

An Empirical Study on Employee Engagement at National Cement Share Company in Dire Dawa Administration, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Employee engagement is a persistent, positive, affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by high levels of activation and pleasure. In engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. An “engaged employee” is one who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about his or her work, and thus will act in a way that furthers their organization’s interests. Engaged employees have much smoother relationship with their superiors compared to the disengaged ones. They are more focused on company’s profitability rather than their own personal goals. These employees show a great degree of organizational citizenship. It is only an engaged employee who is intellectually and emotionally bound with the organization, feels passionately about its goals and is committed towards its values. In times of diminishing loyalty, employee engagement is a powerful retention strategy. This research article focuses on the physical, emotional and cognitive engagement levels of employees. The various contributing factors of higher engagement are also analyzed in this research paper. It also discusses the employee engagement at National Cement Share Company in Dire Dawa Administration, Ethiopia and the relationship between employee engagement and productivity. Further, appropriate strategies are suggested for engaging employees the most.

Keywords: Career, Care, Competence, Commitment, Effective Communication, Empowerment, Involvement and Organizational Citizenship, National Cement Share Company Dire Dawa

DOI: 10.7176/EJBM/11-10-01

Publication date: April 30th 2019

1. A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Employee engagement is also called work engagement or worker engagement. An “engaged employee” is one who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about his or her work, and thus will act in a way that furthers their organization’s interests. Employee engagement refers to cooperation between employees and organization where everyone works together to achieve goals of the organization and of the employees as well. The engaged employees are more focused on company’s profitability rather than their own personal goals. They always spread positive messages and try to make the working environment more congenial. These employees show a great degree of organizational citizenship.

Macey and Schneider (2008) engagement when it is conceptualized as positive attachment to the larger organizational entity and measured as a willingness to exert energy in support of the organization, to feel pride as an organizational member, and to have personal attachment to organization. Lodahl and Kejner (1965) define job involvement as “the degree to which a person’s work performance affects his self-esteem”. They also argue that employees who are highly concerned with their jobs also reveal high involvement in their organizations. Kanungo (1982) identified different explanation of job involvement while studying the relationship of job involvement to numerous variables, including job characteristics, performance, turnover, and absenteeism. Locke (1976) Job - satisfaction is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or experience. It is positively related to organizational commitment, job involvement, organizational citizenship behavior and mental health.

Rana (2015 as cited in Anuradha and Henarath, 2017) presents a conceptual model by analyzing the relationships between employee engagement and high involvement work practices (HIWPs). HIWPs proposed by (ibid) consist of four main attributes: (1) power –involve employees in decision making process (2) information –share information among employees (3) reward –employees are rewarded and given recognition for their strong performance and (4) knowledge -essential training and development. Their study is a theoretical groundwork for an empirical test by researcher.

The purpose of this study is to help employees discover their true passion in their work, which results in doing the best job they possibly can and raising their level of engagement and performance. Most organizations today realize that a “satisfied” employee is not necessarily the “best” employee in terms of loyalty and productivity. It is only an engaged employee’, who is intellectually and emotionally bound with the organization, feels passionately about its goals and is committed towards its values. In times of diminishing loyalty, employee engagement is a powerful retention strategy. Engagement is about motivating employees to do their best. Virtual work practices being the order of the day, one of the greatest challenges for global organizations has been

engaging a dispersed workforce. As organizations globalize and become more dependent on technology in a virtual working environment, there is a need to connect and engage with employees to provide them with an organizational “identity”.

