Leadership Communication as a Strategic Resource for Psychological Well-Being

BITARA
Volume 9, Issue 1, 2026: 126-137
© The Author(s) 2026
e-ISSN: 2600-9080
http://www.bitarajournal.com
Received: 6 January 2026
Accepted: 5 February 2026
Published: 4 March 2026

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Abstract

In the context of contemporary organisations increasingly characterized by high job intensity, environmental uncertainty and increasing psychosocial demands, employees' psychological well-being has emerged as a strategic issue critical to organizational sustainability. Although discussions on well-being often focus on individual interventions, the role of leadership communication as an organizational strategic resource is still conceptually under-elaborated. This paper presented that leadership communication functions as a key social-psychological mechanism that shapes employees' emotional experiences, perceptions of organizational support and coping capacity against job stress. Based on a synthesis of interdisciplinary literature, this discussion presents a conceptual framework that explains how clear and meaning-oriented communication practices can buffer the negative effects of job demands, reduce emotional exhaustion and foster psychological safety. Theoretically, this paper positions psychological well-being not simply as a by-product of effective leadership, but as a strategic mediating mechanism that links leadership communication with work engagement, performance and organizational resilience. The implication is that high-quality leadership communication should be understood as a core organizational capability that contributes to long-term effectiveness by strengthening employees' psychological well-being.

Kata Kunci: leader communication, employee well-being, psychological well-being

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Cite This Article:
Nur Izzaty Mohamad, Abdullah Sanusi Othman & Nabilah Mohammad Yusoff. (2026). Leadership Communication as a Strategic Resource for Psychological Well-Being. *BITARA International Journal of Civilizational Studies and Human Sciences* 9(1): 126-137.

INTRODUCTION

Job stress has become a persistent and systemic organisational problem, especially in highly competitive and performance-oriented work environments (Chen et al., 2022; Conceoção & Palma-Moreira, 2025; Dey & Bhattacharjee, 2026). While moderate levels of stress can increase motivation and task focus, there is extensive empirical evidence that chronic and unmanaged job stress can contribute to far more negative outcomes than benefits (Davies, 2022;

Aguilar Velasco & Wald, 2025; Dey & Bhattacharjee, 2026). Prolonged exposure to excessive job demands is strongly associated with anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion and burnout, which collectively erode employee engagement, cognitive functioning, and ongoing organisational performance (Russell et al., 2020; Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Aguilar Velasco & Wald, 2025). From a scientific and organisational psychology perspective, chronic job stress represents a multidimensional risk that extends beyond an individual's capacity for coping (Prabhu, Thomas, & Singh, 2026). Persistent stress activates physiological responses, including immune suppression, increased cardiovascular reactivity, and prolonged elevations in heart rate and blood pressure (Pires, 2025; Prabhu, Thomas, & Singh, 2026). Over time, these responses impair physical endurance, reduce attentional capacity, and degrade decision-making quality.

Empirical research consistently shows that supportive two-way communication reduces stress levels, strengthens trust, and fosters a healthier organisational climate (Naz et al., 2020; Nadkarni et al., 2021; Pires, 2025). Leaders who encourage dialogue, provide constructive feedback and demonstrate emotional sensitivity create an environment in which employees can express concerns, clarify expectations and meaningfully participate in decision-making. Such communication practices fulfil basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, thereby increasing job satisfaction and psychological well-being (Naz et al., 2020; Bruhn, Tautz & Felfe, 2025). In addition, leaders serve as symbolic bearers of organisational values, and their communication style significantly shapes the emotional climate of the workplace. Empathetic, calm and appreciative communication fosters psychological safety, allowing employees to express ideas and concerns without fear of retaliation (Bruhn, Tautz & Felfe, 2025).

