



DO BUSINESS FASTER™

Jim's Profit Accelerator 58: Just Watching Your Dad Won't Make You an Effective CEO

As you read this, family businesses all over the country are on a hopeless quest. The path is unmarked, the territory is new, and the goal is barely achievable. That quest is to help daughter or son to become the next successful CEO of the business.

Not only are the odds of success lousy, but the cost of failure is a stunning series of frustrations, disappointments, and losses—and that's before the financial and emotional costs. Full disclosure: This is not a screed about the progressive weakness of each generation. That tired trope is of dubious credibility, and of no value in this discussion.

Each family operates in its unique situation, and generalizations require adaptation to reality to be useful. A common abuse of medical studies is to apply study results to an individual case, even though the data describes outcomes and probabilities for a group, not an individual. The point: it is useful to know the odds, but not sufficient. Evidence? Thousands flock to casinos expecting to be just special enough to beat the well-known odds against them. Our desire to be special is a requirement for a successful life, but it's a barrier to embracing our realities as insufficient teachers for our daughters or sons.

SPEED BUMP: Even though my kid is special, that's not enough for success.

Do you know anyone who has learned to ride a bike or a skateboard by watching others? Watching others helps with some details, of course. But ask yourself: Do your golf skills improve by watching the golf channel? Your enthusiasm may get a boost, but until you go to the driving range your skills won't step up, not even a bit. And even that's not enough to really improve your game. What's missing? The teacher.

SPEED BUMP: Being a successful CEO doesn't mean I can teach it to my kid.

Here's why it's so hard for a parent to grow a kid into a successful CEO:

It's harder because it's *your* kid. The relationship requires dad to shift from what he thinks is right to the intersection of what his kid wants to learn and what future success demands. The relationship is charged. For example, the kid wants to please and be independent at the same time, while the dad wants the kid to do what he thinks will benefit the kid while enabling what looks like potential failure. Successfully living in this dynamic for years is beyond the reach of most folks, even with the best motives.

SPEED BUMP: Dad must shift from an object of approval to a resource.

This shift happens in the kid's mind, and there's little a parent can do to make it happen. Enable, possibly. The kid must do it through experiencing her own success, failure, and resilience to build her own sense of independent power. Dad can't inject these, and dad's presence corrupts the kid's experience and dilutes the eventual sense of power. Why? Because dad is THERE.

Personal check: Are you muttering that you can do it, even though most dads fail? What makes you specially gifted for success in this challenge?

Leading isn't coaching. Successful leaders focus first on what their business needs. Part of that is choosing and developing ("coaching") key leaders, but the searing truth is that the job requires pushing out people who can't do their jobs. Every leader I've worked with has confessed that they "waited too long" to move out a poor performer. "Perform or move out" is not the foundation for healthy coaching. Coaching asks a different question: *Who are you, and how can we develop your skills to benefit you and our company?* Positive reinforcement beats fear in skills development, even though fear of failure is an essential driver. The quandary is dad's agenda, and the exquisite balance of learning and performance is easily corrupted in the habits of business success. The company always looms, skewing the coaching dynamic.

Real practice isn't available. Mid-size firms have few leadership positions, and most aren't available to groom a future leader. Learning the ropes of the business—the details of production, shipping, cash flow, selling, and so forth— isn't the same as learning leadership.

Here's how it looks:



ACCELERANT: What is your kid's plan to develop him or herself?

For more information on how you can accelerate revenues and profits in your business, please call or email me.

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.

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