



DO BUSINESS FASTER™

Jim's Profit Accelerator 221 Defining Enough

As a top leader, how do you define *enough*? Do you ignore the question, assuming that more effort is better? Are you wondering if you declare "enough" people will let up? Have you ever even thought about it?

One of the businesses where I worked was owned by an otherwise bright guy who couldn't help himself when he saw a problem solved. Instead of saying, "Nice work," he would say, "Why didn't you do it sooner?" The damage spread and provided me another chance to collect and guide the key leaders to resume trying.

SPEED BUMP: If you can't say something positive, don't say it.

Of course, a valid criticism can be positive if it points to evidence of an unsolved problem. Destructive points to the past, after any hope of remedy, and asks "why" instead of "what." Here's how that looks:

After an error or otherwise damaging event, one question can be, "Why did you do it?" That question is about motive, which is fuzzy in the moment and beyond capture afterward. Now the discussion is about individual interpretations of "why," which spread heat and little light.

Instead, ask, "What happened?" In answering that question, the key data will often become clear: What was the evidence (the picture) that prompted the action? The picture is both what's "out there" and what's "in there," in the head of the person who acted.

SPEED BUMP: If your first question is "what's the evidence?" you'll get to ground faster.

Seeing the evidence provides a window into the mind of the person who acted. It's not perfect, but it's better than flogging a "why" out of him or her.

The other end of the question is this: Is it enough?

Race-car drivers, running backs in football, and good teachers all control their actions, data, and questions to focus on what matters. They ignore unneeded data and look for the through-line to a clear next step. If you're driving a race car, you don't look back (it can kill you). Instead you look ahead for the "line" (the fastest path through the corner without jumping off the track). What no one tells you is that choosing the line ignores lots of alternatives, including the possibility that a better line is available. At 180 miles an hour what you want is a line that works, even as you hope you've chosen the "best" one.

SPEED BUMP: Enough is the least investment to reach the goal. The rest is waste.

A prescription may be to invest some effort in figuring out “enough,” instead of working until the deadline to produce the most possible. This is the flabby action of surface thinking or procrastination, and it’s an enormous and hidden waste of resources. The “cushion” doesn’t produce a better plan; it produces a feeling of less exposure to the person doing the work. Supportive and frank leadership is a much better way to help your folks feel safe enough to do their best, just up to “enough.”

SPEED BUMP: Where are your leaders overperforming?

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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