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Technological innovation and today's workforce in the efficiency of workers in sport retail stores

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to examine, through an analysis, the technological innovation and today's workforce and how they affect efficiency in workers and organizations in sport retail stores, to this end, the research was guided by a postpositivist, qualitative, documentary approach, with bibliographic design, including literary review to know the state of the art of the categories studied, as well as the collection of information obtained from the bases of data, scientific journals, degree projects, institutional repositories, as well as the identification of objectives. The findings demonstrate the existence of a large number of theoretical references on the subject, which shows how understanding of personality within the organization is a strength that allows for growth and development in attitude and persuasion in the workforce. Also, there is a strong sense of motivation within internal users of the organization that can be used as an advantage to learn and adapt to new technologies, with the explicit recognition of team importance, improvements can be made to address conflicts and any interferences with organizational structure within the organization and makes them more productive.

Key words: Technological Innovation, Workforce, Sport retail store.

INTRODUCTION

The sports retail industry is renowned; it has a flourishing and significant incentive in advancing technological innovation. The coherence of the Sport Chek organization makes it integral in the analysis and cognizance of worker efficiency. The growth and development within the sports retail stores structures and organization are noteworthy. Sport Chek is one of the leading and innovative retailers with a wide range of products

available ("About Sport Chek," n.d.). The application of technological innovation in the workforce can ease expanding into international markets. Further exploration into Sport Chek is imperative to understand the organization's position in creating change within sports retail stores.

Sport Chek is known from its iconic status and brand appeal, it is Canada's leading sporting goods brand ("20 Best Canadian retail stores for Sporting Goods," 2021). Many Canadians have shopped there and had a memorable and positive experience. The retailer's net sales of around 40 million dollars last year were remarkable for company growth ("Ecommerce DB," n.d.). As an appealing brand to the youth and older audience, Sport Chek has growth opportunities in the international market.

Sport Chek is a well-known retailer of sports merchandise, including apparel, footwear, and equipment ("Sport Chek works out a new strategy," 2013). They have outlet mall locations in various cities. Sport Chek currently has 191 stores across Canada and Sports Experts' sister brand ("Sport Chek," 2021). The history of the retailer is extensive and comprehensive. Sport Chek was founded in 1999 by The Forzani Group Ltd sports (FGL) and was bought out by Canadian Tire in 2011 ("Sport Chek," 2021). Their dedication to the community is substantial. Sport Chek's mission statement is focused on helping Canadians be active through moving and promoting healthy, energetic lifestyles ("About Sport Chek," n.d.). The company strives to support active living. Sport Chek is a well-known retailer, their motto is "your better starts here" (Dallaire, 2019). The company seeks to build a bond with their customers. By promoting inclusivity and inspiration, physical activity appeals to the population (Laird, 2012). The brand appeal focuses on individual aspirations to be healthier and encourage an active lifestyle. The consumer contributes to their health, improving the brand image of a better self ("Sport Chek works out a new strategy," 2013).

Sport Chek focuses on creating new relationships with customers and creating a healthy lifestyle brand in its customers' eyes. The company has an excellent reputation in Canada as one of the most popular sports retail stores (Bautista, 2021). The company has good financial standing and an admirable reputation and relationship with its customers, which will be the reason for increased success. This report will investigate organizational challenges, personality perceptions, aspects of communication, and culture.

METHODOLOGY

The research that originated this article was directed with postpositivist method, qualitative approach, documentary and bibliographical design, understanding the literary review, the information as well as the identification and categorization of objectives. Different sources were explored, such as books, scientific articles, databases that brought together scientific journals, repositories, through which relevant information was compiled, working documentary observation with the matrix analysis of the categories, by means of a comparative critical review.

