



Jim's Profit Accelerator 151 Leader-Maker Formula

Instead of the standard meme that strong leaders are dangerous and sensitivity is weakness, let's look at how things really work. Leaders aren't leaders unless folks want to follow them. Colin Powell once said, "When your troops stop coming to you for help, you stop being their leader."

SPEED BUMP: How do you decide who to ask for help?

Underneath the standard answer (trust), is this raw belief: I don't think they will hurt me, and I think they want me to succeed.

Full disclosure: Today is Father's Day, and good fathers are good leaders; good leaders also tend to be good fathers. Most folks have a dad or a dad figure in their lives. We let folks become our dads by the raw truth test, above. (Of course, women can be, and are, good dads, but that's another discussion.)

What's the leader-maker formula, to grow your leader/dad/helper reputation? Try these three:

1. **"I don't know."** It only works when you say it as soon as you realize that you don't know. It's an antidote to annoying guessing, which fogs your team's brains. It fuels other minds immediately, opening a space to explore solutions.
2. **"I was wrong."** Even more vital to say it out loud as soon as possible, directly to the folks who received the wrong data from you. It's a loner, though: it only works when you own your mistake. If it's part of others mistakes, your quick acknowledgment can allow the rest of the errors to surface, making correction faster and easier. And it's free.
3. **"What do you think?"** Immediate response to another who asks you what they should do (or wimpy variant, "What should be done?"). This revives the monkey story: When someone asks you what to do, they've "put the monkey on your back." Now progress stops while you come up with a solution that often is mediocre because you haven't put much thought into it. Instead, give the monkey back immediately, asking "What do you think?" This works if you laser listen, even through the quiet. You can take it up a notch by responding to their idea with this: "And what else?"

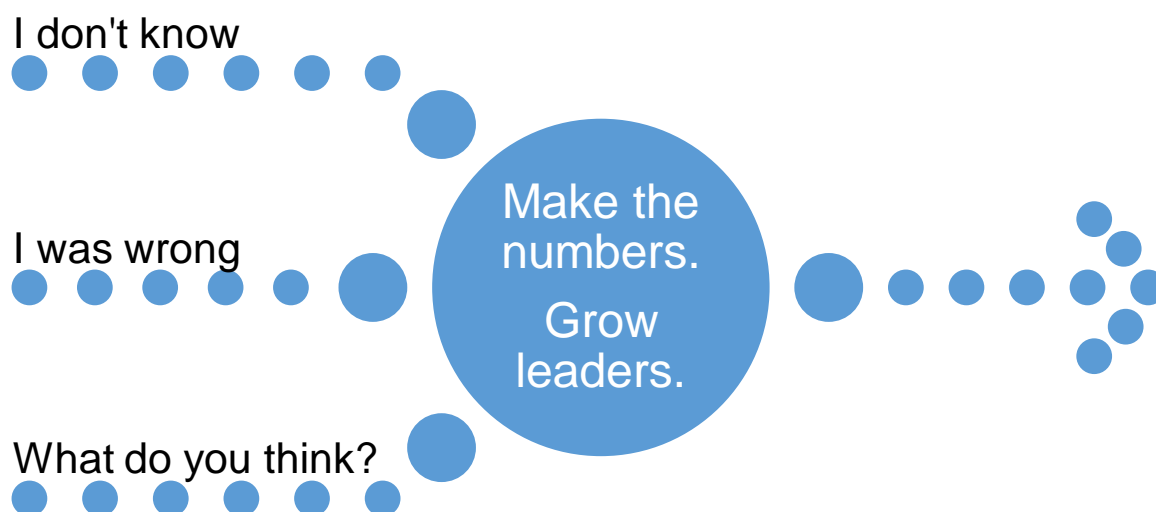
SPEED BUMP: The less you prescribe the better the answer.

The leader always has at least these responsibilities:

- A. Make the numbers.
- B. Grow other leaders.

It turns out that more B cuts the need for you to do A.

One of the best manufacturing managers I've worked with forced me to do all three of the above, thank goodness. He would randomly stop me in the plant and say something like, "What you said today went right over our heads." After a while, I gradually applied one of the simple formula phrases with him (and meant it). He was a former homicide detective, and I know not even to try to defend myself. Instead, he shoved me into doing the right thing. We were remarkably successful.



ACCELERANT: When will you try a leader-maker phrase?

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.

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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