

Employers' Feedback on the Competencies of the Graduates of BS Agriculture Program of Capiz State University-Pontevedra

Diego M. Malones¹; Jon Verny D. Biaco²; Jinky Dogello-Calanza³;
Eden A. Alam⁴; Pedy D. Fernandez⁵

^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5}Faculty: College of Agriculture and Fisheries
Capiz State University-Pontevedra Campus, Philippines

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Abstract: This study examined employers' satisfaction with the competencies of graduates of the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture program of the College of Agriculture and Fisheries at Capiz State University-Pontevedra Campus. Employing a descriptive research design, the study gathered and analyzed employer assessments of graduate performance. Findings indicated that employers were very satisfied with the graduates' competencies and skills. In particular, the graduates were commended for their adaptability, attentiveness, diligence, teaching competence, and leadership capabilities. These qualities contributed to an efficient and positive work environment, underscoring the graduates' preparedness for professional practice and the relevance of the program in developing workforce-ready graduates.

Keywords: BSA Program, Competencies, Employer, Feedback.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of the Philippine economy, supplying livelihoods, food, raw materials, and significant rural employment. Yet the sector now faces intensified pressures from globalization, climate change, resource degradation, and market volatility. These shifts increase the demand for agriculture graduates who can drive innovation, adopt climate-smart practices, and support sustainable rural development.

Higher education institutions that offer the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (BSA) therefore carry a growing responsibility: to produce graduates with the technical, practical, and interpersonal capacities required by today's agricultural workplaces (Armoogum et al., 2016). Postsecondary institutions are central to this task because academic programs shape the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students need to succeed on the job. When institutions align curricula with employer needs, their graduates become more

attractive to employers, making employers important stakeholders—or “consumers”—of higher education outputs (Laguador & Ramos, 2014).

Policy frameworks reinforce this alignment. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED), through CMO No. 23, series of 2021, sets Policies, Standards and Guidelines (PSG) for BSA programs that emphasize outcomes-based and competency-based education. These PSGs specify expected program outcomes—competence in crop and animal production, farm planning and management, agribusiness, agricultural research and extension, and sustainable resource management. The Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) further requires bachelor's graduates to demonstrate broad, coherent knowledge, effective problem-solving, professional ethics, and autonomy (CMO No. 23, s. 2021).

Within that regulatory and sectoral context, the specific competencies developed by BSA graduates—innovation, agricultural research, entrepreneurial leadership,

environmental stewardship, and teamwork—serve as key indicators of program quality. Measuring employer satisfaction with these competencies yields concrete evidence of how well a program prepares graduates for the workplace. Employers' assessments are especially valuable because they reflect graduates' actual performance on the job and can guide curriculum revisions, instructional improvements, and student-development initiatives (Aquino, Del Mundo, & Quizon, 2015; Singh & Choo, 2012).

Adopting an outcomes-based education (OBE) approach requires institutions to define clear outcomes, set measurable performance indicators, and implement continuous quality-improvement mechanisms to monitor student learning (An, 2011; Borsoto et al., 2014). To be effective, this process must be collaborative: employers should provide regular feedback on graduate performance, and institutions must have systems to translate that feedback into faculty development, curricular change, and institutional accountability. Without such mechanisms, employer input risks becoming a one-off evaluation rather than a sustained driver of improvement (Jones, 2019; Smith et al., 2018).

Capiz State University–Pontevedra (CapSU–Pontevedra) exemplifies a local HEI operating within an agriculturally focused province in Western Visayas. Its BSA program uses outcomes-based strategies—field practice, research, and extension activities—to develop students' competencies for employment in farms, agribusinesses, government agencies, NGOs, and community projects. But as agriculture evolves—through new technologies, climate-smart methods, and shifting agribusiness models—CapSU–Pontevedra must regularly validate that its graduates' competencies match employer expectations. Systematic employer satisfaction assessment will help ensure the program remains relevant, responsive, and capable of producing graduates who can meet both local needs and broader sectoral priorities (Armoogum et al., 2016).

