



 **FOUR HANDS**

How to Scale Right: A Case Study in Record-Breaking Growth, Cross Functional Collaboration, and High Employee Engagement

Many companies aspire to experience explosive growth, but one high-end furniture company headquartered in Austin, TX has achieved results many mid-market firms would envy.

In 2019, Four Hands, a global sourcing and design company that specializes in luxury home and office furnishings, projects their revenue to hit \$194M, a revenue growth of \$140M since 2011.

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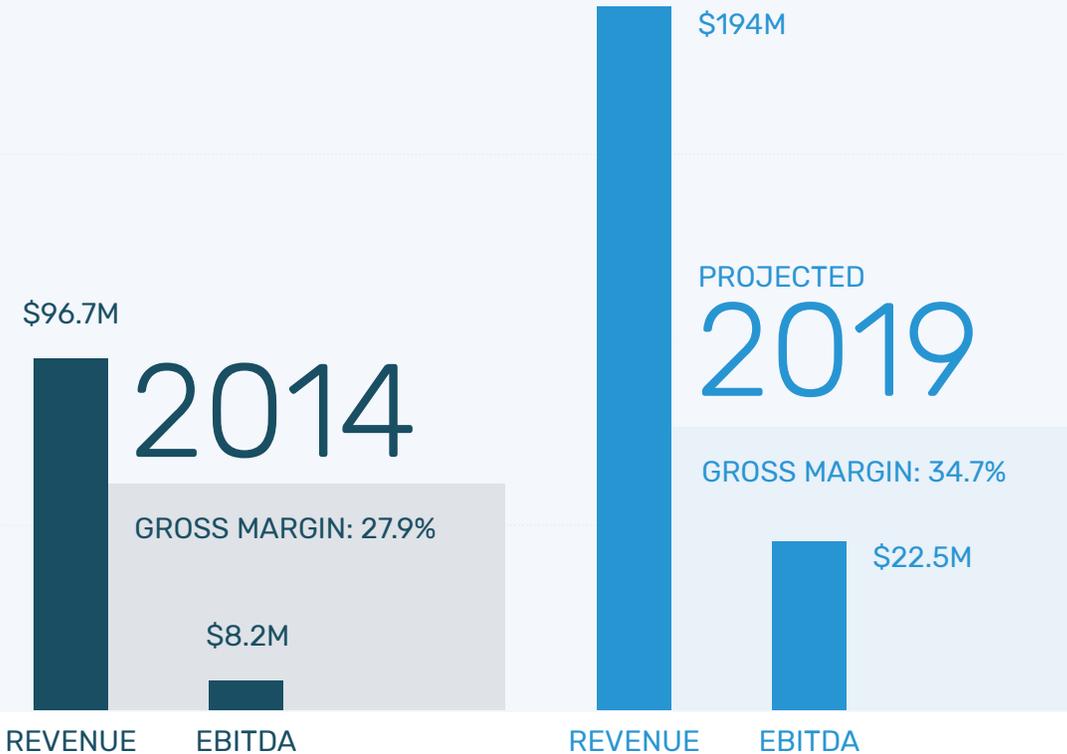
How did they get here?

From 2011 to 2014, under the leadership of CEO Matt Briggs, Four Hands saw a revenue increase from \$54M to \$96.7M and EBITDA increase from \$2.4M to \$8.2M. But rapid growth brings its own set of challenges. In 2014, gross margin percentages were sliding, and it was clear that maximizing returns as a larger company called for new ways of doing things.

“We had a management team that’s worked together for so long we found ourselves in circular patterns without really problem solving,” says Matt Briggs, Four Hands CEO. “We kept going over the same old conversations. We felt like we needed outside facilitation with fresh ideas and new ways of looking at things.”

Enter BLUECASE.

In 2014, Briggs chose BLUECASE to support the company’s next level of high-growth scale—a partnership that continues today. By 2019, Four Hands had more than doubled revenues and increased gross margins from 27% to 34%, with over 40% gross margins each year since 2017 in sales direct from their warehouse.



What part did BLUECASE play in achieving these phenomenal results?

In fast-growth, mid-market organizations across industries, BLUECASE has found that when growth accelerates, the following often happens:

- ✓ Overspending results in lost margins
- ✓ A lot of talk about “communication issues” without much improvement
- ✓ Departments and teams not working great together across functions
- ✓ Executives carrying extra loads
- ✓ People working harder with less getting done
- ✓ Managers don’t always know how to be great leaders
- ✓ Core Values seem less “alive” across the company

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In many cases, these are cross-functional leadership issues—a specific area of expertise for BLUECASE. By deploying a combination of strategic alignment and cross-functional leadership development, our clients often see change happen fast.

Four Hands did just this. They brought on BLUECASE to address and pre-empt the inevitable leadership challenges they anticipated would occur with scale. In the first year of restructuring quarterly executive-level meetings with guidance from BLUECASE, Four Hands experienced a gross margin increase from 27.9% to 28.6%. (By the following year, it had increased to 30.7%)

Next step?

Include the rest of the management team. Nearing the \$100M mark in revenue often means growing pains for the next level of leadership—dealing with a larger number of employees, making faster, more autonomous decisions, and taking ownership of tasks that were previously ‘not my job.’ Four Hands wisely saw this as a leadership development issue and invested in what counted most—their people.

This is where BLUECASE took a cross-functional, cultural approach to leadership development. To date, over a hundred Four Hands executives, directors, managers and employees have participated in the BLUECASE cultural leadership development program that directly addresses cross-functional challenges.

The BLUECASE program includes the tools, skills, language and practices company leaders need to navigate the challenges of fast growth. Teams become more adaptive by using real time feedback to pivot and prioritize. As a result, Four Hands has been working together with greater precision and adapting to industry economic challenges, headcount increases, expanded product reach and greater visibility across their industry.

In a recent survey, an impressive 100% of BLUECASE course participants reported that the BLUECASE training equipped them to be more productive, enabled managers to better lead with vision, and brought core values more fully to life within the company culture. On top of that, 93% of the respondents said the tools they learned improved cross-functional collaboration.

According to Briggs, “The biggest change for me is seeing [next level management] look to each other and themselves for answers as opposed to looking to the senior leadership, so what we’re seeing is a whole different level of performance out of that level of management.”

“... We are a much stronger company and a much higher performing team. Without BLUECASE help and guidance, we would not be where we are today.”

Four Hands COO Jerome Kearns adds, “[As a result of the BLUECASE program], there has been a transformation in how cross functional teams operate and the results they are achieving. The house we are building has a much stronger foundation. We are a much stronger company and a much higher performing team. Without BLUECASE help and guidance, we would not be where we are today.”

To date, Four Hands is regularly featured on Best Places to Work in Austin lists. In 2019, CEO Matt Briggs received the prestigious Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year award, and the company continues to experience remarkable growth. Furthermore, the BLUECASE-taught disciplines and habits of a high performing, innovative leadership culture are now embedded in how cross-functional teams work together company-wide. With these leadership skills in place, the company is poised for continued, adaptive growth while enhancing the vital company culture that makes Four Hands a truly exceptional place to work.

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About BLUECASE

BLUECASE is a strategic leadership consultancy headquartered in Austin, TX. BLUECASE provides the guidance, strategic direction, and leadership training that enables already high performing companies to make the leap to the next level of scale. Companies that work with BLUECASE regularly report an increase in bottom-line results, improved cross functional collaboration, AND increased employee satisfaction across their organization.

Jet fuel comes in blue cases. That is why we are called BLUECASE. The companies we work with are already high performing. With us, they accelerate.

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