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The Journal for Advancing Business Education is a practitioner and scholarly journal that publishes the best work in the field of business education to enhance teaching, achieve student learning outcomes, and meet program goals. The Journal follows the general IACBE theme of “Moving. Forward. Together.” All submissions are subject to a double-blind peer review process. The Journal is an online journal and accessible on the IACBE Web page. The Journal for Advancing Business Education is a biannual publication.

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Journal for Advancing Business Education

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Management institutions are an integral part of society and are frequently influenced by social changes and stakeholders. Recently, business schools faced some difficult times. Business schools have been moved out of their comfort zone, and experienced volatility and uncertainty due to student debt, the pandemic, new learning technologies, questions of relevance, and more. In this context, when a crisis erupts, a feeling of uncertainty permeates business education. A crisis in business education usually reveals business-school problems and dysfunctions. A crisis, in this context, is often a radical change that transforms the mode in which business schools operate. These crises call upon higher education leaders to rise to the challenge and steer the institutions through difficult times.

When a crisis occurs, some of the pertinent questions educational leaders have to ask themselves are as follows: How do institutions prioritize their resources and activities? What adaptive structures do management institutions need to use to overcome crises? Do organizations have to rethink their curriculum, teaching, and student makeup? Does this situation lead to a collective sense of institutional purpose?

More generally, organizations can respond to crises in different ways, such as the following:

- Refutative: The institution refuses to respond to a disaster or actively work to mitigate the problem or challenge. This head-in-the-sand approach, often, works only for a while and does not avoid the inevitable, that an institution has to face the music.
- Accommodative: In this case the institution complies with the minimum actions that need to be taken, but does not really go beyond the necessary. Again, this approach might work for a while but, frequently, does not take care of the problem in the long-run and, therefore, denies the organization an opportunity to place itself into a better position.
- Proactive: With this approach the institution of higher education takes the necessary steps and uses its resources to take care of the problem. The organization not only complies but it also takes actions to mitigate and, maybe in the future, prevent the problem from reoccurring.

In times of a crisis, an institution needs direction and a leader who can show the way and the purpose of the institution (e.g., how a management institution can bring value to education and society). On the contrary, a business school has to utilize the skills of its stakeholders to be able to get through a crisis. The leader has to understand the values of a university in order to know into which direction the organization needs to move after a crisis. To cope with a crisis, a management institution has to develop adaptability.

Institutions that perform best in a crisis situation are organizations which are resilient and agile and which have a high capacity to adapt to challenges. If management institutions can prepare, adapt, and respond to a crisis, they can survive.

Thank you!

Christian Gilde
Managing Editor

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DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK IN ONLINE COURSES

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ABSTRACT

Teamwork has become an integral part of any organization in today's highly interconnected and increasingly global business environment. When performed effectively, teamwork can foster creativity and innovation in the workplace and enhance organizational performance and success. Because of its importance, organizations are looking for employees with strong teamwork skills who can create a cohesive and collaborative environment. This paper investigates effective strategies for incorporating teamwork as part of developing effective teamwork pedagogy in online courses to help students to develop the essential skills and knowledge needed to succeed in a collaborative environment.

INTRODUCTION

Working in teams, especially in virtual environments, has become an integral part of many organizations in today's increasingly global world (Messersmith, 2015). When performed effectively, teamwork fosters a more collaborative and engaging work environment. This increases employee satisfaction and a sense of belonging. Additionally, it enhances creativity and innovative thinking, contributing to the overall productivity and success of an organization. Research shows that, even just the feeling of being part of a team motivates people to work harder on challenging tasks and perform better (Carr & Walton, 2014). To achieve these imperative organizational benefits, strong teamwork skills are required by employers to create an efficient and effective work environment in today's highly competitive and challenging business environment. According to a recent Job Outlook 2023 survey from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) (2022), the ability to work in a team together with problem-solving skills were identified as the two most valued and desired attributes in the eyes of employers in today's workplace. Commonly agreed upon in business organizations, employees with good teamwork skills demonstrate leadership, collaboration, and good communication (Doyle, 2021; Matthews & McLees, 2015), which are important skills for responding to the challenges and complexities in today's domestic and global business environment.

The increased importance of teamwork skills in the workplace has also increased the expectations of the international business education accreditation institutions to include learning experiences to address these skills. For example, both AACSB International and IACBE expect business schools to incorporate teamwork activities across the curricula of their undergraduate and graduate programs to better prepare students for their professional careers. To respond to these changing expectations of the business world and the accreditation institutions, our business program faculty at one of the U.S. Universities revised the student learning outcomes for our Master in Business Administration (MBA) program to include teamwork and designed more effective pedagogy to assess student collaboration and communication skills as contributors in team projects.

This paper includes the identification of new tools and approaches developed for effective teamwork in team projects in online graduate courses; and how these tools and approaches helped to improve student learning outcomes. The data is presented as part of a case study that highlights best practices in the development of curriculum for our MBA program. Further analysis demonstrates how the processes described here can be applied as organizations increasingly work in virtual teams due to advancements in technology and rise in remote work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Working in a team, face-to-face or virtually, can be challenging and daunting for many professionals at times. Many students in higher education resist the idea of working with a team in group projects for many reasons including the lack of positive relationships and trust (Ku et al., 2013). Smith et al. (2011) show that communication issues, personal feelings about team members, and their participation are the most important factors that negatively influence students' teamwork experiences and learning. This impact is even more significant for online courses because communication and relationships, hence building trust, are more difficult when working virtually, as they lack visual cues and instant feedback as in face-to-face interpersonal communication (Zimmermann, 2011).

The challenges of and resistance to teamwork can be overcome and its highest benefits can be achieved if done in a proper and effective way. It is commonly accepted that processes that support effective teamwork follow a series of developmental stages that were first introduced by psychologist Bruce Tuckman. Tuckman (1965) proposed four stages of team development, namely forming, storming, norming, and performing. These stages allow for a group to become a team (Drake et al., 2006). These stages are described as follows:

- Forming is the process of identifying the team members.
- Storming is the establishment of roles and responsibilities, and working through conflict from interpersonal issues as teams attempt to work collaboratively.
- Norming is establishing processes and working styles towards building relationships and trust.
- Performing is when teams learn to work toward a common goal.

Criticism of Tuckman's model notes that the development of teams through the four stages may not be a linear process but instead more of a cyclical process. As teams move through the four stages of team development, they may revisit the previous stages and reassess the established processes for development. Other models of team development, such as the Punctuated-Tuckman model, have been proposed to reflect this cyclical nature (Hurt & Trombley, 2007). However, Tuckman's model is still a valuable and beneficial tool in developing effective teams and widely recognized and used in literature (Bonebright, 2010).

According to Tuckman (1965) and Matthews and McLees (2015), the first stage of effective team development is forming. This stage includes bringing together a diverse group of people for a common goal and identifying the tasks that need to be completed to achieve that goal. These tasks should be designed to promote interdependence, as well as individual accountability (Falls et al., 2014; Matthews & McLees, 2015). However, even when the tasks are well defined, team members have been shown to contribute to team projects by completing tasks but do not always work collaboratively: groupwork is not necessarily teamwork (Birch & McDonald, 2007; Sridharan et al., 2018).

Team members often seem to want to work independently as opposed to collaboratively. They are more interested in getting the work done and not the actual final content. One reason may be the lack of relationships and trust, as cited previously, which leads to conflicts between the team members. This can result in each member providing their own contribution and not reflecting on the team project as a whole. The well-defined tasks create a sense of accountability but do not always support the interdependent group processes through pursuing a common goal.

The storming stage of effective team development moves the team members towards group norms through clearly defined roles and responsibilities that aid in resolution of any conflicts. As mentioned in Ebbers and Wijnberg (2017), conflicts often come from ill-defined relationships and roles of team members. To be able to manage the processes that create effective teams, well defined roles including a leadership role is essential (Matthews & McLees, 2015), and leadership needs to come from both student roles as well as faculty roles to help establish process that support team collaborations (Saghafian & O'Neill, 2018). During this storming stage, the team members better understand the team's purpose and structure as well as their own individual role and influence on the team project. This encourages open dialogue amongst the team members and helps them to manage conflicts within the team more effectively. Before team members move to the next stage of development, they try to resolve areas of conflict and create foundations for trust and collaboration through open dialogue and active listening. Conflicts among team members that are created by the lack of processes that support relationship building and good communication can cause dissatisfaction with teamwork, hindering the success of the group (Matthews & McLees, 2015). As teams move through the storming stage of team development, they may revisit the forming stage and reassess the tasks that are needed to complete the project.

The team members move from the storming stage to the norming stage with a higher sense of belonging and commitment to the team, and they are better prepared to take on their assigned roles and responsibilities and contribute to the team efforts. During the norming stage of team development, the team members work towards building trust, relationships, and good communication and collaboration processes that are key to effective and successful teamwork (Castillo et al., 2017; Tseng et al., 2009). A study by Saghafian and O'Neill (2018) provides evidence that in both face-to-face and virtual teams, improved communication and relationship building is required for successful team performance. Open communication is important to enhance collaboration and increase satisfaction among team members (Castillo et al., 2017; Ku et al., 2013). Ku et al. (2013) recognized that "frequency and quality of communication can encourage team members to exchange information and experiences that can promote team cohesiveness, decision-making, and trust" (p. 923), which are essential to perform as a team.

In a class project, it is important that the process for collaboration is encouraged by the faculty member (Messersmith, 2015). Bocchi et al. (2004) reported that it was necessary for the instructor to work with students to help them develop communication that supports collaborative processes. According to Ku et al. (2013) online team collaboration has been found to be impacted by team dynamics, team acquaintance, and instructor support. Team dynamics are closely aligned with team roles and processes, whereas team acquaintance is closely aligned with relationships. However, it is the way in which the course instructor helps to build trust that results in a cohesive team effort.