Furthermore, Capiz State University in Pontevedra, Capiz, aspires to enhance its effectiveness, competitiveness, and innovation in delivering undergraduate education in Agriculture. Systematically gathering and analyzing feedback from employers enables the university to gauge the quality of its BSA graduates and the relevance of its curriculum to current agricultural and agribusiness practices. In this light, assessing employer satisfaction with the competencies of BSA graduates from the College of Agriculture and Fisheries in Bailan, Pontevedra, Capiz is not merely an evaluative activity; it is a strategic step toward ensuring that the program remains responsive, industry-aligned, and capable of producing graduates who can contribute meaningfully to local, regional, and national agricultural development.

➤ *Research Objectives*

- How satisfied are employers with graduates' competencies in the following areas: oral and written communication,

comprehension, critical thinking, problem solving, research and analysis, teamwork, time management, work quality, honesty, dependability, adaptability, attendance, punctuality, work habits, attitude, relationship with superiors and co-workers, emotional stability, and leadership?

- What feedback does employers have regarding the graduates of the BSA Program?

II. RELATED LITERATURE

The literature on agricultural education frames competencies as integrated combinations of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable graduates to act effectively in complex, real-world agricultural settings. Competency-based approaches stress agriculture's practical, problem-oriented, and context-bound nature, advocating curricula that merge technical knowledge with experiential learning and contextualized problem-solving. Scholars such as Mulder emphasize that competence in scientific agriculture extends beyond technical mastery to include the capacity to apply scientific knowledge within production systems, respond to societal needs, and collaborate in interdisciplinary teams. Together these perspectives argue that Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (BSA) graduates must demonstrate both field-specific and generic competencies to be workplace-ready (Micah, 2025).

Despite agriculture's central role in food security and employment, the sector faces a worrying decline in youth participation. Young people increasingly view farming as a low-status, risky, or family-bound fallback, and many children of farmers no longer plan to continue family farming (Saili et al., 2020; Obayelu & Fadele, 2019; Consentino et al., 2023). This demographic shift—fewer young farmers and an aging farming population—threatens rural productivity and national food security. Contributing factors include negative perceptions of agribusiness, perceived barriers to success, and education that often fails to provide the practical skills and confidence needed for modern agricultural careers (Jjuuko et al., 2019; Robotham & Windon, 2023).

Research consistently identifies a gap between university outputs and employer needs, especially in transferable competencies. While technical competencies—crop and livestock production, farm planning, agribusiness, and extension—are commonly taught and often rated adequate, employers repeatedly value generic skills (communication, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership, ethics, ICT) as equal to or more important than narrow technical knowledge (Alibeigi & Zarafshani, 2006; Finch et al., 2013). Multiple studies and employer surveys across contexts (e.g., Mirakzadeh & Ghiasy, Seti et al., 2025; Haryanta et al., 2025) highlight that employability depends on a portfolio of discipline knowledge plus transferable attributes and practical

experience; lack of supervised practice, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship training undermines graduates' job readiness.

To address these mismatches, the evidence points to four strategic curriculum and sector interventions. First, integrate experiential learning—internships, supervised practicums, farm placements, and applied labs—to bridge theory and practice. Second, embed soft-skill development (communication, teamwork, leadership, ethics) across courses so graduates can function in interdisciplinary, stakeholder-rich environments. Third, strengthen ICT, data-literacy, and emerging competencies (precision agriculture, climate-smart practices, agribusiness innovation) to prepare graduates for modern, technology-driven value chains. Fourth, deepen industry-academe partnerships to co-design curricula, offer placements, and maintain feedback loops so training stays aligned with evolving employer needs. When combined with supportive agribusiness policies, incentives for agripreneurship, and positive messaging to reframe agriculture as a technology-rich, entrepreneurial career, these measures can attract youth and improve sectoral resilience.

