
ESTABLISHMENT STRUCTURAL DIMENSION DESIGN, EXIGENCY VARIABLES, AND CHALLENGES MITIGATION IN KENYA

***¹Chimakati Fredrick Mutsoli & ²Dr. Wilson J. Osito Odiyo**

***Email of Corresponding Author: freddiechi@gmail.com**

Publication Date: August 2023

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of establishment structural dimension design, exigency variables, and challenges mitigation in Kenya.

Research Methodology: The study employed a literature review from previous studies. The data was collected from peer-reviewed journals, books, and academic websites. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

Findings: The study found that a well-designed structural dimension plays a crucial role in shaping the organization's ability to communicate effectively and achieve desired outcomes. The study also indicated that clear lines of communication and effective information flow are essential elements that contribute to enhanced communication effectiveness within organizations. In addition, the study found that the detrimental effects of exigency variables often result in breakdowns and reduced efficiency in information transmission. The study also established that common challenges in organizational communication that hinder its effectiveness include information overload, lack of clarity in communication channels, and cultural barriers.

Conclusion: The findings of the study suggest that the design of the structural dimension, the presence of exigency variables, and the mitigation of challenges all play a role in the effectiveness of organizational communication.

Recommendations: The study found that the design of the structural dimension, the presence of exigency variables, and the mitigation of challenges all play a role in the effectiveness of organizational communication. The findings of the study suggest that organizations should design their structural dimensions in a way that facilitates effective communication, be aware of the

potential challenges that can hinder communication and take steps to mitigate them, and provide training to employees on how to communicate effectively in a globalized environment.

Keywords: *Establishment, Structural Dimension Design, Exigency Variables, Challenges Mitigation*

INTRODUCTION

The complexity of today's business landscape necessitates a meticulous approach to organizational design. At the core of this approach lies the establishment structural dimension design, which forms the architectural blueprint of an organization (Daft, 2010). The concept itself is a refined interpretation of Weber's (1947) bureaucratic model, encompassing reporting relationships, coordination mechanisms, and task distribution. Moreover, as per Mintzberg's (1979) organizational configurations theory, these structural dimensions' dictate how an organization functions and interacts with its environment, managing organizational complexity, ensuring clear command chains, and facilitating coordination and control. Yet, the formation of these dimensions isn't merely a linear process; it's more akin to a multi-dimensional puzzle requiring careful consideration of numerous variables (Donaldson, 2001). Termed 'exigency variables', these constitute the diverse internal and external factors that influence an organization's structure. Stemming from the contingency theory, these variables span environmental uncertainty, technological complexity, organizational size, and culture (Donaldson, 2001). They have a profound impact on the structural constitution of an organization, shaping its performance and competitive stance (Tung & Miller, 1990).

The flux inherent in these variables underscores the dynamic nature of structural design. For instance, high environmental uncertainty might warrant more flexible and adaptable structures, exemplified by adhocracy model (Kwok et al., 2019). Conversely, according to Shen et al. (2021) in stable environments, mechanistic structures, as posited may offer better efficiency. Thus, the effective design of establishment structures is contingent upon the accurate identification and understanding of the prevailing exigency variables. Nonetheless, the treatment of these exigency variables remains somewhat inadequate. Past research often presents a restricted view, ignoring other potentially influential factors. Moreover, inconsistent operationalization and measurement

of these variables have led to variable conclusions, thereby limiting their practical applicability (Burton & Obel, 2004).

The process of designing establishment structures also grapples with the challenge of structural inertia. The term, as coined by Hannan & Freeman (1984), refers to the propensity of organizations to persist with existing structures, even when they no longer serve their intended purpose. This inertia arises from a multitude of factors, including sunk costs, vested interests, and institutional pressures, thereby constraining the organization's ability to adapt to evolving exigency variables. This inertia is often entwined with the resistance to change, a common challenge in structural design endeavors (Pfeffer, 1992). As organizational restructuring is likely to disrupt the existing power dynamics, it can result in conflict and resistance among those who perceive it as a threat to their job security, status, or comfort. Therefore, managing this resistance becomes an essential part of the process of organizational change.

