



## Jim's Profit Accelerator 161 How to Let the Truth Do the Talking

Confrontation has a bad reputation. It suggests an aggressive, in-your-face, pushy, cold, and manipulative style—and that's just a start. Too bad, because skilled confrontation is essential for success as a leader, and in life.

Let's simplify the definition:

1. To confront is to speak the truth as you see it.
2. That's it, provided it's said to the person who needs to hear it.

Yes, there's a difference between what and how. The "what" is the content, or what you communicate. The "how" is the rub, because most of us link confrontation with fighting, raised fists and voices, red faces, and angry denunciations. Those can be confrontations, but confrontations can be kind, gentle, and positive.

Need an example? Picture the patient, loving mother gently holding her child's hand, keeping him out of the street until it's clear. No red faces, no yelling, no drama. (Yes, there can be drama with a mom and a little kid.)

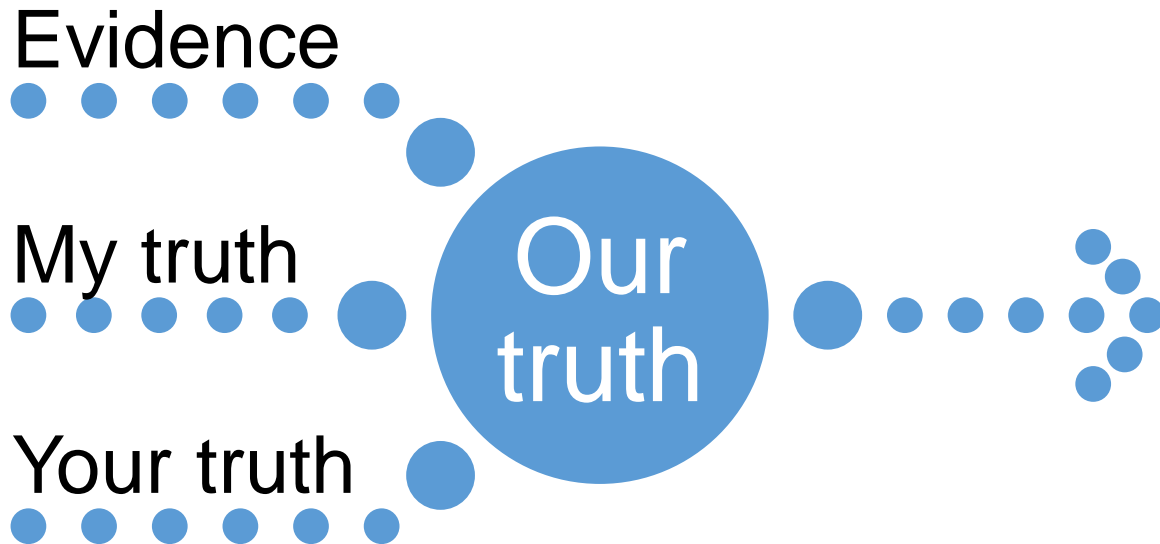
**SPEED BUMP:** Confrontation can be kind.

If we change the definition to "facing," which is pointing out truths, the aroma fades. Now it's more about science than soaring tempers. So, what's the three-step method?

- A. Ask, "What's the evidence?"** Frequently this is the point of difference. If so, dig here, together if necessary, but pull out the evidence, such as it is. If it's weak, acknowledge that. But shifting from conclusion to evidence changes the focus and often the feelings.
- B. Present the truth simply, as you see it.** Consider truth to be your conclusion from the facts. It may be different from someone else's, but you owe them and yourself the opportunity to state what you see. Sometimes you can get to truth faster if you separate the "what" from the "how." For example, if the debate is about a software process, first define the result of the change, and then describe the change itself. You'll find that the debate (confrontation) is about the result of the change, not its method. This simpler difference may be resolved more easily by clarifying the result and its purpose. This clears the air to ask if the benefit is worth the cost of the change.
- C. Listen for the other person's truth.** Discovering our "truth" can provide a rush of satisfaction that blocks our mind and our ears to other possibilities. Remind yourself to

open back up and hear the other point of view. After all, physicists still debate whether the universe is made of energy or particles.

**SPEED BUMP:** The formula for an answer is A + B + C.



With your “truths” and her “truths” on the table, a resolution is near.

When I took flying lessons, I had to take off from a short, soft field as part of the process of obtaining my license. (It’s called a short field take-off.) My instructor was a grizzled crop duster who loved to tease. When we lifted off the farmer’s field, I looked ahead again at the telephone wires racing toward us. He held the wheel down, stopping me from pulling the plane up so soon it would likely stall. Finally, at way past the last minute, he said, “Pop the wheel...pull it toward you fast!” I did, and the plane hopped up and over the wire. I never forgot the “wire confrontation.”

You’d stop the little kid from running in front of a car, so why wouldn’t you help someone else find a clearer truth, and let the truth do the talking instead of you?

**ACCELERANT:** What’s the truth that needs to be shared, with tact?

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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

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