

Jim's Profit Accelerator 105: Gentle Accountability

How does accountability look in your company? Does it wear the uniform of an NFL linebacker: quick, aggressive, dangerous? Or is it gentle, safe, and helpful, like a first-grade teacher? I'm voting for the teacher, because if you need linebacker punch to get things done, there are challenges way past accountability in your organization.

While a blowtorch makes fabulous crème brûlée (done right), it's not much good at lifting an organization to new heights. Yet, when the word *accountability* is spoken, its meaning is blowtorch, not gentle teacher. Let's change that now.

SPEED BUMP: If gentle accountability won't move it along, look at your leadership.

Here's how we all look at change: The most powerful accountability lives inside what I want to get done. I'll do the work, the wondering, and the adjustment that success demands.

Here's a story: One of my clients had two successful businesses for more than 20 years. They were related but involved different channels and service packages. As we explored his declining profits and longer hours, it seemed clear that one of the businesses needed to be put to sleep. Even though it was clear to him, it took nearly two years to trim back the declining one until it finally stopped. The problem? The owner loved it and didn't want it to go away, even though it cost him money every day! So much for rational thinking. The owner, by the way, is a brilliant scientist, pragmatic in virtually every element of his business life, and successful as a result.

SPEED BUMP: Logic is vital, but emotion drives action.

He explained it to me this way: *I knew for several years what we needed to do. My key guy didn't trust you, because you were suggesting the same things he'd heard me say many times. He didn't understand that sometimes you need someone else's view to help you through the door—even when you know it's the right thing to do!*

Where's the accountability? Every time we met, I asked about progress toward closing the dying business, looking for the details that meant progress. Pretty soon he knew I'd ask, and he'd have some. That's it. He knew the goal, and we went there arm in arm. That year he told me he sent the IRS his biggest check in years!

SPEED BUMP: Outside eyes sometimes find the invisible door.

Jazz legend John Coltrane annoyed bandleader and jazz immortal Miles Davis because Coltrane's improvisations seemed to go on forever. Conversation:

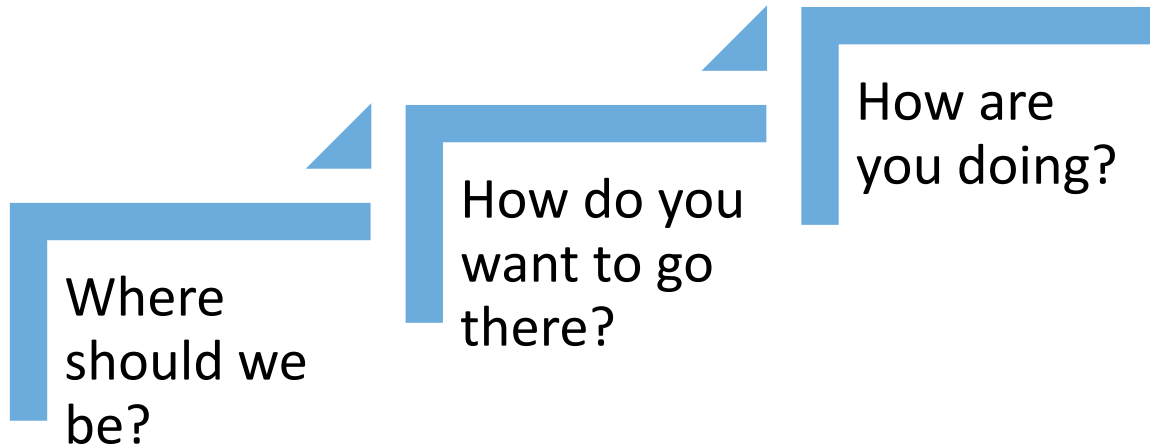
Miles Davis: "Why not play 26 choruses instead of 27?"

John Coltrane: "I get stuck in there and I can't figure out how to end it."

Miles Davis: "Take the horn out of your mouth."

Maybe not so gentle, but opening the door anyhow. (What's unspoken in that bit of dialog is that Coltrane wanted to end it too.)

Here's how it looks:



ACCELERANT: What issue needs your gentle attention?

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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