Some contributing factors of higher employee engagement are:

- Understanding of corporate goals.
- Understanding of job and how it contributes to overall corporate goals.
- Clear communication of goals, expectations, directions
- Learning and Development opportunity.
- Pride in organization
- Employee involvement in decision-making.
- Working Environment

Research has proven that wholly engaged employees’ exhibit:

- Higher self-motivation
- Confidence to express new ideas.
- Higher productivity
- Higher levels of customer approval and service quality
- Reliability
- Organizational Loyalty
- Lower absenteeism

2. CS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: CAREER, COMPETENCE AND CARE

- **Career:** The opportunity to grow career through promotions, rotations and significant assignments is the most important need of employees. If the company and its managers spend meaningful and genuine time in helping employees grow their careers - employees will definitely feel engaged. In a growth market full of opportunities you cannot, in any case, keep employees arrested. However, if you truly invest in careers of your employees they will stay engaged for the time they are with you - breeding enthusiasm and good will.
- **Competence:** While career is about the actual growth, competence is about the ability to grow. Opportunities to learn and apply the learning in real life tasks grow competence. And most employees are looking for competence-boosting opportunities. They would like to stretch, learn and improve as long as they feel they are growing marketable skills. Employees who know that their current jobs are helping them become competent for future jobs will stay engaged.
- **Care:** Caring is a fine art that requires managers to be sensitive, empathetic and spontaneous. Caring is experienced by the small day-to-day gestures of managers and not by grand policies of the company. Caring is a culture that good companies foster through a set of sensitive managers who balance tasks well with relationships. Incidentally, sometimes fun and food-based entertainment helps express caring. Thus entertainment is perhaps 5% of engagement and genuine caring deepens engagement.

Company Background

National Cement, formerly known as Dire Dawa Cement and Lime Factory, is the first cement plant in the country, established in 1936. The company was transferred to private investors in 2005 after which its production capacity was significantly increased and a new green field cement plant has been established with an investment of around 2 Billion ETB (100 Million USD). The new state of the art plant which has been constructed by National Cement is built and operated to world class design and technological standards. The facility has the capacity to produce around 45,000 quintals of cement per day and incorporates the development of quarries associated with producing the main raw materials for this operation. The location of the development is near the communities of Dire Dawa Administration & Somali Regional state.

VISION

“To be a world class company, trustworthy of its shareholders and customers, pride to its employees and business partners, and make a difference in our country’s development aspirations”.

MISSION

“Our mission is to create and maximize wealth to our shareholders by producing and distributing cement and related construction materials which meet and exceed our customers’ quality and service delivery requirements at a competitive price”.

3. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Kahn (1990) conceptualized personal engagement as the harnessing of organization member’s selves to their work roles: in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances. Thus, engaged employees put much effort into their work because they identify with it.

According to Kahn (1990) a dynamic, dialectical relationship exists between the person who drives personal energies (physical, cognitive and emotional) into his or her work role on the one hand, and the work role that allows this person to express him or herself on the other hand.

Inspired by the work of Kahn (1990), Rothbard (2001) took a slightly different perspective and defined engagement as a two-dimensional motivational construct that includes attention (the cognitive availability and the amount of time one spends thinking about a role) and absorption (the intensity of one's focus on a role).

On similar lines as Kahn (1990), Robinson et al. (2004) consider work engagement as a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values. They opine that an engaged employee is aware of the business context, works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. Engagement is a two-way relationship between employer and employee. It overlaps with commitment and organizational citizenship behavior, but it is two-way relationship and is "one step up" from commitment.

Work Engagement comprises three dimensions, namely a physical component (being physically involved in a task and showing vigour), a cognitive component (being alert at work and experiencing absorption and involvement), and an emotional component (being connected to one's job/others while working and showing dedication).

Job satisfaction, a widely researched construct, is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Locke & Henne, 1986). Although there may be room for satisfaction within the engagement construct, engagement connotes activation, whereas satisfaction connotes satiation (Erickson, 2005). In addition, although "satisfaction" surveys that ask employees to describe their work conditions may be relevant for assessing the conditions that provide for engagement (state and/or behavioral), they do not directly tap engagement.

