



DO BUSINESS FASTER™

## Jim's Profit Accelerator 259 More Than a Checklist—It's the Person, Stupid

Bill Clinton's first presidential campaign boiled down to a blunt but effective slogan: "It's the economy, stupid." With apologies, I'll borrow the concept, for emphasis.

CEOs are awash in checklists, process instructions, guidebooks, and the like, all promising some form of improvement.

**Here's secret #1:** These tools can be effective for a problem within the business. They are insufficient otherwise. It took business rock star Peter Drucker an entire book to spell out what is likely the best business leadership roadmap ever.

**SPEED BUMP:** Analytic tools work when the problem is defined and framed.

There is no three-step method to business success—but then you knew that.

**Secret # 2:** The people leading and working in each business are unique enough that even the best techniques demand sensitive customization for success. There are guiding principles, of course, but success comes in application, not in theory, and application is as much about the individual quirks of the people as the analytic process.

Standout business leadership author Jim Collins has spent much of his 30-year career trying to distill leadership greatness. He's done it by peering into more firms than we can name, and he's not found the grail. He's found that top leaders are persistent, focused on the business instead of themselves, and more. Note, however, that his life's work doesn't produce a checklist.

**Secret #3:** It's the "how" that determines success, not the "what." The what is essential (what we produce, what our customers buy, what the tolerances of our product design are, and so forth), but it's the how (what the people do) that determines outcomes.

One of the problems with financial analytics is that after they've framed the **what** they walk away, assuming that a clear end is all that folks require in order to execute well. It clearly is not enough.

Why this rant? Because advice-givers abound, creating complex checklists and tools that they've implemented as a line manager once or never. Advisors who have led only one organization, especially as division managers (Sales, Production), can have high skills in that type of organization or framed situation, but they are a poor bet to provide advice to CEOs who lead the entire organization. As one successful COO (\$400 million public company) told me: *It's*

*not about optimizing your division. It's about deciding which division to optimize, probably to the disadvantage of another division. Answering this question requires strategic and people skills at a level that outside observers seldom grasp.*

**SPEED BUMP:** Seek CEO-level advice from someone who's done it in multiple firms.

Of course, having done it is of little value without the skills of seeing individual differences in leaders and companies and adapting solutions accordingly.

**ACCELERANT:** Who is your advisor?

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](http://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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