Pelekais et al., (2015), for whom speaking of documentary research refers to a study that demand for its development of a pre-existing condition have selected a topic in specific that needs to expand, for it to be done, it must have been defined and sufficiently justified for the purpose of exploring the reality of what is investigating in the sources consulted, also concern the need for accuracy, clarity, as well as the level of synthesis which must meet, so realized approach demonstrates relevance and total correspondence with what was analyzed. In this way, it is possible to respond to the objectives or purposes raised at the beginning.

Organizational Challenges faced today

Hofstede's dimensions of culture are composed of five aspects that provide insight into understanding society (Soares et al., 2007). According to Hofstede's dimensions, Canada scores 80 in individualism which is the country's highest score from all dimensions. While China scores 20 on the individualism dimension, indicating it is a collectivist culture (Figure 1). The difference in goals is an issue that arises from expanding from an individualistic culture to a collectivist culture that focuses on the overall collective good. In Canada, employees can prioritize their needs to achieve personal power and gain, which would be disagreeable and impudent to China's view on achieving a common goal. The difference in attaining goals impacts the long-term orientation dimension. China scores 87 on the long-term orientation, which is the country's highest score. The collectivist culture embraces long-lasting relationships and works hard for an extended period to attain its goals to benefit everyone in the population. Canada is more of a normative society that strives for prompt outcomes.

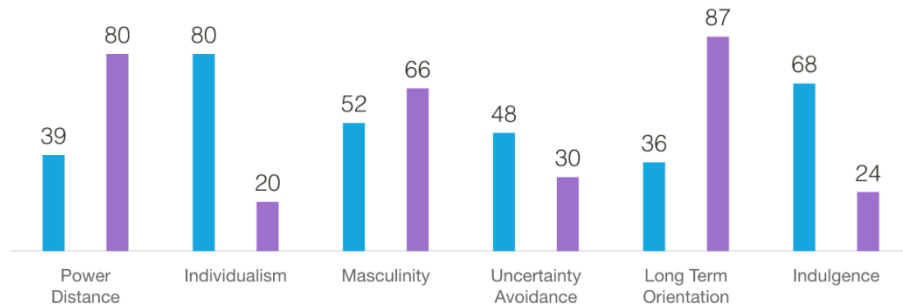


Figure 1. Hofstede Insights showing dimensions between China and Canada. Canada is shown in blue, and China is represented in purple (“Compare countries,” 2021).

Two recommendations for overcoming cultural differences are diversity training and creating inclusive workplace teams. These recommendations rely on the strengths of an individualistic culture and seek to improve the weaknesses through diversifying the workplace and advocating for inclusivity.

Diversity training can allow individuals to use an open-minded attitude and promote a constructive and functional environment. The program can bring awareness of the differences between individualistic and collectivist cultures. It employs trainers with an open and inclusive mindset for promoting effective intergroup behaviours (Pendry et al., 2007). The program emphasizes diversity as a competitive advantage and establishes positive attitudes (Holladay et al., 2003). It helps with individual apprehension of unknowingly discriminating against groups. The recognition of social identity can transform the independent mindset into a collective outlook.

An inclusive workplace team integrated into the Sport Chek workforce promotes team building and coherent communication. Having a team with skilled members enhances creativity and knowledge (Erhardt et al., 2014). The inclusive atmosphere allows individuals to speak openly and have a sense of security in expressing themselves. It helps with employee engagement in discussions for problem-solving (Erhardt et al., 2014). It provides opportunities for open feedback to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the workforce.

Technological Innovation and Today’s Workforce

The progression of technology has led the way for nontraditional work settings. Individuals have a positive attitude towards adopting a flexible work schedule that allows

options for working remotely. Examples of alternative work arrangements are telecommuting and satellite offices (Nelson et al., 2020). Both are types of teleworking arrangements that are prominent in today's workforce.

