

grow



Madron Farming

The power of letting go



Can a CEO do less in order to do more? When Madron Farming's CEO and Founder, Charlie Jenkin, finally admitted to himself that he felt like a 'hamster on a wheel', he decided to seek out business coaching through Grow. Although at first, Charlie was unsure about stepping back from his involvement in the day-to-day operations of a very complex business, he was blown away when he saw just how much his business, and his team, started thriving.

At a glance

Launched in 1999, Madron Farming grows, packages, and supplies leafy green produce to the major retailers in the Western Cape. The business has two major components to it: the farm itself in one location and the pack house in another.

What had started from humble beginnings with a zero percent market share, had grown to a medium-sized business with a solid reputation. But it was also at a point where Charlie was so consumed by the day-to-day operations of the business that there were never enough hours in the day for him to place much focus on its growth.

"Initially, my father began Madron Farming as a hobby to keep himself active during retirement, but it quickly became quite a 'baptism of fire'. I joined him about 6 months into the business and even in those days, we'd work 12-hour days and still come home to talk business and hydroponics till late at night.

We were learning as we went; we climbed each mountain, faced every challenge, and poured everything we had into evolving the business", says Charlie.

After 19 years, Charlie knew that the business had grown to a size where he was able to start letting go of the operational side. What he didn't know was how. That's when he reached out to Grow.



When Grow stepped in

Charlie's desire to step back from being wholly accountable for everything in the business was fully supported by their Grow coach, but it was also clear that the management team was not yet structured to provide Charlie with the support he needed to accomplish that.

"Charlie is a level five leader," says their Grow coach. "He's knowledgeable, value-led and big-picture oriented. He's hardworking – to a fault at times – and when I first started working with him, he was just too involved in too many things. All too often I've seen CEOs hurtling on this path towards burnout, and I wanted to get Charlie to a place where he could really leverage his inherent strengths and leadership skills."

The management team was loosely formed. The four dedicated individuals, including Charlie himself as well as his Pack House Manager Ronel Usher, had all found themselves in a 'too much work, too little time' situation. There was no formal structure for any of them to become vulnerable, ask for help, or to share ideas – their concern was that collective engagement activities would 'just eat away at more valuable time'.

The HR function was also relatively unstructured. At the time, it was handled by many suppliers, making it both expensive and ineffective. This contributed to a growing gap between management and workers, which impacted agility, predictability and consistency of workflow.



Finding the missing piece

Starting with Charlie, their coach began to hold one-on-one sessions with every key person in the organisation. "The reason I use this approach is that it accelerates delivery. It helps inculcate the coaching in a way that helps individuals develop their own competency and confidence, which is so often the missing piece", says their coach.

Ronel says she particularly enjoyed this individual process. "Through the one-on-ones, our coach helped us understand whom we were working with. Before we'd just get on with it, but now we're aware of everyone's strengths and vulnerabilities, we understand their different personalities, and we're better equipped to develop relationships and to handle situations."

Charlie adds that it highlighted which people were in the wrong roles as well as who may be operating at a level below their capabilities. "We needed people in positions where they could play to their strengths and Grow really brought that to the table."



People with new purpose

Over time, with the help and guidance of their coach, Charlie was able to create a powerful management team of eight people: each with a refined sense of accountability and a feeling of being ‘the boss’ of their unique roles. Some of the role shifts and changes included onboarding an HR manager, as well as Ronel’s move from Pack House Manager to Head of Operations, and Charlie’s freedom to truly step up from a managing director position into the CEO role.

“So now we’ve got tiers of leadership in the business. There’s an executive strategic council accountable for formulating and refining the strategy; executive members who together with the strategic council execute on strategy; middle management; and a supervisory tier of management. It’s made a huge difference in terms of quality, ownership and consistency”, says their coach.

Charlie says it’s an incredible experience to witness the transformation of people when they’re given the opportunity to do something they love. **“This whole journey has been life-changing – especially when we’ve seen first-hand how people have become so positive, energetic, and confident as a result.”**

He says there’s a vibrancy in today’s meetings. “Everyone’s got a voice. And people who were the quietest are now almost the most vocal in terms of the ideas they share. Our coach has really helped lead that dialogue and change. I think that’s his real strength. He can quickly gauge a situation and allow it to be discussed without fear of retribution. And that’s been phenomenal.”



Letting go

Today, Charlie is surrounded and supported by an incredible team of people who use their initiative and smarts to help the business evolve. They're quick to bring solutions to an ever-growing list of challenges, constantly refining their purpose and birthing innovation.

More than ever before, Madron Farming's Senior Management team works closely and productively with each other, as well as with their newly nurtured primary and secondary teams. All this has taken the pressure off Charlie. Ultimately freeing him to own the areas that he is uniquely skilled at and enjoys.

Strategy formulation, research, the science of farming, embracing his love of the environment, and making a difference; are the areas where Charlie truly shines.



The business is running extremely well without me in the fray, probably better!



Their Grow coach is particularly impressed by the purpose statement that Charlie has developed for Madron Farming. "It's so alive. It's about much more than profitability; it's about community, sustainability and making a difference in the world. It's always been that way for them. And now Charlie has both the time and the energy to really drive that."

In learning to let go and trust his team, Charlie has inspired even greater levels of confidence and independent thinking in the team. The multiplying effect of his leadership is clear throughout the business, resulting in a more robust strategy that will support Madron Farming's continued scale.



