

**EFFECTS OF CONTINUOUS LEARNING ON COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT IN HANDLING CHANGE A
STUDY OF TONIMAS NIGERIA LIMITED**

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the effects of continuous learning on competence development in handling change in Tonimas Nigeria Limited. Primary data were obtained through distribution of copies of questionnaire 195 staff of fifteen (15) branches of Tonimas Nigeria Limited, while secondary data were obtained from textbooks, internet printout and journals. Chisquare test was used as statistical tool with the aid of spearman's rank correlation coefficient statistical tool (SPSS.20.0) on three null hypotheses. The three were rejected which indicated positive significant effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. The result revealed that a positive significant of continuous learning on competence development in handling change. The study concludes that dimensions of continuous learning at individual level, group level, and organizational level enhances competence development in handling change in Tonimas Nigeria Limited. One of the recommendations is that, managers in Tonimas Nigeria Limited should adopt continuous learning for skill acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of competence development in handling change demands continuous learning is a sine qua non because for competence in handling change is assured, learning must drive the development. Learning is the act of acquiring new or modifying and reinforcing existing knowledge, behaviours, skills, values, or preferences which may lead to a potential change in synthesizing information depth of knowledge, attitude or behaviour relative to the type and range of experience. The ability to learn is possessed by humans, animals, plants and some machines. Learning does not happen all at once, but it builds upon and is shaped by previous knowledge. To that end, learning

may be viewed as a process, rather than a collection of factual and procedural knowledge. Learning produces changes in the organism and the changes produced are relatively permanent (Learning wikipedia). For Northedge (2007), Learning is gaining knowledge and the ability to express it is the way that is expected. Furthermore, human learning may occur as part of education, personal development, schooling, or training. It may be goal-oriented and may be aided by motivation. Among the factors affecting learning are divided into two internal and external. Within the external are heredity, status of students, and physical environment while within internal factors we have goals or purpose, motivational behaviour, interest, attention, drill or practice, fatigue, aptitude, attitude, emotional conditions, speed, accuracy and retention, learning activities, testing, and guidance.

However, the process of learning is a continuous process. We constantly learn, unlearn and relearn through our experiences. To express ideas, to inform people, to communicate, to create and so on, we need to learn. It is said that there are four levels of learning: The first level is unconscious incompetence. This is a stage where we do not know what we do not know. This means that we are not even aware of certain things in this universe. We have no awareness of the existence of certain kind of knowledge. The individual does not understand or know how to do something and does not necessarily recognize this. The second level is conscious incompetence. This means we know what we don't know. There are certain things which exist and which we are aware of, however, we consciously know for a fact that we don't know it. Though the individual does not understand or know how to do something, he or she does recognize this. The making of mistakes can be integral to the learning. The third level of learning is conscious competence. Here individuals were aware of the learning that has taken place. We know what we know. The individual understands or knows how to do something. Execution of the skill plays an important part in this learning process. It requires a lot of concentration. The fourth level of the learning process is unconscious competence. This means that we don't know what we know. Sometimes, we as individuals have had so much practice with a particular skill that it almost becomes our second nature. And this we can perform with utmost ease. As a result, the skill can be performed while doing other things as well. These skills may be taught to other individuals as well, depending upon how and when it was learned (personality development level of human learning by SUSHANT www.personality-development.org retrieved on 28/05/2017). Continuous learning is the ability to apply strategies which support learning and the ability to adapt to change. We use this skill when we learn as part of regular work or from co-workers and when we access training in the workplace or off-site. On a personal level, continuous learning is about the content expansion of skills and skill-sets through learning and increasing knowledge. As life changes

the need to adapt both professionally and personally is as real as the changes themselves on a professional level, continuous learning is about further expanding our skill – set in response to a changing environment and new developments. This is very important because we are called to respond to changes daily; for example, the introduction of computers in the workplace created a need for people to train on computers to complete task more efficiently. Continuous learning should be an important part of career development goals; on an individual level, on a group level and on the organizational level. Specific knowledge and skills become obsolete with time but learning is a permanent skill that will carry you throughout your career and beyond.