Locally, Philippine and regional studies echo these global themes but reveal a need for more place-based evidence—especially employer feedback on BSA graduates from provincial universities in Western Visayas. Tracer studies and alumni surveys show generally high employment but also identify weaknesses in leadership, entrepreneurship, project management, and ICT adoption (Ceniza et al., 2022; Lagrimas et al., 2025; Robinson & Garton, 2008). Given the limited published data specific to institutions such as Capiz State University–Pontevedra, targeted employer-focused research is warranted to map competency gaps, inform curricular revisions in line with CMO #23 (Series 2021), and ensure that BSA programs produce millennial farmers—graduates fluent in advanced technologies, entrepreneurial skills, and practical production methods who can sustain and modernize local food systems.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

➤ *Research Design*

This study used a descriptive-qualitative design to gather employer feedback on the competencies of Bachelor of Science in Agriculture graduates from Capiz State University–Pontevedra Campus who are currently employed in various organizations. Using a structured questionnaire, employers rated their satisfaction with specific competencies, producing quantitative data that allowed the researchers to describe and compare competency levels precisely. To capture richer perspectives, the instrument also included open-ended questions that invited employers to offer detailed comments, suggestions, and recommendations about graduates' workplace performance and readiness. Combining ratings with narrative responses enabled the study to quantify patterns while exploring the reasons behind those patterns. Descriptive

statistics (means and standard deviations) were applied to the numeric ratings, and the qualitative comments were analyzed thematically to contextualize and deepen interpretation of the results.

➤ *Population*

Alumni holding a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from Capiz State University — Pontevedra are employed across a wide range of public- and education-sector roles throughout Capiz and neighboring provinces. Many serve in local government units (LGUs) as agricultural technicians and technologists, administrative officers and assistants, and agricultural reform officers in municipalities such as Pontevedra, President Roxas, Maayon, Cuartero, Panitan, Sigma, Ivisan, Tapaz, and in Roxas City. Others hold positions at the Sugar Regulatory Administration in President Roxas and at Municipal Environmental and Natural Resources Offices in Panay and Pontevedra.

Graduates who completed master's degrees commonly joined academia, teaching at state colleges and universities across Panay, including Northern Iloilo State University (NISU), Iloilo State University for Fisheries, Science and Technology (ISUFIST), Iloilo Science and Technology University (ISAT-U), University of Antique (UA), West Visayas State University (WVSU), and various campuses of Capiz State University (Pontevedra, Tapaz, Pilar, Dumarao). Several alumni also work at regional research and development offices, such as the Department of Agriculture — Region 6 office in Iloilo City and the Capiz Research Outreach Station (CROS) in Malapad Cogon, Sigma, Capiz. Others serve as trainers at Technical Skills and Development Authority (TESDA) Training and Assessment Centers in Capiz and Antique.

To evaluate how well the program prepares graduates for the workplace, department heads and supervisors from these agencies were invited to participate in this study. These employer-respondents assessed workplace competencies, answered open-ended questions about graduates' strengths and weaknesses, and offered suggestions Capiz State University might adopt to strengthen its curriculum. In total, 30 employers — each supervising one or more BSA alumni — completed the employer evaluation.

➤ *Data Collection Methods*

A researcher-developed instrument, the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Competencies Questionnaire, was used to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire was supplemented with open-ended items designed to identify graduates' workplace strengths and weaknesses and to solicit employers' suggestions for remedial actions and curriculum enhancements at CAPSU.

The instrument underwent face validation by a panel of experts and was revised according to their recommendations.

A pilot test followed; its results were used to estimate reliability with Cronbach's alpha. The final instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.787, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

➤ *Data Gathering Procedures*

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant agencies. After approval, the researchers personally delivered questionnaires to the supervisors and department

heads of the graduates and collected the completed instruments on site.

