

# MANAGERIAL TURNOVER INTENTION AS A RESULT OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR, JOB SATISFACTION AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: EVIDENCE FROM CROSS-NATIONAL FITNESS ENTERPRISES IN THAILAND

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## ABSTRACT

*Fitness exercise has been catching on in Thailand and the fitness industry is growing. Fitness establishments have been frequented by an increasing number of health-conscious Thais in the past several years. This study proposes a turnover intention model incorporating leadership behavior, job satisfaction and organizational commitment and tests whether this model fits for cross-national fitness enterprises. The sample consisted of 356 managerial employees drawn from a listing of managers at fitness establishments from all over Thailand. Moderation analyses were conducted through a series of multiple regressions. The results showed that both job satisfaction and organizational commitment significantly affected turnover intention through leadership behavior. The cross-national fitness enterprises should institute programs to enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment among managerial employees. Future research might explore employees at different hierarchical levels or in different organizational settings.*

**Keywords:** Turnover Intention, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Fitness Enterprise.

## INTRODUCTION

The growth of the fitness industry in Thailand has been on the rise now that the Thai people place unprecedented importance on exercise to keep fit. According to a 2015 survey by the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, 36% of the population exercise at least 31-60 minutes a day. Increasingly more facilities have been established around the country for the purpose of providing residents with a workout venue. Particularly foreign brand fitness establishments have penetrated the Thai market and gained a sizable market share. The managerial personnel at fitness establishments play a role in managing the day-to-day back-office and fitness-floor operations and orchestrating the client service efforts. Such businesses need to take into account organizational commitment and job satisfaction among their staff as these qualities are believed to be closely tied to staff turnover (Yousef, 2017).

Turnover can be harmful to organizational performance (Glebbeck & Bax, 2004). Therefore, it is important that an organization try to retain its staff in light of the high cost of replacement (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000; Pack & Won, 2017). This is especially so when it comes to cross-national enterprises where foreign investments are made somewhere outside their home country; it is crucial that more efforts be put into recruiting and staffing. Management needs to

understand what causes turnover intention and what has to be done to retain talented workers (Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001).

Prior research proposing turnover models mostly addressed job satisfaction, organizational commitment and leadership, either independently or correlationally. Sometimes these studies yielded conflicting results and led to a conclusion about the scarcity of research on turnover intention (McCarthy, Tyrrell & Lehane, 2007). In addition, research has been conducted to identify how leadership behavior can be used to encourage employees to achieve better organizational outcomes. However, very few studies have tried to better understand the impact of leadership behavior on predictors of turnover such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational engagement.

This study proposes a model that emphasizes the role of leadership behavior, job satisfaction and organizational commitment in explaining turnover intention. Specifically, the investigator wished to examine these variables whose mechanism was presumed to contribute to turnover intention or particularly, the effect of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on turnover intention as moderated by leadership behavior.

Organizational commitment has been recognized as a psychological state that describes the quality of an employee's relationship with his or her organization and this state implies the decision to continue or discontinue membership in an organization. It is conceptualized by Meyer & Allen (1997) as a model made up of three components of organizational commitment: (1) Affective (emotional attachment and identification with the organization), (2) continuance (awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization) and (3) normative (feeling of obligation to continue employment with the organization).

Organizational commitment is a variable receiving a lot of attention from contemporary researchers. Among other reasons for its prominence in the organizational literature is that commitment has repeatedly been recognized as a significant factor that determines the work behavior of employees in organizations (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002). Commitment is the factors that links employees to the organization (Fornes, Rocco & Wollard, 2008) and helps the organization succeed (Fornes et al., 2008). Commitment has been found to be related to some positive organizational outcomes such as job performance (Chen, Silverthorne & Hung, 2006), employee satisfaction (Chughtai & Zafar, 2006; Meyer et al., 2002) and turnover (Meyer et al., 2002).