Many companies in Ethiopia recognize the relationship between engagement and productivity and measures to address the problems are, why the young employees in Ethiopia plan to leave are fear, job stress, a sense of unfair pay, a bleak or unknown future and for an innovative workplace where they can contribute ideas and make decisions. A large proportion, however, is yet to understand the extent of the challenge. National Cement Share Companies has employee engagement challenges which are directly impacting the productivity of its workforce. The leading global performance improvement, best practices companies can involve the sustained use of incentives, rewards and recognition programs combined with professional communication, education and measurement of performance. With this regard "National Cement Share Companies in Dire Dawa deploying only some (and in some cases none) of these techniques, low productivity, high absenteeism, and high staff attrition rates are widespread".

There are two groups of protagonists — line managers and individuals in the team. A company's programs should assist individuals to commit to improvement objectives publicly and measure their progress in real-time. The premise is that when such commitments are publicly visible in an online environment, a much higher percentage of individuals are motivated to act and hence the all-round improvement in performance is significantly greater. The old adage that people do not leave their company, they leave their manager is as true today as ever. Therefore, the focus should be on the ability of line managers to engage with their team

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the physical, emotional and cognitive engagement levels of employees in the organization.
- To ascertain the various contributing factors of higher employee engagement.
- To study the linkage between employee engagement and productivity.

5. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 0: There is no significant relationship between age of the respondents and their involvement in the decision making process.

Hypothesis 1: There is significant relationship between age of the respondents and their involvement in the decision making process.

Hypothesis 0: There is no significant relationship between experience of the respondents and their views on fair and objective promotion policy in the organization.

Hypothesis 1: There is significant relationship between experience of the respondents and their views on fair and objective promotion policy in the organization.

6. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kahn, (1990) defined personal engagement as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active full role performances".

According to Kahn, people can use varying degrees of their selves, physically, cognitively, and emotionally,

in the work they perform. It seems that the more people draw on their selves to perform their roles the more stirring their performances. The individuals who are engaged become physically involved in tasks, are cognitively vigilant, and become connected to others in the service of work they are doing.

Maslach et al., (2001) defined employee engagement as “a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by high levels of activation and pleasure”

Harter et al., (2004) say that “in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.

Fleming et al., (2005) have stated that the outcomes of employee engagement are advocated to be exactly what most organizations are seeking: employees who are more productive, profitable, safer, healthier, less likely to turnover, less likely to be absent, and more willing to engage in discretionary efforts.

Saks, (2006) defined employee engagement as “a distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance”.

Wagner and Harter, (2006) feel that engaged employees average higher customer satisfaction ratings and generate increased revenue.

Czarnowsky, (2008) says that employees who are mentally and emotionally invested in their work and in contributing to their employer’s success” are defined as engaged. Psychological state engagement is defined as an antecedent to behavioral engagement encompassing the constructs of satisfaction, involvement, commitment, and empowerment.

Czarnowsky and Ketter, (2008) suggest a direct employee engagement–profit linkage. It is not surprising that corporate executives are consistently ranking the development of an engaged work-force as an organizational priority.

Macey and Schneider (2008) feel that as professional societies, consulting groups, and organizations embrace the employee engagement concept, drawn to its potential to solve intractable problems, two major challenges have surfaced. The first challenge revolves around what employee engagement is and how it should be defined. Questions are being asked about whether the concept of engagement is just a repackaging of employee satisfaction and commitment, or whether companies should seek active displays of engagement as part of their pursuit of organizational outcomes. Unfortunately, numerous consulting firms who claim to have developed interventions that aid organizations in creating employee engagement lack even a working definition of the concept, referring to engagement only as a “persistent positive state”

Howard and Foster (2009) view employee engagement as a critical tool in talent management that does not only fortify the competitiveness of the firm but also, enhance the organizational image because it helps to reduce employee attrition rate in a business firm. The implications are that, engaged employees either directly or indirectly project a positive image of their organization because their commitment portrays an impression of a responsible company.

Stone et al, (2009) feel that engaged employees have much smoother relationship with their superiors compared to the disengaged ones.