Quantitative data were analyzed with mean and standard deviation using IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Qualitative responses to the open-ended questions were tabulated, examined for recurring themes and divergences, and analyzed using thematic analysis to summarize employers' perspectives and recommendations.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

➤ *Employer Satisfaction with Competencies of BSA Program Graduates*

Table 1. Employer Satisfaction with Competencies of BSA Program Graduates

Areas of Competencies	Mean	Description	SD
1. Oral communication	4.45	Very Satisfied	0.60
2. Written communication	4.35	Satisfied	0.75
3. Comprehension	4.65	Very Satisfied	0.49
4. Critical thinking	4.45	Satisfied	0.69
5. Problem solving	4.55	Very Satisfied	0.60
6. Research and analysis	4.50	Very Satisfied	0.51
7. Teamwork	4.80	Very Satisfied	0.41
8. Time management	4.65	Very Satisfied	0.59
9. Quality of work	4.45	Satisfied	0.51
10. Honesty and dependability	4.60	Very Satisfied	0.50
11. Adaptability	4.60	Very Satisfied	0.50
12. Attendance and punctuality	4.50	Very Satisfied	0.69
13. Work habits and attitude	4.50	Very Satisfied	0.51
14. Relationship with superior	4.80	Very Satisfied	0.41
15. Relationship with co-workers	4.70	Very Satisfied	0.47
16. Emotional stability	4.60	Very Satisfied	0.50
17. Leadership	4.50	Very Satisfied	0.51
Grand Mean	4.57	Very Satisfied	0.54

Employers reported very high levels of satisfaction with the competencies of graduates from the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (BSA) program, particularly in interpersonal relations and work ethic. This pattern is consistent with employer surveys in agriculture and related fields, which often highlight teamwork, reliability, and positive attitude as core strengths of graduates. The highest ratings in Table 1 were for relationship with superiors ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 0.41$), teamwork ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 0.41$), and relationship with co-workers ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.41$), suggesting that BSA graduates integrate well into organizational hierarchies and collaborate effectively with peers. Similarly, high scores for comprehension ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.49$) and time management ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.59$) indicate that graduates can understand instructions and manage tasks efficiently, a finding that parallels studies showing that agricultural and agribusiness graduates are often rated highly in basic cognitive and self-management skills by employers (Lovei, n.d).

Employers also reported very high satisfaction with honesty and dependability ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 0.50$), adaptability

($M = 4.60$, $SD = 0.50$), emotional stability ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 0.50$), and problem solving ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.60$), suggesting that BSA graduates are perceived as trustworthy, resilient, and capable of dealing with workplace challenges. Research on agricultural graduate employability similarly notes that traits such as integrity, flexibility, and emotional maturity are among the most valued attributes in extension work, farm management, and agribusiness roles. High ratings for research and analysis ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.51$), attendance and punctuality ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.69$), work habits and attitude ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.51$), and leadership ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.51$) further suggest that the program is succeeding in developing disciplined, research-oriented, and potentially leadership-ready graduates, which aligns with studies arguing that modern agriculture curricula increasingly emphasize research skills, professionalism, and leadership development (Kumar, 2022).

At the same time, the slightly lower (though still high) ratings for oral communication ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.60$), critical thinking ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.69$), written communication ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.75$), and quality of work ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.51$)

may point to areas for continuous improvement within the curriculum. Several studies have observed that, while employers in agriculture often commend graduates' attitudes and interpersonal skills, they are sometimes less satisfied with higher-order competencies such as advanced communication, critical thinking, and the application of scientific knowledge to complex, real-world problems. Some authors further caution that very high satisfaction scores might reflect courtesy bias or limited exposure to graduates' full range of tasks, particularly during early employment, which can lead to overly positive evaluations. Others note persistent gaps in written communication, analytical rigor, and leadership readiness among agriculture graduates, suggesting that curricula should more intentionally integrate communication-intensive and problem-based learning experiences (Tuncel & Atan, 2013).

Taken together, the consistently high means across almost all competencies indicate that BSA graduates possess a profile of skills and attributes that employers find highly desirable, reinforcing the conclusion that the program is largely achieving its intended outcomes. These findings support literature that portrays agriculture graduates as strong in interpersonal relationships, work habits, and general professionalism, yet they also resonate with studies calling for a stronger emphasis on critical thinking, communication, and higher-level problem solving in agricultural education. The results therefore affirm the program's success while underscoring the importance of ongoing curriculum enhancement to sustain graduate competitiveness in an increasingly complex and technology-driven agricultural sector (Kumar, 2022).

