



DO BUSINESS FASTER™

## **Jim's Profit Accelerator 8: Succession Illustrated: 30 Feet Up the Fir Tree**

A huge Douglas fir tree in Portland's Rose Garden Park has divided itself into three trees about 30 feet up from its base. The "parent" trunk is three feet across; the "kid" trunks, springing from the base, are each about a foot in diameter. The vigor of this tree is the best image of successful succession I've seen yet.

But first let's clear the air about succession. Somehow it's come to mean a leader leaving his post. Like most clichés it's true enough, but stunningly limited. Succession can be about growing, not just about leaving or dying, and it's a staple of every successful leader and organization I've known. It hides under the rubric of "Change Management," but with richer context. If you'll repurpose the word to mean personal growth and enhanced impact, you'll re-energize yourself and your firm like the tree.

A remarkable number of CEOs and owners that I've known have admitted that they're bored. I'm prescribing Succession: take one daily, and don't leave your firm. You'll love the person you become.

**SPEED BUMP:** Delegation is the single best preparation for succession.

Delegate early and often. Here's what it can get you:

- A continually energized and growing firm.
- A jump in management bandwidth that can conquer top opportunities.
- Vision so clear that reality and opportunity leap into sight.

### **A Continually Energized and Growing Firm**

Jewel Food Stores dominated the grocery business in Chicago for decades. Its 25 percent market share was unheard of in a major metropolitan area. It focused relentlessly on finding and developing talented people, promoting them to key leadership positions in their late 20s and early 30s. It developed a "Skunk Works" separate chain of stores called The Outer Zone, located in a ring about 40 to 70 miles outside Chicago. This was where most new initiatives were tested (and often developed) before rollout in the city. This is where young leaders were developed and proven, with real profit responsibility.

The process of delegating forces a leader to hire and grow competent leaders. No one hands the ball to folks who can't learn to use it well. The impact on hiring and training gets new urgency, instead of languishing by the roadside like many "HR" initiatives. Let's face it: There are few things as energizing as trying to start your car as it sits in the crossing with a train bearing down. New responsibilities are like that train, you know.

### **A Jump in Management Bandwidth That Can Conquer Top Opportunities**

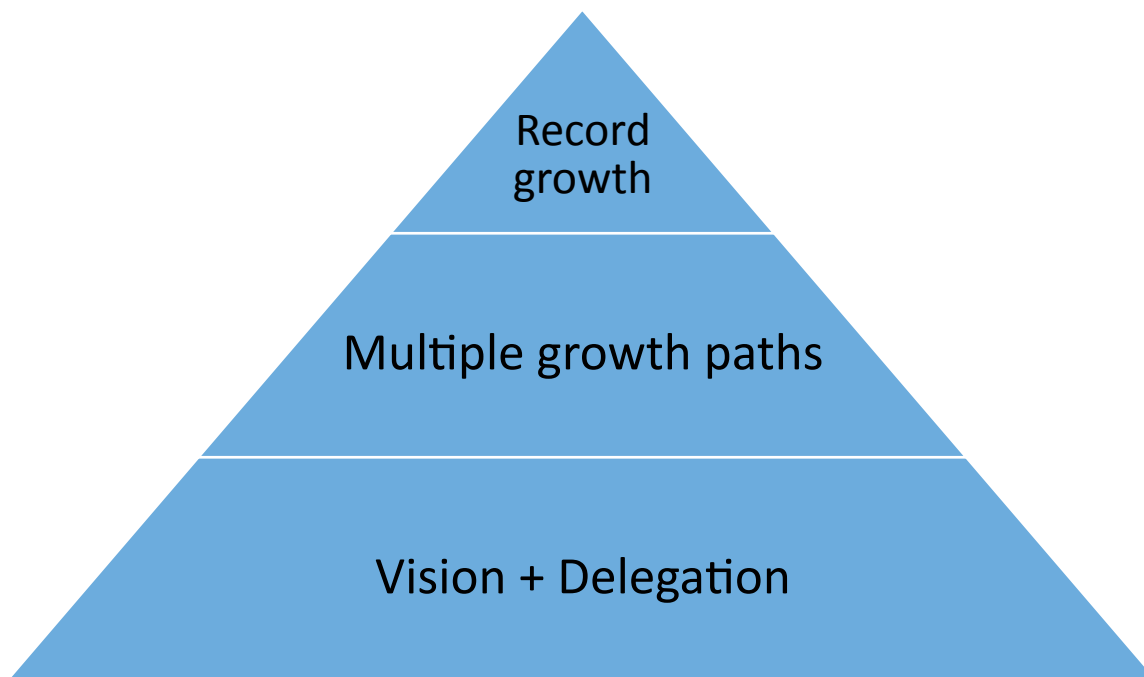
More skilled players are likely not only to deliver better results sooner, but their drive will pull the business into opportunities that now swim by unnoticed. There is a reason that world-class sailboats have a crew: the captain couldn't sail without them, let alone win.

### **Vision So Clear That Reality and Opportunity Leap into Sight**

Yes, the "Vision Thing" is overblown, but here's the opportunity: Real leaders point to the next real opportunity like Sacajawea pointed to the next mountain for Lewis and Clark. Your explorers need you to help them see the great opportunities and pass up low-payoff iterations of the present. If no one is looking, what will you miss?

### **Weightless Weight Lifting**

Here's how a powerful leader who delegates and sees can carry a vigorously successful organization (without feeling the weight).



Intel recently hired a Chief Marketing Officer from Staples. It's unprecedented for a deeply engineering-driven firm to look outside for a powerful vision of customer possibilities. In fact, it's 180 degrees from the core that built the company: *Engineer Moore's Law into better and better products. Customers will see the benefits and throng to buy them.* Brilliant engineering design is still producing chips that meet Moore's impossible standard, but the vital shift is about a new path to customers.

One of my early mentors, the chairman of a \$7 billion firm, told me that he tried to “re-pot” himself every five to seven years. I watched him do it, replacing himself twice as he moved up and onto the board of directors. His company was dominant in its markets for decades.

**ACCELERATOR:** Do you have the guts to “re-pot” yourself?

Call me.

For more information, visit [www.grewco.com](http://www.grewco.com).

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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