



## Fall Into the Cross Functional Team of the Gap: A Content Analysis

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Businesses are rethinking how to organize employees to promote innovation and efficiency, leading to the popular cross functional team structure (Organ and Bottorff, 2021). According to Parker (2003), there are three types of team structures an organization may choose depending on the industry's nature; functional teams, self-directed, and cross functional, which are utilized in companies with fast-changing markets, value adaptability, speed, and an intense focus on responding to customer needs. The apparel firm is focused on competing to satisfy the ever changing needs and wants of their customer (Ha-Brookshire & Hawley, 2012) in the hyper dynamic clothing and textile industry (Ha-Brookshire & Dyer, 2008). Kunz (1995) identifies the merchandising constituency as the group of people in an apparel firm that are responsible for the interactive decisions of an apparel product line that satisfies the consumer's needs and wants. Because of globalization, this group or work team has evolved to include more supply chain members (Muhammad and Ha-Brookshire, 2009). The researchers continue to explain how as apparel firms grow and become more globalized the job responsibilities of merchandisers are separated by several job functions, explaining how buyers/merchandisers work with retailers on acquiring the right product and plan out the product line, marketers are responsible for the sales, product developers help develop the product, and production managers work to source and manufacture the product. However, there is a lack of research exploring the current job positions within an apparel firm and how the job positions work together in a team to create, develop, produce, and distribute an apparel line.

This research project was grounded in Kunz's behavioral theory of the apparel firm's definitions and constructs, however, expands this foundational theory to explore the cross functional nature to evolve the merchandising constituency as it applies to a case study apparel firm Gap Inc. The study's aim was to explore an apparel firm's cross functional behavior through the lens of Kunz's (1995) internal constituencies, specifically the merchandising constituency, which is responsible for interpreting customer's apparel preferences for the rest of the firm and responsible for the planning, development, and presentation of a brand's product lines for a defined target market and manages price, assortment, styling, and timing (Glock and Kunz, 1990). Therefore, understanding how the apparel firm organizes their employees into teams would help to further explore the merchandising constituency to build upon Kunz's (1995) behavioral theory of the apparel firm. The study was guided by the following research questions: (a) to determine the current job titles and responsibilities that Gap Inc. uses for employees that work within the merchandising constituency and (b) to discover how the different Gap Inc. job functions are organized and cross functionally operate.

To achieve the purposed objectives of this study, a directed approach to content analysis was used. A content analysis is a method that utilizes a set of procedures to make a valid inference for text (Weber, 1990). To collect all the job postings listed on the <https://www.gapinc.com/en-us/careers/gap-careers> website, a code in Wolfram Language was written to extract the raw data from each job posting on the site, then exported to Microsoft Excel. Data analysis began by first, organizing each job posting by the job category given by Gap Inc. Second, the Gap Inc. job categories were grouped following Kunz's theoretical constructs of the internal constituencies of the apparel firm, which are merchandising, marketing, operations, and finance. For this study only the job postings in the merchandising constituency were used which totaled 180 job postings from October 2020 to July 2021.

The study's analysis revealed themes that help in answering the research questions. The first theme details Gap Inc.'s organization of internal constituencies by brand, division, job category, and

department along with giving general job responsibilities. Finding revealed the basic structure of the firm's hierarchy was constructed into four levels. In reading and deciphering what Gap Inc. titled division, job category, and job title, along with the "what you'll do" description of the role, a better understand of firm's structure and employee organization was shown. Gap Inc. consists of six brands. Each brand, for example The Gap brand, is then divided into divisions. Within the Gap Brand structure, divisions are men's and women's apparel. Each division is then organized around a job category, which Gap includes design, production, merchandising, inventory planning, and visual merchandising. Gap brand hierarchy from this analysis was (a) level 1 - brand, (b) level 2 - division, (c) level 3 - job category, and what will later be discussed (d) level 4 - department.

The second theme reveals the membership and function of the product category teams and uncovers the cross functional nature of the team. Within each Gap Inc. level 3: job category were then multiple level 4: departments. The design job category had seven departments, production had seven departments, merchandising had five departments, inventory planning had three, and visual merchandising had four. Between the departments within the merchandising constituency, job titles had unique differences. The departments of designer – product, technical designer, production, product development, product engineering, merchandiser, and inventory planning had job titles that included what Gap Inc. job postings note as a "class," "product team," or "product category." Some job title examples were "merchandiser – men's denim," "assistant manager of product development - men's woven," "assistant designer – women's knits," and "associate technical designer – denim." From the analysis of 180 job postings in the merchandising constituency, not all level 3: job categories and level 4: departments had direct responsibility or decision making on the end product. In the end, 116 job postings that were from (a) designer-product, (b) technical design, (c) production, (d) product development, (e) product engineering, (f) merchandiser, (g) inventory planner, and (h) R&D were directly linked a product category and therefore creating the product category team. The term cross functional was used in 136 job postings in the merchandising constituency out of the total 180. Cross functional was used in 104 out of the 116 job postings that were in the product category team. Cross functional was used in the job postings to refer to "partnering with," "collaborating with," "communicating with," "cross functional team members." From the job posting analysis, product category teams seemed to be cross functional in nature.

The study's findings were able to construct an apparel firm's internal hierarchy, connect constituencies, departments, and roles, and identify product category teams and their suggested nature. The research is just the beginning to more fully understanding how apparel firms work, but the implications are an important start. First, a greater understanding and construction of the cross functional membership of Kunz (1995) merchandising constituency was revealed and understood for a major specialty retailer. This finding aids educators in preparing future apparel firm employees in the classroom and career development, but also gives scholars a deeper perspective of an apparel firm to future research the apparel firm work environment. Second, the analysis revealed the product category team, which is at the center of the cross functional team. In constructing the product category teams the cross functional nature of apparel firm give new insight into supply chain members within an apparel firm and across the supply chain.

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## References

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