

Jim's Profit Accelerator 9: Speed-Killer: Leading Like a 40-Year-Old

My editor, Nina, says: *"Some people say they want an editor but don't want ideas or corrections. Baffling."*

What Nina describes is like "Do It Yourself Leadership": a major speed-killer, and a reason that so many firms drown in their sludge, eventually fading from their early glory. The same leader who delivered sparkling growth suddenly seems to be presiding over limits, caution, and a desperate focus on profit.

How can that be? It happens when a leader's confidence blocks powerful outside help, mistakenly believing that past success ensures a winning future.

Are you leading like a 40-year-old? Here's a 60-second self-test.

Mark each item True or False:

1. *Most of my advice comes from a regular peer group.*
2. *I seldom say, "I never saw it that way before."*
3. *If I can't find the answer, no one else will.*
4. *My best subordinate couldn't replace me.*
5. *I've found what works, and I believe in it.*
6. *I really am the smartest person in the room.*

To supercharge the test, try asking these questions of your significant other.

If at least four answers are true (either by your own admission or your S.O.'s), the odds are massively against you. If at least four are False, there's hope for your future success. Why? This is a Success Delusion Test. The head-set of an "early winner" comes with the beliefs above. Necessary for early success, the failure point is when they're no longer enough but continue to be used.

SPEED BUMP: Door to success: Face your limits instead of your wins.

Why do so many successful companies lose their way? It's not changes in the market, it's sclerosis of leadership. The market, whatever it is, changes inevitably.

Have you heard about the slide at McDonalds? Same-store sales have declined for four quarters straight, with profit down 30 percent! The number of menu items is up 380 percent compared to 1980, with a 75 percent increase since 2004. Menu additions drove sales so well that they were accelerated after 2004. It no longer works, but it's still being done.

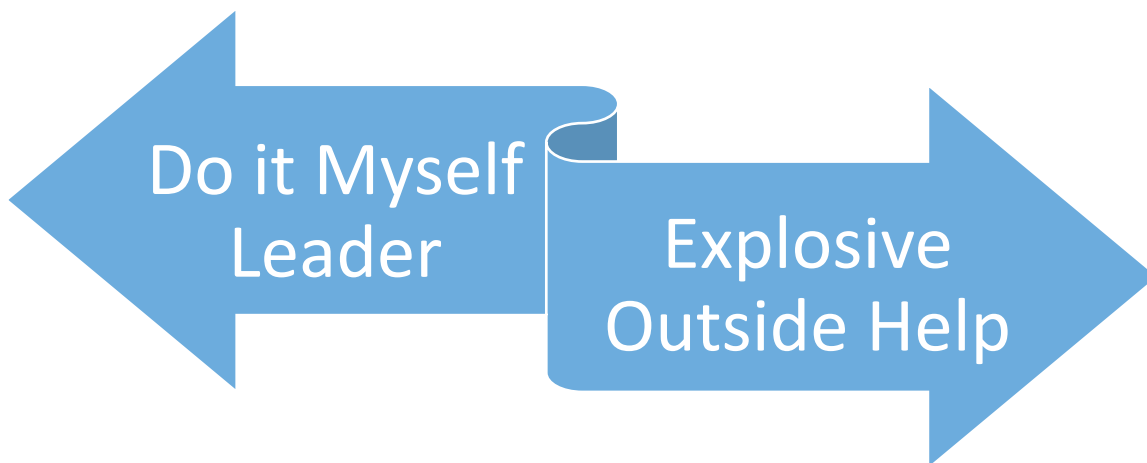
The key measure of a company built on speed has slowed dramatically. Drive-thru performance has declined, with length of time to food delivery rising to an **all-time high** of 189.49 seconds in 2013 when six major menu changes were instituted. (High-density prep tables have recently been put into kitchens to restore speed.)*

Reliance on past success seems to be a big part of McDonald's problem, and that's the mark of a leader stuck in the Achievement Stage. Risk aversion instead of dramatic innovation is the theme in this stage. (I want to know that it will work before I support it.) My experience shows a remarkably consistent pattern of three stages of leadership:

- Development (age 18–30). Primary question: “Who am I?”
- Achievement (age 30–45). Primary question: “How good am I?”
- Generativity (age 45 on). Primary question: “How can I ensure my legacy?”

Legacy requires addressing personal limits and growing exceptional candidates for leadership succession. It requires a shift in leadership passion from self to others. Winning organizations have leaders who institutionalize applied learning at high speed. Those leaders seem to be “other-centered,” constantly bringing in outside ideas to challenge them to further success.

SPEED TRAP: Failure comes to leaders who avoid the fertilization of outside ideas.



ACCELERATOR: What explosive outside help have you pulled into your leadership?

Call me.

*Fortune Magazine 12/1/14.

For more information, visit www.grewco.com.

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.

©Jim Grew 2014. All Rights Reserved. *Do Business Faster*™