A potential solution to these challenges is effective change management, involving strategic planning, managing transitions, and reinforcement of new structures (Kotter, 1996). Successful change management is contingent on transparent communication, active employee involvement, and provision of appropriate training and support mechanisms. Such a proactive approach can facilitate smoother transition and help individuals adapt to the new structures. Complementing change management is the cultivation of an organizational culture conducive to change. A culture that prioritizes flexibility, innovation, and continuous learning can significantly alleviate resistance to structural changes (Schein, 2010). Herein, leaders play a crucial role in setting the tone through their decisions, actions, and communication, underpinning the creation of a change-embracing environment.

While these strategies can help overcome the challenges in structural design, organizations must also acknowledge the temporal aspect of the process. As per Raisch and Birkinshaw (2008), the evolving nature of environmental, strategic, or internal conditions necessitates continuous evaluation and adjustments in organizational structures. This perspective underscores that structural design is not a one-off task but an ongoing, iterative process. Lastly, aligning the organization's structure with its strategic intent remains paramount. As Chandler (1962) astutely argued, "structure follows strategy". Therefore, according to Shum et al. (2008) the design of the

organization's structure should not only mirror its strategic goals but also enable the realization of these objectives. For instance, if the organization's strategy is centered on innovation and swift market entry, a decentralized and organic structure promoting creativity and quick decision-making may prove beneficial.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Modern organizations are confronting a complex array of challenges that demand a profound understanding and application of organizational design principles (Zhang et al., 2022). These challenges are intricately interconnected, forming a multidimensional problem space that requires holistic solutions. One facet of the problem is globalization, which is fundamentally transforming markets, technologies, and organizations (Baylis, 2020). Managers are under pressure to help their companies develop a global perspective, necessitating new competencies, strategies, and structures (Morrison, 2010). In addition, intense competition has rendered the business environment exceedingly complex. Organizations need to maintain high-quality offerings while ensuring competitive pricing, prompting the need for innovative ways to stay ahead (Porter, 2008).

Moreover, the burgeoning focus on sustainability, ethics, and the green movement calls for organizations to strike a balance between profit-making and public interest (Carroll & Brown, 2022). Companies are under pressure to embed sustainability at every level, posing new challenges in terms of organizational design, culture, and strategy (Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008). In addition, the necessity for speed and responsiveness to environmental changes and shifting customer expectations is crucial (Ojha et al., 2021). The volatile business landscape mandates organizations to not just react, but also proactively anticipate and shape market trends. Further, the digital revolution and the advent of big data analytics have redefined how organizations operate, pushing them to integrate these elements into their strategic planning and operations (LaValle et al., 2011). The digital transformation has necessitated a reimagining of organizational structures and processes (Bharadwaj et al., 2013).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To determine the influence of establishment structural dimension design, exigency variables, and challenges mitigation in Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the theoretical framework and empirical review of the study variables

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study is based on several relevant theoretical perspectives that contribute to understanding the influence of establishment structural dimension design, exigency variables, and challenges mitigation.

Organizational Design Theory

Organizational Design Theory, also known as organizational structure theory, is a prominent theoretical perspective that examines how organizations structure themselves to achieve their goals. The theory has been studied and developed by numerous scholars, including Mintzberg (1979), Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), and Galbraith (1973). According to this theory, organizational design involves the arrangement of formal structures, processes, and systems within an organization to facilitate effective coordination, decision-making, and goal attainment (Mintzberg, 1979; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). It emphasizes the importance of aligning the organization's structure with its goals and environmental conditions to enhance performance (Galbraith, 1973).

The theory operates on several key assumptions. Firstly, it assumes that organizations are purposeful and rational entities, striving to achieve specific objectives (Mintzberg, 1979). It posits that organizations design their structures based on a systematic analysis of their goals, tasks, and external environment (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Secondly, the theory assumes that organizations face various internal and external factors that influence their design choices (Galbraith, 1973). These factors include the organization's size, complexity, technology, and the degree of environmental uncertainty (Galbraith, 1973; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Finally, the theory assumes that there is an optimal fit between an organization's structure and its goals, tasks, and environment (Mintzberg, 1979). It suggests that effective design requires a careful balancing act to ensure appropriate coordination, control, and adaptation.