Research shows that commitment has been defined in so many different ways that there is a lack of consistency in the definition and this even has contributed to the difficulty in understanding the results of the research (Darolia, Kumari & Darolia, 2010). In this regard, organizational commitment is characterized by three psychological factors: first, identification which refers to a belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values; second, involvement which refers to a willingness to exert considerable effort toward organizational goal accomplishment; and third, loyalty which refers to a strong desire to remain in an organization (Yousef, 2017).

Moreover, other researchers associated organizational commitment with turnover intention as its predictor (Bentein, Vandenberg, Vandenberghe & Stinglhamber, 2005; Hackett, Lapierre & Hausdorf, 2001; Wagner, 2007). Nevertheless, it was argued that such turnover studies failed to address both job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the temporal dimension, so it was suggested that the causal relationship between these two variables should be interpreted with caution (Wagner, 2007).

Turnover is a concept that has been studied from many perspectives. Some look at turnover as a model, wherein it is viewed as a consequence of employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment. It is also based on the leader-member exchange theory and the organizational support theory (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001; Walumbwa et al., 2011). Turnover is regarded as a termination from the employees' side without any involvement or pressure from the employer's side. With regard to employee turnover, Wagner (2007) asserted that job satisfaction and organizational commitment contribute independently to the prediction of turnover intention or cognition. Later, Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner (2000) also concluded that organizational commitment predicted turnover better than job satisfaction.

Some researchers present the view that organizational commitment develops through job satisfaction and that organizational commitment mediates the influence of job satisfaction on turnover intention. Other authors have stated that the relationship was in fact the opposite; that is, organizational commitment precedes job satisfaction. However, this view was not supported by later research (Chen et al., 2006). In fact, in their meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates and consequences of organizational commitment, Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnysky (2002) treated job satisfaction as a correlate (rather than an antecedent) of commitment in their model explaining turnover and turnover intention. Furthermore, other studies used correlational analysis and regression analysis and failed to attest to the concomitant effect of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on turnover intention (Choi & Chiu, 2017; Wagner, 2007).

As for information technology professionals, despite the fact that organizational commitment was highly correlated to turnover intention, it was removed from the model to minimize multicollinearity since it was highly correlated with job satisfaction (Joseph, Koh & Soon, 2007). Many argued that the tested model did not take into account the influence of leadership behavior that literature has identified as being associated with turnover (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wandberg, 2003; Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell & Allen, 2007).

Leadership has an impact on employees and employee behavior in many ways. It solves the problem about collective effort in an organization so it is crucial to organizational effectiveness (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Hogan & Warrenfeltz (2003) presented a domain model of leadership that identifies four classes of managerial competencies: (1) intrapersonal skill (able to control emotions and behavior, internalized standards of performance); (2) interpersonal skills (building and maintaining relations, social skill role-taking and role-playing, impression management, political savoir-faire); (3) business skills (abilities and technical knowledge needed to plan, budget, coordinate and monitor organizational activities); and (4) leadership skills (influence and team-building skills). This model proposes the different broad competencies that leaders are expected to possess.

The relationship between supervisor behavior and employees' mood has been explored in quite a few studies. For example, Miner, Glomb & Hulin (2005) found that employees rated their interactions with their supervisor as 80% positive and 20% negative. However, the 20% negative interactions affected the employees' mood five times more than the positive interactions. Gilbreath (2004) elaborated on the role of the supervisor in creating a healthy workplace and asserted that positive supervision was a fundamental component of a psychologically healthy work climate. Gilbreath & Benson (2004) commented on the contribution of supervisor behavior to employee psychological well-being stating that there was ample justification for those concerned with psychosocial working conditions to consider supervisor behavior as a potentially influential variable. Bono, Foldes, Vinson & Muros (2007) reported that employees with supervisors high on transformational leadership experienced more positive emotions throughout

the workday and were less likely to experience decreased job satisfaction, than were those with supervisors low on transformational leadership. Moreover, abusive supervision (hostile verbal and non-verbal behavior) has been found to be related to a lower level of job satisfaction, normative and affective commitment and increased psychological distress (Tepper, 2000).

