



DO BUSINESS FASTER™

Jim's Profit Accelerator 247

The Planning Trap

Most leaders like planning: it's mostly under their control, it can be done swiftly, and it offers immediate satisfaction. It's hard to resist the satisfaction of a good plan, which converts a foggy future to the immediate possibility for success.

Plans are important, whether you work alone or lead thousands. Plans help answer the morning question "what shall I do today?" But there's a problem here.

SPEED BUMP: Plans don't pay the bills; results do.

The problem is shifting from plan to execution and follow-through. Starting to execute is a bit harder than planning, but it's relatively simple, because it's a small extension of the plan.

It's a bit like kayaking a river full of rapids. The launch from shore is fairly simple. Setting up and traversing rapids, set after set, is much harder. Getting through each set is hard, recovering is hard, and then setting up in time for the next set of rapids is harder.

SPEED BUMP: Recovery from bumps in execution is hard.

The payoff in planning is the result, not the plan. How to stay in the river as you work through the rapids of execution? Here are three tools:

- 1. Clear measures:** A common mistake is to trade many measures for the few that matter for the results you seek. These anthill measures produce activity without impact. Calling them "drivers" doesn't help, because the mistake persists: a clear result is the doorway to effective measures. No clear result equals lousy measures.
- 2. Quick follow-up:** The best organizations respond to results quickly: daily is best, though weekly will do. More delay can make the numbers better but produces a weaker result. The point of quick numbers is quick action.

SPEED BUMP: Numbers are mostly to stimulate behavior toward results.

- 3. Firm confrontation:** Once the daily numbers are in front of everyone, the immediate question is "what should we do now?" That's a planning statement. The action is for the leader (or the group) to ask the person who should act: "What will you do now?" That's the equivalent of prepping for the next batch of rapids in the river.

SPEED BUMP: A “what” question always needs a “when,” and a “did you?”

Scoring bonus: A follow-up is part plan, part action. The payday is in the action, framed with these questions:

- How did it go?
- Will you get to your goal?
- If not, now what?

Execution works in waves. It starts with an action, is fed by monitoring (“how’s it going?”), is guided by correction, and requires a leader to check in before the end. This seems obvious. How often did that last step happen in your organization in the past month?

ACCELERANT: What initiative will you actively check into 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.

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