Markos and Sridevi, (2010) have stated that there is a paradigm shift in recent times towards development of casual models that help to better explain employee engagement in modern organizational setting. It is believed that this would assist to create appropriate linkage between theory and practice.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this thesis is to empirically test employee engagement; for this reason, we thought that a quantitative approach would have best answered to the research question. Since “*theory cannot be generated without data, and data cannot be collected without a theoretical framework*” (Swartz, Money, Remenyi, & Williams, 1998), a strong theoretical background supports the empirical research in this thesis. In a good work there should be a balance between theory and empirical research.

7.1 Research Design: Descriptive research design is adopted for the study. Descriptive research is a fact finding enquiry or investigation. Survey method is used for data collection.

7.2 Sampling Technique: Simple random sampling technique is used for selecting the sample size of 150 respondents from the population of around 700 employees at Dire Dawa National Cement Share Company in Dire Dawa Administration, Ethiopia. In this sampling method, every unit in the population has an equal chance of inclusion in the sample and each one of the possible samples has the same probability of being selected.

7.3 Data Collection Method: Primary data is collected directly from the 150 sample respondents through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of dichotomous, multiple choice and closed end questions.

7.4 Limitations of the Study

- The findings of this study are based on the views of 150 sample respondents. Hence, they are to be carefully considered for generalization.
- The inferences drawn are subjected to bias and prejudice of the respondents.
- The accuracy of findings is limited by the accuracy of data collected and statistical tools used for data analysis.
- The accuracy of findings is constrained by sampling and non-sampling errors

8. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 8.1: Respondents' views on their Engagement Level in the Organization

Engagement Level	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Std. Devi	Mean Score
Physical engagement							
I work with intensity on my job	0	21	16	79	34	.935	3.84
I exert my full effort to my job	0	26	36	56	32	1.007	3.63
I strive as hard as I can to complete my job	0	11	26	49	64	.942	4.11
Emotional engagement							
I am enthusiastic in my job	0	16	36	74	24	.863	3.71
I am proud of my job	11	19	38	58	24	1.126	3.43
I feel positive about my job.	0	11	43	71	25	.825	3.73
I am excited about my job	11	21	38	58	22	1.123	3.39
Cognitive engagement							
I know what is expected of me at work	0	12	32	75	31	.847	3.83
I focus a great deal of attention on my job	0	10	30	77	33	.824	3.89
I am fully absorbed by my job	11	28	34	51	26	1.182	3.35
I concentrate on my job	0	10	30	77	33	.824	3.89

Table 8.2: Respondents' Views on Feedback and Suggestions Received from their Superiors about Work Progress

S. No	Feedback & Suggestions	Weight	No of Respondents	Percent	Mean Score
1	Always	5	28	18.7	3.90
2	Very Often	4	78	52	
3	Sometimes	3	35	23.3	
4	Seldom	2	9	6.0	
5	Never	1	0	0	
Total			150	100	

Table 8.3: Respondents' Views on Learning and Development Opportunities Available in the Organization

S. No	Learning & Development	Weight	No of Respondents	Percent	Mean Score
1	To a Great Extent	4	24	16.0	2.77
2	To a Moderate Extent	3	72	48.0	
3	To Some Extent	2	50	33.3	
4	Not at All	1	4	2.7	
Total			150	100	

Table 8.4: Respondents' Views on Clear Communication of Goals and Directions from Their Superiors

S. No	Clarity of Communication	Weight	No of Respondents	Percent	Mean Score
1	Always	5	28	29.3	3.89
2	Very Often	4	78	52.0	
3	Sometimes	3	44	29.3	
4	Seldom	2	0	0	
5	Never	1	0	0	
Total			150	100	

Table 8.5: Respondents' Views on Fair and Objective Promotion Policy in the Organization

S. No	Opinion	Weight	No of Respondents	Percent	Mean Score
1	To a Great Extent	4	35	23.3	2.72
2	To a Moderate Extent	3	38	25.3	
3	To Some Extent	2	77	51.3	
4	Not at All	1	0	0	
Total			150	100	