Telecommuting provides opportunities for a work-life balance through adjustable practices and settings. The rise of mobile connections increased the digital transfer of documents (Allen et al., 2015). It allows employees to work in their own quiet and secure locations. Telecommuting is positively impacting the workforce by increasing the jobs available from remote locations with flextime (Allen et al., 2015). The impacts on work relationships are varied between coworkers and managers. Increased proximity and connectedness are seen with managers while unfavorable associations with colleagues (Allen et al., 2015). The extent to which an employee spends time telecommuting influences their job performance. As a result of working in isolation, prolonged periods of telecommuting negatively impact commitment to completing quality work (Allen et al., 2015).

Satellite offices are small-scale worksites that allow individuals to work remotely from the central offices (Nelson et al., 2020). It allows large corporations to downsize and provide incentives for flexible work alternatives (Srinivasan Rao, 1995). They have numerous advantages for employees of an organization. The growth of job performance results from minimized distractions and positive experiences in the office. There are remarkable advancements in productivity and the inclusive team environment (Srinivasan Rao, 1995).

Personality Assessments in Organizations

The Big Five Personality Traits is a theory that seeks to explain and understand the dimensions of individual personality traits. It has numerous applications, including understanding entrepreneurial personality and learning styles. The model provides insights into individual achievement and performance dynamics in a work environment (Komarraju et al., 2011). This model will be used to understand the personality traits of Sport Chek's company leader.

The late John Forzani, the founder of The Locker Room, which later became Forzani Group, was a Calgarian businessperson and played with the Calgary Stampeders for seven years. John Forzani was an extroverted person; he was a known leader and coach,

as he establish agreements with their employees with respect to their role and responsibilities, and they give a lot of orientation and at the same time communicational feedback. (Ramirez et al., 2019).

He spent much time speaking at universities and high schools to give insights on entrepreneurialism, leadership, and team building ("JA Southern Alberta," n.d.). John was a sociable person; he was known for quickly visiting employees during the day to say hello. John's compassion and kindness are what pushed him to give back to the community in many ways, such as The Forzani Mother's Day run and the formation of The Forzani Group Foundation in the promotion of health and wellness. ("JA Southern Alberta," n.d.). Forzani's Locker Room was opened by John and people that had a close relationship with him ("JA Southern Alberta," n.d.). This shows a great deal of agreeableness and working well with others. Together, they grew the business into 23 locations across Alberta and Saskatchewan in five years ("JA Southern Alberta," n.d.).

Being a husband, a father of two, football teammate, business partner, and entrepreneur shows emotional stability, organization, and dependability. Personal values, ethics and commitment to the corporation's organizational culture are essential for maintaining a positive perception (Hemingway, 2005). These personality traits are crucial for success in all aspects of his career and home life.

Bias and Barriers to Social Perception

A perceptual barrier that would affect Forzani's hiring process is selective perceptions. As an entrepreneur, it is essential to be open to information, whether it supports your viewpoints or threatens those views. A problem that may arise from selective perceptions is a lack of diversity in the hiring process. Having selective perceptions could cause decisions to be made based on personal views rather than doing what is best for growth in the corporation. An individual's values can influence their approach to corporate social responsibility and behaviour (Hemingway, 2005). When expanding businesses, there is a great deal of research to ensure success.

Ethical Behaviour

Sport Chek's mission is to promote a healthy lifestyle ("Sport Chek," 2021). The company desires to inspire people of all ages to be more active and healthier. Although

their products are for everyone, not just athletic people, they promote themselves as a sports store. Sport Chek's slogan is to find what moves you ("Sport Chek," 2021). This statement summarizes the company's values. Its mission and slogan highlight its strategic direction in providing a personal connection and fulfillment to individuals' lives.

Sport Chek was promoting that everyone can be an athlete. According to the vice president of Canadian Tire, the parent company of Sport Chek, the company began to broaden "find what moves you" to include every level of an athlete ("Sport Chek," 2021). Sport Chek has always gone beyond when it comes to helping the community. For example, in March of 2021, Sport Chek was following a mom who was not a runner or pro athlete ("Sport Chek," 2021). They did this to show that although she is not as fit as a pro athlete, she still has the motivation and drive. Rather than get extra sleep in the morning, she gets up and goes on a run before living her hectic day.

