



## Jim's Profit Accelerator 157 Did I Hear What I Meant?

Superb communication is fundamental in a winning organization. It's also as "scarce as hens' teeth," to quote my Oklahoma mom. Consistent operations depend on data communicated about these fundamentals:

1. How are we doing?
2. How well did the new item (test, product, process) go?
3. What do we do now?

Don't hang up yet—these aren't what you think. They look simple, but they don't translate well within most organizations (neither horizontally nor vertically). Unfortunately, leaders don't realize that until a major FUBAR\* shows up.

\*(military term for huge mistake, rendered in colloquial speech)

**SPEED BUMP:** What you mean is seldom what you get.

We'll skip the brain diagrams and cut to the problems:

- When we think we've said it clearly, we turn off our listening equipment.
- When we see that our meaning didn't reach the other person, we often just repeat.
- When the other person didn't get what we meant, it must be their problem, not ours.

**SPEED BUMP:** If the student fails to learn, the teacher failed to teach. \*\*

\*\*Vintage U.S. military saying, still true.

We commonly work harder on preparing our communication than on learning what was missed, and how to fill in the blank spots.

When I ran a manufacturing business, my manufacturing manager all too frequently stuck his head into my office to say something like, "You're way over our heads. What did you mean?" Happily he'd provide the corrective slap to me, and then help me clear things up. I don't know what he said, but somehow the folks still tried to understand, even in the face of my vagueness. In every case that I remember, I worked hard to explain and dramatize (with stories, diagrams, and so forth) the great ideas that I planned to present. Fortunately my translator bridged the gap between speaker and listener.

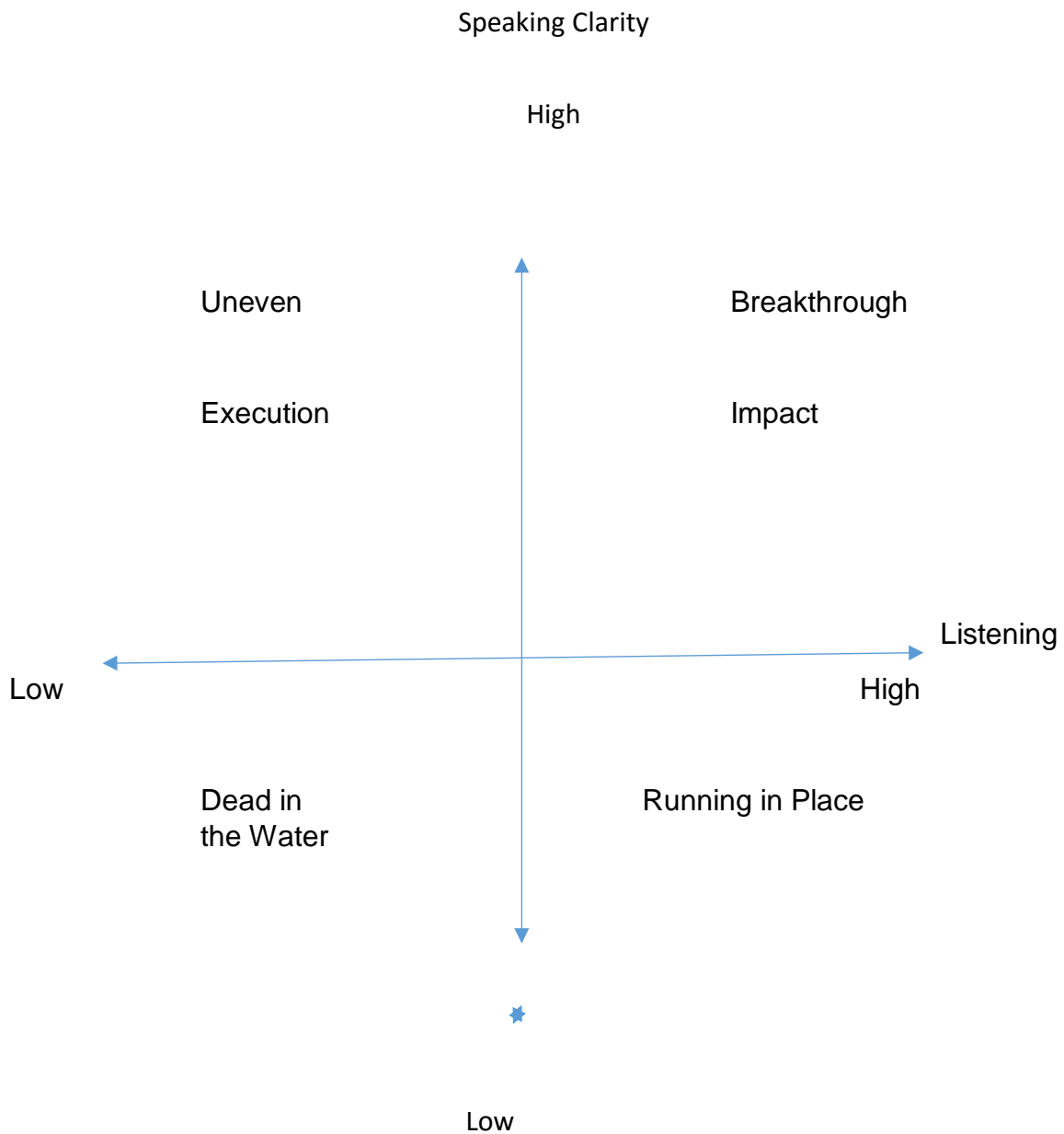
Who is your translator? Do you even know that you need one?

Here's a personal translation kit that will help you and your people better work together:

1. **One idea at a time.** Don't do pairs or threes, even if they are related, because the result will be blurriness.
2. **Ask, "What did I mean?"** Watch intently. This is the communication gateway.
3. **Respond to what you hear** in #2, not what you meant. Until you go to the place the other person occupies, you're likely to miss the vital connection.

**SPEED BUMP:** Most communication is about listening and adjusting to the listener.

### COMMUNICATION IMPACT



The problem with exhortations to listen is that they are misplaced. They start at #2, above, after the communication starts. Instead, ask first how your listener sees the topic you will be discussing. Like most skilled salespeople, you'll tailor your comment to their starting place, instead of your own.

**ACCELERANT:** To what action topic will you apply "first listen, then talk"?

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](http://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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