Table 8.6: Respondents' Views on Working Environment

S. No	Working Environment	Weight	No of Respondents	Percent	Mean Score
1	Highly Favorable	4	82	54.7	3.45
2	Favorable	3	56	37.3	
3	Unfavorable	2	10	6.7	
4	Highly Unfavorable	1	2	1.3	
Total			150	100	

Table 8.7: Respondents' Views on Understanding of Job and Corporate Goals

S. No	Opinion	Weight	No. of Respondents	Percent	Mean Score
1	Always	5	47	31.3	4.22
2	Very Often	4	89	59.3	
3	Sometimes	3	14	9.3	
4	Seldom	2	0	0	
5	Never	1	0	0	
Total			150	100	

Table 8.8: Respondents' Views on their Involvement in the Decision Making Process

S. No	Opinion	Weight	No of Respondents	Percent	Mean Score
1	Always	5	75	50.0	4.19
2	Very Often	4	28	18.7	
3	Sometimes	3	47	31.3	
4	Seldom	2	0	0	
5	Never	1	0	0	
Total			150	100	

Hypothesis Testing: Chi square test is applied for testing of hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between age of the respondents and their involvement in the decision making process.

Table 8.9: Relationship between Age of the Respondents and Their Involvement in the Decision Making Process

Observed Frequency

Involvement / Age	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	No. of Respondents
20 – 30 years	9	5	34	48
31-40 years	36	13	3	52
Above 40 years	30	10	10	50
Total	75	28	47	150

Expected Frequency

Involvement / Age	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	No. of Respondents
20 – 30 years	9	7	32	48
31-40 years	30	16	6	52
Above 40 years	30	5	15	50
Total	69	28	53	150

Calculation

O	E	(O-E)	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
9	9	0	0	0
5	7	-2	4	0.57
34	32	2	4	0.125
36	30	-6	36	1.2
13	16	-3	9	0.56
3	6	-3	9	1.5
30	30	0	0	0
10	5	5	25	5.0
10	15	-5	25	1.67
				$\sum(O-E)^2/E = 0.958$

Inference: Since calculated value 0.958 is less than the table value 9.49, hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant relationship between age of the respondents and their involvement in the decision making process

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between experience of the respondents and their views on fair and objective promotion policy in the organization.

Table 8.10: Relationship between Experience of the Respondents and Their Views on Fair and Objective Promotion Policy in the Organization.

Observed Frequency

Fair & Objective Promotion/ Experience	To a Great Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To Some Extent	Total
Below 5 years	8	12	47	67
5-10 years	6	9	14	29
Above 10 years	21	17	16	54
Total	35	38	77	150

Expected Frequency

Fair & Objective Promotion/ Experience	To a Great Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To Some Extent	Total
Below 5 years	12	16	43	71
5-10 years	6	12	16	34
Above 10 years	18	15	12	45
Total	36	43	71	150

Calculation: Observed - Expected

O	E	(O-E)	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
8	12	-4	16	1.33
12	16	-4	16	1.0
47	43	4	16	0.37
6	6	0	0	0
9	12	-3	9	0.75
14	16	-2	4	0.25
21	18	3	9	0.5
17	15	2	4	0.266
16	12	4	16	1.33
$\Sigma(O-E)^2/E = 0.644$				

Inference: Since the calculated value 0.644 is less than the table value 9.49, hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant relationship between experience of the respondents and their views on fair and objective promotion policy in the organization.

9. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 60% of the respondents have stated that they are aware of what is expected from them at work.
- 77% of the respondents agree that they work with intensity and strive as hard as they can to complete their job.
- 74% of the respondents are enthusiastic and feel positive about their job.
- 76% of the respondents agree that they know what is expected of them at work.
- 78% of the respondents focus a great deal of attention and concentration on their job.
- 52% of the respondents have stated that they very often receive feedback and suggestions from their superiors about work progress.
- 48% of the respondents feel that learning and development opportunities are available in their organization only to a moderate extent. Another 33% of them think that learning and development opportunities are available only to some extent.
- 52% of the respondents have stated that they very often receive clear directions and communication from their superiors about clarity of goals.
- 51% of the respondents feel that the promotion policy of their organization is fair and objective only to some extent.
- 55% of the respondents feel that the working environment is highly favourable and conducive to work.
- 59% of the respondents have stated that they very often have a clear understanding of their job and corporate goals.
- 50% of the respondents have stated that they are always involved in the decision making process. However, 31% of them feel that they are sometimes involved in the decision making process, and not always.
- There is no significant relationship between age of the respondents and their involvement in the decision making process.
- There is no significant relationship between experience of the respondents and their views on fair and objective promotion policy in the organization.