At the performing stage, the teams are expected to become fully functional with a high level of interdependence and accountability towards productivity. Faculty support is important in moving the teams through the different stages of team development. It not only can help to identify the tasks needed for the team forming, but it also aids in developing the roles of the team members for storming. Faculty support was found to be necessary in encouraging collaboration in the norming stage; providing feedback and support for effective decision making among team members (Ekblaw, 2016; Mathieu & Rapp, 2009). The case study presented here will statistically support the findings in the literature and help to identify best practices when creating online team assignments as part of graduate level learning.

A CASE STUDY FOR EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK PROJECTS

The workforce of the twenty-first century is and will be required to work in teams at a distance (Ku et al., 2013; Messersmith, 2015). Much has been written about the need for virtual teams because of the globalization of markets (Shroder et al., 2021). However, more recently there has been a shift toward remote working across industries (Chrapek, 2021). As a result, knowing how to effectively manage teams is crucial in today's business environment. This requires essential soft skills including strong leadership, good communication, and collaboration (Doyle, 2021; Ingols & Shapiro, 2014). To prepare graduates for the job market, it is important for business education to provide students with the learning opportunities to develop and demonstrate these essential soft skills (Belasen & Rufer, 2007). In this section, a case study is presented that illustrates how students, in an online MBA in Business Management program in one of the U.S. Universities, were able to demonstrate all three aforementioned soft skills, through the development of pedagogy that created processes for effective teamwork. Virtual team processes are identified and assessed as to their effectiveness as part of a team project in a core strategic marketing management course taken close to the end of the program.

In this team project, students were tasked to work collaboratively in teams to develop marketing programs for a marketing plan based on stakeholder needs. Tasks to be completed for the project were identified by the faculty member as part of the forming process. Students started the team process by coming together to understand and discuss the tasks and objectives of the process. They then assign roles to team members and define their responsibilities.

As part of the virtual team processes, the collaboration Web tool Wiki was used in documenting and exchanging information to promote communication and collaboration. The Wiki allowed for team coordination and faculty observation. The instructions on how to use the Wiki tool were presented to the students by the course instructor during a webinar that reviews the requirements for the team project.

A rubric was used to measure the norming of the team members as it related to their individual participation in the team project and their collaboration and communication during the team process. The performance of student participation in the project is rated individually using the rubric represented in Table 1. The student learning outcomes based on the rubric were anticipated to show that at least 80% of all students who participated in the team project performed at the “proficient” or the “expert” levels.

Table 1. Rubric for Teamwork Assessment

Performance Level	**Definition**
Novice	Student contributes marginally to the team efforts.
Competent	Student works collaboratively on the team effort.
Proficient	Student applies learning from others to achieve team goals.
Expert	Student contributes significantly to the success of the team project.

Initial Pedagogy

In the initial design of the pedagogy for the team project, to help with the assessment of the teamwork using the presented rubric, program faculty developed a collaboration analysis survey to be completed by each team member at the end of the team project. In this survey, team members were asked to provide their individual reflections and evaluations on their experiences on the team project. Using twelve Likert type statements, students indicated their agreement about the effectiveness of their team’s work, their individual engagement, and their individual contributions, as shown in Table 2. In addition to the twelve Likert questions, students were also asked to provide their role in the project and to rate their overall satisfaction with their team's performance from very dissatisfied to very satisfied on the 5-category scale.

The described initial design of pedagogy was implemented during the 2018-19 academic year. For the assessment of students' teamwork skills, faculty considered their engagement and contributions in the Wiki forum as well as their ratings of several aspects of their teamwork. This was provided in the collaboration analysis survey to determine a performance level from novice to expert for each student.

Table 2. Teamwork Collaboration Analysis Survey

Team Name	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
Team members worked collaboratively					
Team members demonstrated flexibility in working together					
Team members met deadlines set by the team.					
Team members demonstrated quality of ideas in the team activities.					
Team members contributed effectively to the achievement of team goals.					
Team members learned from each other					
I personally engaged in the team activities					
I personally helped keep the team organized, cohesive, and progressing toward completion of the goals.					
Everyone on the team contributed to the team's success					
Everyone on the team contributed to the assignment on time					
Everyone's work was crucial to the team's success					
Communication among team members was civil					

Table 3 shows the assessment results for the teamwork learning outcome measured for the team project. The results show that only about 70% of all students performed at proficient or expert levels, which was below our performance target of at least 80%.

Table 3. Teamwork Assessment Results for Initial Pedagogy (2018-19 Academic Year)

Performance Level	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Novice	1	2%
Competent	14	28%
Proficient	15	30%
Expert	20	40%
Total	**50**	**100%**

During the assessment process, the faculty observed inconsistencies between the students' responses in the collaboration analysis survey, their actual engagement, and their contributions in the Wiki forum. For example, while some students rated their personal engagement in the team activities as high, their actual engagement in the Wiki forum was low. Faculty also observed significant differences in the evaluations of team performance by different members of the team. Furthermore, students tended to just submit their own work in the forum and seldom went back to edit each other's work in the Wiki collaboration platform. There were some instances of conflict and resistance when students modified each other's work resulting in frustration. This observation is consistent with some other studies that have found that not all students resent when their work is edited, but about twenty-five percent do experience resentment (Pimlott, & Tikasingh, 2021).

Lack of trust or relationships may be the contributing factors that hinder the collaboration among team members leading to conflict within the team resulting in frustration. Teams never moved from storming to norming. Therefore, the faculty determined that students needed to be taught how to work collaboratively as a team instead of working individually, and that the collaboration analysis survey did not provide validity or reliability for the assessment of actual student achievement and collaboration during the teamwork process.

Additionally, many students reported in the collaboration analysis survey that they were hampered by a lack of structure; clarity in the directions; and timeline associated with the assignment. These comments seemed to indicate a breakdown in communication. Faculty were concerned that those obstacles might have detracted from student ability to display the teamwork skills intended for measurement by this assessment. As a result, the student reporting instrument was discontinued, and redesign of the assessment process was implemented.

Improved Pedagogy

Faculty oversight is an important part of the process of developing effective teamwork (Saghafian & O'Neill, 2018; Tseng et al., 2009). In a face-to-face classroom, faculty oversight is a natural process. However, in a virtual classroom, oversight needs to come from well-defined teamwork processes (Falls et al., 2014). The well-defined processes help to build good relationships and trust among the team members, which is critical for collaboration. Team leadership also contributes to trust building and thus collaboration (Ku et al.,2013; Matthews & McLees, 2015; Olson et al., 2015). Faculty redesigned the teamwork process to improve clarity in roles, communication, and feedback.

As early as 2006, Drake et al. (2006) recognized the importance of assigning roles for effective teamwork. These roles were seen to engage the students in the team assignment as it helped to define their contribution. The most common roles assigned in team projects are a Team Leader, a Scribe, a Facilitator, and a Liaison (Ekblaw, 2016).

In the initial pedagogy design for teamwork, when students were asked to provide their role in the project as part of the collaboration analysis survey, most indicated that they were a "contributor". They also indicated exceptional performance by the team. Thus, there appeared to be a lack of clear allocation of roles and team processes. We lacked discriminant validity because most students reported the same role, while the expectation was to identify roles including leadership. Furthermore, we lacked congruent validity when comparing survey results to those processes we could observe through Wiki. Based on the lack of discriminant validity and lack of congruent validity, faculty reflected on how to better measure collaboration among team members.

Similar to the process followed by Ingols and Shapiro (2014), as part of continuous improvement of student learning in the MBA program, faculty reviewed the student learning outcomes in the program and the assessment tools. As a result of this process, faculty revised the rubric language used to assess teamwork to create more nuanced levels that provide specific competencies exemplified by the varied levels of mastery, as noted in Table 4.

Table 4. Revised Rubric for Teamwork Assessment

Performance Level	Definition
Novice	Student's team participation is limited to nominal contribution to the development of a teamwork plan.
Competent	Student provides an average contribution to team effort by participating in assigned work according to the work plan.
Proficient	Student collaboratively shares ideas with others and takes responsibility for project.
Expert	Student collaborates with team members in a group decision making process and supports the efforts of the team members.

The faculty also developed a team workflow plan template to both document individual student contributions to their team and to provide instructional support on topics such as teamwork roles and responsibilities, task breakdown, and timeline. The teamwork roles included are the Leader, Coordinator, Editor, and Recorder, as noted in Table 5.

Table 5. Team Members' Assigned Roles and Responsibilities

Name	Role	Responsibilities
Include the names of all team members. Add/delete rows as needed.	E.g. Leader, coordinator, editor, recorder, etc.	Brief description of the responsibilities of each team member in his/her assigned role

These clearly defined roles and a formal communication process were expected to improve the collaboration in the team assignment (Mathieu & Rapp, 2009). The leadership role is critical to improving communication and collaboration among team members (Ekblaw, 2016), and teams need effective leaders for optimal performance (Matthews & McLees, 2015). In the redesign of the teamwork assessment, the team leader was assigned the task of oversight of the team workflow plan, which helped to track the success of the project and to communicate the progress to team members. As noted earlier, communication was found to be important to support team processes and build relationships and trust among team members. Communication was essential to move the team toward norming and then performing.

What was significant about the team workflow plan was the addition of dates of when a particular task was due and the actual date it was submitted. This addition was included to enhance individual accountability and to help reduce some of the conflict among team members, caused by the lack of trust that each member would not contribute to the team project in a timely manner. Staying on task, clear communication, and staying connected are important in online teamwork projects (Saghafian & ONeill, 2018).

Even more significant in the revised pedagogy, was the addition of columns to the workflow plan of who edited each section and other team member contributors, as seen in Table 6. This addition communicated to students the importance of collaboration on tasks as opposed to cooperative engagement or individual submissions. As part of our model this moved the students through the storming phase to the norming phase.

Table 6. Teamwork Plan Task Breakdown and Timeline

Task Number	Task Description	Responsible Team Member(s)	Due Date	Actual Completion Date	Other Team Member Contributions
Add/delete rows as needed	Tasks to be completed by each member	Add the names of the members that are assigned to each task	Due date for each assigned task	Actual completion date should be added after each task is completed	Add names of team members who contributed to the improvement of the work submitted for the task
1					
2					
. . .					

