

## Jim's Profit Accelerator 129: Top Three CEO Weaknesses

My mom would be 108 if she were alive today. She maintained provocative and influential relationships with everyone she met, from grandkids to nurses at her retirement home. She did it with words and specifics, such as making ice cream cones for her grandchildren with M&M's at the bottom. Thirty years later they still remember that.

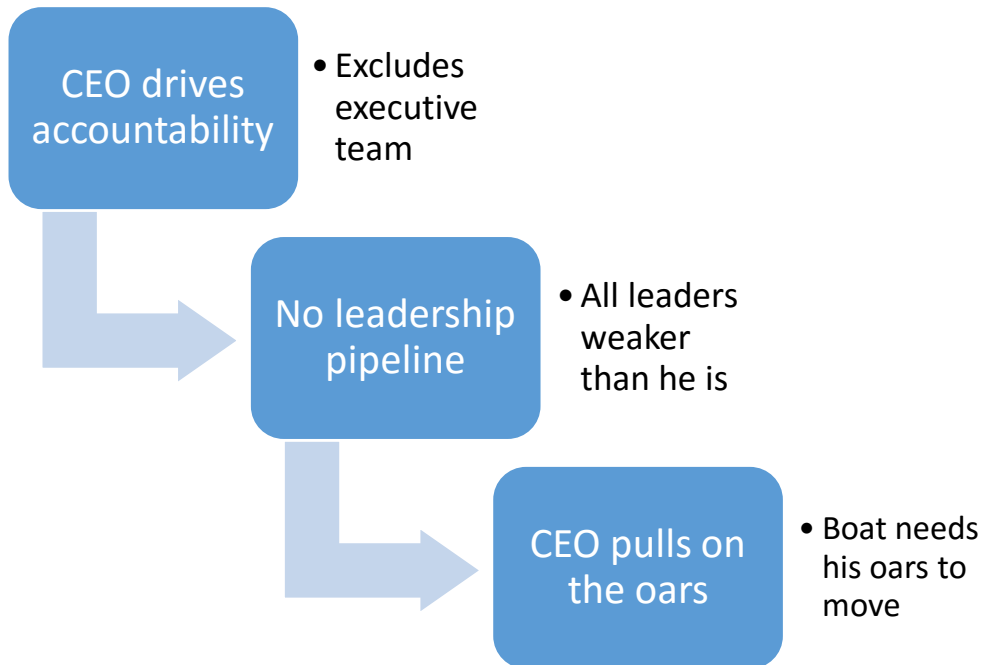
My mom "saw" and celebrated the individual "specialness" (her word) of each kid, while insisting that each person around her use their gifts to the limit. She built a safe place where folks could grow, excel, and contribute more than they imagined. She sounds eerily like the description of a superb leader, don't you think?

*Provocative* and *influential* are descriptors of effective CEOs, I think. Popular nonsense describes a leader as a visionary who drives the herd to his destination. Not even Steve Jobs did that! Let's change the lens a bit, to note the weaknesses that block talented leaders from the success that they crave.

Top weaknesses:

1. **THE Source of Accountability.** Instead of building an executive team that effectively maintains accountability across the organization, the CEO thinks of himself as *the* source of accountability—and teaches that to his troops. That limits the innovation that fuels success, since his approval lurks in the way of individual risk-taking.
2. **No Leadership Pipeline.** Weakness shows in a limited or non-existent bench of future leaders, and an organization buried in today's problems. It's strange math that fills key positions with un-promotable people "because we can't maintain positions for people who don't contribute." Why not ruthlessly find and promote promotable people into as many positions as possible—even very junior ones? Doesn't it cost the same?
3. **Personally Pulls on the Oars.** Rather than creating an executive team that fuels momentum in the organization, the CEO tries to do this independently. This is frequently a habit carried over from leading a smaller organization or a functional department. In both cases part of the leadership job is pulling on the oars to set the example. In both cases it is quite possible to hire folks who want to pull on the oars themselves, even very junior ones, so that the "oar-puller" is the team, not the boss.

**SPEED BUMP:** Successful CEOs expect others to be the fuel for growth.



**SPEED BUMP:** Top leaders look to their team to build a great organization.

**What's Your Yank Rating:** Here's a 30-second test of your leadership sophistication. How often in the last three months did you yank on the reins to change the direction of your leadership team? Here's your yank rating:

1. More than one yank a month: You haven't built a strong team.
2. One yank a month: Your team is under construction, but not fully formed.
3. Less than one yank a month: You're lucky, you're asleep, or you have a great team!

**ACCELERANT:** When will gentle tugs replace yanks to guide your team?

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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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