

Jim's Profit Accelerator 124: Trapping Your Implementation Gaps

After your planning and budget meetings for the next year, there's a list of "initiatives"—things we want to do or do better. The people at the top and the bottom of the organization understand them the best, but often they understand them differently. Unless their understandings meld into a single path with checkpoints and adjustments, it's all just wind and noise.

And since there's already too much noise in most organizations, these great initiatives fade like a sunset on a cloudy day. What's left are the **implementation gaps** (IGs) that drive leaders nuts and undermine consistent results and employee confidence. They usually operate in the dark, like mice, and require intentional trapping to halt their assault on the company.

SPEED BUMP: Implementation gaps are doors to failure: nail them shut.

Implementation gaps start with this critical flaw when the annual plan/budget is developed and communicated: The framers are the communicators. That means that since they crafted the plans, they miss the subtleties or implementation traps that will tie up their first-line leaders. Making it worse, communication ends with the useless question, "Does that make sense?" That question is useless 93 percent of the time, because the people responding won't admit to the part they don't understand—or worse, they don't know what they don't know!

SPEED BUMP: Invest more in communicating a plan/budget than in creating it.

In a five-level organization (president to first-line worker), results depend heavily on what the first-line does or skips. To prevent gaps, ask each department leader these three questions:

1. What will your team do to make our plan work?
2. How will you know if you're successful?
3. When will you check?

SPEED BUMP: Department leaders decide what gets done. Recruit them.

The combination that recruits leaders is a challenge that matters coupled with a leader who helps them from the shadows and praises their success in public. If you silently watch their check-ins with their people, you'll know when they need help before they ask—and also know when to rescue the stubborn ones who resist help. Your annual plan competes for attention with the daily noise of the business. The noise wins unless you help them build a rock-solid checkpoint that's public, simple, and real.

SPEED BUMP: Checkpoints that the whole company can see can nail the gaps shut.

In a metal parts manufacturer we posted results daily on three key measures, and side-listed special actions needed. This powered a daily leads huddle that adjusted actions in less than 15 minutes, and boosted profits and profit sharing by thousands of dollars. It worked mostly because the numbers were posted without fail, and they were easy for everyone to understand. Everyone got in on the game. The measures didn't change for years, and the initiatives were adjusted at year-end. Everyone knew that game and the score.

ACCELERANT: How will your frontline folks know what to do with this year's initiatives?

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, 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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