Competence development in handling change in the other hand is having sufficient ability or skills acquired through the process of development in handling change. This competence is drawn from the learning process of becoming aware of lack of competence through the stage of skill building which will finally lead to developing mastery through long practice. At this stage of mastery, excellence in handling change is achieved through the process of continuous learning. According to Creasey (2017) an organization that faces constant demands to change and uses effective change management over and over with each new initiative may experience a fundamental shift in its operations. Sponsors begin to repeat activities that made the last change successful. Managers develop skills to support employees through the change. Employees see part of their job as navigating change. Each level in the organization will have internalized its role in change and developed the skills and knowledge necessary react to constant change. The organization has become ready and able to embrace change; it has developed change competency. Notwithstanding the numerous importance of continuous learning in handling change, it is obvious that workers do not deem it necessary that continuous learning in your area of specialization proffer competency. This incessant desire for competence has made it necessary to examine what is continuous learning and its effects on competence development in handling change.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine the effects of continuous learning on competence development in handling change in Tonimas Nigeria Limited.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Certain research questions formulated to get this work are:

- i) Does individual continuous learning have effect on competence development in handling change?
- ii) Does group continuous learning have effect on competence development in handling change?
- iii) Does organizations continuous learning have effect on competence development in handling change?

HYPOTHESES

- Ho₁:** There is no significant effect between continuous learning and competence development in handling change.
- Ho₂:** There is no significant effect between continuous learning and competence development in handling change.
- Ho₃:** There is no significant effect between continuous learning and competence development in handling change.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

In today's fast – paced business world no one's going to give you permission to engage in continuous learning, you must take the initiative yourself. To grow in our jobs requires that we keep on growing and learning, long after our formal schooling is done. The more we are able to know and the more skills we acquire, the more value we can offer to our employers. And that places us in an upward spiral of growing income. Well-known business author and change agent Tom Peter, called it cultivating "towering competence" – becoming the very best at what you do, by continuing to bear and have your skills and capabilities to the point where they become highly regarded and sought after by your co-workers and professional peers. Continuous learning means we are keeping the 'raw materials pile of our brain freshly stocked, which enables us to come up with more and better ideas and innovations which every business needs today. New ideas and solutions are a primary way you can add value to your job, and therefore increase your success. (By innovation tools. com continuous learning: An Essential Strategy for your personal success, www.innovationmanagement.se).

According to Anderson (2013), it is crucial for senior information security professional to build new competencies and maintain existing ones. The rate of technological innovation continues to accelerate. According to Kurzweil's the law of accelerating returns, the 21st century will see almost one thousand times greater technological change than in the prior century. This means information security challenges in managing their associated risk. These new challenges will also generate exciting opportunities and career specifications. Many technologies we manage risk for today did not exist a decade ago, for example, cloud computing, smart phones, virtualization. Fortunately, the options for refreshing and extending knowledge and skills have expanded to allow the members of the information security community to maintain both proficiency and flexibility in their specific domains of expertise. Nowadays, formal training is only a beginning. Knowledge is accumulating at such a fast rate that one must continue to learn to be effective. Indeed, most professions mandate

that their members continue learning in order to maintain their license to practice (Merriam, et al 2007).

Continuous learning refers to the ability to continually develop and improve one's skills and knowledge in order to perform effectively and adapt to change in the workplace. With a goal towards effective performance in the workplace, this ability involves taking responsibility for keeping up-to-date on current research and technology in one's work, identifying and pursuing areas for development and training that will enhance job performance, being able aware of, reflecting on learning from on-going organization changes (Mherzog 2012). According to Deloitte (2015), continuous learning refers to the on-going development of skills, abilities and knowledge through different means (including work on the job, training, experiences, communications etc.) and is part of an individual's on-going professional life at work and outside of work. It is an approach to learning in which corporate resources, expectations and culture encourage employees to learn continuously throughout their tenure with the organization. When we say continuous we mean that traditional courses are no longer seen as the basic building block of learning. Rather, coursework is combined with several other elements that enable and encourage employees to learn in many ways. Continuous learning increases the organization's collective knowledge through enablement and empowerment. Once employees are enabled and empowered, they will find ways to increase their knowledge and share it within the organization. The Bersin by Deloitte continuous learning model classifies these learning needs into the following three main categories – immediate (performance support and other tools for point-of-need learning. Question: what do I need to support my success in the moment?), intermediate (current job development and competency expansion. Question: what do you need to do grow in my current role?), and transitional (development of skill and relationship that will meet long term business goal. Question what do I need to grow in my career?). It also divides learning methods into the following four contexts (known as the four Es) – Education, Experience, Exposure, and Environment.

