



DO BUSINESS FASTER™

Jim's Profit Accelerator 156 Dare to Ask

The advice enshrined in the temple of good business management (whatever that is) is to “ask your customers.” Sounds good, but it’s seldom done well (either no conversation, dismissed as anecdotal, or limited to complaints). So really, what is your team doing now? How do you gather customer information?

Use this scale to show how you’re gathering customer information now. Where would you put your organization on each of these continuums?

Anecdotal ← 1-----10 → **Researched**

Low Cost ← 1-----10 → **Expensive**

Provocative ← 1-----10 → **Projectable***

*Projectable means it’s likely true enough to invest in it.

SPEED BUMP: The value in data is the action it stimulates. No action = waste.

Unless you are a major polling company like Gallup, your inputs should aim at the critical elements in your customer proposition. If you’re not sure what they are, and especially if your team isn’t sure, it’s time to find out—by asking.

The fastest way to get usable data is to add a question to every customer conversation. One question allowed, with a follow-up question only if necessary for understanding.

What can you ask about? Start with these—they matter to everyone:

1. Are you buying more from us than a year ago? Why?
2. Is our quality better than a year ago?
3. Is our value to you better than a year ago?
4. Do we answer your questions as soon as you want?
5. Is there anything you want us to know?

The process:

- Make a question card to standardize the questions and answers (one card per call).
- Make five calls a day for five days.
- Tally the number of yes and no answers.
- Copy verbatim the answers to #5.

- Distribute to the entire company.
- Repeat every month.

The action: Ignore whiners who complain that this isn't "scientific" or "projectable." So what. It will prompt questions, changes, programs, and major initiatives that will dig out the extent of the opportunity and payback. This is mostly to re-sensitize your folks to their customers.

SPEED BUMP: Make it easy for most of your people to talk to some of your customers.

Then what: Bring the 25 cards to every meeting in the company. The idea is that everyone will see the cards at least once.

Ask each group for one action item for the company out of the pile of cards. Collect the action suggestions, and ask your management team to take up to one hour to decide on one action from the card discussion.

Repeat next month. The good actions will be repeated. The lousy ones will dry up.

It's like a quiet voice in the wind from your customers, joining your team in their everyday work.

ACCELERANT: What questions were asked and what actions taken this week?

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.

©Jim Grew 2017. All Rights Reserved. *Do Business Faster*