Additionally, to improve communication, instructions on how to use the Wiki collaboration tool were revised to encourage students to have open discussion about why changes were being made. Otherwise, students would feel that they were being denied their input, thus creating more dissatisfaction. Consistent with Ku et al. (2013), students needed to feel that they were co-creators of the assignment.

Faculty added the requirement that when one member of the team made changes, the rationale for the change needed to be discussed either through team communications or in the comment section of the Wiki forum. Having team members use the comment section to explain any editing they did and drawing attention to the responsibility of working collaboratively (i.e., reviewing and editing), improved the teamwork processes and collaborative engagement. This open communication, about why changes were being made, increased the satisfaction of the team members, and hence increased both trust and collaboration among the students.

The improved pedagogy with the revised rubric definitions and the newly developed teamwork plan was used in the same core strategic marketing course during the 2019-20 academic year. Some literature found that having students either work together in the same group or repeat similar processes helped to facilitate collaboration among team members and develop trust in the process (Ekblaw, 2016; Young & Stachowski, 2020). Following these findings, students were asked to implement the developed team process for two different assignments. Formative feedback was given to each team about how well they collaborated on the first of the two assignments. The second assignment was used to measure their performance as a team. This was the same assignment used to measure teamwork during the 2018-19 academic year.

The assessment results presented in Table 7 show that 87% of the students performed at the proficient or expert level, which is statistically higher than the 70% performance level during the 2018-19 academic year. Equally important to this analysis was the Wiki forum history, which showed in this revised process, students actually reviewed each-others' work for greater validity and reliability of the collaboration between members as opposed to just individual contributions (compared to Wiki history based of the first instrument and process used in 2018-19 academic year).

Table 7. Teamwork Assessment Results for Improved Pedagogy (2019-20 Academic Year)

Performance Level	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Novice	0	0%
Competent	12	13%
Proficient	26	28%
Expert	54	59%
Total	**92**	**100%**

Performance Comparison of Initial Pedagogy and Improved Pedagogy

The performance outcomes obtained from the use of the initial pedagogy and improved pedagogy were compared using statistical analysis. We first tested if the results for student performance outcomes for the initial and improved pedagogies are statistically significant.

Hypothesis 1. Student performance levels are dependent on the pedagogy used

A chi-square test was performed to determine if the student performance levels are dependent based on the pedagogy used. Table 8 shows the observed and expected frequencies for the novice, competent, proficient, and expert levels for the initial and the improved pedagogies. Using this data, the chi-square test statistics is calculated as x^2_{calc}= 8.0044 and the corresponding p-value is 0.0459. This p-value indicates that the student performance in the team project depends on pedagogy used at the α = 0.05 significance level, based on our sample of 142 students in total.

Table 8. Chi-Square Test of Independence of Teamwork Performance Levels on Pedagogy

		Performance Level				
Pedagogy		**Novice**	**Competent**	**Proficient**	**Expert**	**Total**
Initial	Observed	1	14	15	20	**50**
	Expected	0.35	9.15	14.44	26.06	
Improved	Observed	0	12	26	54	**92**
	Expected	0.65	16.85	26.56	47.94	
Total		**1**	**26**	**41**	**74**	**142**

x^2_{calc}= 8.0044; *degree of freedom* = 3; *p-value* = 0.0459

Next, a z-test was conducted to compare the percentages of the students that performed at the proficient or expert levels to determine if the improved pedagogy has enhanced student performance of teamwork skills.

Hypothesis 2. Improved pedagogy increased the percentage of students performed at the proficient or expert levels

The data presented in Table 9 for the teamwork assessment results for the initial and improved pedagogies is used for the analysis where:

- x_i is the number of students performed at the proficient or expert levels;
- n_i is the total number of students participated in the team project;
- p_i is the percentage of the students performed at the proficient or expert levels for the improved (i=1) and initial (i=2) pedagogies; and
- p_c is the pooled percentage.

Using the presented data, the *z* value can be calculated as:

$$z_{calc} = \frac{p_1 - p_2}{\sqrt{p_c(1-p_c)\left[\frac{1}{n_1}+\frac{1}{n_2}\right]}} = \frac{0.87 - 0.70}{\sqrt{0.81(1-0.81)\left[\frac{1}{92}+\frac{1}{50}\right]}} = 2.466$$

The corresponding *p*-value is 0.0068, which supports the hypothesis that the percentage of students who performed at the proficient or expert levels is significantly higher for the improved pedagogy at $\alpha = 0.05$, based on our sample of 142 students in total.

Table 9. Comparison of Teamwork Performance Levels for Initial and Improved Pedagogies

	Pedagogy	
	Improved	**Initial**
Number of Students Performed at the Proficient or Expert Levels	x_1 = 80	x_2 = 35
Total Number of Students	n_1 = 92	n_2 = 50
Percentage of Students Performed at the Proficient or Expert Levels	p_1 = 87%	p_2 = 70%
Pooled Percentage of Students Performed at the Proficient or Expert Levels	$p_c = \frac{x_1 + x_2}{n_1 + n_2} = 0.81\ or\ 81\%$	
	p-value is 0.0068	

DISCUSSION OF DIFFERENT PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

Using a survey that asked students to reflect on their team engagement and contributions proved to have little reliability when compared with observations in the Wiki collaboration tool used for the team assignment. As part of a process of continual improvement in our assessment of teamwork, a thorough literature review provided the faculty with guidance on how to better assess teamwork and collaboration on team assignments. The literature identified the importance of the faculty role as well as leadership roles amongst the team members (Matthews & McLees, 2015; Saghafian & O'Neill, 2018).

As part of the forming process, faculty took an active role in defining the tasks and roles that students needed to assume. However, before collaboration can exist, relationships and trust have to be developed by team members (Chiocchio et al., 2011; Matthews & McLees, 2015; Smith et al., 2011). Faculty again were instrumental in defining the process to build trust. Using the Wiki forum, team members were asked to include a rationale for any modifications made to submissions by other team members. Communication was identified to be an important component for the norming process of team development (Matthews & McLees, 2015; Smith et al., 2011). The addition of this communication requirement proved to increase the trust amongst team members and reduce the conflict observed in the previous pedagogy.

One additional change was made that followed the literature: to have teams work together on different assignments. A first assignment was added that provided the same structure as the one that was to be assessed. In this first assignment, the faculty provided formative feedback to each team on the teamwork process and collaboration. When the team completed the second assignment, relationships had been established, and clear expectations of the need for collaboration was conveyed through the feedback of the team processes on the first assignment. Using the redesigned pedagogy results in a statistically significant increase in collaboration as measured by the rubric shown in Table 4 (p =.0068). Faculty feedback and oversight in the online environment aided in the teams moving from the storming phase to the norming phase to the performing phase. Review of the Wiki forum and comparison to the workflow plan provided congruent validity to the assessment of the collaboration among team members. The workflow plan was key to communicating the tasks, roles, and collaboration among team members. It also helped to build trust by documenting the accountability of each team member (Falls et al., 2014). Trust is essential in moving the team from the storming phase to the norming phase (Castillo et al., 2017). Through faculty leadership, well defined tasks and roles, and the workflow plan that documented accountability, team engagement and collaboration was successfully observed.

EVIDENCE OF ACQUIRED SOFT SKILLS

We began by saying that faculty needed to teach students how to work collaboratively in teams. While the data suggests that the new processes improve collaboration among students in the MBA course on strategic marketing management, it does not indicate if it helped students to improve their teamwork skills, and whether they will be able to apply them in different settings using the same processes at the same or higher-level performance. To find out if teamwork skills were truly taught and improved, we used the team workflow plan in the capstone course with students who had gone through the marketing management course.

Hypothesis 3. Students being taught to work collaboratively will acquire the skills for continuous improvement in teamwork

The data in Tables 10 and 11, statistically indicate that students have learned to work collaboratively in teams, supporting the work of Young and Stachowski (2020).

Table 10. Teamwork Assessment Results for Improved Pedagogy in Capstone (2020-2021 Academic Year)

Performance Level	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Novice	3	4%
Competent	3	4%
Proficient	16	22%
Expert	50	70%
Total	**72**	**100%**

Students who learned to collaborate in the earlier course showed a much higher performance in teamwork in the following capstone course. By applying the same skills 92% of all students performed at proficient or expert levels in the capstone course in the MBA program. Chi-square testing statistically supports our third hypothesis that students following this pedagogy will learn how to work collaboratively and continue to improve their teamwork skills.

Table 11. Chi-Square Test of Independence of Teamwork Performance Levels on Improved Pedagogy

Improved Pedagogy		Novice	Competent	Proficient	Expert	Total
Marketing Course	Observed	0	12	26	54	**92**
	Expected	1.68	8.42	23.56	58.34	
Capstone Course	Observed	3	3	16	50	**72**
	Expected	1.32	6.58	18.44	45.66	
Total		**3**	**15**	**43**	**104**	**164**

x^2_{calc}=8.6240; *degree of freedom* =3; *p-value* = 0.0347

RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Working in virtual teams is essential in today's business environment. It has expanded recently with more domestic and global business being completed through virtual teams. The lessons learned in how to collaborate and improve the effectiveness of virtual teams as part of a student's degree program have implications once the students become part of the workforce. Thus, being able to develop teamwork skills is an important component of online business education, as recognized by the business school accrediting agencies and employers. Methods for how to best develop those skills for today's business graduates are identified in this paper. Both current literature and the case study example discussed in this paper clearly identify the importance of faculty input in the process of team development and clear communication pathways to build trust and relationships among virtual teams. The data here indicate that having an instrument that aids in identifying accountability of each team member as well as the need for collaboration, as opposed to individual cooperation, improved the team development in a strategic marketing course in an online MBA program.

