



DO BUSINESS FASTER™

Jim's Profit Accelerator 203 When You Hire an Operations Manager and "Become" CEO

This is for CEOs or presidents who have acted as their own operations manager for years. The prospect of growth brings the need for more robust management (or at least someone else to handle some of the pile in your inbox). Once you've hired this operations manager (OM) your work isn't over—it changes.

SPEED BUMP: When you hire an OM, your job changes.

If you're serious about an effective OM, every operations question and decision must go through that person. That sounds easy, but it will be elusive, confusing, and clumsy.

Here's why: Your new job requires that you stop doing what's made you successful. Yes, you'll focus on decisions with risk, but you'll do it differently (if you want your OM to be successful). You'll be dragging other people along with you, you'll start sooner, decisions may take longer, and so forth. Most important, your job is to help your OM be more successful than you were (isn't that what you've said out loud about this change?).

SPEED BUMP: Your job is to help your OM be more successful than you were.

Here are some starter tips:

- Meet weekly with your OM (just the two of you). Let him or her manage the agenda but ask that last week's action plans be reviewed in this week's meeting (how did it go?).
- Whenever anyone comes to you for an idea or decision that involves operations, ask them, "What did Don [the OM] say?" Send them away without a decision from you.
- As you look about the business, seek information and avoid decisions. Most of the time you have hired a person to be responsible for those situations, so let them take care of it. Best is to ask the employee if she's talked with "Don" about it. Next best is to ask them to take it to their supervisor. Either way, if you wish, you can mention it in your weekly one-on-one, by asking what's happened about it.
- Consider yourself a repository of data and ideas, not a problem-solver. Leave the problem with your people.

- Require that your OM (and other direct reports) provide you with one to three weekly metrics that will let you know what's working and what isn't. The discipline of defining the metrics will help you both, and the ongoing information will give you chances for praise as well as raising concern.
- Whenever any employee asks you what the company is going to do about a topic, ask, "What do you think we should do? Why is that?" You'll find that the why has more legs than the what.
- Make it clear formally and informally that you want the facts immediately, especially if the news is bad. When you get it, say thank you and ask your leader involved for an action plan on the topic. DO NOT prescribe action.

SPEED BUMP: These tips are the same for anyone reporting to you.

By now you're nodding and assuring yourself that you never go around your leaders by making decisions or giving direction to your people. For a brisk awakening, ask your leaders to rate how often you do it in a month, on a 1–10 scale (1=never; 10=all the time). This is also a test of their willingness to tell you how it is. If you get a 1 or 2 rating, they are protecting you (and maybe themselves).

ACCELERANT: When have you asked for information without acting on it?

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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