

## Jim's Profit Accelerator 94: Team Building Won't Build a Successful Team

Team building seems like it ought to work, feels like it ought to work, and creates hope that it will work, but the reality is that four months in, little has changed. It's like attending one of those exercise boot camps—after camp is over, your workouts taper off.

**SPEED BUMP:** Leadership can't be outsourced.

Would you believe it if Bill Belichick, the remarkably successful coach of the New England Patriots, said that next season he's going to outsource leadership to team-building experts? Of course not. If an all-time great leader (skip the moralizing) won't outsource leadership to others, why would you?

Full confession: I've seen team building blast open the door to future team success, but its hand-grenade effect doesn't last. **It's what happens after the blast that matters.**

**SPEED BUMP:** Leadership, membership, and real-world experience build teams.

The main weakness of team building (TB) is that the regular leader is replaced by a temporary facilitator who creates a fantasy world of safety and simple problems. Jumping the gap to real problems with the real leader usually blows up enough TB principles to cripple the learnings from TB. Here's the reality behind developing successful teams:

- What the leader does (or not) is essential for team success.
- Team members must have essential skills that complement each other in a mix that continuously ignites progress.
- Teams are built by working through real business problems together. Practice games can build skills and team work templates, but the real team building happens when those formats are sucked into the daily pressure of work, with all its ambiguity.

That's a starter list for successful team development. Compare it to your current practice, remembering that these are bare minimums, usually not enough.

**SPEED BUMP:** Nothing replaces "being in it together to the end."

Here's the leader's job:

1. Pick team members who offer needed skills, and who will be able to work well together. Replace brilliant folks who won't team up with brilliant folks who want to work together.
2. Protect candor. Cut off personal attacks or other destructive wandering by asking: What's the evidence? Why now? What else will it take? (Note: Candor is honesty without the moral thread. It's easier to maintain.)

3. Focus the agenda on high-value items. Push aside the rest.

In one of the companies where I worked, gross margin percentage jumped 175 basis points with the kind of teamwork described above. None of the solutions were exotic or new. The results dramatically changed the trajectory of the business.

**ACCELERANT:** What kind of team are you leading?

For more information on how you can accelerate revenues and profits in your business, please call or email 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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