Organizational design theory provides a foundation for understanding how organizations structure themselves to achieve their goals. It focuses on the formal structures, processes, and systems that

shape the organization's activities. The framework draws upon this theory to analyze the establishment's structural dimension design, including formalization and specialization, as internal characteristics of organizational design. It explores how these dimensions influence the establishment's values, magnitude, technology, locational setting, and structural plans.

Contingency Theory

Contingency Theory, also known as the theory of contingency or contingency approach, was developed by numerous scholars, including Woodward (1965). The theory posits that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to organizational design, and the most effective design is contingent upon various internal and external factors (Lartey, 2020). According to this theory, organizations must adapt their structures to align with the unique characteristics of their environment and internal conditions to achieve optimal performance (Betts, 2003). The theory emphasizes the importance of considering factors such as environmental uncertainty, technological complexity, organizational size, and culture in designing organizational structures (Betts, 2003).

Contingency Theory operates on several key assumptions. Firstly, it assumes that organizations exist in dynamic and complex environments that differ in terms of uncertainty and complexity (Donaldson, 2001). The theory suggests that different environments require different organizational structures to effectively respond to these varying conditions (Millar, 1978). Secondly, the theory assumes that there is no universal best way to design an organization's structure (Donaldson, 2001). It posits that the optimal design is contingent upon the specific circumstances and requirements of each organization (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Lastly, Contingency Theory assumes that organizations must match their internal characteristics, such as technology, size, and culture, with the demands of their external environment to achieve high performance (Woodward, 1965).

The framework incorporates contingency theory to examine the influence of exigency variables on organizational design. These variables include environmental uncertainty, technological complexity, organizational size, and culture. The framework explores how these variables interact with the establishment's structural dimension design and impact its performance and competitive stance.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the influence of establishment structural dimension design, exigency variables, and challenges mitigation. It allows for the analysis of organizational design, the impact of contingency factors, strategies for managing change, and the role of organizational culture in supporting structural changes. The framework informs the study's analysis, interpretation of findings, and recommendations for optimizing establishment design and mitigating challenges in the organizational context.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Vestberg (2018) studied study aimed to understand the current state of communication within the company and determine how streamlining communication between employees and departments can support the company's continued expansion. The study employed the methodology of Social Network Analysis. Data regarding network, logic views, and culture were collected from 12 employees through forms and open-ended questions. The study revealed that competence and collaboration were not being optimized to maximize productivity within the company. The study indicated that a more transparent communication structure between departments, along with functional support systems such as production planning, updated schematics, and proper stock management, would likely have a positive impact on efficiency. The analysis also identified several factors inhibiting the transfer and generation of new knowledge within the company. These included a combination of bow-tie configurations, imploded group structures, a missing culture of the socio-technical multifunctional principle, and irregular network structures with structural holes. The study found that these factors resulted in a heavy workload on the centerpiece of the company, which likely had to handle the information flow through seven holes in the network. Further, a logical clash between the current and previous CEOs, a fragmented humane orientation culture, and uncertainty about validation of actions further contributed to the challenges.

Král & Králová (2016) conducted a comprehensive study on the impact of organizational structural dimension design on communication effectiveness. Their research focused on examining the relationship between formal and informal communication channels, hierarchical structures, and the flow of information within organizations. The findings suggested that a well-designed

structural dimension, incorporating clear lines of communication and effective information flow, positively influenced communication effectiveness and overall organizational performance.

In a study by Ishak and Williams (2018), the researchers explored the role of exigency variables, such as time pressure and environmental uncertainty, on communication processes within organizations. The findings highlighted that high levels of time pressure and environmental uncertainty often led to communication breakdowns and decreased effectiveness. The study emphasized the need for organizations to proactively address exigency variables through adaptive communication strategies and the development of robust contingency plans.