The leader-member exchange refers to the quality of a working relationship between a superior and his or her subordinate (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2015). Role theory advanced in the previous century-the leader-member exchange theory-has evolved into a social exchange theory in which exchange partners in a relation attempt to fulfill the expectations held by one another. This relationship develops and evolves over time as superiors and subordinates interact and are characterized by perceptions of loyalty, interpersonal attraction, willingness to put forth extra effort for the counterpart and professional respect (Ansari, Hung & Aafaqi, 2007).

According to the leader-member exchange theory, leaders develop different exchange relations with employees (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer & Ferris, 2012). When partners in the exchange relationship feel mutual obligation and act reciprocally and have trust in and respect for one another, leader-member exchange quality is said to be high (Dulebohn et al., 2012). However, when leader-member exchange relations focus on economic exchange in which participants involved do their work just to get paid, it is said to be of low quality relationship (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001). Such a relationship is characterized by a low level of trust, a high level of influence that is derived from the superior to the subordinate and lower levels of interaction and rewards (Walumbwa et al., 2011). Employee perceptions of their relationship with their supervisor have been found to be associated with many important attitudes and behaviors, including but not limited to commitment, organizational citizenship behavior and job performance (Dulebohn et al., 2012). Antecedents include follower characteristics (e.g. conscientiousness and positive affectivity), leader characteristics (e.g. transformational leadership, agreeableness and ethical leadership) (Walumbwa et al., 2011) and interpersonal relations (e.g. affect, liking and leader trust) (Dulebohn et al., 2012).

The organizational support theory is concerned with employees' belief about the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). Shanock & Eisenberger (2006) found that organizational support was related to job satisfaction, affective commitment and performance and that it contributed to a reduction in withdrawal behaviors among employees. Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch & Rhoades (2001) also advocated that supervisor support seemed to contribute to organizational support and to staff retention. In a subsequent study, Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell & Allen (2007) demonstrated that supervisor support had an effect on turnover cognition and the relationship was not mediated by organizational support. Moreover, they have found that low supervisor support strengthened the negative relationship between organizational support and turnover, while a high level of supervisor support weakened it. These results took into account the relationship between supervisors and employees in terms of supervisor support, but did not include in the model other variables likely to account for turnover intentions. Nevertheless, the results from leader-member exchange and supervisor support stress the importance of considering leadership in turnover intention models.

It was found that employee affective commitment to their supervisor predicted their affective commitment to the organization, which in turn predicted their intention to quit (Vandenberghe, Bentein & Stinglhamber, 2004). Importantly, Rad & Yarmohammadian (2006) found a significant relationship between leadership behavior and employees' job satisfaction and also found that employee-oriented dimensions of leadership influenced job satisfaction

significantly more than task-oriented leadership behaviors. Both the leader-member exchange theory and the transformational leadership theory take into account the relationship between a supervisor and his or her employees.

Task-oriented leadership has a strong influence on organizational commitment (Simha & Cullen, 2012; Zatzick, Deery & Iverson, 2015) and leadership is believed to have a role in affecting organizational commitment through the presence of job satisfaction. Furthermore, they found that the only direct link to turnover intentions went through organizational commitment. They discovered that personal and organizational characteristics influenced organizational commitment only through job satisfaction. However, in the present study the investigator wished to test whether such a model held true in a cross-national fitness domain.

The proposed model was built on the postulate that turnover is a consequence of employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment and that leadership behavior is related to job satisfaction and to organizational commitment according to the leader-member exchange theory and that organizational support reduces turnover in accordance with the organizational support theory. The model includes leadership behavior, job satisfaction and organizational commitment of employees in a contemporary industry (Ying & Ahmad, 2009). In light of the preceding theoretical and empirical background, the investigator thus hypothesized that leadership behavior moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention and that leadership behavior moderates the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intention.

