

Jim's Profit Accelerator 22: Are You Using Last Five, First Five?

Ohio State football coach Urban Meyer, playing in his third national championship, uses a uniquely simple tool to ramp his players' focus and performance: He puts special emphasis on the last five minutes of the game before halftime, and on the first five minutes of the second half. That technique changes the game from a 60-minute marathon to a series of sprints. Just as runners or swimmers put extra drive and focus into the hand-off to their next teammate, Meyer has changed the game in the minds of his players.

Results:

- In the 2014 Big Ten championship game, OSU recovered a Wisconsin fumble and scored with 36 seconds left in the first half. It put the game out of reach for Wisconsin, pushing the score to 38–0.
- In the 2014 Sugar Bowl with eight minutes left in the first half, OSU scored two touchdowns on 70+ yard drives to close to 21–20 at the half. In the first three minutes of the second half, OSU took a 27–21 lead, and Alabama never caught up.*

World-famous business performance expert Alan Weiss reports that “logic makes you think; emotion makes you act.”

Good advice, but how do you find the “emotion” button for your people? And even if you do find it, the reality is that emotion is usually available in bursts; it's not a steady flow, because “emotion” means a jump in feelings (good or bad), and time and entropy will dilute them either way.

SPEED BUMP: The effort to find the “emotion button” can accelerate your payoff.

Urban Meyer's brilliance is creating a high-yield moment in time, granting everyone permission to reach hard for “better.” Notice that Meyer doesn't use a speech or a number or a threat—the three most common “motivators.” Instead he creates an opportunity to blast it, and it's equal opportunity: everyone may step up, no risk. How could you resist such an offer?

Let's grab the pieces of this, so that we can pull some of the OSU magic into our organizations. Coach Meyer creates a frame for his players with this device, and that's part of its brilliance. Framing is one of the weakest tools in many leaders' toolkits, based on my experience. I prefer the label “frame” for the package usually called “delegation,” because too often delegation is corrupted into meaning only its least important traits: hand-off and progress check. Those seem simple, but without the rich context that should accompany each, they almost guarantee either resentment or failure. That essential

context includes the items below. Accountability (follow-up) is not listed because it is well understood, if administered unevenly.

SPEED BUMP: Delegation with emotion yields a thrilling performance boost.

Here are three keys to a successful hand-off (*delegation*):

- **Goal:** With some effort to check understanding, this can be done easily. Its biggest enemy is trying to transmit the entire picture instead of the outcome. Success tip: Explain the outcome first, in fewer than five words. Coach Meyer does it with one word: *momentum*. And then he stops talking. Try it yourself: “Our goal is...”
- **Limits** (boundaries, if you like). Football has rules, referees, and lines to mark the out of bounds. Among many benefits, those allow players to “let ‘er rip,” tapping the outrageous power of their emotions. Doubt it? Why is there so much dialogue by commentators about *momentum shifting*? The discussion doesn’t center around when the score shifted or any other particular indicator (downs, yardage, etc.). Those metrics validate their theory about the fundamental: momentum, which is entirely in the heads of the players. Limits can enable the focus that success demands. Here are some examples of limits:
 - **Time:** When do we need to finish?
 - **Money:** What’s our budget?
 - **Team:** Who’s going to work on it?
- **Affirmation: “I know you can.”** This is an *assumptive close* in full-dress leadership. An assumptive close is a powerful technique to influence other people, with their permission. It’s been around a long time because it’s a helpful way to deliver effective dialogue. Its phrasing assumes that the other person agrees, and spells out the next logical step. Most vital, it communicates confidence and assurance, the fuel required to drive through fear and fatigue.
 - “I knew you could,” its apparent opposite, is a destructive “praising” technique that dilutes confidence, minimizes the pain and effort expended, and rewards the success with the unspoken requirement to step it up even further. University of Oregon football coach Mark Helfrich acknowledged that his team would spend some time savoring their Rose Bowl victory before shifting to preparation for their next game. That’s “hooray we did it,” not “I knew you could.”

Goals, limits, and affirmation are all required ingredients here. Think of it this way:

1. Goal + Limits – Affirmation = **Overwhelmed**
2. Goal + Affirmation – Limits = **Unfocused**
3. Affirmation + Limits – Goal = **Waste**
4. Goal + Limits + Affirmation = **Win!**



A manufacturing company where I worked created amazing emotion in its employees with a simple thermometer (think United Way), showing progress toward weekly and monthly shipping targets. This thermometer and the daily discussion combined limits, a goal, and affirmation. Even better, the earnings boost and bonuses were beyond their imagination, not to mention the imagination of the CFO!

ACCELERANT: When will you apply emotional delegation to that huge opportunity right in front of you?

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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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