Ferri and Pedrini (2018) studied the contribution of social and environmental practices throughout the purchasing process to the economic performance, competitiveness and risk mitigation of buying firms. The study analyzed a database of 189 international buying companies operating in Italy. The results indicated two main observations. Firstly, both social and environmental dimensions were found to contribute to firm performance, supporting the hypotheses of the study. Secondly, the findings revealed that the impact of these dimensions on firm performance varied depending on the stage of integration within the purchasing process. The integration of social criteria primarily influenced risk mitigation, while the environmental dimension contributed to risk mitigation and competitiveness during the supplier selection phase, and economic performance during supplier relationship management.

Further, in a study conducted by Thompson and Davis (2019), the researchers examined challenges related to communication within organizations and proposed strategies for effective mitigation. The study identified common challenges, such as information overload, lack of clarity in communication channels, and cultural barriers, that hindered effective communication. The researchers recommended implementing technological solutions, providing training programs, and fostering a culture of open communication to overcome these challenges and enhance organizational communication.

de Almeida and Balasundharam (2018) conducted a study to analyze the effects of selected structural reforms on output and employment in the short and medium term. The study utilized a comprehensive cross-country firm-level dataset covering both advanced and emerging market economies from 2003 to 2014. The findings demonstrated that structural reforms generally have a

positive impact on output and employment in the medium term. The results also revealed evidence that these firm characteristics do indeed affect the outcomes of structural reforms.

Wang et al. (2020) investigated the impact of exigency variables, such as environmental uncertainty and technological complexity, on communication processes. The findings revealed that organizations facing high levels of environmental uncertainty tended to have more decentralized communication structures, allowing for quicker decision-making and adaptation. Similarly, organizations dealing with high technological complexity tended to have more specialized communication channels to facilitate the exchange of technical knowledge and information.

Maiers et al. (2005) examined the challenges related to communication within organizations and proposed strategies for effective mitigation. The research identified barriers such as information silos, hierarchical communication patterns, and lack of cross-departmental collaboration. The study recommended implementing communication technologies, fostering a culture of open and transparent communication, and providing training programs to improve communication effectiveness and overcome these challenges.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Organizations shape our lives, and well-informed managers can shape organizations. The first step for understanding organizations is to examine the features that describe specific organizational design traits. These features describe organizations in much the same way that personality and physical traits describe people.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

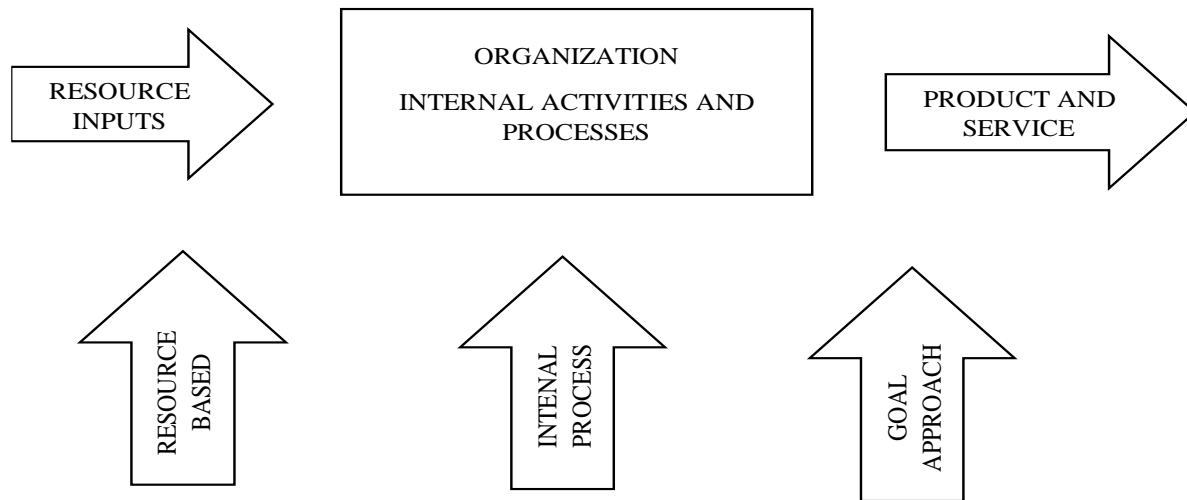


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Efficiency refers to the number of resources used to achieve the organization's goals. It is based on the quantity of raw materials, money, and employees necessary to produce a given level of output. Effectiveness is a broader term, meaning the degree to which an organization achieves its goals. Defining goals and measuring the organization's progress toward attaining them is the most common way managers assess effectiveness.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings of this study reveal significant insights into the influence of establishment structural dimension design, exigency variables, and challenges mitigation in Kenya. These findings provide a comprehensive understanding of organizational design and communication effectiveness within Kenyan organizations, offering valuable guidance for managers and practitioners.

