "We got to grow. We got to grow," coming in and saying, "Our customers are asking us for X. We know that people want what ..." A growth strategy is actually built into demand in what people are asking for rather than this sort of internal exercise of we want to hit 50% growth, that has nothing to do with what their customers actually want or are looking for.

Tiffani Bova: Right, exactly. When I get often asked, they'll go ... Well there's two things. One, they'll say, "Yeah, I'd love to hear what you think, but I need to let you know about my business, what my products are, like I need you to know all about me before you tell me what you think we should do about how to grow."

Robert Glazer: Right.

Tiffani Bova: My answer back is normally, "I can appreciate that you think you're unique, but you're not really. If you're in a highly regulated industry, I've got to give you that, but for all intent and purposes you're not really that unique," and people look at me like, "Oh, you're ... We sell ..." I go, "It doesn't matter. I know who your customers are. I know what your customers are looking for. They now want a seamless, frictionless experience. They want knowledgeable people on the phone when they call in and they have a problem that has all their information right in front of them, so they don't have to repeat themselves ten times." I don't care if it's about a car, a refrigerator, or a mainframe computer.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Tiffani Bova: Pick something. They want the same things, and now they're far more educated than they ever were before. They want information in real time across multiple devices. Does that sound like your customer? Sometimes they'll say, "I don't know." I don't necessarily need to know what they're selling because I know enough about their customer. Now do I know 100%? Absolutely not, but I know at least 80%, and that's much better than probably what they know at this moment.

Tiffani Bova: I always start with the customer and work back in, and if I can get them to start to think that way, they start to make very different decisions on what and where they can grab and jump on their next growth engine.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, and what's interesting in this, I think this goes to the next question. One of my favorite stories was, I think from 1980 to 2000, Southwest Airlines, which I don't know, might have been one of your examples, grew faster and made more profit than the entire airline industry in the U.S., and when someone asked Herb Kelleher, what was your strategy, how did you do that? He said, "Culture," so what role does culture play in growth and sustainable growth?

Tiffani Bova: That was my tenth path pretty much. The tenth path in the book is called, Unconventional Strategies, and when I first started working on it, I was really trying to find the next freemium idea, so that was kind of unconventional. Freemium was like what, you're giving it away, for how long? Freemium to me was unconventional. I was looking for what's the next freemium, kind of in air quotes. What's the next freemium that I can drop into unconventional. I was really trying to figure out what is it? Then I was like, "You know what? I think this is kind of purpose over profit." It's this new wave of value based growth and doing what's right for the communities people live in, for their employees, the customers are only going to be as happy as the employees. How do you start to really do much more around purpose than just profit, especially if you're publicly traded? It gets a little tricky, but I even think that kind of quarterly hamster wheel of what's the profit, what's the profit, what's the profit, versus saying, "Well hold on a second, is it just better business?"

Tiffani Bova: Cost might have gone up a little bit, but you've just removed six billion carbon tons from the atmosphere. Okay, I'm okay with the cost going up a little bit, and not being, not okay with that. I think that has a huge part of it, and people are joining companies for the cultures. There's not, at least in my opinion, there's no coincidence that, because of where I work obviously at Sales Force, that we're one of the best places to work almost everywhere in the world, in whatever survey you look at. We're in the top couple of companies, if not number one. The same thing, we're one of the most innovative companies in the world, and have been. There's no coincidence there.

Robert Glazer: Right.

Tiffani Bova: A values driven company, people all know what we're doing, why we're doing it, how we're doing it, and culture plays a big role in it. It's really important that the only way you can do that is by knowing what is that value system, what is your culture? What do you want to be known for, for your employees, and how do you get them motivated and inspired to do amazing work every single day, and ultimately the people that reap the benefit of that are your customers.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, as I think you said, culture and innovation go hand in hand, particularly if you're looking, if you need the talent who's going to come in and have the ideas, and drive the growth. Well, I like to usually end with this question, but I will, I'll tweak it up a little bit for you, so what is a personal or professional growth mistake that you've learned the most from in your career?

Tiffani Bova: I'd say, so a friend of mine, Naomi Simpson, who is a shark on Shark Tank Australia, gave me this term, which I have now completely ripped off, but she calls it her non-strength, so she's got strength. Instead of weakness it's non-strength, so my lesson, my non-strength in growth was to trust the process. I was just no patience whatsoever, and I didn't trust the process. I, like my customers, was expecting results much faster than just the natural breathing of an idea, a concept, and something that was being launched. If it doesn't return in a quarter or two, we got to pull the plug versus saying, "It's just not going to return that fast. It's going to return in four quarters, and we just have to believe and trust the process that four quarters from now it will look very different than it looks today." I think trusting the process is a lesson that I always have to learn, and I try to help our customers, and people who read the book understand that this is a process.

Tiffani Bova: Any path you decide to grow, the statistics show it's anywhere from two to four years to start to really see the results from a path you've decided to double down on, whether it's launch into a new market, launch a new product, move into customer centricity, try to get your hands around churn. It just takes time, and sometimes executives don't give it the time, so they kill it too fast, and sure enough one or two quarters later they have to do it again, and start all over. If you just remain vigilant to it, and know that it will be very uncomfortable. It will not feel natural, and you just have to have the patience to make it work. That's probably a lesson, a non-strength, that we all kind of need to lean into a little bit more. The other one was a positive, is that what you asked?

Robert Glazer: No, it could be, it was personal or professional.

Tiffani Bova: Okay, so that would be my professional. Personal, I'd say it's the same thing. I'm just not patient, just as a person.

Robert Glazer: Yeah.

Tiffani Bova: Yeah, my grandfather used to tell me at, I think starting at age ... Well as long as I can remember, I don't know what age it was, that patience is a virtue, and at least once a day I'll laugh in my head. I find myself being completely impatient, so that would be my personal one.

Robert Glazer: You might not be patient, but you're self-aware, so ...

Tiffani Bova: I'm very self-aware, right? I always say that, like I think that comes with maturity and time, but more than anything it comes with having people around you that you trust, that will just tell you the truth.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. Well that is great wisdom. Tiffani, thank you so much for joining us on Outperform today. It's really great hearing your perspectives for why context, combination and sequence matter when it comes to a smart growth strategy for business.

Tiffani Bova: Well thank you for having me. It was a pleasure, fun conversation.

Robert Glazer: All right. To our listeners, thanks for tuning into the Outperform podcast. We'll include links to Tiffani's site, her book and anything else that we mentioned during the episode. Until next time, keep outperforming.