In the context of leadership, consistent and meaningful interactions enable both parties, the leader and the employee, to build strong trust and mutual understanding in the working relationship (Ngo, 2024; Bruhn, Tautz & Felfe, 2025). This trust is formed when employees feel that their views are heard, their concerns are understood, and their contributions are valued by the leader (Ngo, 2024; Bruhn, Tautz & Felfe, 2025). At the same time, clear and ongoing communication helps to create realistic expectations regarding roles, responsibilities and performance standards, thus reducing confusion and role conflict in the workplace. In addition, frequent, transparent, and two-way communication also serves as an important mechanism in reducing misunderstandings and uncertainty among employees (van Ruler, 2018; Du & Xie, 2025). Unclear information and inconsistent communication are often the cause of work stress, insecurity, and reduced motivation. When employees have a clear understanding of job expectations, the roles they need to perform, and the support they can expect from their leaders, they will feel more confident and in control in carrying out their daily tasks (van Ruler, 2018; Du & Xie, 2025). This clarity not only reduces psychological stress but also increases a sense of security, confidence, and trust in the working relationship, which in turn contributes to psychological well-being and better work performance.

In this psychology, psychological well-being serves not only as an outcome but also as a critical mediating mechanism through which leadership communication enhances productivity, work quality and organisational resilience (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012; Bruhn, Tautz, & Felfe, 2025). Effective leadership communication goes beyond simply delivering instructions or performance metrics (Mishra & Venkatesan, 2022; Frølich, Bleiklie & Stensaker, 2025). It reflects a leader's capacity for active listening, empathy, emotional

validation, and respectful dialogue. When communication is open, supportive, and psychologically aligned, employees are more likely to experience a sense of recognition, fairness, and belonging, which can offset the negative effects of job stress (Mishra & Venkatesan, 2022; Frølich, Bleiklie & Stensaker, 2025). Leadership communication should therefore be reconceptualised not as a technical management competency but as a value-driven and psychologically informed practice grounded in empathy, authenticity and respect for human dignity. In contemporary organisations, effective leadership communication must be dialogic, inclusive and attuned to the emotional and psychological realities of employees. It serves not only to align tasks but also to maintain psychological well-being and relational trust. Therefore, this paper discuss that leadership communication is a strategic organisational resource in promoting psychological well-being and sustaining long-term organisational effectiveness.

LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION STYLE

Leadership communication plays a crucial role in shaping the development of an organisation and determining its long-term success. The way leaders communicate strategic priorities, organisational direction, and core values not only influences the level of employee engagement and internal alignment but also shapes external perceptions and the quality of relationships with various stakeholders (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017). Through clear, consistent, and authoritative communication, leaders can create a shared understanding of the organisation's goals, thus encouraging employees to align their behaviour and efforts with the established strategic objectives. Effective leadership communication also catalyses employee motivation and commitment. When leadership messages are delivered transparently and meaningfully, individuals within the organisation will feel more valued and understood, thus motivated to contribute their best efforts. At the same time, consistent and ethical communication helps build trust, not only among employees, but also between the organisation and external stakeholders such as customers, investors, and regulatory bodies. This trust is a critical intangible asset, especially in industries that rely on institutional credibility and reputation.

Leadership communication styles encompass a variety of approaches and strategies that leaders use to convey messages, build interpersonal relationships, and influence the attitudes and behaviours of internal and external stakeholders (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017). These communication styles are not uniform, but vary according to the leader's personality, organisational context, and current strategic needs. Key characteristics of leadership communication styles include the balance between the use of data-driven and insightful language, the level of formality and transparency in the delivery of information, and the emphasis on individual versus collective organisational achievement (de Vries et al., 2010). Variations in these communication styles directly impact how leadership messages are interpreted and received by employees and other stakeholders. Leadership communication plays a critical role in shaping organisational culture, driving strategy implementation, and influencing stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation's direction and credibility. Through consistent and meaningful communication, leaders can embed organisational values, shape norms of work behaviour, and promote alignment between individual goals and organisational goals. On the other hand, one-way communication that is unclear, contradictory or excessive