Using Wiki technology, faculty were able to observe congruent validity and reliability of the team process through the implementation of a workflow plan. The critical components of the workflow plan included well-defined roles and tasks; integration of a milestone table; and identification of where collaboration occurred as part of the team project. Based on data that support the hypothesis that students were taught how to collaborate, this process demonstrates that another soft skill was developed in MBA students with the improved pedagogy.

Whether working in an academic environment or a business, these components appear to improve the leadership, communication, and trust amongst team members. One additional outcome of the case study analysis was that working together on different assignments improved the trust and collaboration amongst the students. We saw this improvement within the MBA Marketing Management course and later in the capstone course. Within the business environment, teams that work consistently together may also see continued improvement in team performance as members build trust and collaborative relationships. Using a workflow plan that increases accountability within a virtual team has implications as well in the workplace.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Three limitations have been identified in this study:

- First, the sample size during the first phase of the curriculum design for measuring student teamwork skills included 50 students, whereas during the second phase 92 students participated in the team assignments.
- Second, while the student learning outcomes were measured on the same assignment during both teamwork evaluations, the second design provided group members with a similar experience prior to the assignment used to measure teamwork skills. The formative feedback on this first assignment helped to create the relationships that improved trust and collaboration on the second assignment. However, this purposeful improvement was not part of the first curricular design.
- The third limitation of this study is that we did not measure or define a variable for the trust or relationships formed among team members. We only observed the outcomes and results from the formative assessment on the first team assignment in the course. Future research can be conducted to evaluate the trust and relationships formed among team members and the dependence of collaboration on these relationships.

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LEVEL UP DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING COURSES: A FOUR-STEP MODEL OF ENHANCING COURSES THROUGH VENDOR-SPECIFIC INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

The use of social media marketing has increased multi-fold over the last decade and transformed how companies allocate their marketing budget and media mix. As the popularity of advertising through digital modes increased, universities slowly adapted their curriculum to encompass digital marketing to educate students on these emerging skills. Educating students on emerging social media marketing techniques is challenging due to the dynamic nature of the digital field. Despite the development of new courses to meet these demands, a skill gap has been noted in the literature. In this context, integrating industry certifications into a curriculum may enhance a course and mitigate this skill shortage. This paper examined a strategy to "level up" social media courses by leveraging industry certification, specifically vendor-specific credentials. A four-step model for integrating industry certifications into curriculum is detailed.

The use of social media marketing has increased multi-fold over the last decade and transformed how companies allocate their marketing budget and media mix. As the popularity of advertising through digital modes increased, universities slowly adapted their curriculum to encompass digital marketing to educate students on these emerging skills. Despite the development of new courses to meet these demands, a skill gap has been noted in the literature. In response to skill deficiency and the dynamic nature of technology, universities should revisit their social media courses to investigate potential areas of enhancement. This paper examined a strategy to "level up" social media courses by leveraging industry certification, specifically vendor-specific credentials. A four-step model for integrating industry certification into the classroom, investigating certification options and alignment with the curriculum, determining student preparation programs, and encouraging students to improve credentials to yield possible labor market advantages was identified.

BACKGROUND ON SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING COURSES AND SKILL GAPS

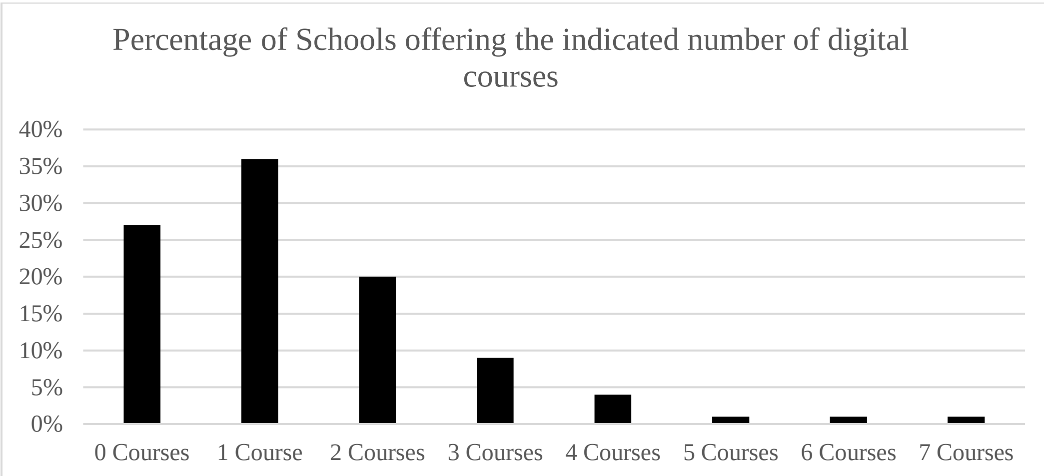
The scope of marketing has profoundly changed with the advent of digital and social media marketing. Educating students on exclusively traditional marketing tactics is no longer effective. Universities have gradually recognized the need to modernize their marketing courses by developing the curriculum and launching relevant courses. In this context, Edwards (2016) suggested that universities were the last to get on board in this dynamic landscape, despite the critical need for more social media classes and curriculum. Staton (2016) indicated that developing a digital marketing course is difficult as the field is dynamic, and "innovative" tools are continuously replaced.

Furthermore, Aljohani et al. (2022) highlighted the importance and time-intensive challenge of aligning the digital marketing curriculum to bridge the gap between the skills attained in the university and the corresponding skills that are mandatory in the job market. Despite universities' efforts to integrate emerging skills into curricula, a skill gap between recent graduates' abilities and industry demands is prevalent. Thus, Rohm et al. (2019) argued for the benefits of a digital-first curriculum in direct response to the digital skill gap.

In response to the digital marketing skill gap, Langan et al. (2019) researched the number of AACSB universities that offered courses in this area. Of the 529 schools in the domestic AACSB schools, (9.8 percent) did not offer a marketing program, leaving a sample size of 477 schools. Langen et al. (2019) discovered that a majority 73 percent (n = 347) of the 477 AACSB universities with marketing departments offer at least one digital marketing course and that 27 percent (n = 130) of schools with a marketing program do not offer a digital marketing course.

Based on Langen et al. (2019) analysis of data collected from 477 business school websites, the findings revealed that 347 schools (73%) offer a digital marketing course, with a range of zero to nine digital marketing course offerings. Within this range, Langen et al. (2019) concluded that a full 27% (n = 130) of schools with a marketing program do not offer a digital marketing course of any type. For those schools that do offer a digital marketing course(s), the majority (36.4%) offer a single digital marketing course (n = 174). The remaining 36.2% (n = 173) of programs offer two or more courses (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.
Number of Digital Course Offerings per Institution. Langan et al. (2019). The state of digital marketing in academia: An examination of marketing curriculum's response to digital disruption.



LEVELING UP THROUGH INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION

Social media marketing courses could be "leveled up" by integrated industry credentials. The term "level up" was strategically selected due to its definition and usage in the digital arena. In the traditional gaming or now e-gaming ecosystem, leveling up referrers advance to the next level. It is a simple, understandable way of assessing where one is in contrast with where one needs to be. "Leveling up", advancing from one level to the next (Merriam-Webster, 2022), has become a trending hashtag on Instagram and Twitter and is widely utilized in current songs and television shows. The definition is consistent with the current state of social media marketing courses. Skills gaps are still being noted by employers despite 73 percent of AACSB universities offering at least one social media course. Therefore, we must transition to the next level of teaching these skills, namely "Level Up."

Industry credentialing is not a new concept and has been utilized to demonstrate abilities in an area, product, or software proficiency for hundreds of years. Harper (2016) suggested that official certifications can be traced back almost 500 years and are prevalent in almost every country. In addition, Meyer (2019) defined industry certification as a voluntary process where individuals are assessed by an independent, third-party certifying entity using predetermined standards for knowledge, skills, and competencies. Hastie (2006) stated, "Certification is the process whereby an external organization or body validates the skill and/or knowledge of an individual as competent to practice in a particular area" (p. 4). A certification is "a designation earned by a person to assure qualification to perform a job or task" (Harper, 2016, p. 1).

An effective strategy to enhance current social or digital media courses is selecting an industry certification and integrating the same into the curriculum. A recent study by The Wharton School (2023) revealed that 94 percent of marketing and creative leaders face difficulties finding skilled professionals to fill open positions, as many digital marketing careers are highly technical. Half explained that a digital marketing certification demonstrates one's familiarity with industry tools and techniques to employers. Similarly, Staton (2015) attested that the use of certification programs improved course organization and increased students' success rate in the job market.

Spiller and Tuten (2019) explained that many marketing educators incorporate branded digital marketing certification programs into their pedagogy as a part of their continuous quest to improve marketing courses, increase the relevancy of course content, enhance experiential learning opportunities for students, and produce adequately prepared graduates. Spiller and Tuten highlighted that digital certification programs enable students to demonstrate to future employers that they possess the relevant skills needed to overcome the digital transformation challenge of today's business world. Similarly, Cowley et al. (2021) suggested that third-party certificates (that is, Google, HubSpot, Hootsuite, and so on) are emerging educational tools in marketing and digital media courses. A credential indicates that the students are proficient in a specific platform or software and may provide labor market advantages.

FOUR-STEP MODEL

The researcher purposed a four-step model to assist educators in seamlessly integrating an industry certification into their course or degree program. The subsequent sections will comprise a detailed description of these steps (see Table 1).

Table 1

Four-step Model for Integrating Digital Marketing into a Social or Digital Marketing Course

Step1	**Description**
Step 1	Investigate Certification Types/Classifications
Step 2	Selection of Best Certification and Alignment with Curriculum
Step 3	Determine Best Practices for Preparing Students
Step 4	Encourage Students to Promote/Labor Market Advantages

Step 1: Investigate Certification Types/Classifications

Professional certifications can be categorized into vendor-specific, vendor-neutral, and practical (Bishop & Fricke, 2004). Understanding the classification and function of each credential is important to ensure the best certification is selected. Vendor-specific certifications address a specific vendor's technologies and tools and validate your competency in them, while vendor-neutral certifications will validate your competency in baseline skills in security and network fundamentals. In contrast, practical certifications require the completion of specific tasks versus the general knowledge of a domain.

