

## Jim's Profit Accelerator 82: Lessons from the Carolina Panthers

For the exclusive group of executives who aren't football fans, Carolina has broken the rules about firing employees. This is not about the approved HR list of processes to avoid a lawsuit and be fair to your people. So aren't you asking, "How did they get to the Super Bowl?"

This is not about Cam Newton, groundbreaking Carolina quarterback. This is about the leaders and key folks in the off-field organization. In business terms, you might say that the team of football players is the production organization, and the supporting departments around them impact their chances of success. Powerfully.

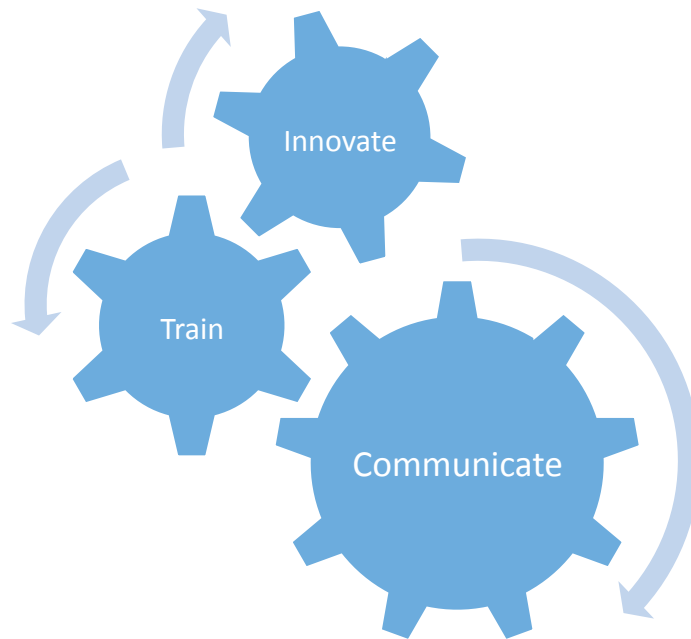
Many new GMs clean house when they arrive, but here's what Dave Gettleman did when he came on board: "I had this crazy idea that there were already smart people in the building."\* He made selective changes in responsibility, but most folks kept their jobs. Here are three ways he guided his leaders:

1. **Train:** Instead of firing, he dug into what would help each of his leaders do better and provided ways for them to learn it. His assumption seems to be that if folks want to do well and are willing to do the work to learn, better results come faster through supervised training than by replacement.

*He noticed that only twelve of fifty-three defensive backs in the NFL scouting combine were judged competent in the "back-pedal-and turn" drill. Rather than dump forty-one players, he asked if they had the athletic ability to do the move. His scouts said most could, so Carolina chose from a larger field and trained them up to par.*

2. **Communicate:** Gettleman says, "We just talk all the time." Finding a need for bigger men in the center of the defensive line, they didn't just recruit them. They insisted that the men and their coaches talk to each other, to build the quick confidence to be effective in the moment together.
3. **Innovate:** Building the relationship among offensive coordinator Mike Shula, quarterback Cam Newton, and himself helped spark creative use of Newton's unusual talents, guiding his supporting players on the field and building powerful and successful tactics. Working closely together has upped their game.

## The Carolina Panther Innovation Formula:



**SPEED BUMP:** The seed of the next growth explosion is waiting in your business now.

Innovation often is a fresh take on old data. Here's an example from the auto world: Aluminum is the new darling for cars and trucks, because it is 30 percent lighter than steel—except when it isn't. Volvo mined steel's intrinsic advantages over aluminum to craft a steel SUV (XC90) that is 300 pounds lighter, has a cargo area 8 percent larger, and measures five inches shorter overall than a major competitor's aluminum SUV (Audi Q7).

The advantages of steel include:

- Cost
- Formability
- Strength in details: fastening, tailoring, and pinpoint connection

**SPEED BUMP:** Fresh eyes can mine winning ideas from the same old, same old.

When we looked carefully inside a client's tropical aquarium business, we found a tiny but vibrant sub-business ready to grow. The growth we planned and nurtured produced the highest profit in his twenty-year history.

**ACCELERANT:** Where do you make space for fresh eyes?

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

\*Wall Street Journal, 2/3/16

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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