



Jim's Profit Accelerator 143 The Power of Obstructions

Obstructions may be the most powerful source of excellence in your organization—and your life. Here's why: Our standard view of opportunity is a three-step process (and if it's more, we try to reduce it into three, at least to start):

1. Picture the goal.
2. Name the obstructions.
3. Power through the obstructions.

Step 3 usually includes power, intrigue, salesmanship, influence, bribery, and other unsavory but useful practices. Their familiarity pulls them into the room with mixed results. Improvement usually requires change, which by definition includes doing some things that seem at least unfamiliar, if not dangerous.

SPEED BUMP: Change means not doing things the same way.

The garment of change is danger. We literally take on (wear) the set of challenges as we contemplate the struggle right in front of us. Worse, we mistakenly lean on an idealized picture of the future to pull us through the tough times, but, in fact, there's an easier way: rethink the role of obstructions.

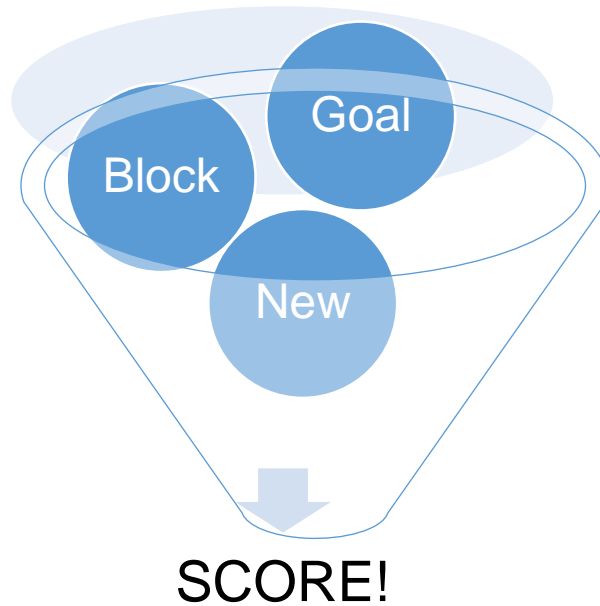
Obstructions promise risk, embarrassment, discomfort, and friction, and that's just for starters. So it's no wonder that we need a puffed-up future to pull us through the mess. What if we see obstructions differently?

SPEED BUMP: Obstructions are the midwives of success.

Here's the better way, and it's so simple that it's easy to dismiss it. There are three forces at work when there's an obstruction:

1. **Goal:** Where you or your people are trying to go.
2. **Block:** The real progress-blocker; sometimes hard to figure out.
3. **New idea:** A powerful replacement for powering through. Instead, look for an idea that opens a path forward that's different than you expected. Indeed, leave some space for discovery; rushing seldom helps. Instead, ask this question: how else can we get there?

SPEED BUMP: A problem can't be solved at the level at which it was created (Einstein).



An Internet marketing company found that growth came along with a boom in customer service calls; so many that they couldn't all be handled as they came in, forcing customers to leave a message (not good). The messages required calling customers back, often several times. Asking phone service people to move faster didn't help. However (sound of music rising in the background), when analysis showed that staff schedules could match call peaks, the changes were made, call-backs declined, and customers were taken care of in a positive way.

Analysis:

1. Goal: Resolve customer concern on first call
2. Block: Surge in customer calls buried their capacity to call back
3. New: Analysis of call patterns enabled staff scheduling to meet peaks
4. Score: Customers were handled well even as sales grew

ACCELERANT: What's the biggest block to profitable growth?

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?"

*Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Holy Trinity and the Law of Three* (Shambhala Publications, Inc.: 2013), 38-40.

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 University. In his new book, *The Other Side of Succession*, he shares how to plan for the future by growing your business now.

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