According to a literature review, the researcher has identified various well-known vendor-specific certifications (see Table 2).

Table 2
Vendor-specific Certifications

Certification	Description
HubSpot email and inbound marketing	Certification demonstrating expertise in a particular HubSpot products, specifically customer service and email marketing
Google Search Ads	Demonstrate mastery of building and optimizing Google Search campaigns
Google Analytics	Prove proficiency in Google Analytics 4 property for a website or an app including collecting data and recognize key measurement features
Twitter Flight School	*Twitter Flight School* offers three badges: Launch and Connect, Performance Fundamentals, and Twitter Video
Facebook Blueprint Certification	The most advanced-level program, Blueprint Certification demonstrates expertise across the Facebook family of products and services, including advertising on Instagram and Messenger.
Hootsuite Social Marketing Certification	Demonstrate expertise with essential elements of social media marketing including content planning and data analytics
YouTube Certification	*YouTube* Certified is a series of courses designed to help eligible creators and partners use advanced *YouTube* systems and tools.

Step 2: Selection of Best Certification and Alignment with Curriculum:

The selection of the best credential is difficult due to thousands of certifications claiming similar benefits (Giddens, 2022). Similarly, Spiller and Tuten (2019) attested that certification programs provide a practical, experiential learning element for marketing education. Not all certification programs are equally valuable from a pedagogical perspective. In this context, the selection of the appropriate credential is essential. Therefore, Giddens (2022) suggested that the top five certifications to provide labor market advantages to students are vendor-specific, provided by Google, Hootsuite, and HubSpot (see Table 3).

Table 3
Top Five Marketing Certifications

Top Five Certifications	Vendor
1	Google Analytics IQ Certification
2	Hootsuite Social Marketing Certification
3	Google Ads Certification
4	HubSpot Content Marketing Certification
5	Google Digital Garage: Fundamentals of Digital Marketing Certification

Giddens (2022)

Incorporating industry certification into digital marketing courses is a new trend, and considerable research on the prevalence of utilization has not been comprehensive. As seen in the literature review, Cowley et al. (2021) surveyed 80 AACSB-accredited undergraduate business schools in the United States and asked each business school to identify certified usage and preferred vendors. Cowley et al. (2021) concluded that the most frequently mentioned certifications included Google Analytics (31.3 percent), the Hootsuite platform (16.3 percent), Google Search Ads (13.8 percent), and HubSpot Social Media (10 percent). These certifications were primarily incorporated into digital marketing or social media courses. The data have been populated in Table 4.

Table 4
AACSB-accredited Undergraduate Business Schools Reporting Usage of Social Industry Certification

Vendor-based Certification	N	Percentage
Google Analytics	n = 25	31.3%
Hootsuite Platform	n = 13	16.3%
Google Search Ads	n = 11	13.8%
HubSpot	n = 8	10%
No report of certification utilization	n = 23	18%

The selected certification must be aligned with a course description and learning objectives. Herein, the researcher designed a quick guide outlining popular social and digital marketing courses at universities and appropriate certification selections (see Table 5).

Table 5
Recommended Certifications for Widely Offered Social/Digital Media Course Offerings

Common University Course Offering	Appropriate Vendor-specific Certification
Social Media Marketing Courses	Google Ads
	Twitter Flight School
	Facebook Blueprint Certification
	Hootsuite Social Marketing Certification
	YouTube Certification
Digital Marketing Courses	HubSpot Email and Inbound Marketing
	Salesforce Sales Development
Web Analytics Course	Google Analytics

Step 3: Determine Best Practices for Preparing Students

Once the certification that provides the greatest synergy to the course has been selected, the educator must decide how to prepare the students for success. Certifications such as Google and Hootsuite have comprehensive training programs on their websites for certification preparation. In a survey with 122 digital marketing faculty, Cowley et al. (2020) discovered that 89.3 percent of faculty assigned students to watch and study materials beyond the scope of a class, whereas others brought official certification preparation material into the lecture (31 percent), created their preparatory lectures (25 percent), or preparatory quizzes (7.1 percent) (see Table 6).

Table 6
Method of Certification Preparation

Preparation Method	Percentage
Vendor-created materials outside of the classroom	89.3%
Prep materials integrated into the lecture	31%
Instructor-created preparatory lecture	25%
Instructor-created preparatory quiz	7.1%

Cowley et al. (2020)

The author, Elmore-Bosonac (2024), designed and launched a 30-credit master's degree in digital marketing and integrated two industry certifications into the curriculum, Hootsuite Certification for the graduate course in social media marketing, and the Google Analytics Certification for the course in digital media analytics.

Students were prepared differently for each certification. For Hootsuite, a dual approach utilizing vendor-based preparation material in conjunction with course lectures was utilized. In 2021, nine students attempted the Hootsuite certification, and the pass rate was 88 percent. In 2022, ten students embarked on the certification with a pass rate of 90 percent (see Table 7).

Table 7
Pass Rate of Hootsuite Certification in Social Media Marketing Course with Vendor and Instructor Preparation

Year	**Pass Rate (n)**	**Percentage**
2021	n = 8 (8/9)	88%
2022	n = 9 (9/10)	90%

In contrast, in the digital media analytics course, students utilized the preparation material offered through Google for the analytics certification. In 2021, nine students were enrolled in the program and ten students in 2022. The pass rate for each year was 77 percent and 50 percent respectively. These findings raised the question of whether students' success rates could have been increased by incorporating training into the course lessons (see Table 8).

Table 8
Pass Rate of Google Analytic certification in Digital Media Analytics Course with only Vendor Preparation

Year	**Pass Rate (n)**	**Percentage**
2021	n = 7 (7/9)	77%
2022	n = 5 (5/10)	50%

While conclusions cannot be drawn from such a small sample size, it represents an area of consideration and future research. The initiative to determine best practices for preparing students for successful exam completion should be further studied. The rigor of the vendor-based certification should also be examined.

Step 4: Encourage Students to Promote / Labor Market Advantages

Research indicates that certifications minimize the knowledge gap between students and employers and facilitate various other benefits through credentialing. Half (2022) suggested that other benefits entail learning new skills, appearing more credible to recruiters and hiring managers, standing out from the competition when applying for jobs, qualifying for higher hirer-paying positions, and improving one's quality of work. A certification may give a student a labor market advantage, as determined by the researcher's decade-old research.

Elmore (2014) showcased that obtaining marketing industry credentials facilitated labor market advantages even for secondary students. In a research study of 190 employers of secondary education students (n = 190), Elmore asked employers to state their perceptions of labor market advantages for credentialed prospective employers. The mean was 2.77. These results were as follows: 2.6 percent (n = 5) selected "would definitely make me want to hire the employee," 44.5 percent (n = 85) opted for "would be looked upon as favorably when deciding to hire the employee," 30.9 percent (n = 59) selected neutral, 14.7 percent (n = 28) opted for "makes a slight difference to hiring decision," and 6.3 percent (n = 12) chose "makes no difference to the hiring decision." The mean of 2.77/5 indicated that most employers consider marketing certifications neutral or slightly favorable when hiring an employee (see Table 9).

Table 9
Labor Market Advantages of Industry Certification

Response Options	# of respondents (n = 190)	Percentage
Definitely makes me want to hire the employee	n = 5	2.6%
Looked upon as favorably when deciding to hire an employee	n = 85	44.5%
Neutral	n = 50	30.9%
Slight difference in hiring decision	n = 28	14.7%
Makes no difference to the hiring decision	n = 12	6.3%

The researcher was also interested in discovering whether hiring managers had prior knowledge of the National Retail Federation (NRF) marketing certifications, widely utilized in secondary education. Thereafter, it was discovered that only 22.5 percent (n = 43) of hiring managers had prior awareness of this marketing certification, whereas 77 percent (n = 147) had no former knowledge (Elmore, 2014) (see Table 10).

Table 10
Awareness of the NRF Marketing Certification

Response Options	# of respondents (n = 190)	Percentage
Awareness of NRF Marketing Certification	n = 43	22.5%
No Awareness of NRF Marketing Certification	n = 147	77%

Therefore, a large majority of the managers had no awareness of the NRF marketing certification, the level of rigor, or the components of the certification. This finding was interesting to the researcher because, as discussed and displayed in the data, most employers perceived this certification as favorable when making hiring decisions despite the lack of knowledge about what the certification entailed. Therefore, it can be concluded that some hiring managers, even those who know nothing about marketing credentials, still perceive them favorably when making hiring decisions.

The researcher does not recommend universities select certifications with low awareness or low impact but rather suggests revealing a finding from the research. It can be assumed that employers of postsecondary or graduate students have a broader knowledge of vendor-based certifications. Furthermore, a postsecondary or graduate student may need to be equipped with specific skills in the workplace. On the other hand, a certification for a secondary student, such as the NRF certification, may demonstrate other skills, such as baseline knowledge, work ethics, and dedication as opposed to specific vendor proficiency. Regardless, the researcher concluded that students at all levels, secondary, postsecondary, and graduate, could potentially yield benefits or labor market advantages from earned industry credentials. In this context, Goldring (2017) found that including certifications on personal branding and résumés often opened the door to interviews and signaled a student’s willingness to learn.

Educators should encourage students to market themselves and showcase these skills on their resumes and social media platforms. For example, LinkedIn is an excellent social media platform for showcasing students' experiences, expertise, and accolades. Emphasizing credential achievement and displaying the results publicly through badges is another tool for increasing students' marketability. Pernick (2023) suggested that groups must create badges to recognize users with a digital representation of skills and achievements within a system framework. Digital badges are tokens that showcase your achievements.

TOPICS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research highlighted various areas that need further investigation. Thereafter, it would be a valuable endeavor to determine best practices for preparing students for successful exam completion. As previously discussed, an educator could simply prepare students using the vendors' materials, in-class exercises, or a hybrid or combination approach.