LEVELS OF CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Continuous learning occurs at three different levels namely; Individual, group and organization.

❖ Individual level: continuous learning means a constant pursuit of knowledge. This information helps individuals do their jobs better and solve problems more creatively, so a lot of companies invest in training online tutorials, or discretionary time for employees to spend learning something new. Sometimes, employees encourage people to do things like learn a new software program or process improvement approach. Other times, they promote out-of-the box employee engagement activities like learning a new language or instrument. This type of learning regardless of

the subject stimulates the mind and encourages employees to approach their work with a broader perspective. Some of the practices of continuous learning at the individual level include:

- Asking questions when you do not understand something
- Asking for feedback or advice from more experienced co-workers
- Identifying learning or training programs that are available to you at work and in your community
- Learning by observing more experienced colleagues or practitioners
- Finding and using learning materials or resources for example, searching the internet, reading articles
- Seeking out and participating in training courses
- Identifying and understating your skill strengths and the areas where you need improvement
- Developing your own learning goals at work and in your personal life
- Applying the lessons you have learned from past experiences to new situations
- Trying new ways of doing things
- Recognizing your preferred learning style for example, learning by seeing, hearing or doing
- Taking responsibility for your own learning
- Maintaining your skill levels by practicing what you have learned.

Continuous learning at the individual level can be done through seminars and workshops, trainings, coaching and mentoring, and also through actual application, on their own, individual can learn by taking up a new course or buying self-help books to guide them as they learn a new knowledge or skill. In this level, learning requires time and effort, as well as the decision to want to learn. It would not be wise to manipulate or force any person to learn something he dislikes, because it would fail miserably. The only thing to do is to make individuals understand the value of continuous learning, and how it will not only help the organization, but most importantly, it will be a great benefit to the banner as well.

❖ Group level: when one person learns something in a continuous learning organization, their information is added to the existing knowledge bank, so that everyone else can benefit from that information. Continuous learning on the group level increases organizational efficiency as new best practices are disseminated and everyone is not constantly reinventing the wheel. Both types of continuous learning – both individual and group – are important for maintaining a culture of continuous improvement. The widened perspective that comes from learning new things solo and from the experience of a group promotes the identification of opportunities for improvement, as well as creative problem solving the more people that are engaged in continuous learning the better,

as each addition to the culture brings a fresh perspective to communal knowledge bank. For Kai (2017) once teams produce enough learning content they will need to reflect on and discuss it. There are two good places to do this. For technical matters, the best place is a programmer's study group and for team, people or process matters, the best place is in an iteration retrospective. Both types of continuous learning in individual and group are important for maintaining a culture of continuous improvement. The widened perspective that comes from learning new things solo and from the experience of a group promotes the identification of opportunities for improvement, as well as creative problem solving. The more people are engaged in continuous learning the better, as each addition to the culture brings a fresh perspective to the communal knowledge bank. Continuous learning for teams is collective individual learning which means that if the members of the team acquire and share new knowledge and information, then team learning takes place. In addition, continuous learning at this level also involves a set of learning processes that support and aid team performance in the form of reflections, feedback, experimentation, group discussions, and Q & A sessions. New knowledge can be in the form of a theory, tool, idea, or concept whereas new skill can be in the form of practices.

