



Jim's Profit Accelerator 168 Find Change and Get Ahead of the Curve

An early promise of Internet shopping was the exotic combination of almost unlimited selection and immediate price comparison. Quality comparisons were promised, but they're veiled in user opinion and limited by descriptions of features and benefits. This utopia was never as broad or deep as promised, but it seemed to be an advance.

The combination of sliding sales for traditional package good firms, the consolidation of grocery retailing into four dominant firms, and Amazon's foray into Whole Foods now yield this remarkable change: Ecommerce is projected to double from 4 percent to 8 percent of the food & beverage category by 2021—\$70 billion annually.* This food is ordered online, and delivered by a mix of store pickup and van delivery. That's interesting, but not our point.

The point is that suddenly selection has narrowed for these shoppers, dramatically enough to send food producers rushing to invent new ways to get onto customer shopping lists. Instead of going to a store and supplementing their list with items that they see on the shelf, shoppers mostly go to their list (now conveniently in their computer) and check off items that they want to buy again. The net is that this shopping takes less time—at the cost of variety, interest, or exposure to new items.

SPEED BUMP: Your customers are changing the way they prefer to buy.

This plodding description buries the power of changes once dismissed as “millennial behavior.” The problem with social media–induced change is that it's silent until it's not. (Think of foreign hackers grabbing your identity data from your credit bureau.)

Elon Musk's brilliance isn't the Tesla; it's using it to scare competition into building cars that will need the batteries from his battery company. China's shift to all electric or hybrid cars by 2019 or 2020 accelerated projected demand enough to make Musk's best investment his battery maker, not his cars.

SPEED BUMP: It's time to ask your customers how they want to buy.

Avoid underestimating change by pointing out what will remain unchanged. Instead, use this three-point change finder:

1. How would your customers like to buy?
2. What's being sold that way now?
3. When can you test the method for yourself?

If 20 percent of your *potential* customer purchases will shift to a new buying method, shouldn't you be at the head of the line to offer it? You'll learn how to do it, refining as you stay ahead of your competition.

SPEED BUMP: It's better to be second to market than fifth or sixth.

The task is to understand what your customers' trade-offs are now, rather than assuming lowest cost is best. The online food example suggests that for at least some customers saving time and simplicity win over best value or lowest cost. The point is not that any of these propositions are correct, but that the buyer equation is changing with increased use of the Internet. Your buyers almost certainly use the Internet, and are likely influenced by it.

ACCELERANT: When will your new buying process be available for your customers?

For more information on how you can accelerate revenues and profits in your business, please call or email me.

A note on **SPEED BUMPS:** Use them to click quickly with an idea that can immediately be implemented in your life as a business leader. Think: "How can I use this today?" or "Who can use this?"

* Wall Street Journal, 10/16/17, p R4

For more information, visit www.grewco.com.

Jim Grew, the Business Defogger and Accelerator, helps leaders discover hidden opportunities within their businesses and exploit them for dramatic results. Jim has led 9 businesses, worked in 31 companies at C-level, and is an expert in strategy and executive leadership. He presents regularly to industry groups, mentors business leaders, and shares insights in his Executive Letter (above). Jim holds BA and MBA degrees from Stanford University. In his new book, *The Other Side of Succession*, he shares how to plan for the future by growing your business now.

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