Moreover, the researcher is interested in discovering the labor market advantage for postsecondary and graduate students for the vendor-specific certifications discussed above, including Google Ads, Google Analytics, Hootsuite, HubSpot, and so on. Labor market advantages could encompass hiring preferences and increased starting salary. Data from employees regarding perceptions of certified students for vendor-specific credentials have not been widely researched yet. Additionally, the use of digital badgers is a new concept. The examination of employer preferences for digital badges is another area of interest.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite universities' initiatives to offer courses in the digital marketing arena, a skill gap has been noted in the literature. While 73 percent of AACSB universities have at least one social or digital media course in the curriculum, skill gaps and skill deficiencies are still being reported by employers. Integrating vendor-specific industry certifications into the curriculum is one tactic that can help bridge the gap between students' skills and the industry demand. Various credentials exist in social and digital marketing; however, the selection of the most appropriate choice is contingent upon the course.

An educator can integrate a credential into a previously existing course using a four-step model—investigate certification types/classifications, selection of best certification and alignment with curriculum, determine best practices for preparing students, and encourage students to promote their accolades digitally to potentially yield labor market advantages.

Labor market advantages may also exist for students equipped with credentials. Further research has been suggested to determine the most effective methods for preparing students for earning credentials and explore the extent to which the credential will provide labor market advantages, such as hiring preference or increased salary.

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REVIEW OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK SYSTEMS FOR BUSINESS PRACTITIONERS: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF HPWS

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the high-performance work system (HPWS) framework with business practitioners as its intended audience. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of these practices and suggestions for implementation. The article explores how organizations can encourage high performance, the challenges of managing HPWS, and how to recognize outstanding HPWS team performance. We argue that for an organization to transform their business operations into an HPWS, the intrinsic value of their employees must be vital (Llyod, 2021). Additionally, an HPWS leverages and enhances employee skills, loyalty, and commitment, leading to a genuine competitive advantage for the organization.

As global competition increases and the pace of technological progress speeds up, the success among organizations will be determined by employee performance. How skilled and motivated employees are to work efficiently will matter when offering valuable services to consumers (Nkomo, Fottler, & McAfee, 2010). Organizations are faced with the pressure to improve the quality of their products without increasing their costs or raising their prices. It is essential in this situation to have employees who are creative, skilled, and motivated to have a competitive advantage over peers in the market (Cappelli, 2016; Reed, 2017).

Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, stated that organizations need to continuously engage their employees to help them become more valuable (Immelt, 2017; Krishnamoorthy, 2015). This concept that an organization's employees are transformable assets with the potential to be developed and educated challenges the traditional organizational mindset that views employees as instruments in a system that succeed or fail by executives' strategic decisions (Boyer, 2017).

According to Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y framework for employee motivation and management, Theory X assumes most human's work is innately unpleasant, thus people try to avoid work when possible (Fischer, 2009; McGregor, 1960). This framework additionally assumes that most workers are not inherently motivated, prefer minimal responsibility, and want to be told what to do rather than become leaders themselves. The traditional Theory X HRM framework is highly bureaucratic, and rule based (Lawter, Kopelman, & Prottas, 2015). Theory X has been used as a practical guide for managers since its origins during the Golden Age of workplace motivational theories (Barney, 1990). Employees under this HRM approach followed organizational rules while managers enforced them (Lawter et al., 2015). However, this approach of HRM to organizational design is now starting to be replaced with a more open and participatory style that is less authoritative (Schachter, 2017). This change is due to the slow decision-making process of the bureaucratic HRM style that did not work well in a changing and unpredictable global marketplace (Boyer, 2017). Also, the bureaucratic and authoritative HRM style limits the participation and creativity of employees in the decision-making process which could be the difference between average and excellent work performance (Boyer, 2017).

Traditional HRM systems focus on centralized power and authority, minimizing employee benefits, and reducing employee costs (Thoman & Lloyd, 2018). However, the focus of HRM systems have shifted toward building organizational trust, developing employees for organizational capability and improvement, and driving performance through robust incentives, team integration, and worker autonomy and independence (Lloyd, 2021). This shift is known as the High-Performance Work System (HPWS) framework.

According to Lloyd (2021), a High-Performance Work System aligns organizational strategy and their goals with human resource management. Lloyd (2021) describes that for an HPWS to be successful, management needs to work hard to overcome traditional administrative HR functions and commit to allowing HR to engage in efficient human resource development to improve employees' skills. Further, it is important to note that HPWS is a process imbedded in the HRM function and that HPWS is not an identical framework as High-Performance Organization (HPO), which refers to the organization itself that performs. For HRM and organizational strategies to join, practitioners need to pay attention to HRM practices, theories, and processes (Lloyd, 2021). In practice, HPWS is committed to selective hiring, providing benefits for long-term employee security, decentralized decision-making, high-results-high reward compensation, reduced status barriers, and dissemination of key information throughout the organization (Thoman & Lloyd, 2018).

One of the principles of strategic HRM is to assess how organizational performance is related to the way employees are managed. HPWS have been studied and have been found to improve employee productivity, which leads to increased organizational performance (Chaudhuri, 2009; Chow, 2012; Guthrie, Flood, Liu, MacCurtain, & Armstrong, 2011; Rasool & Nouman, 2013; Reed, 2017; Riaz & Mahmood, 2017). These organizations achieve outstanding performance by implementing the practices of using employees' skills and abilities to produce the desired outcome. These HRM practices are most effective when applied in groups as their synergistic effects on performance create greater employee effectiveness (Chaudhuri, 2009; Chow, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2011; Rasool & Nouman, 2013; Reed, 2017; Riaz & Mahmood, 2017).

This article reviews the HPWS framework to show how they enhance employees' skills, loyalty, and commitment to increasing employee effectiveness and overall organizational performance. HPWS practices are used for strategic human resource development (HRD) to create high-performing organizations (HPOs) (Adatsi, Yamamoto, & Lloyd, 2020; Appelbaum et al., 1999; HPO Center, 2022; Reed, 2017; Yamamoto, 2020). First, we start by investigating how business practitioners can encourage high performance within the High-Performance Work Systems framework. Second, we summarize important High-Performance Organization and High-Performance Work Systems processes for implementation, followed by the challenges of managing High-Performance Work Systems and how to recognize outstanding High-Performance Work Systems team performance. Finally, we conclude with implications for business practitioners.

ENCOURAGING HIGH PERFORMANCE IN HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK SYSTEMS

All the elements of HPWS in HRM practices are designed explicitly to allow the entire system to function well. The components of HPWS are human resource development and training, work design that empowers employees to use their many skills, organizational structure, human resources, and work processes (Chaudhuri, 2009; Chow, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2011; Rasool & Nouman, 2013; Riaz & Mahmood, 2017). These elements include empowerment through decentralized decision-making, selective hiring, providing benefits for long-term employee security, high-results high reward compensation, reduced status barriers, and dissemination of key information throughout the organization (Thoman & Lloyd, 2018).

The first component of HPWS is employee empowerment in the workplace. Employee-empowered work environments allow employees to be more motivated to be creative, participatory, and responsive to consumer needs rather than possessing the fear of making mistakes (Blanchard & Spencer, 2015; Boyer, 2017). For example, at Nordstrom, employees were empowered to do what they consider necessary to please customers appropriately and to satisfy customers without being restricted by rigid rules to determine what is not permitted ("Nordstrom, Inc. SWOT Analysis," 2015).

Commonly, when employee empowerment is conditional, those empowerment initiatives within organizations often fail (Amah & Ahiauzu, 2013). This is because the first instance an employee makes a mistake, their power to make critical decisions is withdrawn. It can be challenging for organizations to recognize a healthy balance between giving employees enough power to encourage initiatives and trusting them with authorities that could negatively impact business performance. However, organizations tend to pull the plug too quickly and they do not bring out the best in employees. To allow employees to make creative and sound decisions, organizations need to be patient, create broad parameters, and trust their employees (Amah & Ahiauzu, 2013).

In many organizations today, the employee empowerment initiatives as a part of HPWS have led to a work environment that relies on the power of teamwork rather than individuals (Amah & Ahiauzu, 2013; Chaudhuri, 2009; Chow, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2011; Rasool & Nouman, 2013; Riaz & Mahmood, 2017). Teamwork, of course, is hardly a new concept in business, as virtually every organization emphasizes it as its core value. Teams today do more than simply have meetings; they decide how the work should get done.

Traditionally, tasks are viewed as isolated functions, but within a team-dominated workplace, tasks are divided among groups of people who share collective responsibility; in some cases, they have the authority and power to organize tasks in any way appropriate. Work teams are interdependent and function with organizationally placed limitations on what they do and how they do it (Chaudhuri, 2009; Chow, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2011; Rasool & Nouman, 2013; Riaz & Mahmood, 2017). Nevertheless, in their level of autonomy, teams differ from traditional organizations in noticeable ways. In a well-functioning HPWS, work teams tend to be more cross-functional than segmented, meaning team members work together on tasks than work on their own (Chaudhuri, 2009; Chow, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2011; Rasool & Nouman, 2013; Riaz & Mahmood, 2017). There is usually little hierarchy within the group regardless of seniority or individual responsibility and decision-making is typically a group task, not the responsibility of a single individual (Amah & Ahiauzu, 2013). Next, we turn our focus to the characteristics of High-Performance Organizations and their connection with High-Performance Work Systems.