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The innovations and the wins

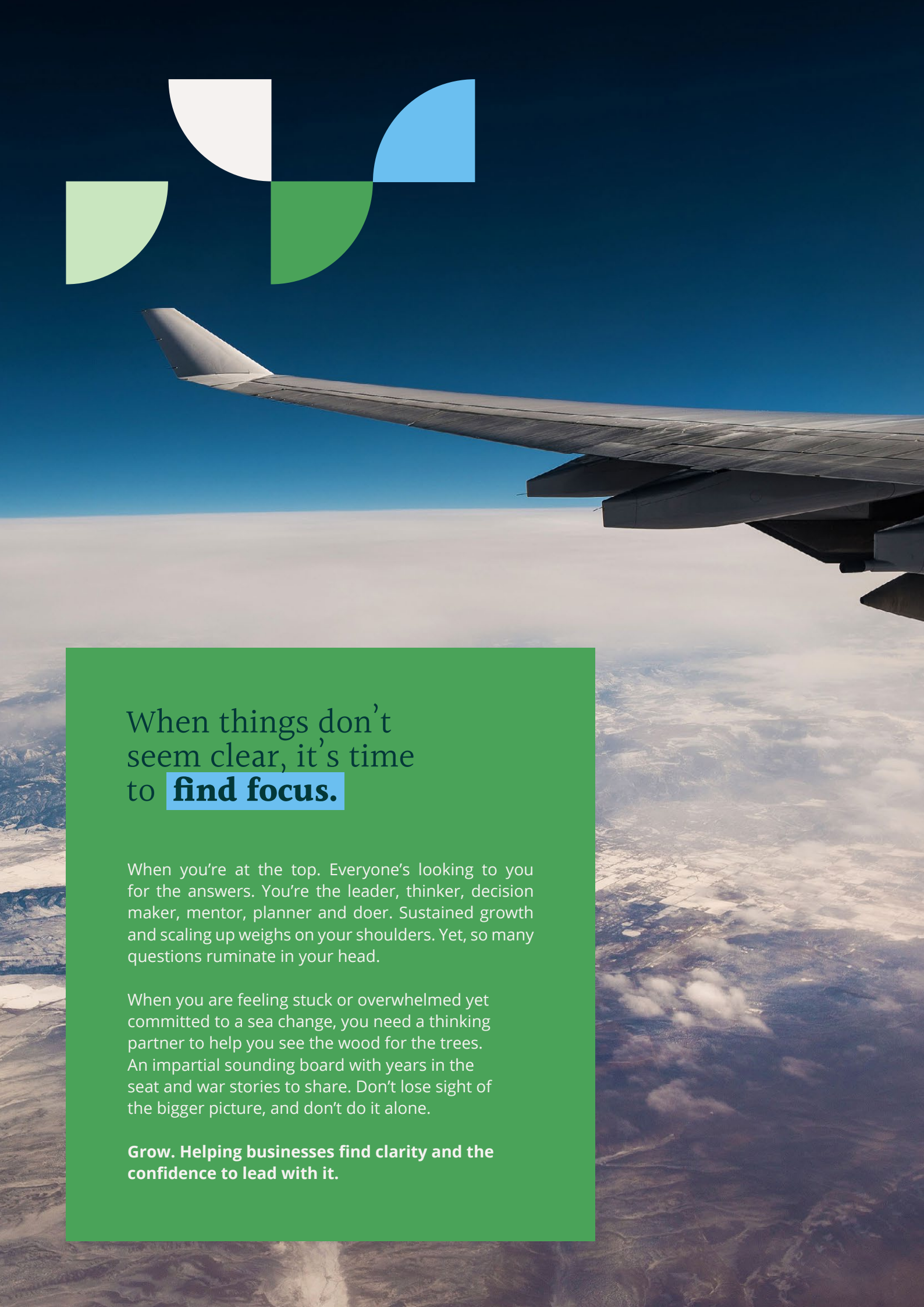

With his team in full support, Charlie is becoming the leader that he naturally is - and it shows! A new retailer has been brought on board as a new key client, supplying the food services sector is close to becoming a reality, at least one additional sector has been identified, and hydroponics has evolved into the main approach for growing the lettuce product. The leadership team is strong, middle management is energised, and the workforce are much happier, engaged and exceeding operational requirements in their day-to-day work.

The road to this remarkable evolution has been paved with many of Grow's key business coaching tools. For starters, weekly cadence meetings keep cultivating the unique strategic rhythm of the business, daily interactions are characterised by open, robust, and constructive collaboration, HR best practices now include scorecards, effective OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) are put into place to drive execution of strategy, and accountability frameworks are continuously refined.

And, of course, as Charlie says, it comes right down to his team's deep commitment to change. Charlie would not have been able to step up without his winning team.

"The journey with Grow has helped us to make a paradigm shift towards a better and more sustainable business model. It is a journey in its infancy that has ignited a desire for Madron to continue improving and reaching new heights. Currently farming inflation is unprecedented and without our business shift with Grow's help we would be really struggling to find the time and energy to find solutions to reducing costs and bringing in new revenue."





When things don't seem clear, it's time to **find focus.**

When you're at the top. Everyone's looking to you for the answers. You're the leader, thinker, decision maker, mentor, planner and doer. Sustained growth and scaling up weighs on your shoulders. Yet, so many questions ruminate in your head.

When you are feeling stuck or overwhelmed yet committed to a sea change, you need a thinking partner to help you see the wood for the trees. An impartial sounding board with years in the seat and war stories to share. Don't lose sight of the bigger picture, and don't do it alone.

Grow. Helping businesses find clarity and the confidence to lead with it.



Build your business with **clarity and confidence.**



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