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Velocity Advisory Group – helping Organizations Achieve Greatness through Sales Growth, Strategic Planning, Leadership Development, Employee Experience and Culture



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"In times of uncertainty, Velocity brings clarity and direction." Dave Fechtman

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: *Mr. Fechtman, what is the overall idea behind velocity Advisory and what is your focus right now?*

Mr. Fechtman: We actually help organizations and leaders within the organizations achieve greatness and what that means for them varies from client to client. Generally speaking, we support clients in four main areas, one is sales growth and sales strategies. The second is in developing strategy. In times of uncertainty, we do a lot of strategic planning. The third is leadership development. We primarily do that through executive coaching and through training curriculum. The fourth area is employee experience and culture.

CEOCFO: *Are there particular industries you prefer?*

Mr. Fechtman: We are industry agnostic so, as a 13-year-old firm, we have worked probably every industry at this point. We have concentration and a lot of experience in financial services, insurance and construction as well as life sciences and biotech.

CEOCFO: *Would you give us a couple examples when companies turn to you, what they are looking for and how you help them make the change?*

Mr. Fechtman: Right now, with The Great Resignation and "quietly quitting," we are working with a lot of our clients on keeping their workforce engaged, developing new ways of leading virtual teams and

hybrid workforces. As we enter into a recession, one of the things we say at Velocity regularly is, "In times of uncertainty, Velocity brings clarity and direction." What we are finding is our clients right now are scratching their heads. They are a little nervous.

It has been a long time since they have seen inflation, and it has been a long time since they have seen interest rates this high, and it has been a long time since they have had to lay any one off. We help declutter all the issues that they have and come up with plans and help strengthen the leadership. We come up with culture initiatives to help keep their employees engaged and happy.

CEOCFO: *What do you understand on a basic level that allows you to work with a client on getting a solution and where does the client's personality come in to play in how you engage with them?*

Mr. Fechtman: I have come to understand a lot. One, is that most leaders and most employees today are overwhelmed. We see that the folks who have quietly quit puts a lot of pressure on the people who do not. We believe that their leaders have a lot of blind spots. We believe that data is informing healthy organizations more than it ever has. Doing engagement surveys, understanding customer experience, employee experience, those sorts of things are more important than they have ever been before. Any organizations that are guessing are significantly behind the organizations that actually know. We believe that knowledge is power in today's global and business environment.

Back to your question about individualized approach and personalities, one of the things that Velocity does and part of our secret sauce is we do a lot of behavioral assessments and we work with a lot of the different tools, but one of our favorites is DISC Assessment. My business partner, our President, Dan Silvert co-created a metaphor, where we use birds, and it is eagles, parrots, doves and owls. If you go to orderdisc.com, that is our other website. If you think through even not knowing what those metaphors fully mean, you can begin to visualize how a parrot would respond to a stressful situation maybe differently than an owl or an eagle, or manage through change and stress. All those things differ based on an individual's unique personality and behaviors. We have a lot of ways we support leaders individually and collectively understand those nuances and differences.

CEOCFO: *How long might you work with a company and would it be ongoing?*

Mr. Fechtman: At Velocity we focus on building a trusted relationship. That is one of the reasons we made the INC 5000 list for three or four years now. It is because our clients oftentimes become long-lasting partners of ours. Because of the four areas that we support our clients, almost always they have a need in one of those four areas if not all four of those areas. We do some things that are more episodic and those are some of our trainings. Our coaching is generally six months.

We have many clients that we have worked with on strategic planning since our inception for thirteen years and we will do an annual refresh with them. Every three to five years we will do a complete overhaul of their plan. We in many instances have long-standing relationships with

our clients, our Fortune 500 clients all the way down to our much smaller mid-market clients.

CEOCFO: *How are you helping people with supply chain, the economy and the political atmosphere?*

Mr. Fechtman: We believe generally speaking our clients know the answers, but they do not know how to prioritize those answers. They do not know how to eliminate distractions in a way that they can communicate throughout their entire organization. What we do well at Velocity is we take all the clutter and all the things that seem like they are not connected, and create connectivity among all those things that you just mentioned such as supply chain, economic pressure and political pressures. We help them prioritize and operationalize what they need to do around those issues. We are not Lean Six Sigma consultants or project management consultants.

