



DO BUSINESS FASTER™

Jim's Profit Accelerator 222 Which Kind of Coaching

For most people, medical school is both laborious and mentally challenging. An old prescription for getting through medical school is to look down at your feet and take one step at a time until you can't stand it, and then switch your gaze to your goal, and take one step at a time—rinse and repeat.

Is this how you lead? The clue is in what kind of coaching you do. Or more properly, which kind of learning do you help your people with?

The distinction is not about the kinds of problems your people are facing. Instead, it's what you take from them to help your folks improve.

Here are the two kinds of learning (and coaching):

- 1. Solve the current problem:** Much of the time the focus is to solve the problem right in front of us (see medical school story above). It is based upon skills, data, and problem-solving within the capacity of the team that must implement the solution. The coaching should focus on skills such as these:
 - Clear problem definition:** Lack of problem definition is often the primary obstacle to a solution.
 - Clear people roles:** Lack of clarity is frequently the real problem, as in *who will lead this, who will do this, who will track this, and so forth.*
 - Clear first steps:** Commonly the tough problems grind folks to a halt until they allow themselves to take a few steps toward a solution. Those few first steps, if they aren't required to produce a full solution, can open the door to a real solution sooner than expected.
- 2. See the pattern to suggest a behavior change:** This developmental coaching connects data from the current problem to patterns in past problems. The patterns include both the problem and the approach of the leader to guide a solution. Sometimes those patterns suggest that if the leader would take a different approach and change a behavior, it would open the door to improved results. Such coaching focuses on leader behavior, and how to change it to help their people improve outcomes.

Here are examples of habitual behavior that limit performance and may block further promotion (as explained in depth by Marshall Goldman's classic *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*):

- Slow to pull the trigger: Examples of this dithering are being slow to move an under-performing employee out of his current job or committing to a major investment for the business.
- Managing from past skills: An example would be a CEO who had been chief marketing officer over-controlling his CMO. It frustrates the new CMO and prevents the company from having the CEO be CEO.
- Fuzzy problem definition: This happens when a leader doesn't check understanding with her people or avoids checking for questions or concerns about a proposed plan.
- Weak delegation and accountability skills: This shows up as a bandwidth limit on the leader, with deadlines missed, decisions rushed, priorities confused.

SPEED BUMP: How you lead matters more than which problems you solve.

Relying only on problem-solving leadership to enhance the skills of your leaders is the long way around the barn. It reinforces the need for rapid solutions without self-reflection or help, especially in how the leader goes about leading her people.

Real leverage in improving leadership effectiveness comes from changing behaviors with self and other people. Such changes usually require outside insight and personal reflection, since all of us have constructed our own way of seeing the world around us.

SPEED BUMP: I'm more likely to change a behavior if someone shows me the cost of that behavior.

ACCELERANT: What behavior will you coach in your top leader today?

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.