Persuasion and Sport Chek

Sport Chek has typically used attractive or physically fit actors in its advertisements to attract its target audience. The company wants to invite customers looking to get into shape and live a healthy lifestyle. Typically, seeing people fit in advertisements will push people to "want to take care of themselves and try to increase their self-perceived attractiveness" (Kniffin & Wilson, 2004). However, this idea has shifted for the brand, starting with releasing an inclusivity advertising campaign in 2018.

Sport Chek has used social media to attract an audience of ages between 18-34 who have heavily invested their time in social media. The company's most recent advertisement campaign has focused on inclusivity, claiming that sport and fitness are for "all ages, all abilities, and all sizes" (Dallaire, 2019). This short advertisement was capped off with Sport Chek's slogan, find what moves you ("Sport Chek," 2021). Sport Chek had historically been using advertisements geared towards men, but now has brought this inclusive marketing to its most recent advertisements to attract a bigger audience that has included men and both women and children. This marketing structure will allow the company to target a larger audience and profit from persuading this audience to purchase more of its products.

The message that has been used to persuade Sport Chek's audience has been an open invitation for healthy lifestyles and sport to improve the inclusive image of the retailer. This

is to provide consumers with an attitude where everyone is welcome. David Lui, the vice president of marketing for Sport Chek, found through consumer research that 57% of Canadians realize that living an active and healthy lifestyle is important. (Dallaire, 2019). With this information, the brand has been more inclusive with its target marketing audience in hopes of reaching more potential consumers.

Attitude Change

The cognitive change that comes from a shift in advertising and the overall message put out into the business space and consumers' minds have changed how Sport Chek is perceived. Shifting the advertising to become more inclusive has changed who is purchasing products from Sport Chek. The company's message was changed to target a larger audience in 2018, which included women and children on top of the already targeted audience of men and included "all sizes and abilities." This message change had provided an increased revenue stream for Sport Chek. The inclusivity marketing structure was released in 2018, showing that the company had approximately 1.97 billion in revenue the previous year (Canadian Tire, 2018). The revenue increased to approximately 2.04 billion in 2019, a considerable jump of around 70 million over the span of two years (Canadian Tire, 2020). Successful market development is what has led to substantial growth in the company.

Communicating Through Technology

The term digital natives refer to the millennial generation who are accustomed to the cyber world; the sense of digital connection shapes their values and perceptions (Nelson et al., 2020). Digital natives influence Sport Chek's method of communication by focusing on the internet and computerized technology to share and transfer information. The digital environment has become intertwined with their means of communication, socialization, and learning (Helsper & Eynon, 2010). Digital natives comprise a large segment of Sport Chek's target audience, impacting the dissipating of organizational barriers.

Digital communication has become the norm, although it has disadvantages in personal interaction and misinterpretations of nonverbal cues (Nelson et al., 2020). With digital communication, aspects such as hiring new employees have become more challenging. The reduction of in-person interviews and personal interaction can result in

employers misinterpreting nonverbal cues during the interview process. Finding a candidate with the personality traits that uphold company values is important. Interviews are a way to see if the applicant is enthusiastic, passionate, and the correct fit for the role.

The advantages of digital communications are enhanced participation and overcoming communication barriers (Nelson et al., 2020). Online shopping helps with reducing obstacles in communication. It provides opportunities to find products that are the right fit and match the consumer. For example, when purchasing a hockey stick, customers may choose through many options and read reviews to pick the perfect one based on the information provided. Sports Chek's website allows for digital shopping, offering curbside pickup or delivery ("Sport Chek," 2021). Digital communications allow Sport Chek to market its product to anyone with access to the internet. This results in a higher profit and allows customers to have a more accessible and convenient experience.

