

“The way that came naturally to me got us to a certain point, but it became clear that I was hitting a wall and I would need to change.” - Ben

About Sierra Interactive

Sierra Interactive was founded by Ben Peskoe in 2007 when he saw the opportunity to use Google maps' new API integration to create custom websites with integrated listings for real estate agents. For ten years, the business grew slowly and steadily. Then in 2017, Ben decided to pivot to a more scalable SaaS model with a focus on more advanced CRM functionality. From that point on, things moved very quickly. Over the next 2 years, the company grew by multiples in both revenue and team size.

ability to manage the company effectively. It was becoming too much to handle.

Ben recognized that if Sierra was going to be successful over the long term, **he needed to make fundamental changes to the company's structure**. He needed managers who could share accountability. He needed to know how to hire well and set new team members up for success. At the same time, he didn't want to compromise his high standards for quality as the company grew.

All of this was leading Ben to feel **overwhelmed, exhausted and burned out**. On top of that, he felt unprepared to deal with the friction between employees. And he was noticing that his discomfort with crucial conversations was holding the company back.

He realized that becoming an effective CEO would depend on his ability to grow. And that company culture is a real thing, and would need to be proactively managed for the company to be successful. That's when he reached out to Elizabeth.

The Challenge

Sierra was Ben's **first experience managing a growing business**. What's more, he'd never worked in another organization of the type that he was trying to build so he didn't have a frame of reference for how to approach it. As the pace accelerated, Ben continued to manage it in the same way that he'd always done, which was to be involved in everything. The organization was flat and with no structure in place, he was the back stop for every issue and decision. He was rapidly losing his



At a glance:

Company size

30 => 80 employees

Revenue growth

4X

Acquired

2022



The Solution

Over the next several months, Elizabeth and Ben took several actions to organize the company and position the team for continued growth.

They established a structure and routines.

First, they created an organizational structure and a management layer that leveraged informal leads within the team. This gave Ben more capacity to focus on where the company was headed. They clarified the team's focus and improved communication by implementing strategy sessions, leadership team meetings, all hands meetings and 1:1s. They started regularly asking employees for feedback to continuously improve their experience at the company.

“It wasn't only structure in terms of the org chart and the growth of company, but it was also a structure for establishing and maintaining a healthy culture within the organization.” - Ben

They created strategic alignment.

They defined the company's core values, which reflect its unique identity and help guide decisions to this day. They held the first company retreat where they communicated the values and vision. They started a leadership team routine of cross-functional strategic planning and goal setting.

They developed strong leaders.

Elizabeth coached each leader to step into their role by addressing their development areas around leading, having high-stakes conversations and building trust.

“I realized that in order for the organization to continue growing, I needed to continue to grow, not just as a leader, but as a person. To just really keep leaning into these challenges and improve the honesty, the directness, the integrity with which I operate.” - Ben

They built trust and strong communication within the leadership team.

They addressed practical alignment issues by introducing a decision making framework and continually reworking the leadership team meeting until it was efficient and issues-focused.

They addressed the interpersonal aspects of alignment through leadership retreats and workshops on crucial conversations and CliftonStrengths.

“Implementing a team and feeling like we have really great people and solid communication in place is so freeing.”



The Impact

“With my particular background, not having worked in an organization of the type that I was trying to build;

I can't imagine not having worked with a coach like you. We just wouldn't have been able to achieve the same outcome.”

Our mission was to better prepare the Sierra ecosystem for growth, and the benefits were wide-ranging. Here's the impact in Ben's words:

On Ben himself

“Even though the business is much bigger now, with many more customers and a much larger team, I work less than I used to. I'm able to have more head space, where I'm not always thinking about work all the time. Implementing a team and feeling like we have really great people and solid communication in place is so freeing.”

On the company's financial success

“Our recent acquisition was a huge financial success. Between 2019 and when we were acquired in 2022, our revenues were up four times. Our work absolutely helped us implement that foundation and structure so that we were able to sustain that growth in a healthy way.”

On the people and culture

“People are invested in the company. They feel like they have a voice in the direction of the company.”

“Ultimately it's the quality of the work being done, but it's also the quality of the relationships within the team that really determines so much of our experience of work, and the success of the company.”

“We have almost a hundred people now, and we have more opportunities for career growth within the company. It's been really rewarding to see them have opportunities to grow and advance their careers and thrive.”

On the leadership team

“We have a really strong, healthy culture and a strong, healthy core leadership team. We respect each other, we trust each other, and we rely on each other. We really do work effectively as a team with each other. And that makes the day to day experience of work so much better.”

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