STAY IN THE BLACK

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Why Founders Need an Outside Perspective

By Colin Barnhart · 16 Oct 2025 · 4 min read

Running a business is both rewarding and isolating. Founders and CFOs often carry the weight of decision-making alone, and after years of growth, they can feel like they've hit a wall. They've built something that works, but they're also aware of blind spots they can't fully name. That's where an outside perspective becomes not just helpful, but necessary.

When you're inside the business every day, it's hard to challenge your own assumptions. You know how you've always done things. You know what's worked in the past. But growth creates complexity, and complexity creates new challenges. At that stage, "knowing what you know" may not be enough.

Why blind spots happen as businesses grow

Most businesses start lean. A founder builds processes around what works in the moment, and the team adapts along the way. This flexibility is a strength in the early years. But once the company scales, those makeshift processes can break down.

Blind spots often show up in three places:

Reporting and visibility. Numbers look good at a glance, but they may not be telling the whole story. Without the right reporting in place, leadership can miss key signals.

New growth spurts. When revenue jumps or the team expands quickly, systems that once worked may suddenly feel outdated.

Preparing for an exit. Owners start thinking about selling the business and realize their financial reporting isn't built to stand up to due diligence.

None of these issues means a company is failing. In fact, they usually show up when the business is succeeding. But success also creates blind spots, and those blind spots can hold leaders back.

Why an outsider's perspective matters

An outside perspective does more than highlight problems. It helps leaders see the full picture.

As outsiders, we aren't tied to the way things have always been done. We don't carry the same assumptions that shape day-to-day decisions. That distance allows us to spot gaps and opportunities that insiders can overlook.

We've worked with founders, CFOs, and creative agencies across different stages of growth. While every business is unique, the challenges are familiar. We know the questions that will come up in diligence, the reporting standards investors expect, and the operational shifts that free up a founder's time. This isn't about reinventing the wheel. It's about applying proven solutions to your specific situation, and making them fit your business.

Just as important, we don't discard what already works. Too often, leaders fear that bringing in outside help means scrapping everything and starting over. That's not the case. A strong advisor builds on what's in place, adds what's missing, and strengthens the business without disrupting its culture.

Challenging the misconception: we do work with CFOs

One misconception I often hear is that bringing in outside perspective somehow sidelines the CFO or the finance team. That couldn't be further from the truth.

The best outcomes happen when we partner with CFOs. They already know the business inside and out. What we bring is perspective from across industries: what others are doing, what's becoming standard, and what works when companies prepare for growth or exit.

Even companies that look similar on paper don't always need the same solutions. That's why we design approaches that fit the business and its leadership. I often tell clients that the only diet that works is the one you stick to. Finance and reporting are no different. The right solution is the one that makes sense to the team and becomes part of the company's rhythm.

What founders should focus on

If you're a founder or CFO wondering if now is the time to seek outside perspective, here are a few signs to look for:

You've grown quickly and feel like your reporting hasn't kept up.

You're considering an exit in the next few years and want to start a "pre-diligence" process.

You're spending too much time wrestling with numbers instead of leading the business.

You feel like you've plateaued and need a new way of looking at the business.

In each of these cases, a fresh perspective can help you:

Validate the numbers and ensure reporting meets industry standards.

Build systems that scale with growth instead of holding it back.

Free up your leadership team to focus on strategy, not just reporting.

Gain confidence that you're seeing the business clearly and making strong decisions.

Where this leaves us

Founders and CFOs build businesses by solving problems. But the same instincts that fuel growth can sometimes create blind spots. At a certain point, you can only see so far on your own. That's when an outside perspective helps you sharpen your view, challenge assumptions, and make stronger decisions with confidence.

The takeaway is simple: you don't need to start over, and you don't need to fit into a playbook. You need someone who understands what works across industries, knows what investors and buyers will ask, and can help you build on what you already do well.

At Black Ink, we work alongside founders and finance teams to create solutions that fit the business, not the other way around. If you've reached the point where you're ready to broaden your perspective, start the conversation now. The sooner you bring clarity to your numbers and reporting, the stronger your business will be, whether you're preparing for growth, stability, or an eventual exit.

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