

Jim's Profit Accelerator 109: The Executive Team Entity

Collaboration is much sought—in spite of the fact that there is no map, guidance, or “three simple steps” to get there. It’s more like a golf swing, jibing a windsurfing board, or surfing a wave higher than your waist: excellence follows many tries and many tumbles. The collaboration that fuels superb executive teams requires the same tries, but the penalty can be worse than a wayward ball or a dunk into the water. Falling short in front of your peers and your boss seems untenable, especially when the penalty is unknown and likely severe.

SPEED BUMP: Mistakes in front of peers may be deadly.

Here is where some might chirp reassurance that promises an easy trip to the great team. It’s the chocolate sauce on the ice cream of the leadership retreat. The problem is that not only will the good juju die within days of the retreat, but the way to success is to pick up the club and start hitting the ball, or get on the board and go for it.

SPEED BUMP: There is no way to be part of a great team without getting some of the mess on you.

Jumping into the mess works for the plunge-ahead types, but the thinking plodders who often birth winning solutions don’t see a door that fits them, so they stand on the sidelines watching

What makes an executive team function is the recognition that it is its own entity—we’ll simply call it ETE (executive team entity). The collection of all of this team’s members create this separate unit that requires recognition, nourishment, support, patience, and so forth. In fact, if you can master the concept below, you may be permanently excused from the deadly “team-building retreat” (sound of plodders clapping enthusiastically).

SPEED BUMP: Grow the ETE vigorously. You’ll be glad you did.

Here’s how to start growing your ETE:

1. **Accept the idea that it really exists.** It isn’t one person (either your best or the one you can barely stand to sit next to), or a theory, or anything else.
2. **Create it the way you want it.** Ask yourself: How would you like your ET to function? What would make you want to be part of it? (Note that this is only about you.) Don’t assume that someone else (especially your CEO) knows how to make this team sing better than you do.
3. **Jump into every topic with your best stuff.** That will require more preparation than you’ve given to these meetings before. Of course, the more closely you listen before you jump, the better your stuff will be.



SPEED BUMP: Great results come from great teams. Great leaders are great because of the teams that they help build.

Tips:

- **Devote yourself to team success.** It's not about you or your department; it's about an ET that blows everyone away.
- **Work with the data, not the personalities.** Focus on the data—its evidence and holes. Question it, not the motives or skills of the person discussing it.
- **Use L & A (Listen & Ask) to help the other person be a successful member of the ET.** Negotiate as though your life depended on it. That means balancing what the team creates with the individual who seems to be pulling the boat 30 degrees to the starboard. So listen and ask questions like she's got a fix on a better way.

ACCELERANT: What will you do today to boost your ETE?

For more information, visit www.grewco.com.

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