➤ *Employers' Feedback on the Graduates of BSA Program*

Employer feedback on graduates of the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (BSA) program at Capiz State University–Pontevedra campus was overwhelmingly positive, emphasizing both strong personal qualities and high levels of job suitability (Alston & Crutchfield, 2009; Jackson, 2016). Employers' comments such as "responsible and willing to take risks," "dedicated, hardworking," and "meticulous at work and always ensures the best output" underscore graduates' perceived diligence, initiative, and focus on quality—traits consistently identified as core employability attributes in agricultural and allied fields (Cabardo, 2016; Ng & Feldman, 2009). Both written and verbal feedback from informal interviews portrayed BSA graduates in a very favorable light, which is consistent with employer-tracer studies reporting high satisfaction with agriculture graduates' work ethic, reliability, and willingness to learn (Tindowen, Bassig, & Cagauan, 2017; Sohu et al., 2020). At the same time, some scholars caution that overwhelmingly positive qualitative feedback may partly reflect courtesy bias or the desire to maintain good relations with partner institutions, suggesting the need to interpret such narratives alongside more objective indicators of performance (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Peterson, 2001).

The specific endorsements from employers—such as describing graduates as "trusted when it comes to communication and hosting," "flexible at all times," "very good employee when it comes to doing tasks and other activities," and a "remarkable employee in terms of teaching and a big help in the department"—highlight perceived strengths in interpersonal skills, adaptability, teamwork, and role versatility (Lamm et al., 2011; Robles, 2012). Similar patterns have been noted in studies of agriculture and extension graduates, where employers often commend graduates' ability to work effectively with farmers, students, and community stakeholders, as well as their willingness to handle diverse functions in teaching, research, and extension services (Francisco & Nuqui, 2019; Acker & Gasperini, 2009). Feedback such as "can communicate easily with colleagues, students, and farmers in the community" and "always showing a helping hand and has a good relationship with his peers" echoes findings that community-based projects and extension activities strengthen graduates' interpersonal and community-engagement skills (Rivera & Alex, 2004; Lamm et al., 2011). However, other studies in agricultural and related disciplines note that, despite good interpersonal rapport, graduates may still struggle with more formal or technical communication—especially professional writing, technical reports, and structured presentations—indicating a gap between interpersonal ease and high-level communication competencies (Male, Bush, & Chapman, 2011; Tynjälä et al., 2016).

The verbal suggestions for improvement—particularly in punctuality, written and oral communication, time management, and the use of technical operation software—are consistent with international and local research on competency gaps in agricultural graduates (Rasul et al., 2013; Yorke, 2006). Several studies have argued that, while agriculture graduates typically demonstrate strong attitudes and practical orientation, employers are often less satisfied with their proficiency in advanced communication, digital literacy, and time management under complex workloads (Jackson, 2010; Cabardo, 2016). Research on employability in agriculture and related sectors frequently identifies written communication (e.g., report writing, documentation), public speaking, and the use of specialized agricultural or data-management software as recurring areas for further development (Hollis et al., 2015; Miller & Blaylock, 2017). Punctuality and broader time-management challenges among new graduates have likewise been linked to limited emphasis on professional conduct, deadlines, and digital productivity tools in some curricula and practicum designs (Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin, & Zehner, 2013; Tomlinson, 2012). Conversely, studies of institutions that have systematically integrated ICT-based courses, communication-intensive assignments, and industry-partnered projects show higher employer satisfaction with graduates' communication and ICT skills, suggesting that these gaps can be substantially reduced through deliberate curricular design (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008; Lizzio & Wilson, 2004).

