



DO BUSINESS FASTER™

Jim's Profit Accelerator 264 What Leaders Do That Matters Most

The surge of opinions and studies on leadership ignores an essential fundamental: It's not what the leader does; it's what her people do that matters.

SPEED BUMP: It's not what leaders do; it's what their people do that matters.

Elaborate systems are available to help leaders manage everything in their way, from life balance to time management to interpersonal skills. All of that matters, of course—and it matters a great deal. The problem is that the noise about these topics obscures the real “leader thing” that matters: what their people do.

In a burst of enthusiasm I blurted to a COO whom I was coaching, “No one cares what you do. They care how your people do.” His eyebrows nearly blew off the top of his head. No one had ever said this to him before, and he was (and is) conscientious about his practices and behaviors. He changed, and some of those changes are outlined below.

What's a leader to do?

1. **Focus on business outputs.** That means measures of critical things like revenue, profit, shipments, quality, efficiency. Yes, I mean measures. Otherwise, what does “focus” mean? Walking around can be one helpful source of data, but it measures inputs, not outputs. It measures busy-ness (activity), attitudes, flow, and other efficiency essentials, safety, and more. It's not enough, especially for a top leader. Her question is always “How are we doing now?” Answering that question requires reliable data. For most mid-size businesses, that doesn't require AI, but it does require an approach like this to produce the data:

- a. What are our top two drivers of profit and quality?
- b. How can we measure them daily?
- c. How can we show everyone our results daily?

Most businesses are so complex that it's easy to shift to parts of processes that can be easily measured. This data is an interesting diversion but doesn't have the punch to sort out what reveals success or falling short.

2. **Share output results with all employees** and use them for regular pointed discussion with your direct reports. If you and each of your people can agree on how they are

doing and where they need help, you can earn your salary by helping them move toward their goals.

3. **Separate the signal from the noise.** That means that there are always uncomfortable problems, and part of your job is to provide solid enough support to your people so that they know what is noise, know that you agree that it's noise and can be ignored, and know where they need to focus now.
4. **Clarify priorities repeatedly,** referring to goals and budgets for guidance. Problems attract folks who want to solve them, and it takes a skilled leader to divert them to issues where a solution is a payday.

SPEED BUMP: Leadership is simple: How are we doing? What's needed now?

The trick is to ask mid-level leaders these questions gently and slowly, creating space for them to update themselves (and you), and then clarify next steps. Much of the time the trick is to redirect to the actions that will yield the better results, instead of the actions that are easy.

ACCELERANT: What is one thing that each of your people should focus on this week?

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?"

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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