has the potential to create confusion, mistrust and reduced employee engagement, which ultimately affects the effectiveness of the organisation. In management practice, leaders' awareness of communication also increases the leader's ability to identify and solve problems more effectively. Leaders who are aware of communication tend to be more proactive in assuming management responsibilities, including addressing issues of work stress, interpersonal conflict and workload imbalance before they develop into more serious problems. Existing studies have shown that leaders' awareness of communication can encourage employees to feel recognised, valued and motivated, in addition to helping leaders understand the psychological conditions and needs of employees more accurately and promptly (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2016). This ability allows leaders to make appropriate adjustments in leadership and management style, in line with the actual conditions of employees. In addition, leaders' awareness of communication also influences employees' perceptions of the leader's intentions and attitudes. Employees who see positive changes in the leader's communication style will feel more valued and confident that the leader truly cares about their work and psychological well-being (Eberth & Sedlmeier, 2012). This perception helps reduce psychological problems stemming from work stress, such as anxiety and emotional exhaustion, and thus contributes to increased psychological safety for employees. High psychological safety ultimately creates a more open work environment, supporting learning, innovation and long-term well-being within the organisation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies on leadership communication styles have identified a variety of approaches that leaders use to convey messages and influence stakeholders. Several studies, including by de Vries et al. (2010) and Mayfield and Mayfield (2017), emphasise the importance of charismatic and people-oriented leadership communication styles such as clear communication, the use of high emotional intelligence and an emphasis on building relationships based on trust and mutual respect, understanding the emotional and psychological needs of employees can increase individual motivation, commitment and involvement in the organisation.

In contrast, studies by Groves (2006) and Holter and Frabutt (2012) focus on the difference between visionary and data-driven communication styles. Visionary leaders typically communicate in an inspiring and motivating way through compelling narratives, the use of metaphors, and an emphasis on the organisation's long-term vision and goals. This approach is effective in shaping work meaning and uniting employees' collective efforts towards a common direction. In contrast, data-driven leaders prioritize the presentation of information based on facts, figures, and objective analysis to demonstrate credibility, transparency, and rationality in decision-making. While this approach increases the clarity and trustworthiness of communication in organisational decisions, overly data-oriented communication without elements of empathy and inspiration has the potential to diminish the emotional connection between leaders and employees. Studies in other leadership domains consistently show that the relationship between leaders and employees is a core element of effective and sustainable leadership. This relationship not only influences the leader's ability to communicate the organisation's vision and goals, but also determines the level of acceptance, commitment, and involvement of employees in the instructions and decisions made. In this

context, communication should not be viewed simply as a management tool for conveying information or work instructions but should instead be understood as a critical and fundamental process in forming, maintaining, and strengthening quality leadership relationships. Through effective communication, leaders can create space for open and respectful interactions, thus supporting more positive and productive working relationships.

Arendt et al. (2019) define leader awareness in communication as the internal awareness that leaders display when interacting and communicating with employees. This awareness not only refers to the ability to effectively convey messages but also reflects the level of mental, emotional, and cognitive presence of the leader in the communication process. It includes several key aspects such as the ability to listen with focus and attention, maintain emotional calm in challenging situations, and avoid the tendency to make hasty or defensive judgments of employee views (Good et al., 2016; Feng, 2022). Such a communication approach reflects an important shift in traditional leadership styles towards more reflective, empathetic, and well-being-oriented leadership. This change indicates that leaders with high communication awareness have transformed the way they see themselves, others, and their leadership role. This transformation can be detailed through several key dimensions. First, leaders can achieve a more open and receptive level of perception, where employees' views and experiences are recognized as valuable information. Second, the way leaders think becomes more objective and is no longer focused solely on self-interest but instead considers the implications of decisions for others. Third, leaders' thinking perspective becomes more inclusive, i.e., the ability to consider organisational issues from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, especially directly involved employees. Fourth, leadership stance shifts from a self-interest orientation to a service orientation, where leaders see their role as advocates and guardians of employee well-being.

There is also empirical evidence that leaders' awareness of communication has a significant impact on a variety of positive work outcomes. For example, a study by King and Badham (2018) found that leaders' awareness of communication is positively related to job satisfaction, job happiness, and employee performance. In addition, Daniel, Walsh, and Mesmer-Magnus (2020) reported that leaders' awareness of communication has a positive impact on the quality of interpersonal relationships and work attitudes, including employee commitment and engagement. Based on these findings, the current study explores the mechanisms by which leaders' awareness of communication influences employees' psychological safety, to help leaders perform their caregiving role more effectively, thus supporting overall mental health and organisational development. The findings of this study indicate that leaders' awareness of communication reflects the qualities of concern, calmness, and non-judgment, which are key characteristics of caring practices in the workplace. This quality allows leaders to gain a more sensitive and in-depth understanding of employees' psychological states and the challenges they face, thus facilitating the implementation of appropriate and timely interventions. In this situation, leaders tend to see problems from the employees' perspective, rather than simply channelling work stress or organisational demands onto them. As a result, employees' work stress levels can be reduced, and their psychological safety can be enhanced.

