

THE ANATOMY OF A BREAKTHROUGH

# How a Founder's Identity Shift Led to a Life-Changing Acquisition



**Salt Strong**

Online Fishing Community & Education | Tampa, FL

**10,000+**

Members Served

**\$10M+**

Revenue at Exit

**Life-Changing**

Acquisition

## THE CHALLENGE

# A Visionary Entrepreneur Stuck in the Mud

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Joe Simonds had already built something remarkable. Salt Strong, America's largest saltwater fishing club, was helping tens of thousands of families create lifelong memories on the water. The business was growing. The mission was clear. The numbers were climbing.

But beneath the surface, something wasn't right.

**Despite the outward success, Joe was:**

- Battling persistent anxiety and internal pressure to perform
- Feeling stuck despite strong business growth
- Carrying hidden fears about his worth and identity as a leader
- Frustrated by recurring communication breakdowns inside his team

**That pressure didn't just impact his health. It bled into how he led the business**

“There was this fear that I wasn't worthy, that if Salt Strong didn't grow, maybe I wasn't enough.”

— Joe Simonds, Co-founder and CEO, Salt Strong

Even with momentum, Salt Strong hit a ceiling. Communication across the team felt misaligned. Joe found himself stuck in cycles of proving and hiding. And a question kept surfacing:

**“What if I'm the bottleneck?”**

Salt Strong didn't need a turnaround. It needed a breakthrough: a fundamental shift in how its leader saw himself, his team, and the purpose of the business.

## THE ANATOMY OF A BREAKTHROUGH

# Three Shifts That Changed Everything

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A breakthrough is not a single event. It is an interconnected sequence of shifts that build on each other.

At SightShift, we have identified the anatomy of a breakthrough: three shifts that, when they happen in order, create lasting and scalable transformation.

### 01 COMMUNICATE → VISION

Communicate a clear vision that leads to a shift in identity.

The breakthrough begins when a leader sees a new vision for themselves and their organization. That clarity reshapes who they are and how they relate to the business.

### 02 CHANGES → APPROACH

Make changes based on that vision that lead to a shift in approach.

The identity shift naturally leads to new ways of operating. Leaders redesign their systems, team structures, and culture around who they have become.

### 03 CONNECTION → RELATIONSHIPS

Deepen connection with your team that leads to a shift in relationships.

When vision and structure align, the environment is set for deeper relationships. Teams show up differently. Trust deepens. The culture becomes self-sustaining.

SHIFT 01 | COMMUNICATE → VISION

## From Anxiety to Significance

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Joe began working privately with SightShift through its leadership development process. What started as an attempt to address a leadership block quickly evolved into something far deeper: a full reintegration of his identity, his faith, and his vision for what Salt Strong could become.

**SightShift invited Joe to examine:**

- The root causes of his anxiety, driven by performance and fear of not being enough
- What he truly wanted from the next stage of leadership
- How to lead from a secure identity rather than from pressure to prove

“I learned that anxiety is just fear of something that hasn’t happened yet. And the only way to beat it is to stop hiding and start facing it.”

— Joe Simonds

Joe had done extensive personal work overcoming anxiety. With SightShift, he took those lessons the last mile. He learned to confront his insecurities instead of hiding behind them, and to anchor his leadership in purpose rather than performance.

As Joe changed, his clarity sharpened. And with it came a realization: if this transformation helped him this much, what could it do for his team?

“I used to lead to prove I was enough. Now I lead to build something worth passing on.”

— Joe Simonds

### The Ripple Effect

Joe’s identity shift didn’t stop with him. His co-founder and brother, Luke, experienced a parallel transformation—redefining his own relationship to the business and stepping into a deeper level of shared ownership and leadership.

SHIFT 02 | CHANGES → APPROACH

## A Culture Reset from the Inside Out

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As Joe's identity evolved, so did his leadership. He invited SightShift to expand its work to the rest of the Salt Strong team. Together, they worked to surface the culture patterns that had been holding the team back and align the entire organization around a shared vision and language.

**Salt Strong engaged SightShift to implement:**

- **The Culture Risk Report™**  
to surface the greatest culture risks their team faced
- **Figure That Shift Out™**  
coaching to shift the mindset and behavior of leaders throughout the organization
- **Figure That Culture Out™**  
to integrate shared values throughout the entire team
- **The SightShift Leadership Operating System™**  
to sustain the impact long term

The result was a full cultural reset without blowing everything up. The identity shift at the leadership level naturally led to changes in how Salt Strong operated: clearer communication, shared vocabulary, and systems for developing talent that didn't depend on any single leader.

“We went from everyone speaking a different language to moving in the same direction. Our meetings got shorter, decisions got faster, and for the first time, we were building something together—on purpose.”

— Joe Simonds

### Structural Shift

The clarity at the leadership level gave Joe and Luke the foundation to make bolder decisions about the business's future, including who the right steward of Salt Strong's mission ultimately was.

SHIFT 03 | CONNECTION → RELATIONSHIPS

## Where Culture Meets Community

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When identity shifts and systems align, something powerful happens in the relational fabric of a team. People show up differently. Interactions deepen. The culture becomes more reflective of the values that drive the people within it.

**At Salt Strong, the deepened connection produced tangible, measurable results:**

### Increased Engagement

Leaders stopped performing and started investing. People brought their full selves to their work—not just executing tasks but building toward a shared vision.

### Cultural Clarity

Salt Strong developed a shared language for how it leads, making conflict productive and alignment natural. Vision metaphors united the team instead of confusing them.

### Accelerated Growth Beyond the Founders

Because the culture was built on something deeper than Joe and Luke's personalities, it became transferable. The team expanded into a larger vision with shared ownership, growing not just in size but in depth of leadership.

“It’s all about people. As our people grow, our business grows.”

— Joe Simonds

## THE IMPACT

# The ROI of a Breakthrough

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What Joe experienced personally scaled through the entire culture of Salt Strong. Revenue grew beyond \$10M. Team cohesion deepened. Communication cleared. Leaders began calling each other forward instead of playing politics.

But the most significant moment came when Joe and Luke led Salt Strong to a life-changing acquisition—a milestone that validated not just the business they had built, but the people and culture behind it.

“We only grow because our people do. The work we did with SightShift changed everything—for me, for my team, and for the people we serve.”

— Joe Simonds

For Joe, the ROI isn't measured only in revenue or in a successful exit. It's leading from peace, not pressure. Building from focus, not fear. And watching his team, his family, and the 10,000+ Salt Strong members thrive in the clarity of what was built.

## Ready for Your Breakthrough Moment?

The scalability of your organization depends on the scalability of your leaders. SightShift helps fast-growing companies identify the hidden risk factors that threaten to hold them back.

With proprietary data, proven coaching systems, and a simple model for building culture, we can help you accelerate your growth without sacrificing your values.

[Schedule a Call](#)

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