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How the right advisors helped transform Yoko Co.

By Marissa Levin

"Get On Board" will be spotlighting companies that have successfully implemented advisory boards.

This month, we spotlight **Yoko Co.**, a Virginia-based web-presence management company specializing in website design and development, content creation, and web impact analytics. In the following interview, founder and CEO Chris Yoko talks about how he selected advisory board members who helped ground him personally and define his business vision.



If you have a successful advisory board and would like your firm to be spotlighted in this column, please email Marissa at marissa@successfulculture.com. If you are looking to implement an advisory board, we would like to hear from you as well. See below for more information.



Chris Yoko

Tell us about Yoko Co. How long has it been around, and what inspired you to launch it?

Yoko: I started the company in 2009 after serving as the managing partner for a full-service ad agency based in DC. I disagreed with some of the strategies and tactics being implemented and wanted to use more interactive tools to help clients see the impact the web has on their business.

What are your core service offerings, and who are your primary customers?

Yoko: Our core service is web presence management, which includes website design and development, content creation (animations, videos, infographics and copy-writing mostly) and aligning it all to help our clients see the impact their web presence has on their

organization's objectives.

When did you first implement an advisory board?

Yoko: It'll be a year next month.

What prompted you to do so? Was it in response to a pain or challenge, was it in response to a growth strategy or goal, or was it a combination of the two?

Yoko: I was inspired to launch it in large part because of your book, *Built to SCALE!* The impetus to take action on what you wrote was that we got to a point where the company was doing fine and I kind of lost my way. I was hoping the advisory board could help me ground and find myself, and help find our true north.

How many people serve on your advisory board?

Yoko: Five of the most awesome people I know.

How did you recruit your advisors?

Yoko: I initially asked a close group of confidants who they thought might be a good fit for the different areas of expertise we needed, then reached out to them via email with a document explaining the role and discussed it through a few interviews before securing the members themselves.

How often do you meet? What is the format?

Yoko: Once a quarter, in person, for at least half a day. We usually have between 1 and 3 high-level strategic concerns we want to address and discuss them throughout the time. I will usually come in with my thoughts to start the conversation, and we take it from there.

What has been the single greatest benefit of your advisory board?

Yoko: They not only helped me figure out why my business exists, but they helped me figure out why I believe I exist. That might be a little deep for most people, but it's been absolutely transformative for me, my team, and our clients.

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What advice would you give to a CEO looking to implement a board?

Yoko: Don't put it off and don't stress it too much. The right people will help you figure out the right way to work with you, or determine they aren't a good fit and introduce you to folks who are. Don't let compensation stop you from doing it, and don't overthink the compensation. Again, if you're speaking with the right people, they'll find a way to make it work. I'd be wary of anyone who really tries to "sell" you on themselves.

"Get On Board" will also be spotlighting companies that are looking to implement advisory boards, and will serve as an online recruiting center to connect potential advisors with these firms. If you are currently building an advisory board, please email Marissa at marissa@successfulculture.com.

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