COMMUNICATION THEORY

The development of communication technologies has given rise to qualitatively new forms of communication behaviour, including data-driven communication, human–algorithm interactions, meaning formation through automated filtering systems, and the influence of platforms on perception, emotion, and social action (Katz, 2025). These phenomena require the expansion and adaptation of communication theory to be able to unravel the mechanisms of power, meaning, and influence that operate in the digital environment. Therefore, contemporary communication theory must move beyond cosmetic adaptations of existing theories and develop as critical analytical tools that can explain how technology not only mediates communication, but also shapes social reality, human relationships and organisational structures in an increasingly algorithmic world.

Rogers (1951) humanistic theory and Erikson (1968) theory of psychosocial development provide a strong conceptual foundation for understanding communication as a human-centred process rooted in the psychological needs of individuals throughout the life cycle. Both theories emphasise that communication is not simply an exchange of information, but an interpersonal process that shapes self-identity, psychological well-being, and social relationship. According to Rogers (1951), effective communication depends on the existence of unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence. In the context of organisations and leadership, this humanistic approach emphasises that individuals can only develop optimally in a communication environment that supports unconditional acceptance and appreciation of their subjective experiences. When leaders practice empathetic and nonjudgmental communication, employees feel safe to voice their opinions, express emotions, and engage authentically in their tasks. Conversely, communication that is controlling or denying an individual's emotional experiences can hinder personal development and increase psychological distress.

Erikson (1968) theory of psychosocial development complements Rogers perspective by asserting that individuals are constantly confronted with different psychosocial conflicts at every stage of life, such as trust versus mistrust and identity versus role confusion. The success of resolving these conflicts is greatly influenced by the quality of social interactions and communication experienced by the individual. In the work environment, supportive leadership communication can help individuals build a sense of competence, professional identity, and trust in the organisation. Conversely, ambiguous, inconsistent, or insensitive communication can create prolonged psychosocial conflict, thus undermining psychological well-being and work commitment.

Taken together, these two theories reinforce the argument that leadership communication functions as an important psychosocial mechanism in shaping meaningful and healthy work experiences. Rogers emphasised the internal and emotional dimensions of communication, while Erikson highlighted its developmental and social implications. Therefore, communication based on empathy, trust and recognition not only meets the emotional needs of individuals but also supports ongoing psychosocial development. In the context of modern organisations characterized by work stress and uncertainty, this theoretical framework asserts that leadership communication that is humanistic and sensitive to individual development is an essential prerequisite for psychological well-being, work effectiveness, and organisational sustainability.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Psychological well-being refers to the capacity of individuals for effective performance within intrapersonal and interpersonal domains, which include emotion regulation, purposeful involvement, and the maintenance of satisfying interpersonal relationships (Burns, 2017; Prabhu, Thomas, & Singh, 2026). Effective psychological performance involves personal growth, mastery of life challenges, a clear sense of purpose, and meaningful interpersonal relationships (Huppert, 2009). Importantly, psychological well-being does not simply mean the absence of negative feelings indeed, the experience of painful feelings and life challenges represents a normal dimension of the human experience, and psychological well-being emerges from the dynamic interplay between individuals and the environment (Huppert, 2009; Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012).

Psychological well-being should be viewed as a multi-dimensional construct that reflects an individual's thriving in life, as opposed to mere happiness or life satisfaction. The most widely referenced foundational model of psychological well-being, developed by Ryff, comprises six primary dimensions of well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. These dimensions combine the elements of both subjective and eudaimonic well-being (Ryff, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Self-acceptance implies an overall positive view of oneself, including an awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses. Positive relations imply the ability to establish trusting and affectionate relationships with others. Autonomy implies self-determination and independence in life. Environmental mastery implies the ability to effectively manage life circumstances. Purpose in life implies the presence of goals or directions that provide meaning to life. Personal growth implies the development of an individual's potential.

