



Roots, Sap, & Soil

Nurturing the Core of Business Growth

Explore the essential elements that fuel your business, from the foundational roots shaping your beliefs to the dynamic sap that brings your company culture to life.

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When people ask me what I do, I sometimes tell them I'm in the "root, soil, and sap business." Being an arborist (or a tree surgeon) for business is, of course, a metaphor.

The healthiest trees bear the most fruit and nuts and must have the most nourishing roots, sap, and soil. They also happen best to support their neighboring trees and the forest around them.

Without strong roots, the tree can't pull nutrients from the soil.

Without healthy sap — the tree's lifeblood — it cannot carry those nutrients from the ground up to create strong branches, leaves, flowers, fruit, and nuts. If you don't have this, there's nothing to harvest.

Without good soil, you won't have the nutrients and sustenance to sustain or grow your tree.

Your roots are the core drivers of your organization. They include your belief-driven motivations and actions, such as the right purpose, vision, and values. This is called brand because your roots impact your whole living entity and the forest of living things around it, including how it relates to the forest and the ecology.

Your sap is your people, your culture. It's your dynamic, alive, ever-changing, and moving lifeblood. Full of vitality and life force, they create, deliver, innovate, and communicate everything your company says, does, and needs. Your sap flows throughout your tree, providing the lifeblood to sustain itself. It works in harmony with the entire tree.

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Your soil is the firm ground within which your business is planted. It includes things you can and cannot control. While you can put nutrients into your soil to modify and improve its health, so can outside forces you can't control. Weather, atmosphere, and other trees' droppings and living organisms affect your soil. Your soil is your market, industry, and society.

When people understand this metaphor, they begin to understand the nature of the interconnections I help to foster.

Here's where the metaphor breaks down a bit.

Because of our human nature, we are blessed with the ability to imagine, unlike the tree or the forest and its living things. The blue jay living in the woods doesn't imagine it can be a hawk. It just goes about its bluejaying business. The same is true for all other living beings except humans. However, if a tree were human, it could begin one day as a humble pine tree, then re-envision itself as a strong walnut, a mighty oak, and even a giant sequoia. This act of imagining is the process of re-visioning our future, our identity, and our brand.

As a business arborist, I help organizations re-envision their next-level root system. And I help them understand the soil nutrients needed and care for the sap to evolve.

Or, if the tree is suffering from a lack of healthy fruit and nuts, I help the organization heal the root, sap, and soil, so growing healthy fruit is possible and predictable.

As with most worthwhile things, it takes time, presence, and patience. It takes a caring and self-aware team that is bold enough to envision the next. Maybe that's you.

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“There’s nothing more powerful than a united group of souls ignited in a common cause with love at the core.”

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