## METHOD

### Participants

The target population for this study consisted of the managerial staff in all cross-national fitness and exercise establishments in Thailand. With the margin of error set at 5% and a confidence level of 95%, a sample size of at least 341 participants was needed to detect an effect of this magnitude. To achieve 35% response rate, the investigator sent out the survey to 975 people and, of those, 36.5% (N=356) voluntarily completed and returned the questionnaire and this caused the return size to exceed the required sample size.

The participants were selected using multistage sampling. First, the investigator opted for two out of five arbitrary geographical areas in the Bangkok metropolis to be primary sampling units and then selected at random 975 managerial employees performing managerial duties at the establishments in those two areas from the organization's payroll. The investigator allocated the survey to the research assistants in charge of their designated fitness establishments. They then was instructed to deliver copies of the survey to the intended participants, to wait for them to complete the form and finally to return those responses to the researcher.

The participants constituted an almost equal proportion of men (n=183, 51.4%) and women (n=173, 48.6%). Most of the respondents were 31-40 years of age (34.8%) though some others (34.6%) were under 30 years old and the rest (30.6%) were over 41 years old. There were slightly more participants holding an undergraduate degree (54.8%) than those with a graduate degree (45.2%). The mean yearly salary for the managerial position as revealed by most of the participants was over 420,000 baht (US\$ 12,000). Most of the respondents (n=132, 37.1%) had been in the same managerial role for 6-10 years. Those with fewer than 6 years of tenure (n=118) were about the same number as those who had held the position over 10 years (n=106). Finally,

41% (n=146) of the participants declared being affiliated with a professional sport association, while the rest were not (59%, n=210).

## **Measures**

The following scales employed in this study were developed and utilized in prior research. Once validated, they were deployed to research participants during a period of two months. The questionnaire consists of two major sections: the four variables measurement and the demographics which involve gender, age, educational level, yearly salary, tenure and professional affiliations. The content of the measures was validated, the index of item-objective congruence for each variable was satisfactorily higher than 0.5 (Turner & Carlson, 2003). In addition, they were but also checked by language experts through back translation before they were administered to the Thai participants in order to ensure translation accuracy and cultural equivalence.

### **Leadership Behavior**

Leadership behavior was measured using the scale developed by Harris & Ogbonna (2001). It is widely used to measure a subordinate's perception of leadership behavior with 13 statements. The first five items measure participative behavior. The next four items measure supportive behavior. The last four items measure directive behavior. Participants were asked to rate each of nine statements on a 7-point scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). Scores for individual participants could range from 9 (strongly disagree on all statements) to 63 (strongly agree on all statements). Internal consistency reliability scores of 0.68, 0.86 and 0.71 were obtained in this study and stability ( $r=0.86$ ) of the scale have been established. Evidence of the validity of this measure was reported by Hochwarter, Perrew, Feris & Gercio (1999). Example items are "Before making decisions, my superior considers what his or her subordinate has to say," "Before taking action, my superior consults with his or her subordinates," "When faced with a problem, my superior consults with his or her subordinates," etc.

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction was measured using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss, Dawis, England & Lofquist, 1967). This scale consists of two dimensions-one with 12 statements measures intrinsic job satisfaction and the other with six statements measures extrinsic job satisfaction. All the statements were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (most satisfied) to 7 (least satisfied). The lowest possible score for an individual participant is 9 (least satisfied on all statements); the highest possible score is 63 (most satisfied on all statements). Internal consistency reliability coefficients of 0.89 and 0.77 were obtained for each dimension respectively. Example items are "I am able to keep busy all the time," "I have a chance to work alone on the job," "I have a chance to do different things from time to time," etc.