HIGH-PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATIONS

As described by Lloyd (2021), HPWS refers to the process that allows HRM to align its functions with organizational strategies and goals, whereas a High-Performance Organization (HPO) refers to the whole organization that is performing at a high level. Organizational study experts on HPWS report that when this concept is appropriately implemented, it creates impressive outcomes in productivity, employee morale, and customer satisfaction (Chaudhuri, 2009; Chow, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2011; Rasool & Nouman, 2013; Riaz & Mahmood, 2017). The number of organizations that have come to rely on the work team process remains relatively small (Elmuti, 1996). The issue is that more organizational leaders need to be convinced that work team processes produce high-performance organizations (HPO) and that they run against traditional organizational authoritative management practices (Callahan, Dworkin, Fort, & Schipani, 2002; HPO Center, 2022). The HPO focuses on quality of management, openness and action orientation, long-term orientation, organizational learning, and attracting and retaining high-quality employees (de Waal, 2018). Not every task in organizations lends itself to a teamwork approach. Task appropriateness needs to be assessed to see if the work that needs to be done will benefit from a team style.

While the HPWS approach at Boeing and Federal Express worked, other organizations struggled to implement HPWS and create positive results (Gehani, 1998). This is because team leaders are often not willing to delegate their authority to team members, and as a result, the teamwork does not function smoothly. Additionally, people within teams are worried about who gets credit for a given project. A negative aspect of human nature is to crave power and authority which hinders the flow of the HPWS approach (Anderson, n.d.). Self-directed work teams can function well under the proper distribution of authority within the team, but they can quickly get out of hand when team leaders become possessive of taking credit for the work the team accomplishes (Anderson, n.d.).

IMPLEMENTING HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK SYSTEMS

As Lloyd (2021) illustrates, HPWS is a continuous work process that supports HRM and an organization's strategic goals to be in alignment. As such, HPWS is a group of distinct, but interrelated HRM practices that are designed to increase employee effectiveness (Chaudhuri, 2009; Chow, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2011; Rasool & Nouman, 2013; Riaz & Mahmood, 2017). There are several factors to consider when implementing the HPWS framework successfully in organizations (Maxwell, 2009; Karlgaard & Malone, 2015; Valletta & Trump, 2014). This section will cover five factors beneficial to practitioners considering HPWS implementation. First, it is helpful to recognize that not every task is suitable for teamwork. It can be beneficial to involve employees so that, collectively, a team can decide if jobs need to be handled by a team or not.

Second, the strategic goals of the HPWS organization need to be established relative to the tasks the team will perform. To accomplish this, organizational priorities and responsibilities must be focused on the strategic aims of the organization. Additionally, objectives and progress need to be measurable, specific, and attainable (Appelbaum et al., 1999; Reed, 2017). As a result, tasks are aligned to strategic goals and thus require practical action plans.

Third, the members who are in HPWS organizations need to have clarity on their roles within the team and understand other members' responsibilities and contributions to the team's performance (Reed, 2017). It is helpful to hold regular meetings to make sure that team members understand the expectations of their roles and responsibilities. It will be beneficial to develop protocols for intervention, for instance when members are not meeting the expectations. It is helpful to encourage team members to seek help when they are having issues handling assigned responsibilities and provide support as needed.

Fourth, as in any teamwork, management of HPWS involves how to resolve conflicts best (Appelbaum et al., 1999). During work team involvement, HR should anticipate disagreements due to diversity within the team. Management should develop reasonable ways of addressing the differences among members.

Fifth, when managing HPWS, employees should be allowed to learn and acquire new knowledge and skills while they are working toward the organization's goals. When leading work teams, setting aside time for group learning and providing each member a chance to share their experiences will stimulate interest in further learning in new tasks (Appelbaum et al., 1999; Karlgaard & Malone, 2015; Maxwell, 2009; Valletta & Trump, 2014). We now shift our focus to the challenges associated with managing HPWS.

CHALLENGES TO MANAGING HPWS

There are challenging issues managing HPWS. The predominant challenges include the integration of contrasting functions of the organization, managing the cross-functional nature of the HPWS teams, social drivers of organizational culture, and a lack of comprehensive focus on skill development (Levenson, 2012; Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). A study reported that the significant barrier to the effectiveness of the HPWS approach in organizations was the organizations' policies, procedures and how it focused on the individual and not on the team performance (Chaudhuri, 2009; Chow, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2011; Rasool & Nouman, 2013; Riaz & Mahmood, 2017). This issue is complicated to overcome~~,~~ and top management needs to be committed to changing organizational barriers so that the HPWS approach can function well in the organization. The first step is to review organizational policies and rules to make sure they are compatible with the work teams' aims and goals. Then, team members should communicate candidly with senior managers about the organizational barriers that need to be worked on for HPWS to benefit the organization's strategic objectives (Maxwell, 2009; Valletta & Trump, 2014).

Another challenge to encouraging HPWS is how to efficiently reward team performance. Organizations face challenges in how to adopt proper mechanisms to reward team activities. This is a big challenge for organizations who are transitioning to a team approach as traditionally individual performance is rewarded individually. To create appropriate reward mechanisms, organizations should keep in mind that rewards can be non-monetary as well as monetary. Organizations can ask team members to provide their preferred rewards and bonuses within organizational constraints to effectively incentivize employees. Additionally, reward mechanisms should give weight to both teams and individual accomplishments appropriately (Appelbaum et al., 1999; Maxwell, 2009; Valletta & Trump, 2014).

HOW TO RECOGNIZE OUTSTANDING HPWS TEAM PERFORMANCE

One of the characteristics of an excellent manager is one's openness to give proper praise when employees have done outstanding work within the HPWS (Blanchard & Spencer, 2015). Focusing on employees' positive accomplishments rather than their shortcomings gives them motivation and encouragement to keep developing themselves. When organizations have a culture of recognizing employee achievements, the satisfaction levels of employees are considerably higher (Blanchard & Spencer, 2015). Traditional recognition programs such as attendance, safety, and length of service, are in place in most organizations. However, in the current performance-oriented marketplace, the recognition for accomplishments and productivity can have a more direct impact on organizational performance and employees' motivation to perform well in HPWS (Chapman & White, 2012; Nelson, 2012; Nelson & Blanchard, 1997).

Employee recognition does not have to be expensive in HPWS organizations. When recognition programs are implemented well, they enhance performance, increase employee morale, and build loyalty (Chapman & White, 2012; Nelson, 2012). The fact that the organization is showing appreciation toward team members who have accomplished excellent work could be as inspiring as monetary or material rewards. However, no recognition program can overcome the lack of morale and productivity loss of team members who work in a poor working environment. Similarly, a recognition program cannot cure management-related issues of the organization.

Management should not make the mistake of assuming that recognition programs will build loyalty and morale without addressing the real issues at the HPWS workplace (Chapman & White, 2012; Nelson, 2012; Nelson & Blanchard, 1997).

Additionally, some individuals may feel that the recognized employees are not deserving. There is no way to avoid some people feeling this way beyond communicating the criteria of recognition for rewards to all employees early before starting the recognition program. To get the most out of a recognition program, organizations need to spread the news in newsletters, memos, and announcements. Lastly, rewards of recognition should be related to the accomplishments that are deserving of acknowledgment. The recognition programs aim to motivate excellent performance within HPWS (Chaudhuri, 2009; Chow, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2011; Nelson & Blanchard, 1997; Rasool & Nouman, 2013; Riaz & Mahmood, 2017). Ultimately, the HPWS aims to leverage the organization's employees into a true competitive advantage (Llyod, 2021).

CONCLUSION

In the HPWS framework, employees should have autonomy that is reasonable for the performance of their tasks (Appelbaum et al., 1999). In an HPO, the authority to make decisions is spread throughout the organization. A team member's decision replaces the procedures of an organization regularly. In an HPO, the need to supervise is kept to a reasonable minimum (Nelson & Blanchard, 1997). The employees as a part of HPWS themselves become increasingly accountable for their own decisions and actions (Chaudhuri, 2009; Chow, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2011; Rasool & Nouman, 2013; Riaz & Mahmood, 2017).

Organizational research over the years has shown that employees who are trusted with autonomy in their work environment are more resourceful, productive, and responsive to consumer trends than workers who are micromanaged and supervised heavily under the traditional authoritative organizational culture. Most reports of work satisfaction such as strong loyalty, motivation, and low turnover, are noticeably higher in organizations that encourage employees to work in teams and have the individual autonomy to accomplish their work tasks proactively (Chaudhuri, 2009; Chow, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2011; Rasool & Nouman, 2013; Reed, 2017; Riaz & Mahmood, 2017; Stanford, 2015).

This article has reviewed the HPWS literature to provide insights for business practitioners who are interested in implementing these practices in their organizations. We have stressed the importance of HPWS as an integrative process of aligning HR functions to the strategic goals of the firm. Additionally, we emphasize the need for organizations wishing to utilize HPWS that the continuous development of employees is paramount. Knowledge workers are essential assets to HPWS organizations who need to be regularly cared for with positive encouragement, and recognition, and be entrusted with autonomy to maximize their work performance (Nelson & Blanchard, 1997). This focus on employee development often leads to a more motivated, more adaptable workforce, which enables the organization to achieve new heights. Organizational HRM that nurtures outstanding employee performance starts with creating an HPWS environment that uses the full potential of employees to produce an HPO that is profitable (Reed, 2017; HPO Center, 2022). As a result, business practitioners must be committed to empowering their employees to successfully apply the HPWS framework.

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IS THERE A CORRELATION BETWEEN THE BEST PLACES TO WORK FOR RANKING AND COMPANY REVENUE?

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ABSTRACT

The *Fortune 100 'Best Places to Work for'* list is a widely used publication that highlights the best companies to work for in the world. However, very little research exists to determine whether a correlation exists between a company's ranking on the list and financial performance. The study compared a company's ranking on the list and their financial performance measured in Revenue in 2022. Revenues were utilized because it was easily attainable and was not reduced with expenses or depreciation. The researcher found a small correlation between the ranking and Revenues (rho=-.047, n=100, p=.640), but the correlation was not significant to show a strong connection.

INTRODUCTION

The *Fortune 100* list of 'Best Companies to Work for' is a survey that has been administered for the past 30 years. The magazine ranks companies based upon whether their employees feel that their workplace is a great place to work and helps predict employee retention, agility, and overall business success ('*Methodology for Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work for*', 2023).