We are experts in helping them take all the things that they know but maybe do not always know that they know, and create plans around them. More importantly execute those plans. One of the things we know to be true is many organizations go through planning but there is a 90% failure rate statistically of executing plans successfully. It is not because they were poorly designed plans, it is because they were poorly executed plans. We focus a lot on discipline and structure on focusing on what they need to do as opposed to some of the techniques and dealing with foreign currency exchange or supply change issues themselves.

CEOCFO: *How do you help people from falling back on what they typically do in a situation? How do you help them implement what they have learned on a continual basis?*

Mr. Fechtman: You think through New Year's resolutions on how many people are still doing them in February or March. We know that is human behavior. We actually build our strategic plans into a project management system. We have one that we host. Sometimes our clients have their own and we will build it in theirs and then we assign responsible parties and create those habits in the organization as they committed to it.

With coaching, there are three things that we focus on with executive coaching. One is skill development and how to be a better leader. Secondly is situational coaching so all things you talk about such as supply chain, quietly quitting. Maybe I do not like one of my coworkers or my boss and I am not seeing eye-to-eye. The third one is goal attainment and, in that case, really what we are talking about is accountability so we actually have an accountability model called the DONE Model and we also have a delegation model that is used by thousands of leaders and hundreds of organizations that identify six different ways to delegate.

We have some cool frameworks that we can do at an enterprise level for a client that helps the whole organization align around a way of doing something. We work one-on-one with our clients to help them stay committed to it. We automate a lot of the ways we support our clients. For instance, if we notice that you are falling behind on your plan because you are a human being and that is what we do, we can send

push notifications to say "Hey what is going on, can we help you. Or ask, "should we schedule a meeting to see if we can get you back on track?"

CEOCFO: *What has changed in your approach over time? What have you learned?*

Mr. Fechtman: One thing I have learned is that in some regards nothing has changed. To what we were just talking about, I imagine New Year's resolutions have been going on for hundreds of years and people still have the same behavior. In some regards human behavior is human behavior. The work force has changed dramatically. COVID changed it a lot. For example, it was unacceptable when working from home for a dog to bark in the background or for people to be dressed more casual on a video two or three years ago. Now it is much more common place. The power used to be solely in the hands of the employers and now the power has shifted a lot to the employees. Just recently, Facebook announced 11,000 layoffs, and we know about Zillow and Twitter, for a lot of reasons people are losing their jobs.

I do think that is going to shift the power back to more of a mutual place where employers and employees both are going to have common ground and I think that is a healthy thing. I do not think it is healthy for a worker and employer relationship when the power is solely in one camp or the other. I think cooperation and working together to find out what conditions from a cultural standpoint are really healthy for companies and for customers of those companies. The landscape is changing dramatically.

CEOCFO: *When you are working with a client, where does the gut feeling and human element come into play?*

Mr. Fechtman: A gut feeling is not really a gut feeling; it is passive pattern recognition. Some people are good at following their gut or hunches but for people that are not maybe spontaneous or not as good as following their gut, what they do not realize about the folks that are is that it is passive pattern recognition. At Velocity we hire people that are experienced because only experienced people can correctly follow their gut. For inexperienced people it is significant guess work. We like to do a blend of experienced people so they are allowed to follow their gut. Our clients' gut is often right because of the passive pattern recognition, it is not just snake oil or voodoo. Gut feelings factors in a lot.

CEOCFO: *Do you do much outreach or are people turning to you from referrals or because they know about your company?*

Mr. Fechtman: We are proud of this, most of our growth has been organic. We have not been great at marketing historically. We have gotten much better at that in the last year and we are beginning to get people that have never heard of Velocity to find us and to want to do work with us. However, almost exclusively our growth comes from happy satisfied customers. Because we do a good job is why we have high retention rates with our client. Our clients love to talk about our partnership and the work, we have done for them, to other colleagues of theirs, we really grow through word-of-mouth and through interviews like this as well. We are proud of the quality of work that we deliver as the primary driver of growth for us.

CEOCFO: *What if anything might someone miss or not recognize about Velocity advisory group that needs to be understood?*

Mr. Fechtman: I do not think it is possible by looking at a website or collateral or marketing pieces to understand how much we care and how much we become vested in our clients' success. We really do pride ourselves on being trusted partners. We never think of ourselves as a vendor. We truly think of ourselves as committed partners. I do not know that that would ever show through just by a casual search without experiencing it to some degree.