### **Organizational Commitment**

Organizational commitment has been measured using Meyer & Allen's (1997) Three-component Model of Organizational Commitment scale. It consists of three components; namely affective, normative and continuance commitment. Each component has six statements to which respondents were asked to state their level of agreement on a 7-point scale (1=strongly disagree

to 7=strongly agree). Scores for individual participants could range from 18 (strongly disagree on all statements) to 63 (strongly agree on all statements). Internal consistency reliability coefficients of 0.89, 0.76 and 0.85 were obtained for each respective dimension. Example items are “I am happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization,” “I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it,” “I feel this organization’s problems are my own,” etc.

Turnover intention. The intention to quit was measured using two statements from Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins & Klesh’s (1983) Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire. It consists of two statements which are assessed on a 7-point scale. The first statement reads, “How often do you ponder about leaving your current job?” (1=rarely and 7=always) while the second statement reads, “What are the probabilities that you will be looking for a new job within the next year?” (1=least probable to 7=most probable). Reliability was quite high ( $\alpha=0.98$ ) on this construct.

## Analysis

A series of multiple regression analyses was applied using the ordinary least squares method. Pursuant to the recommendation by Cohen & Cohen (2003), the investigator thereby centered the job satisfaction, leadership and organizational commitment predictors, as well as the derived interactions, namely Job satisfaction  $\times$  Leadership and Organizational Commitment  $\times$  Leadership. When an interaction effect was found to be a statistically significant predictor, additional analyses were conducted at  $\pm 1$  standard deviation units of the moderating variable—leadership (Table 1).

<b>Measure</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Job Satisfaction	3.90	1.924	-			
Commitment	4.04	2.009	0.61	-		
Leadership	4.06	1.859	0.65	0.57	-	
Turnover	1.05	0.909	-0.79	-0.69	-0.68	-

The results of the moderation analysis for leadership on the relationship of job satisfaction to turnover intention are shown in Table 2. The analysis suggested that job satisfaction, leadership and Job satisfaction  $\times$  Leadership interaction significantly predicted leadership,  $F(3,352)=42.09$ ,  $p<0.05$ . These independent variables accounted for 59% of the criterion variable, turnover intention,  $R^2=0.59$ , adjusted  $R^2=0.55$ . Then, an additional analysis was conducted at a leadership level of +1 standard deviation unit by recentering the leadership variable at that value and it was found that there was a significant relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention,  $B=-32.03$ ,  $p<0.05$ . The second analysis was performed at a leadership level of -1 standard deviation unit by recentering the leadership variable at that value and the results detected a significant relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention,  $B=-37.88$ ,  $p<0.05$ .

**Table 2**  
**MODERATION ANALYSIS OF THE MODERATING EFFECT OF LEADERSHIP ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB SATISFACTION AND TURNOVER INTENTION**

Variable	B	SEB	95% CI	$\beta$	t	p
Constant	456.17	134.09	[0.02, 3.24]	444.32	72.77	0.011
JS	0.57	0.03	[0.02, 3.24]	0.42	2.40	0.004
L	0.44	0.01	[0.78, 8.23]	0.56	5.23	0.028
JS×L	-0.77	0.09	[0.31, 5.24]	0.34	2.25	0.012

The results of the moderation analysis for leadership on the relationship of organizational commitment to turnover intention are shown in Table 3. The analysis revealed that organizational commitment, leadership and Organizational Commitment  $\times$  Leadership interaction variables could predict leadership significantly,  $F(3,352)=98.87$ ,  $p<0.05$ . The three independent variables including the interaction accounted for 45% of the criterion variable, turnover intention,  $R^2=0.45$ , adjusted  $R^2=0.44$ . Then, the first analysis was carried out at a leadership level of +1 standard deviation unit by recentering the leadership variable at that value and showed a significant relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intention,  $B=23.92$ ,  $p<0.05$ . Finally, the second analysis was carried out at a leadership level of -1 standard deviation unit by recentering the leadership variable at that value and the results demonstrated that the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intention was also significant,  $B=26.53$ ,  $p<0.05$ .

