

Jim's Profit Acceleratory 97: Experimental Leadership

It's not just pressure to deliver quarterly earnings growth; it's pride, pressure, and peer approval that drives leaders away from the success burst. That's right, the success burst. That's not about working diligently every day; most successful folks do that. It's a mind shift that experiments along the way, even at the risk of a bad quarter or even a bad year.

SPEED BUMP: Great leaders experiment more and more as they age.

Writer Adam Grant* documents two kinds of innovators: conceptual and experimental. Conceptual innovators typically find their breakthrough while they are young, usually under 35. Experimental innovators learn over many years by "trying stuff." While the conceptual innovators (think Einstein) find themselves bound by their breakthrough, experimental innovators take longer, and often discover more during their lives.

Which kind of leader are you? Do you drive to an answer, and drive through execution to a quick result? Do you then refine the initial breakthrough into "here's how we do it here"? The result often can be quick growth followed by long struggles to keep it alive. The premium is on results, not on enhanced paths to new results.

Or do you move quickly from one answer and stable process to the search for another? The core difference is whether you're willing to risk a quarter or a year's results to find your next five-year growth surge.

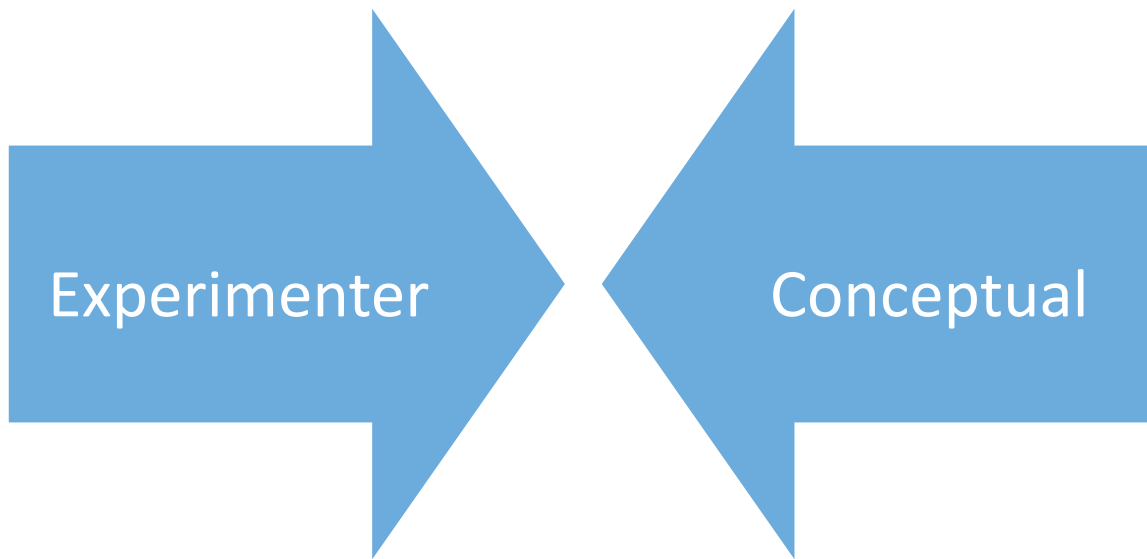
SPEED BUMP: The experimenter knows that her team can create a new future.

The successful experimenter pairs trial and evaluation repeatedly. That requires a careful balance of praise for success with challenge for demolition of the current best way.

SPEED BUMP: Demolition of tradition is exciting until the tradition is your own.

Are you willing to blow up how you're doing things today to see a new and better way? Trail-blazing e-retailer Zappos has re-created its management system three times while retaining its culture of fun and exceptional customer service. It's in a doubting period now, testing self-management teams to remove the "waste" of management. The powerful difference is that it may not work; and, if not, founder Tony Hsieh will try yet another approach.

Raise the ante: Does your preferred approach match your business model?



Conceptual Leader: Business depends on unique niche or patent. Its barriers to entry are high enough to keep most competitors out. It succeeds by refining service, products, and customer lists. Its measures are quality, customer satisfaction, and profitability. Industry examples: petroleum distribution equipment, Apple brand.

Experimental Leader: Business has capability to add offerings to changing customer bases. It rewards innovation as much as profit. It builds barriers to entry by its customer service reputation. Its measures are sales growth, product growth, customer service, and profitability. Industry examples: Amazon, Starbucks.

ACCELERANT: Experimenter or Conceptual, how will you apply that to your business?

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

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Jim Grew is an expert in CEO-level strategy and executive leadership whose clients refer to him as the Business Defogger and Accelerator. Jim helps leaders swiftly discover the hidden opportunities within their businesses and exploit them for dramatic results. Nearly three decades of success as a COO and CEO coupled with his experience running nine thriving businesses provide the foundation for his consulting work as president of the Grew Company. He presents regularly to industry groups, mentors business leaders, and shares insights on his blog, BizBursts.com: <http://bizbursts.com/>. He holds BA and MBA degrees from Stanford University.

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