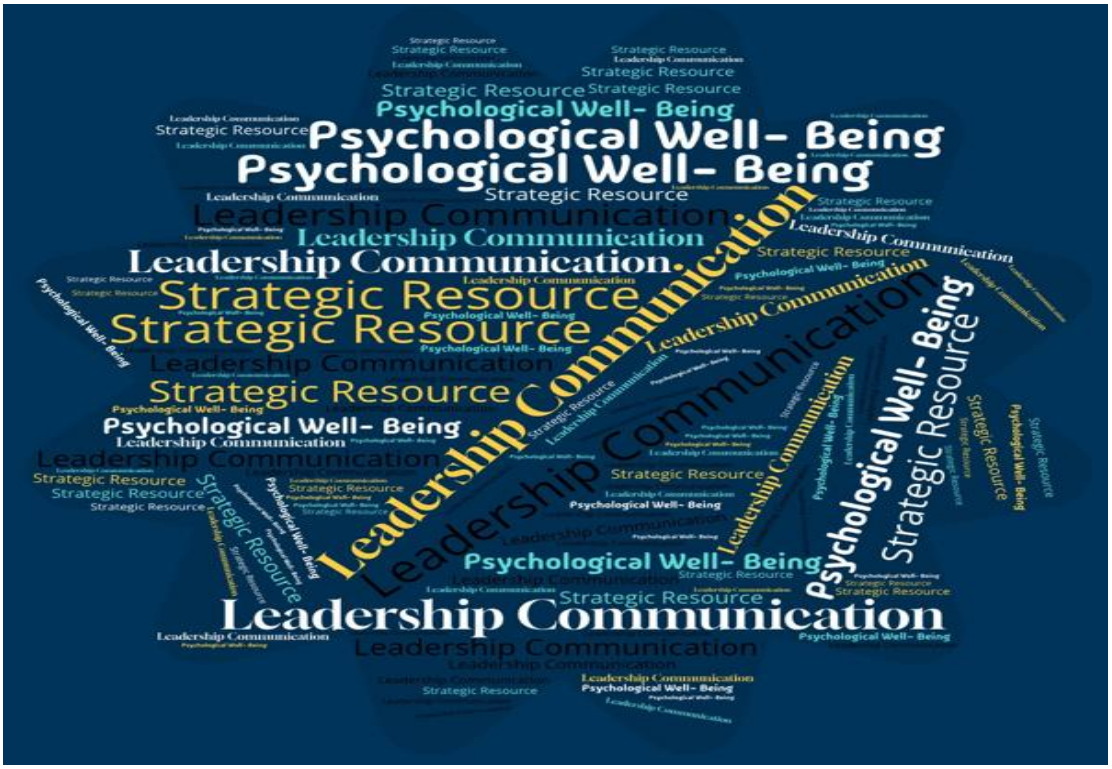
Recent studies have supported that psychological well-being includes hedonic (positive affect and life satisfaction) and eudaimonic (fulfilment and self-realisation) components that together predict superior functioning in cognitive, emotional, and social areas (Trudel-Fitzgerald et al., 2019). Psychological well-being is not a static construct; instead, it is influenced by life experiences and developmental factors. Research has revealed that high levels of psychological well-being are protective factors that prevent mental illness, a decreased risk of physical health decline, and are linked to resilient stress management across the lifespan (Ryff, 2014). Furthermore, longitudinal studies have supported that individuals with high levels of psychological well-being are more resilient to depression and have better health outcomes over time; thus, it appears that psychological well-being not only measures current functioning but also predicts future psychological and physical health (Cowden et al., 2026).

