

Jim's Profit Accelerator 11: Less Is More: 3D + 3T Management

The number-one problem that I see with my senior executive clients is a level of conscientiousness that slips into compulsion. Even when these executives delegate, they're in the shorts of their people. (It's a clumsy way to do things — just picture it). Everyone benefits when we stop believing we're so important and start believing in our employees and their importance. One practical way to implement this thinking is to better manage the barrage of communication in daily business life.

In the late sixties and early seventies, I worked with Verne Smith at a large chain of grocery stores in the Chicago area. Verne's management technique was to ignore paper and go see what his people did. Back in the day when meat was cut in the store, Verne led 1,200 (or so) meat cutters in 125 supermarkets, spread over 300 square miles. He managed supervisors while pleasing executives in the billion-dollar organization where he was a senior officer. Verne's philosophy on memos and management was this: "All memos go in this top drawer. Tomorrow they'll go in the middle drawer. The third day they go in the bottom drawer. The next day I throw them out." He never read them: "If they need me, they'll call me." His division's morale and numbers were tops in the company.

The endless tide of corporate communications can threaten to drown anyone, and it can keep senior executives tied to a compulsive conscientiousness. Tame the tide by riding the wave instead of swimming in it. For each communication you receive, choose one:

1. **DELETE:** Toss it. Trust me on this: Most of what you receive goes here.
2. **DELAY:** Unless it's really urgent, hit the pause button. You are the decider, not the sender. You have goals and priorities. Use them. Often, if you hit pause, others will solve it.
3. **DELEGATE:** Reward one of your people with this task. They'll appreciate the chance to do well and impress others, so let them have the satisfaction. If they need a bit of help, it will take less of you than doing the whole thing, and it will help others grow into expanding competence.

I call that **3D management**, and it's an effective method for dealing with written communication and will free you to focus on what matters. Anyone can be subject to distraction, and as a senior executive, you don't have time for that nonsense.

While we're at it, here's 3T management: Cut out stray chatter by helping your folks know when to talk with you. Let everyone know that there are three rules for communication with a supervisor:

1. **TELL ME BEFORE YOU DO IT:** Risk drives this one. If the risk is high, you want to review their plan

before they pull the trigger, even though it's their plan and their trigger.

2. DO IT AND TELL ME AFTER: When their action impacts others inside or outside the organization, awareness is all you need. Resist meddling in their solution; it will help them grow.

3. DO IT AND DON'T TELL ME: This applies more and more, as your confidence in your team and their skills develop. When in doubt, do this. Really. If you audit your conversations for a week, you'll be stunned at the waste. Go sit in the sun, or play. Everyone will thrive.

Your job requires you to do less than you think. When employees are free to do their jobs, then you are free to do yours. Focus on growth and profitability, and leave the excess of communication to others.

Call 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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