10. INFERENCES/CONCLUSIONS

Physical engagement level of the respondents is higher than their emotional and cognitive levels of engagement. It is clear from the study that only 16% of the respondents feel that learning and development opportunities are available in their organization to a great extent. Hence, learning and development opportunities need to be made available to all the employees. Since 51% of the respondents feel that the promotion policy of their organization is fair and objective only to some extent, the management has to ensure transparent and objective promotion policy and it should be made known to all the employees. Nearly one third of the respondents think that they are not fully involved in the decision making process. Employee empowerment is essential for employee engagement. If employees are involved in the decision making process, they feel committed to work and strive as hard as they can to achieve the organizational objectives.

11. STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING EMPLOYEES THE MOST

- **Link Engagement Efforts to High Performance:** Employee engagement is not about employee satisfaction. Engagement efforts have to unlock employee potential to drive high performance. Employee satisfaction will be an outcome of a great culture, but it should not be the goal.
- **Top Management Support:** Senior leaders must demonstrate support for an engaged culture by personally living their organization's values. Employees are watching everything the leaders do. Leaders have to practice what they preach.
- **Engage the First Line Managers:** The old adage, "employees join great organizations but quit bad managers" is true. Research shows the key driver of engagement is the relationship between an employee and his direct manager. If a line manager is disengaged, his employees are four times more likely to be disengaged.
- **Focus on Effective Communication:** Successful leaders recognize the power of an effective communication plan. It should be built on clarity, consistency and transparency. Organizations have to learn how to leverage the various communication media available to them, especially social media, and how to tailor communications to reach different generations. There can be frequent meetings and discussions between superiors and sub-ordinates relating to work and non-work related problems. The superiors can empathize with their sub-ordinates for an effective two-way communication. They have to communicate clear goals and expectations to their employees.
- **Individualize Engagement Programs:** Today's leaders must tailor everything, including programs their communication approaches, rewards and recognition, and training and development programs to the unique motivational drivers of each employee. It is no longer "treat people the way you want to be treated." The new mantra is "treat people the way they want to be treated."
- **Create a Motivational Culture:** To create motivational cultures, leaders need to understand the different intrinsic motivational drivers of their employees. A key engagement driver is that leaders showing empathy towards their employees. Employees will strive to work as hard as they can when they know leaders care about them as people.
- **Create Feedback Mechanisms:** Organizations need to ask employees what they think. Employee engagement surveys are a great tool for that. It's then essential to use the feedback you receive productively to assure employees that you have heard them. Employees are no different than leadership—they want to work for a winning team. Leaders need to tell their employees where the organization is headed, how it is performing and where they fit in.
- **Reinforce and Reward the Achievement:** It's not enough to simply communicate your business goals and measure employees' progress against them. It's important to recognize, and if necessary reward, the achievement of goals, as this encourages and engages your employees. Employees are incredibly motivated by achievement, not by money. Money can disengage employees if they perceive unfairness in compensation.
- **Matching Jobs with Employees' Behaviours and Traits:** Many companies are hiring the wrong behaviors and traits to succeed in their culture. Although we place much emphasis on education and skills, people generally succeed or fail because of their behaviors and traits. It all begins with selection of the right person for the right job.
- **Encourage innovation:** Engaged employees are innovative. They're always looking for a better way.
- **Empowerment:** Empowerment is the ability to make decisions within the work environment without having to get prior approval. Empowered employees feel ownership for their jobs and their roles in them.

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