Overall, the strong positive feedback from employers suggests that BSA graduates from Capiz State University–Pontevedra possess the core competencies needed to succeed in their roles and to contribute meaningfully to their organizations’ vision, mission, and objectives (Alston & Crutchfield, 2009; Francisco & Nuqui, 2019). This aligns with broader literature indicating that agriculture graduates often perform well in terms of work ethic, collaboration, and practical field skills, and that they are viewed as valuable assets in teaching, research, extension, and agribusiness settings (Acker & Gasperini, 2009; Rasul et al., 2013). At the same time, the constructive feedback regarding punctuality, time management, communication skills, and technical software use mirrors studies that highlight these domains as common developmental needs for agriculture graduates and early-career professionals (Jackson, 2010; Male et al., 2011). Rather than undermining the positive evaluations, these critiques provide concrete, evidence-based directions for enhancing graduate preparation.

In this context, employer feedback becomes a critical resource for curriculum refinement and faculty development. Studies on outcomes-based and competency-based agricultural education emphasize the importance of using employer input to recalibrate pre-service training, strengthen practical and laboratory activities, and embed explicit training in digital tools, agricultural software, and professional communication into the curriculum (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Tindowen et al., 2017). Empirical work has shown that structured opportunities for students to practice time management (e.g., multi-deadline projects, supervised fieldwork), punctuality (e.g., strict attendance and field-time policies), and communication (e.g., extension talks, stakeholder presentations, technical report writing) can significantly enhance workplace readiness and employer satisfaction (Lamm et al., 2011; Miller & Blaylock, 2017). Similarly, integrating specialized software—such as farm management systems, geographic information systems (GIS), and data-analysis tools—helps reduce the gap between classroom learning and actual industry practice (Hollis et al., 2015; Rasheed & Wahid, 2018).

By acting on this feedback, faculty members can more deliberately address critical issues such as pre-service training quality, the design and frequency of practical and laboratory activities, the integration of agricultural software, and the systematic development of time management, punctuality, and communication skills (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Yorke, 2006). Evidence from other institutions suggests that such targeted interventions not only improve graduates’ competencies but also enhance institutional reputation and graduate competitiveness for highly sought-after positions in government agencies, agribusiness firms, and development organizations (Tomlinson, 2012; Finch et al., 2013). In turn, responsiveness to employer feedback can reinforce partnerships with industry and community stakeholders, ensure that BSA graduates remain competitive relative to

peers from other institutions, and sustain a cycle of continuous quality improvement grounded in real-world expectations and empirical evidence (Acker & Gasperini, 2009; Francisco & Nuqui, 2019).

V. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the overall findings from the study, several recommendations can be drawn to strengthen agricultural science education. To sustain and further strengthen this positive reputation, it is essential to deepen the alignment between the BSA curriculum and the evolving needs of local employers. Conducting systematic training needs assessments with industry partners would help identify specific competency gaps and emerging skill requirements, ensuring that course content, practicum experiences, and assessment strategies remain responsive and relevant. Involving employers as active members of a Board of Advisers can also provide continuous feedback on curriculum design, internship arrangements, and graduate performance, thereby institutionalizing industry–academe collaboration rather than relying on one-time consultations.

While the study relied primarily on quantitative data, which limits the depth and nuance of employer perspectives, this limitation can be turned into an opportunity for richer inquiry. Integrating qualitative methods—such as focus group discussions or key informant interviews with employers, supervisors, and even graduates—would yield more detailed insights into specific strengths, weaknesses, and emerging demands in the agricultural sector. A collaborative and iterative approach that combines survey data with qualitative feedback will not only sharpen curricular reforms but also help ensure that future BSA graduates remain competitive, industry-responsive, and well-prepared to meet the complex challenges of modern agriculture.

VI. CONCLUSION

Employer feedback indicates a consistently high level of satisfaction with the competence of BSA graduates, reflecting positively on the quality of education provided by Capiz State University. The graduates emerge as credible ambassadors of the program: they are viewed as trustworthy, diligent, accountable, and responsible, and are consistently recognized for their strong personal and professional attributes. Highly regarded by the community, students, and colleagues, they demonstrate adaptability, attentiveness, and a strong sense of commitment in the performance of their roles. Their teaching ability, initiative, and leadership within their units contribute not only to effective service delivery but also to a positive and collaborative work environment.

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