



Jim's Profit Accelerator 162 Wimpy Dashboards

One of the most shocking disappointments in the many companies that I've worked with is their dashboard. While dashboards come in many flavors, most suffer from some common failings. Why? I think it's because they are created by numbers analysts who simply see them as more numbers rather than as big signposts for the folks doing the work in the business.

SPEED BUMP: Dashboards are not for the executives, though they can peek.

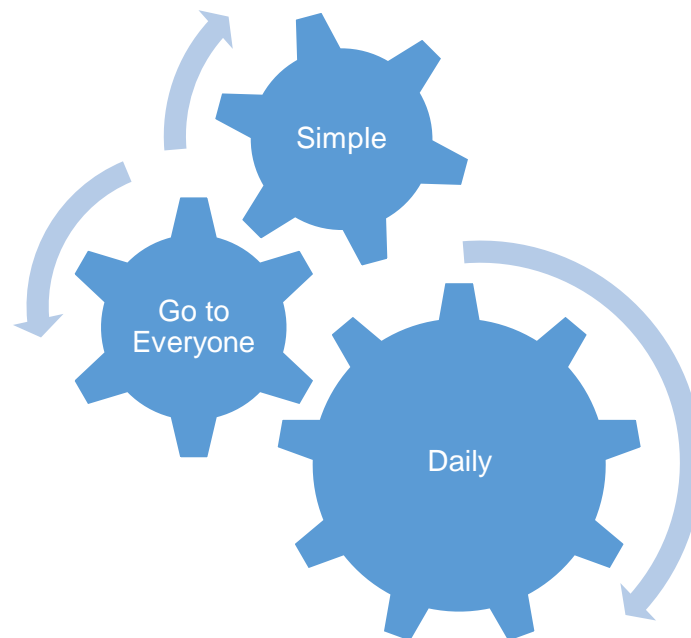
Here are the top weaknesses that produce wimpy dashboards. Which apply to yours?

1. **Too many numbers.** If your dashboard has more than three numbers, it's mostly gas bubbles. Here's how to check: Ask a division manager or section leader what the top three numbers were on yesterday's dashboard. I'll bet you an ice cream cone that no one can come up with all three. That's a problem because the point of dashboards is to incite action, not to keep a record like a guest book at a funeral service. It folks can't remember the numbers, what action will they take about them?
2. **They require management translation.** Why on earth would you do that? People learn faster when they're the ones coming up with the actions the numbers call for. Merely listening to the boss generates weak impact and little sustained effort, except in a fire. The names of the numbers should explain what they are, and every employee should know those definitions through repetition, if nothing else.
3. **Their definitions are hazy,** requiring a formula to unpack. The definitions should be crystal clear and incite action. How to check: Ask a mid-level person what they intend to do with today's numbers. Any answer other than "this action" is a flunk for the dashboard, not the people.
4. **They go to a limited group of preferred people.** Why not share them with everyone, all the time? No, it doesn't matter if competitors see them. At one of the companies where I worked, the senior quality executive for Oshkosh (one of the largest defense contractors in the United States) raved that we had metrics and posted them daily, for all employees to see! Oshkosh buys from hundreds of firms all over the United States, and our simple metrics stood out.
5. **People must look them up on their computers.** Few folks will remember to do so in the daily crush of work.
6. **They come out at unpredictable times.** Unless they are as regular as the sunrise, they fade into background noise in 14 days and lose their impact—and people will doubt their accuracy when the numbers point to a problem.

7. **They don't show company totals.** Instead, they do a good job of showing department results. That's necessary but not sufficient, and it breeds more silo-ing, rather than cross-department teamwork.
8. **Their calculation is obscure or not explained to everyone.** Similar to #6, this will cause people to doubt them when they expose a problem—and spend time trying to disprove the numbers instead of fixing the problem or going after the opportunity.

SPEED BUMP: Dashboards are calls to action, not webs of analysis.

THE BEST DASHBOARDS:



ACCELERANT: How will you boost the power of your dashboard?

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 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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