To be eligible to be on the list, a company must have at least 1,000 employees and not be a governmental organization. *Fortune* uses a proprietary trust index survey that measures the level of trust in managers, between colleagues, and loyalty to the company. The survey involves 60 Likert scale questions and 2 open-ended questions and is administered throughout the company. *Fortune* also considers a company's programs and strategy. After the data are collected and analyzed, the companies are evaluated and placed on the list in terms of their overall scores ('*Methodology for Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work for*', 2023).

Being on the *Fortune 100* list indicates a commitment of organizations to employees' well-being. Organizations that focus on their employees gain trust and loyalty in the organization. While studies show that trust and loyalty are correlated to a company's bottom line in terms of increased retention, no research exists that obtaining a higher ranking of the 'Best Places to Work for' list is correlated to better revenue performance.

The purpose of this study is to see whether a correlation between the 'Best Places to Work for' ranking and company revenues exists. The researcher used revenue as a financial measure because it does not include items like depreciation. The intent is to see whether being ranked higher or lower on the list impacts financial performance measured by revenue.

LITERATURE

The researcher could not find any study that evaluated the connection between the 'Best Places to Work for' and company revenue. However, literature exists concerning organizational culture and its impact on various parts of an organization.

Pilav and Jatić (2017) investigated the correlation between the type of organizational culture and patient satisfaction in a healthcare organization. Although in a healthcare environment, the study showed the importance of organizational culture on performance. In primary health care centers (PHC), a hierarchical culture was found to be the dominant culture the PHC center A. In PHC center B, a market culture was found to be the dominant culture. The researchers found a statistically significant result (t-test) in overall patient satisfaction in health care centers with a hierarchical culture. A clan culture was the second most effective in terms of patient satisfaction. A clan culture is an environment that focuses on a family-like environment with everyone being perceived as equal. Having an optimal organizational culture impacts patient satisfaction ultimately impacting the bottom line with returning patients.

Trauma can have an impact on company culture. Keesler (2019) researched organizations that support individuals with intellectual and develop-mental disabilities (IDD). Leaders were challenged to maintain a viable workforce of direct support professionals (DSP). DSP help IDD with their daily living, goal development and obtainment, and community inclusion in the organization. Kessler evaluated whether organizational culture based on trauma-informed care promoted DSP retention through increased satisfaction and decreased fatigue. The study provided preliminary evidence that a trauma-informed culture helps increase worker satisfaction and reduce fatigue.

The type of leadership utilized in an organization also has an impact on culture. Pasha and Rehman (2020) attempted to ascertain the relationship of the moderating role of organizational culture between transformational leadership and meaningful work and that of psychological empowerment and meaningful work. The researcher found a strong correlation between meaningful work, psychological empowerment, and leadership. Generalizing, male leaders should arrange their teams by practicing transformational style of leadership. Transformational leaders inspire their subordinates to work towards a goal. Additionally, leaders need to psychologically empower their subordinates to optimize employee buy-in and performance.

Employer and employee branding impact employee satisfaction with organizational culture. Increased satisfaction impacts employee and financial performance. Müceldili, Tatar, and Erdir (2021) studied the impact of employee branding on current employee behaviors. Furthermore, the researchers examined the antecedents and consequences of employer branding. Utilizing structural equation modeling and data from white collar workers, the study found that supportive organizational culture is positively associated with employer branding. Additionally, employer branding positively relates to employees' intention to stay at the organization and partially mediates the relationship between supportive organizational culture and intention to stay.

Employee burnout has a detrimental impact on employee retention and performance. Burns, Pattani, Lorens, Straus, and Hawker (2021) examined the impact of organizational culture on physicians' professional fulfillment and burnout. The researchers found professional fulfillment was associated with satisfaction with efforts to create a collegial environment and agreement that colleagues were respectful. Lower professional fulfillment was associated with higher burnout of physicians. Additionally, lower confidence to address unprofessional actions led to higher burnout. Organizational culture impacts professional fulfillment and burnout for physicians. The researchers recommend implementing strategies that promote inclusivity, respect, and ways to report unprofessional behaviors.

To have consistent employee and financial performance, employees must be committed to an organization. Giac Tri, Viet Thanh, and Thap (2022) investigated organizational culture in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. The researchers found evidence that some aspects of corporate culture have positive impacts on employee commitment to an organization. The factors included encouraging communication within the organization, the exchange of mutually supportive information between departments and divisions and creating favorable conditions to complete the work of the organization. These factors are predictive and improve engagement thus improve commitment to the organization.

To have a strong workforce, industry and educational institutions must have a strong working relationship. Lv Y and Shouse (2022) examined the connection of Chinese vocational educational institutions to create high quality human capital to supply workers to Chinese industry. The researchers were concerned about weak organizational culture and occupational commitment within vocational institutions that may threaten the production of quality graduates and teachers. Ly Y and Shouse found that organizational cultural positively influences industry-university cooperative behavior. The culture was created through the construction of strong occupational commitment and job involvement between the vocational institutions and industry partners.

Employee behavior and organizational culture can have an impact on employee performance. Pandey and Deepti (2022) studied the impact of organizational culture on employee behavior in a research and development organization. Researchers found that research and development organizations have a mixture of technical and bureaucratic cultures. There appears to be a progressive association between organizational culture and employee behavior that impacts employees' job performance. Additionally, the study helped organizations understand the causes of organizational and employee performance deficiencies, effectiveness of motivational methods used, and the means to correct negative employee behavior. The authors also explained that the study provided insight into professional perception, and team-oriented cooperation can boost employee relationships (behavior) and performance.

Employees feeling safe in the workplace can impact performance. Silcox, Ley, and Sutliff, (2022) investigated the best practices to improve safety performance and culture within the Utah Valley University (UVU) School of Aviation Science's flight training program. Anecdotally, the flight department personnel have observed an underreporting of issues involving safety within the functions of maintenance and flight operations. The researchers wanted to measure whether there was a sufficient level of understanding between the impact that safety culture has on overall safety performance levels. More specifically, the study intended to measure how a safety culture impacts flight operations and the actions can be taken to improve overall safety performance. The researchers found that a safety culture was essential to effective a safety program deployment. Key safety and cultural elements included effective communication, a strong relationship between functional roles, being professional, providing a robust training program, improved safety procedure documentation, and awareness of safety procedures.

METHODS

The data were collected by visiting the Fortune 100 'Best Places to Work for' website (https://fortune.com/ranking/best-companies/) and recording the 100 best places to work. Using the Security and Exchange Commission's (SEC) website (http://sec.gov), the researcher recorded each company's revenue listed in their 10K report for 2022.

After all the data were obtained, the researchers utilized SPSS 24.0 to evaluate the data. More specifically, a Spearman correlation analysis was used. The Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient allows researchers to measure the relationship between ordinal and continuous variables. Additionally, the researchers used the following guidelines to determine the strength of the relationships (Cohen, 1988, pp.79-81):

Table 1: Guidelines for Interpreting Correlations

Small correlation:	rho=.10 to .29
Medium correlation	rho=.30-.49
Large correlation	rho=.50-1.0

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample size was 100, the exact number of companies in the Fortune 100 ‘Best places to work for’ list. The (N) of usable cases was 100 companies.

Table 2 outlines the descriptive statistics for the study. The revenues of the company range from a low of $1.7 million to a high of $156 billion with a standard deviation of $30 billion. Because the company ranking is ordinal, the descriptive statistics for the rankings are not useful.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ranking	100	1	100	50.50	29.011
Revenues (millions)	100	.00170	156.59500	18.93026	30.3986
Valid N (listwise)	100				

Using the Spearman coefficient, the relationship between the ranking on the *Fortune 100* list and revenues were analyzed. As noted in Table 3, there was a small correlation between the two variables, rho=-.047, n=100, p=.640. The coefficient of determination was 0.002209 or .2209 percent. The correlation between the two variables was very small.

Table 3 Correlations

			Ranking	Revenues (millions)
Spearman's rho	Ranking	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.047
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.640
		N	100	100
	Revenues (millions)	Correlation Coefficient	-.047	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.640	.
		N	100	100

As noted above, there is a very small correlation between the ranking on the *Fortune 100* ‘Best Places to Work for’ list and the revenue of the organization. Placement on the list appears not to have much impact on revenues.

The researcher was surprised by the outcome. Theoretically, a higher place on the list indicates a happier, engaged workforce. Workers are having their workplace expectations met in terms of salary and benefits. Although not the only determinants of employee happiness and engagement, meeting the basic hygiene factors are important for employees. Organizational culture certainly plays a role in the overall ranking, the researcher excepted a higher ranking would have a great impact on revenues. In fact, the opposite appears to be true. The relationship was inverse in nature.

It appears that the determinants of the *Fortune 100* list have little impact on company revenues. While trust and loyalty are certainly something organizations should aspire to, it has very little impact on revenues. Increasing revenues may not be the underlining intent of becoming a 'Best Place to Work for'. Therefore, companies should not abandon their efforts to improve their placement on the *Fortune 100* list.

Because the study only evaluates the 'Best Place to Work for' in one year, a study could be conducted longitudinally comparing revenues over multiple years. The additional years of revenues and ranking may show a stronger relationship. A researcher could use another financial measure as a means of comparison. Using traditional financial measurements such as profit, earnings-per-share or return-on-investment may yield different results. Large and small companies by their mere size and revenues may not provide a true correlation between 'Best Place to Work for' and revenues. The size of the overall revenues may distort the outcome.

Several popular business publications rank employee workplaces. A future study could involve comparing other publications' rankings and financial returns. Components could be extracted from various lists and compared with financial data. Collectively, more specific components that impact the financial performance of firms may be developed.

Placement on the 'Best Place to Work for' list has little correlation with financial performance in terms of revenue. Companies that place emphasis on improving workplace conditions, benefits, and other employee related benefits are not guaranteed higher revenues. Conversely, companies lower on the list are not doomed to lower revenues. More research is needed to find a better link between organizational culture and financial performance.

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