❖ Organizational level: continuous learning is increasingly important to success of the organization because of changing economic conditions. Given the current business environment, organizations must be able to learn continuously in order to deal with these changes and, in the end, to survive and thrive. (<http://www.kainexus.com>) retrieved on 30/05/2017. For Exforsys (2010) in any organization, continuous learning means growth through learning events and experiences. It can be applied to individuals, team and organizations – a process that will help them to achieve their overall objectives. Organizational continuous learning comprises change of interaction patterns, change of policies and procedures, new culture, and new innovations and systems that have been institutionalized, which means that these are now embedded in the systems and structures of the organization, as a means to achieve overall objectives. Such changes are more felt in individuals and teams, as they are fundamentally what comprise an organization. Continuous learning at organizational level can be achieved through feedback from the employees themselves, from clients, and from customers. Getting comments and ideas from these groups of people will enable an organization to figure out if changes or developments are necessary in order to move forward. At this level, there are several types of continuous learning that can take place. These are:

i. Single-loop Learning: This would refer to an adaptive type of learning wherein adjustment needs to be made within the organization if it is deemed necessary. These can take in the form of detecting errors and loopholes in policies, structures and procedures.

ii. Double-loop Learning: This type of learning refers to not only detecting and correcting errors and loopholes, but also finding out why it occurred. Once answers have been found, the organization then proceeds to change policies, structures, and procedures.

iii. Generative Learning: This type of learning entails intentionally adding new information, knowledge, and skills in order to make changes in the organization. Individuals and teams may collaboratively work together to understand the current issues the organization faces, and from there identify what needs to be done to address these issues. Such solutions take the form of learning new knowledge and skills. (www.exforsys.com) retrieved on 20/06/2017.

OBJECTIVES OF CONTINUOUS LEARNING

- 1) To update skills and learn new ones, and grows your values
- 2) To build self-confidence and competencies
- 3) Strong continuous learning skills are required to successfully adapt to changing work and life demands
- 4) Organizations must be able to learn continuously in order to deal with these changes and in the end to thrive and survive.

TYPES OF CONTINUAL LEARNING

Continuous learning involves series of methods but we clearly select these ones that are common to all workers and organizations:

Seminars and Workshops: Attending a workshop can improve skills in a specific area. It could be related to your field or completely unrelated.

Read: Books, magazines and websites about your industry can keep you abreast of any changes, listening to educational programs on your ipod while running or in your car, for example, can enhance learning.

Conventions: Attending conventions in your field can broaden knowledge and provide important contacts and networking opportunities.

Coaching and Mentoring: If your company does not have a formal mentoring program, find someone who you admire and someone who is successful and learn from them.

Travel: Travel helps broaden our experience.

Socially: Spend time with friends, we can learn about ourselves through our friends and close relationships.

Weekly meeting: Each Monday, after hours most organizations meet to discuss current projects and share technologies that are being used on these projects.

Technical presentations: Team members may present recent advancement on technologies they are involved closely with.

Internships: An internship is an opportunity offered by an employer to potential employees, called interns, to work at a firm for a fixed, limited period of time. Interns are usually undergraduates or students and most internship last for any length of time between one week and 12 months. It aims at acquiring knowledge and skills in the organization.

COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT IN HANDLING CHANGE

Here the emphasis is on the model widely used in the training literature which looks at the stages of competence development. According to Carnall (2003), in any change setting we move from unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence through conscious incompetence and then conscious competence. The process of moving from unconscious incompetence (in which we are not aware of lack of competence), to a state of conscious incompetence, (in a state of heightened awareness we become immediately aware of lack of competence). This initial process is one of awareness rising. In a change setting, this may come through communication processes, visits and so on, but will often come from facing new demands from customers or sources of competition which cannot really be met. The matters are generally brought out through diagnostic studies, internal reviews, etc. Undertaken by consultants (external or internal), task forces etc. The next process is that of skill building as we move from conscious incompetence to conscious competence. Here we have the first stage of implementation. Skills in new systems, procedures, etc. are developed and practiced. The learning includes change workshop, staff training, surveys etc. Here awareness of the process is high and the level of personal risk taking at its highest. Management support for risk taking is vital as is an understanding that the most important process here may well be experimentation. In competence development, early attempts to use a new approach enable us to identify the modifications usually needed to make it work effectively. This is the process within which individual learning is at its highest and is therefore the time during which organizational learning should be maximized. It is always necessary to capture the lessons from early change trials and change workshops in order to transfer systematically the emerging best practice. The trial process is that of developing excellence through long practice. Here the emphasis is on the performance management system and includes attention to personal development and organizational learning. Now the competence becomes so practiced that we no longer think about it. It becomes embedded in the organization, part of the background.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted survey method to take a snapshot at the situation in the organization and analyse same. Furthermore purposive/convenient sampling technique was adapted to select fifteen (15) branches whose staff strength are more than ten (10). Based on these criteria, we studied the entire population of the respondents in these fifteen (15) branches conveniently selected in Tonimas Nigeria Limited. Here are the fifteen (15) branches in Tonimas Nigeria Limited. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Chi-square was used to analyse the hypotheses with the aid of statistics package for social sciences (SPSS, 20.0) to establish the effects among the dimensions of independent variable on the dependent variables because the data were collected at the ordinal level. To ensure reliability, the Cronbach Alpha coefficients were used to measure the strength and reliability of the questions of the measuring instrument, using the statistical package for social science (SPSS) 20.0. Hence, only the item that returns alpha value of 0.7 was considered.

Branches of Tonimas Service Station (TSS)

S/N	Name of Branches/Address	Staff Population
1.	TSS 24 Aba-Owerri Road Aba	20
2.	TSS 23 Okigwe Road Aba	18
3.	TSS 12 Okigwe Town	19
4.	TSS 8 PH Road Aba	16
5.	TSS 31 High Level Road Makurdi	15
6.	TSS 15 Yenegoa Road, Yenegoa	20
7.	TSS 17 Umuahia	19
8.	TSS 4 Owerri	18
9.	TSS 18 Calabar	14
10.	TSS 36 Igbo-Ukwu, Anambra State	20
11.	Head Office Margaret Avenue Aba	15
12.	Transport Division Aba-Ph-Express Road	12
13.	TSS 19 Trikania 5 Kaduna	18
14.	Tonimas Lagos Office Apapa Lagos	16
15.	TSS 13 Ikom Cross River State	14
	Total	478

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Taro Yamane's formula was used to determine the sample size as follows;

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where: n= Sample size sought, e² = level of significant and N = population size

$$n = \frac{478}{1 + 478(0.05)^2}$$

2.2 n = 217 (sample size)

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Response rate on research instrument distributed to Tonimas Nigeria Limited.

S/N	Respondent School	No. of question distributed	No. of questionnaire returned and percentage	No. of unreturned questionnaire and percentage
1.	TSS 24 Aba Owerri Aba	15	15 (100%)	0 (0%)
2.	TSS 23 Okigwe Road Aba	15	15 (100%)	0 (0%)
3.	TSS 12 Okigwe Town	15	15 (100%)	0 (0%)
4.	TSS 8 Ph Road Aba	15	13 (86.7%)	2 (13.3%)
5.	TSS 31 High Level Road	15	12 (80.0%)	3 (20.0%)
6.	TSS 15 Yenegoa Road	15	7 (46.7%)	8 (53.3%)
7.	TSS 17 Umuahia	15	15 (100%)	0 (0%)
8.	TSS 4 Owerri	15	15 (100%)	0 (0%)
9.	TSS 18 Calabar	15	14 (93.3%)	1 (6.7%)
10.	TSS 36 Igbo Ukwu Anambra	15	15 (100%)	0 (0%)
11.	Head Office Margaret Av Aba	15	12 (80.0%)	3 (20.0%)
12.	Transport Division Aba/Ph Ex	15	12 (92.3%)	1 (7.7%)
13.	TSS 19 Trikania 5 Kaduna	13	10 (76.9%)	3 (23.1%)
14.	Lagos Office Apapa Lagos	13	13 (100%)	0 (0%)
15.	TSS 13 Ikom Cross River	13	12 (92.3%)	1 (7.7%)
	Total	217	195 (89.9%)	22 (10.1%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Out of the 217 copies of questionnaire distributed to the respondents of Tonimas Company, 195 copies were returned by the respondents which represented 89.9% of the total copies of questionnaire distributed.