Establishment Structural Dimension Design

The research findings underscore the critical influence of establishment structural dimension design on organizational performance and communication effectiveness. The study reveals that a well-designed structural dimension plays a crucial role in shaping the organization's ability to communicate effectively and achieve desired outcomes. One key finding is the positive impact of

a well-designed structural dimension on communication effectiveness. Clear lines of communication and effective information flow were identified as essential elements that contribute to enhanced communication effectiveness within organizations. This means that when communication channels are well-defined and information flows smoothly across different levels and departments, employees are better able to exchange ideas, collaborate, and make informed decisions. As a result, communication becomes more efficient, leading to improved organizational performance.

In addition, the study emphasizes the importance of considering both formal and informal communication channels within the structural dimension design. Formal communication channels, such as official reports and meetings, ensure the dissemination of important information across the organization's hierarchical structure. However, the findings highlight that informal communication channels, such as social interactions and informal networks, also play a significant role in facilitating effective communication. These informal channels allow for the exchange of tacit knowledge, quick problem-solving, and relationship building. Thus, a well-designed structural dimension should incorporate and support both formal and informal communication channels to optimize communication effectiveness.

The study also underscores the influence of hierarchical structures on information flow within organizations. Hierarchical structures define the reporting relationships and decision-making processes within the organization. When hierarchical structures are well-designed and aligned with the organization's goals and functions, they can promote efficient communication flow. Clear reporting lines, well-defined roles and responsibilities, and effective decision-making processes all contribute to streamlined communication. On the other hand, poorly designed hierarchical structures can lead to bottlenecks, delays in communication, and reduced overall organizational performance.

Exigency Variables

The study extensively examined the influence of exigency variables, including time pressure and environmental uncertainty, on communication processes within organizations. The findings shed light on the detrimental effects of high levels of these variables on communication effectiveness, often resulting in breakdowns and reduced efficiency in information transmission. High levels of

time pressure create a sense of urgency and a need for rapid decision-making, which can put strain on communication processes. In such situations, individuals may feel compelled to rush through conveying or receiving information, leading to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and incomplete communication. The pressure to meet tight deadlines or deliver quick responses can compromise the clarity and accuracy of messages, hampering effective communication.

Similarly, environmental uncertainty adds another layer of complexity to communication processes. When the organizational environment is characterized by volatility, unpredictability, and ambiguity, it becomes challenging to gather and disseminate accurate and up-to-date information. This uncertainty can create confusion, hesitation, and conflicting messages within the organization, hindering effective communication. Developing contingency plans is an essential aspect of proactive communication strategies. Contingency plans enable organizations to respond swiftly and effectively in high-pressure situations or uncertain environments. These plans outline alternative communication channels, protocols, and approaches that can be implemented when faced with exigency variables. By having contingency plans in place, organizations can mitigate the negative impact of time pressure and environmental uncertainty on communication, ensuring that important information is transmitted accurately and efficiently.

Challenges Mitigation in Organizational

The study identifies common challenges in organizational communication that hinder its effectiveness. Information overload, lack of clarity in communication channels, and cultural barriers emerged as key challenges. Information overload, resulting from the abundance of available information, often poses difficulties in prioritizing and processing information effectively. Lack of clarity in communication channels leads to confusion and misinterpretation of messages, resulting in ineffective communication. Cultural barriers arising from diverse cultural backgrounds within organizations hinder effective communication among employees. To mitigate these challenges, the study proposes several strategies. First, the implementation of technological solutions that facilitate efficient information management and communication is recommended.

