

## Jim's Profit Accelerator 115: Three Hats of Every Executive Team Member

The hidden responsibility that comes with promotion to head of a functional division is “membership” in the executive team (ET). This feels more like admission to an exclusive club than a chance to drive the bus. Even worse, the experience frequently combines vague responsibilities, unpleasant surprises, and introduction to the worst problems of the company.

**SPEED BUMP:** Real leaders shine in an executive team setting.

Here is the secret job description of an ET member. The three responsibilities are both obvious and obscure, depending on the confidence and power politics of ET members. The responsibilities are for excellent outcomes for the company and all its functional departments (FD).

1. **Functional Department Head:** This is the clearest job description, sometimes characterized as “CEO of your department.” Responsibilities include delivering budget numbers, building a competent organization, and the like. It’s focused entirely on internal requirements to serve external customers, who are often a mix of other company employees and customers or regulators. This job focuses first on department performance.
2. **Joint Leader of the Company:** Here is where the fuzz starts. In the worst situation the CEO drives the bus, controls the conversation, and leans heavily on solutions chosen (or ignored). In the best situation, each ET member brings perspective, experience, and data (inside her department and outside) to the top activities of the ET:
  - What needs attention in the company?
  - What’s the priority?
  - What investment and risk accompany the proposed solution?

Success in this role includes crisply informing and persuading the group toward the best possible solution for the business. It’s aimed at plans, priorities, and leaders responsible for good results on those priorities.

3. **Success Partner with Every Functional Department Head:** This mostly occurs outside the view of the executive team. It includes close work at the senior level with another department head as well as guiding lower-level cooperation with other departments as company effectiveness demands. It balances personal power with substantive help, often delivered out of sight of other leaders.

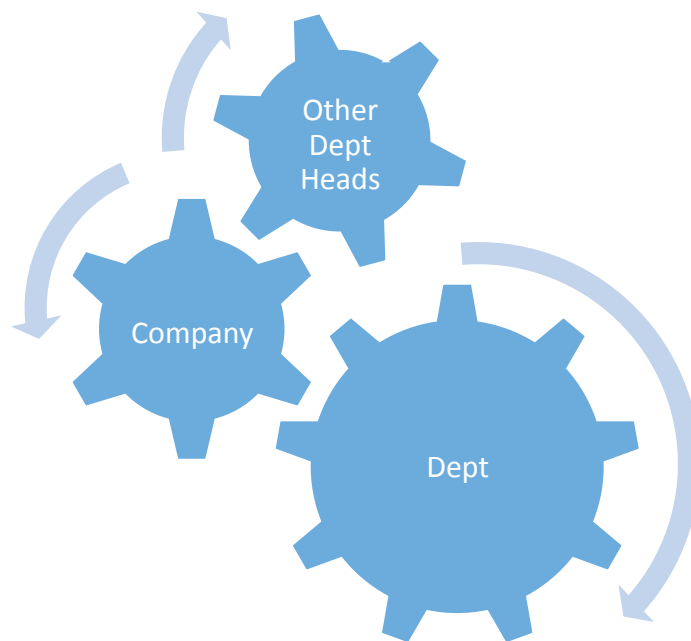
**SPEED BUMP:** Close partnering with other departments decides which firm wins.

Triad Speakers sells its high-end home theater speakers through custom installers worldwide. When I first started working there, orders took six-plus weeks to ship and were frequently late; as a result, sales were slumping. Installers couldn’t start a job until all parts of the home theater were received

(including speakers), so they had stopped ordering because they couldn't quote reliable install dates to their customers.

One morning I met with the heads of production, product design, sales, and supply chain. The production manager pinpointed the reasons for specific late orders; we identified who needed to act to change things and went to work. After two days I asked the sales leader to call and let customers know their real ship dates. He resisted at first, but then he tried it. This daily meeting continued without me, cutting production time to three weeks and then to ten days. After that sales jumped 47 percent year over year (customers could count on delivery dates).

**SPEED BUMP:** When departments share problems and solutions, results jump.



**SPEED BUMP:** Effective ET members keep all three hats on, despite turbulence.

**ACCELERANT:** How well do your ET members wear their third hat?

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](http://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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