**Table 3**  
**MODERATION ANALYSIS OF THE MODERATING EFFECT OF LEADERSHIP ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND TURNOVER INTENTION**

Variable	B	SEB	95% CI	$\beta$	t	p
Constant	432.57	123.03	[0.02, 3.24]	423.42	91.40	0.004
OC	0.63	0.05	[0.98, 5.24]	0.41	4.03	0.021
L	0.44	0.01	[0.78, 8.23]	0.56	5.23	0.028
OC $\times$ L	0.56	0.08	[0.12, 5.07]	0.89	2.59	0.001

## DISCUSSION

This research aimed to assess the mechanism of various factors conducive to turnover intention among managerial staff in the foreign fitness industry in Thailand. The antecedent factors under investigation were turnover intention, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. A sample of managerial staff employed at some fitness clubs was chosen for the purpose of testing the model.

Following the multiple regression analyses, it could be inferred that both job satisfaction and organizational commitment had a significant predictive effect on turnover intention and the effect was mediated by leadership. This is consistent with previous research (Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006; Zapantis, Skordoulis, Chalikias, Drosos & Papagrigoriou, 2017). Specifically, turnover intention decreased with increasing levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment across the range of leadership. It appeared that the presence of a



higher level of leadership could act as a resisting force for lowering turnover intention with increases in job satisfaction or organizational commitment.

The findings, however, contradict previously tested models (Hochwarter, Perrew, Ferris & Gercio, 1999). Rather, job satisfaction seems to predict organizational commitment which, in turn, negatively predicts turnover intention. The proposed model seems to support the view that commitment mediates the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention. This finding is consistent with Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner (2000) who found that organizational commitment predicted turnover better than job satisfaction in their meta-analysis of antecedents and correlates of employee turnover.

Other research has found a similar effect of positive leadership behavior on turnover intention (Kim, 2002; Yousef, 2017). Specifically, it seems that leadership behavior has a direct effect only on job satisfaction; it does not directly predict the level of organizational commitment or turnover intention. It is thus crucial that future research on turnover intention that wishes to study the role of leadership behavior take into account the mediating role of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Because a convenience sample was used, generalizations to populations should be made with extreme caution.

The strength of this study is the inclusion of leadership in the model like others (Mathieu, Fabi, Lacoursière & Raymond, 2016), an advantage over some other studies in which leadership was not tested (Joseph, Koh & Soon, 2007). Here leadership was found to assume an important role in the relationship that contributed to turnover intention. Without this variable in the picture, the model would not accurately reflect the organizational workings.

One limitation of the study involves the use of electronically self-administered questionnaires in measuring psychometric variables. This method may pose a risk of common method variance and thus lead to an overestimation of the relations between attitudinal and behavioral constructs. Nonetheless, this model supports the view expressed previously that turnover models need to include both job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Bentein et al., 2005; Hackett et al., 2001; Wagner, 2007) and that turnover models should take into account the mediating effect of organizational commitment in predicting the impact of job satisfaction on turnover intention (Hackett et al., 2001; Wagner, 2007).

Future research on turnover intention should incorporate in the model other organizational constructs such as employee creativity, employee engagement, organizational culture, organizational conflict and career motivation that are believed to predict turnover intention. Alternatively, researchers can choose to explore some other settings apart from sport organizations. Furthermore, future studies can look into leadership behavior on two different dimensions: task-oriented and people-oriented skills, as proposed by Rad & Yarmohammadian (2006). Such a study would demonstrate which of these two skills contributes to the model more than the other or is most relevant to employee satisfaction planning. Suggested research could be carried out in various domains as shown in (Tsitmideli, Skordoulis, Chalikias, Sidiropoulos & Papagrigroriou, 2016; Skordoulis, Chalikias & Koniordos, 2015; McCarthy et al., 2007).

In light of the results of this study, a fitness operation in Thailand is advised not only to institute programs that will enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment among its managerial staff, but also simultaneously to improve leadership skills of the supervisory staff such that they can lead their organization more productively in today's high-stake competitive sport industry.

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