This may include utilizing communication tools, collaboration platforms, and information sharing systems that streamline communication processes and alleviate information overload. Second, the study emphasizes the importance of providing training programs to enhance employees'

communication skills. Equipping employees with effective communication techniques and strategies can improve communication clarity and reduce misinterpretation. Lastly, fostering a culture of open communication is highlighted as vital. Creating an environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas promotes effective communication and collaboration. Encouraging transparency, active listening, and feedback mechanisms are key components of nurturing such a culture.

CONCLUSION

The research findings provide valuable insights into the influence of establishment structural dimension design, exigency variables, and challenges mitigation in Kenya. The study highlights the critical role of a well-designed structural dimension in shaping communication effectiveness and organizational performance. Clear lines of communication and effective information flow were identified as key factors in enhancing communication effectiveness. The study emphasizes the importance of considering both formal and informal communication channels within the structural dimension design, as well as the impact of hierarchical structures on information flow.

In addition, the study sheds light on the detrimental effects of high levels of time pressure and environmental uncertainty on communication processes. It emphasizes the need for organizations to proactively develop adaptive communication strategies and contingency plans to navigate these exigency variables effectively. By doing so, organizations can mitigate communication breakdowns and maintain effective information transmission even in challenging circumstances. The study also identifies common challenges in organizational communication, including information overload, lack of clarity in communication channels, and cultural barriers. It proposes strategies to mitigate these challenges, such as implementing technological solutions to manage information overload, providing training programs to enhance communication skills, and fostering a culture of open communication.

These findings have significant implications for managers and practitioners in Kenya, as they provide guidance on optimizing establishment design, improving communication effectiveness, and mitigating challenges. By incorporating the study's recommendations, organizations can enhance their communication processes, promote collaboration, and ultimately improve overall organizational performance. The research findings contribute to a comprehensive understanding

of establishment structural dimension design, the impact of exigency variables, and challenges mitigation in Kenya. The insights gained from this study provide a foundation for informed decision-making and the development of effective strategies to optimize communication effectiveness and organizational performance in the Kenyan context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the study presents the following recommendations; effective communication within an organization is hinged on clear and well-defined channels, both formal and informal. Ensuring that everyone in the organization understands these channels, which include formal reports, meetings, social interactions, and informal networks, is essential. This sets the stage for streamlined information flow and improved organizational function. Building on this, the promotion of a collaborative culture that fosters information sharing, idea exchange, and shared expertise across all departments and hierarchical levels is critical. This can be facilitated through the use of collaborative platforms, cross-functional teams, and the initiation of knowledge-sharing programs.

As the dynamics of an organization's goals, tasks, and environmental conditions change, so should its structural dimension design. A periodic evaluation of the reporting lines, decision-making processes, and communication channels ensures that the organization remains effective and efficient. In an ever-changing business environment, organizations must develop adaptive communication strategies. This involves being prepared for exigency variables like time pressure and environmental uncertainty. The establishment of clear protocols and guidelines for communication during high-pressure situations and uncertain times is key. Alongside this, contingency plans that outline alternative communication approaches become a necessity. A culture of agility and flexibility within the organization helps in quickly adapting and responding to changing circumstances. Promoting open communication, encouraging innovative thinking, and empowering employees to make timely decisions forms the bedrock of this culture.

In the era of digital transformation, organizations should invest in communication technologies that streamline information management and enhance communication clarity. The use of collaborative tools, project management software, and knowledge-sharing platforms are worth considering. To foster effective communication within the organization, offering training programs

that enhance employees' skills is essential. This can include active listening, effective written and verbal communication, and cross-cultural communication training programs tailored to address specific communication challenges within the organization. The creation of a culture that encourages open communication, transparency, and feedback is vital. This can be realized by creating channels for sharing ideas and concerns, providing opportunities for employees to express their opinions, and rewarding effective communication practices.

Last but not least, diversity and inclusion should be at the core of the organization. Overcoming cultural communication barriers involves fostering an inclusive work environment, promoting cultural awareness and sensitivity, and providing cross-cultural training to enhance understanding and collaboration among employees from diverse backgrounds. Through the integration of these recommendations into organizational practice, improvements in establishment structural dimension design, effective handling of exigency variables, and overcoming challenges in organizational communication are achievable. This lays the foundation for enhanced communication effectiveness, collaboration, and contributes to the overall success of the organization.

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