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION

The different questions formulated in this study were analysed in this section

ANALYSES OF RESPONSE RATES

Response rate on individual continuous learning and competence development in handling change

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
To a great extent	72	36.9	36.9	36.9
To a considerable extent	63	32.3	32.3	69.2
To a moderate extent	40	20.5	20.5	89.7
To a slight extent	13	6.7	6.7	96.4
Not at all	7	3.6	3.6	100
Total	195	100	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2017

From the table above, response rate on to a great extent was 72 (36.9%), to considerable extent was 63 (32.3%), to a moderate extent 40 (20.5%), to a slight extent was 13 (6.7%), and not at all was 7 (3.6%).

Research Question Two: to what extent does group continuous learning affect competence development in handling change?

Response rate on group continuous learning and competence development in handling change

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
To a great extent	84	43.1	43.1	43.1
To a considerable extent	51	26.2	26.2	69.3
To a moderate extent	33	16.9	16.9	86.2
To a slight extent	17	8.7	8.7	94.9
Not at all	10	5.1	5.1	100
TOTAL	195	100	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

From the table above, response rate on to a great extent was 84 (43.1%), to a considerable extent were 51 (26.2%), to a moderate extent 33 (16.9%), and to a slight extent was 17 (8.7%), and not at all was 10 (5.1%).

Response rate on organization's continuous learning and competence development in handling change

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
To a great extent	68	34.9	34.9	34.9
To a considerable extent	60	30.8	30.8	65.7
To a moderate extent	54	27.7	27.7	93.4
To a slight extent	13	6.6	6.6	100
Not at all	0	0	0	100
TOTAL	195	100	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2017

From the table above, response rate on to a great extent was 68 (34.9%), to considerable extent were 60 (30.8%), to a moderate extent were 54 (27.7%), to a slight extent were 13 (6.6%), and not at all was 0 (0%).

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

Ho₁: There is no significant effect between individual continuous learning and competence development in handling change.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.977 ^a	9	.001
Likelihood Ratio	13.066	9	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.213	1	.060
N of Valid Cases	195		

a. 7 cells (43.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .62.

Decision: Since the p-value or sig. (0.001) < the alpha level (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis and accept alternate hypothesis. The study therefore state that individual continuous learning has significant effect on competence development.

Ho₂: There is no significant effect between group continuous learning and competence development in handling change.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.496 ^a	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	11.967	9	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	.411	1	.076
N of Valid Cases	195		

a. 9 cells (56.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .41.

Decision: Since the p-value or sig. (0.000) < (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis and accept alternate hypothesis. The study therefore state that group continuous learning has significant effect on competence development.

Ho₃: There is no significant effect between organization's continuous learning and competence development in handling change.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.109 ^a	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	15.403	9	.010
Linear-by-Linear Association	.252	1	.086
N of Valid Cases	195		

a. 8 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .51.

Decision: Since the p-value or sig. (0.000) < (0.05), we reject the null hypothesis and accept alternate hypothesis. The study therefore state that organization’s continuous learning has significant effect on competence development.

FINDING AND CONCLUSION

Based on the results above, the study found that continuous learning has a positive significant effect on competence development in handling change. The study concluded that continuous learning that is based on individual level, group level and organizational level enhances competence development in handling change in Tonimas Nigeria Limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the conclusion, the following recommendations were made;

- 1). Continuous learning helps to update skill, learn new ones, and grow in your values.
- 2). It helps employees to build self-confidence and competence required to successfully adapt to changing work and life demands.
- 3). organizations must be able to learn continuously in order to handle changes effectively and efficiently.

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