



DO BUSINESS FASTER™

Jim's Profit Accelerator 182 **How Good Do You Want to Be?**

Executive leadership development includes these two elements:

1. Problem-solving
2. Behavior change, which is the real doorway to excellence

Problem-solving often is situation specific and depends on an essential idea or two that can be implemented successfully. It often demands simpler leadership skill, because its appeal is the promise of a solution to the problem.

Key problem-solving skills include:

1. Assessing the impact of a solution on profit and customer satisfaction.
2. Deciding whether a solution is worth the investment and effort.
3. Defining the problem clearly enough for mid-level folks to solve.
4. Choosing the team to find the solution.
5. Framing the timing of the planned solution.
6. Organizing implementation of the solution by others.

The effective leader solves problems with one foot in current operations and the other in assessing the probability that the resolution will pay off adequately. Success in choosing problems to solve requires willingness to endure:

- The messiness of unsolved problems
- The possibility that a "solution" will fail
- The willingness to ignore another solution that would have delivered more
- The requirement that implementation is the gateway to solution

SPEED BUMP: Only a few problems justify solution. The rest are cosmetic at best.

Behavior change demands personal change (there's that "habit" stuff again) that sticks.

SPEED BUMP: Behavior change and problem-solving are different.

The challenge is that as business grows, its leaders need to grow also; and that growth includes modifying personal behaviors that are obstacles to performance.

Some are blind to the leader, though obvious to those around them. Most behaviors serve a purpose to the person doing them, even when they make it tougher for that person to reach

their goals. Whether blind or not, the leader has habits that are reinforced so regularly that strong interference and support are usually needed for lasting change to occur.

A client, CEO of an international firm, had excelled in another multinational firm even though his behavior to subordinates combined anger and threats out of proportion to the situation. He blamed “weakness” in his people, probably blinding him to his part in the problem. Coaching helped him notice when his anger rose, and note cards scripted non-emotional questions for him to ask his people. His destructive outbursts diminished.

There are three sources of behavior change that can be quite effective:

1. Advice from those inside or outside of the company, including supervisors or professional advisors (law, finance, etc.)
2. Peer groups of outsiders, (YPO, Vistage)
3. Personal study and practice with a dedicated coach.

SPEED BUMP: Supervisors seldom have the time or skills to coach behavior change.

Even when supervisors have the skills to help their employee change habits, the flood of daily job demands eats up the time for coaching. Also coaching requires sometimes intrusive observations by the coach, and such intrusiveness is uncomfortable for many leaders because it’s not directly involved in problem-solving. That means that easy changes happen in the usual course of supervision, but the harder changes often don’t.

SPEED BUMP: Your best chance of behavior change is with an outside coach.

The harder changes usually offer the highest impact on performance, however. One effective path to that behavior change is a personal advisor or coach whose purpose is to help you develop needed skills. The coach will focus tightly on situations calling for the new behavior, guide you in learning the behavior, and help you adjust as you try it out. That tight focus is repeated in weekly reviews to help learn the new behavior. Like learning to play the violin or run a pattern in basketball, the most efficient path to change includes a teacher who observes and advises as skills increase. Most of the time most supervisors don’t have the skill or time to operate like that.

ACCELERANT: What behavior is in your way? Who is your coach?

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

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