In organisational settings, psychological well-being is conceptualised as both an outcome and a determinant of the functioning and sustainability of employees. Systematic reviews of the literature have demonstrated that the psychological well-being of employees is significantly influenced by several psychosocial factors related to the workplace. Reviews of the literature have identified leadership styles and communication mechanisms as key determinants of psychological well-being outcomes. According to Shifana & Sathyamoorthi (2025) conducted a review of the literature on the influence of organisational factors on the psychological well-being of employees. Their review demonstrated that leadership styles and communication mechanisms were principal determinants of psychological well-being

outcomes such as engagement, job satisfaction, and stress. Organisational and social work factors such as supervisor support and organisational climates were also moderate to strong predictors of providers' mental well-being in emergency settings (Schneider & Weigl, 2018). This finding is consistent with the role of leadership communication as a key determinant of psychological well-being. Perceived organisational support was also demonstrated to have a direct impact on occupational well-being as a resource that buffers against poor work conditions (Zheng et al., 2024). This finding is also consistent with the role of organisational factors as key determinants of psychological well-being. Similarly, poor psychological well-being has been consistently related to burnout, emotional exhaustion, and poor job performance, suggesting that this factor is an important strategic concern rather than a personal one (Arendt et al., 2019).

In conclusion, psychological well-being is an adaptive and resource-based process that incorporates emotional, cognitive, and social elements. The multifaceted nature of psychological well-being reminds us that optimal functioning results from the interplay between internal and external conditions, precisely the conditions that leadership communication can shape in an organisational context. Figure 1 shows the word cloud generated in Google.

Figure 1: Word cloud



CONLUSION

Leadership communication is a critical strategic resource that enables organisations to actively shape employees' psychological well-being. More than simply the delivery of information, leadership communication functions as a meaning-making process that influences how employees interpret organisational reality, evaluate their roles, and experience their work

environments. When leaders communicate clearly, consistently, and empathetically, they can help employee to reduce ambiguity, foster trust, and create a sense of psychological safety to sustain well-being in increasingly complex and challenging workplaces. Leaders' communication choices, whether directive, participatory or conversational, signal what is valued in the organisation and shape employees' perceptions of fairness, support and recognition. In this sense, communication serves as a vehicle for aligning individual meaning-making processes with organisational goals, thereby reducing the stress that arises from role conflict, uncertainty and perceived lack of control. Importantly, conceptualizing leadership communication as a strategic resource highlights its ability to function as a preventive and developmental tool for psychological well-being. Effective communication enables leaders to anticipate emotional and cognitive responses, proactively address concerns, and foster relational connections that can buffer the negative effects of job demands. Conversely, poor or inconsistent communication can exacerbate stress, erode trust, and contribute to disengagement and psychological strain. In conclusion, leadership communication should be developed and intentionally managed as a core organisational capability rather than considered a soft skill for individual leaders. Therefore, future research and practice should continue to integrate communication processes into leadership and well-being recognizing communication as a strategic asset and a fundamental human process in organisational life.

This article mention that leadership communication can no longer be understood simply as a means of delivering information or a medium for coordinating tasks, but as a strategic organizational resource that shapes the psychological landscape of the workplace. In increasingly complex organizational environments, the way leaders communicate determines how employees interpret work realities, construct meaning, and evaluate the level of support they receive from the organization. Through a synthesis of the literature on organizational psychology, leadership studies, and communication theory, this paper conceptualizes leadership communication as a social-psychological mechanism that influences psychological well-being through three main pathways: the formation of emotional experiences, the strengthening of perceptions of support, and the activation of individual coping resources. Clear, consistent, and meaning-oriented communication serves as a buffer against high work demands, reduces emotional exhaustion, and fosters psychological safety that is the basis for sustained work engagement and performance.

Theoretically, this discussion contributes by positioning psychological well-being not simply as an outcome of effective leadership, but as a strategic mediating mechanism that links leadership communication with long-term organizational resilience and effectiveness. This approach expands the discourse on leadership from an instrumental perspective to a resource-based view that emphasizes communication capabilities as an essential asset. From a practical perspective, organizations need to view the development of leadership communication as a strategic investment, including training in clear communication and meaning. This effort not only enhances employee well-being but also strengthens the organization's capacity to respond to uncertainty and change. Future studies are recommended to test the proposed conceptual model through longitudinal designs and multi-data source approaches to assess the causal effects of leadership communication on psychological well-being and organizational outcomes. In this way, leadership communication can be more comprehensively understood as a key driver of organizational sustainability in an era of high-intensity work.

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