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Entrepreneurial Mindset: Kirsch CPA Group Sets A Framework For Growth

Sometimes the key to better serving clients and fueling growth may be to take a closer look inward, which is exactly what Hamilton, Ohio-based **Kirsch CPA Group** decided to do.



With a five-year strategic plan that involved doubling the size of the organization, the \$6.8-million IPA 400 and 2021 Best of the Best firm realized that it may have outgrown its somewhat informal method of governance and decision-making. While such an approach made sense for a smaller organization that took pride in its

ability to quickly pivot as opportunities arose, Managing Partner **John Kirsch** says things became more challenging as the firm grew, with confusion as to responsibilities and accountability throughout the organization.

“As we developed our strategic plan to reach our growth objective, it became apparent that providing additional structure to our governance was going to be necessary,” he says.

The result of that realization was the implementation of an **Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS)**, which Kirsch describes as a platform for the firm’s growth. Working with an outside consultant, the Kirsch team put in place a framework to help the firm become more mindful about how it does everything from making decisions to hiring top talent. Among the most impactful elements of the EOS are tools for

identifying key organizational functions, assigning accountability for results, creating a structure for identifying issues and opportunities and maintaining focus on them until they’re resolved. The EOS also features a structure for scheduling and conducting meetings that maximizes the team’s ability to get things done more efficiently as a group.



“The appeal of EOS was its holistic approach – from clarifying vision down to a specific tool to determine if team members are a good fit for our culture,” Kirsch explains. “This is a system that provides structure without being overbearing. The entire team now knows who owns

which functions and who is accountable. The EOS really provides a framework through which all the initiatives of the firm can be managed.”

Like any other major strategic leap, Kirsch says there was some natural skepticism among the partner group when EOS was initially floated, but any misgivings were largely put to rest once the plan was fully laid out and explained. Once the process was underway, the challenge for leadership then became striking a balance between continuing to provide great service to clients while trying to manage such a large-scale internal project.

Having had EOS in place for about 15 months now, Kirsch says the firm has experienced significant benefits in terms of how opportunities are identified and how problems are solved, but not necessarily in terms of dollars and cents. Even in the numbers-driven world of accounting, though, he says that's not really the point. The idea is to be able to better focus attention on the most important issues facing the firm and not getting distracted by the urgent.

"There's a consistency of process now," he says. "Issues are not handled with a one-off approach – we have a system for everything that comes along. This was more than a 'gut-feel' decision than an ROI decision. And that may scare the hell out of some of the accountants reading this, but it's something we knew we needed to do."

While other firms may reject that approach, it clearly has been the right choice for Kirsch.

"Knowing what I know now, we could have benefited from doing this even much earlier in our growth cycle," Kirsch says. "It was really just a matter of being open to doing something different." ■IPA



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