

# THE CRUX MOVE:

## How to climb above the competition.

Oh, how we delight in an extended metaphor. This month, it's rock climbing. So strap on your harness, chalk up your hands, and settle in. By the end of this mailing, you'll know how to tell whether the people you've hired will help you reach the top – or leave you dangling from a fraying rope.



In rock climbing, each route from the ground to the peak is rated with a number. A climb rated 4.0 or lower is considered non-technical. To tackle one of these climbs, you need strength and agility – but no fancy equipment and little to no experience.

A climb rated higher than 4.0 requires ropes, harnesses – and a willingness to dangle oneself somewhat precariously above the ground.

Climbing at a god-like 5.14 requires years of practice, less than 5% body fat and perhaps a Spiderman complex.

The interesting thing about these ratings: they aren't based so much on the difficulty of the entire climb as on a set of moves known as the crux.

Crux moves are the most challenging moments of the entire route. They often require you to push physically, emotionally, and intellectually in a way no other part of the climb does. There are usually multiple crux moves along a single route.

When it comes to navigating crux moves, what's the one factor more crucial than equipment, nerves and body fat percentage combined? Experience.

Every profession has its own crux moves. (A-ha! You knew we'd explain the metaphor eventually!)

In accounting, routine bookkeeper tasks (those tasks that keep the "route" below a 4.0) may include entering payables, cutting checks and sending out invoices.

Standard stuff. Easy-peasy. No sweat. Basic training makes these tasks feasible; a bit of experience makes them routine.

Tasks that push the route to a 4.0 or above consist of all the atypical activities. This might mean working with a vendor on a payment plan; collection calls with large and important clients; making a journal entry for a special, one-time payroll.

How do you know if it's a crux move? The stakes are higher and more skill is required

## NOW LET'S LOOK AT IT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CFOS.

For CFOs, tasks in the 4.0 and below range include month-end variance analysis, financial statements and cash flow forecasts.

And the crux moves? Negotiating lease agreements. Securing financing. Developing a plan to return to profitability. Ensuring that fast growth doesn't kill the company. Nailing the birdie on a par 3 when there are clients to impress. (Just kidding.)

**These are the moments when experience is of irreplaceable value.**

Why do crux moves matter so much? Because this is the meaty stuff. These are the (often very public) tests. This is where deals are made. This is where some companies dig in, hang on and move ahead while others fall behind. Nail those moves and you can laugh at your competition as they stagnate back on the ground. Falter on the crux moves, and the best outcome you can hope for is a bit of backtracking. The worst outcome? Well, let's just say that the metaphorical freefall has a potentially gruesome ending.

Too often, business owners hire for the ability to handle the basic, everyday tasks (the below 4.0 routes). It's an easy mistake to make – after all, when you write up a job description and spout off interview questions, it makes sense to focus on the tasks that the employee will handle most frequently.

**But remember – the difficulty of the route (or position) is defined not by the most common moves, but rather by the crux moves.**

A business owner would be wise to identify the crux moves for each critical role in his or her company, then hire people who can deftly maneuver through those critical situations. We'll say it again: hire for the crux moves.

If you hire for the 4.0 routes, you're shooting yourself in the climbing harness. That's because by the time you realize that your person can't handle a 5.0 route, the damage has already been done – and mountainside rescues are expensive.



### So what can you do to avoid the mountainside rescue?

You have a few options:

- 1: YOU CAN WAIT...**  
until your existing staff gains more experience and know-how, hoping to get lucky on the crux moves in the meantime.
- 2: YOU CAN TAKE A LONG, HARD LOOK...**  
at the crux moves facing your business. And if your current staff doesn't have what it takes, you can make the challenging but forward-thinking choice to do yourself – and your employees – a favor by re-staffing with people who won't bat an eyelash when faced with an out-of-the-ordinary challenge.

To navigate the make-it-or-break-it moments, you need make-it-or-break-it skill sets.



**Need help scouting your route? You're in luck – we're well equipped to get you to the top. Give us a call today.**

For more information, contact us at 612-816-6007 or visit [owlbookkeepingandcfo.com](http://owlbookkeepingandcfo.com)

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OWL BELIEVES TWO THINGS ABOUT SMALL BUSINESS MONEY:

- > It should be stable and secure.
- > There should be more of it.