Sport Chek relies heavily on retail purchases as it has around 397 locations nationwide (Canadian Tire, 2020). Physical separation barriers started in 2020 for retail stores as Covid-19 lockdowns were prevalent across all Canadian provinces, leading to loss of revenue for Sport Chek and other brands under the Canadian Tire ownership ("Sport Chek," 2022). Retail stores were forced to abide by governmental restrictions and limit their capacities. As a result, "Covid-19 restrictions have led to the company losing 13.1% in revenues from 2019" (The Canadian Press, 2020).

Another communication barrier that has been a threat to Sport Chek is consumers' and employees' perception of the brand. Online research involving the work environment at Sport Chek as suggested that they offer poor training, leaving employees inefficient (The Canadian Press, 2020). The same can be argued from the staff side about the management of the store to store. As a result of the communication barrier, the company lacking managerial skills results in a toxic work environment.

To battle the physical separation barrier set between Sport Chek and its consumers by Covid-19 restrictions, a compelling communication medium, e-commerce has been used far more. It has led to a recovered revenue loss as online purchases have increased significantly over the past two years. Canadian Tire CEO (Chief Executive Officer) Greg Hicks says that "the company as a whole has seen a 44% increase in e-commerce sales" (The Canadian Press, 2020). With e-commerce booming, this could be a gateway between consumers and the company going forward and should be advertised more.

To prevent the brand's image from being tarnished by bad reviews from consumers and employees, the company should use 'active listening' and investigate providing in-depth training programs to management and associates. Consistent training provided by every store and department can lead to a positive work environment for associates and managers and help increase sales, as the employees will want to work for the company longer, and employee turnover will decrease (go2HR, 2020). An improved training program will provide consumers with a more consistent and pleasant in-store experience and continue to support the business (go2HR, 2020).

Motivation and Needs Theory

The needs theories focus on the premise that unfulfilled desires and wants are factors that influence an individual (Nelson et al., 2020). An example of a need theory is the ERG theory that Sport Chek exemplifies profoundly in its values and commitment to promoting a healthy lifestyle among individuals. The ERG theory by Clayton Alderfer is based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, although it is modified to incorporate a regression proposition emphasizing efforts to fulfill lower category needs when other needs are not fulfilled (Nelson et al., 2020).

Sport Chek employees are motivated by the links between an existence that incorporates basic needs and relatedness and growth. As team members, they are paid and have access to material objects. The relatedness factor is from colleague interaction and competition to make the most sales and be an employee of the month. It was announced in late 2008 that the commission was removed to help with after-sales service and client relations (Ryan, 2008). Furthermore, the highest level is growth, in which employees focus on personal development and self-esteem. It focuses on how employees can progress to fulfill their own needs, from learning and to be on the Sport Chek team to attaining purpose. With attention to this, the present manuscript considers effective the use of cognitive tools linked to the phenomenon, as an edifying process for the personal development of each individual, noting that it allows each human being to take advantage of their characteristics, qualities, abilities and skills in the exercise of their functions in positions of popular election. (Buitrago & El Kadi 2019)

Process Theory

The process theories center on extrinsic variables that impact individual motivation (Nelson et al., 2020). An example of a process theory is the equity theory rooted in social transactions. The equity theory focuses on fairness being an essential component in interactions with others, whereas it lacks influence on individuals and their acts (Nelson et al., 2020). It is based on the interaction between inputs and outcomes that results in a ratio that could be equitable or inequitable (Al-Zawahreh & Al-Madi, 2012). For example, Sport Chek employees put in their time and effort and receive pay and recognition. The subjective ratio compared to their coworkers can be a factor of motivation (Nelson et al., 2020). Generally, receiving more awards and putting in advanced levels of experience, effort, and time results in a higher ratio that is balanced and equitable. Although, if an individual put in the same amount of time and effort and has lower pay, recognition and status, it results in a disparate ratio and inequity. The lack of fairness evolves into tension and other emotions (Al-Zawahreh & Al-Madi, 2012). An individual in this situation would be motivated to pursue justification and take the initiative to settle the unfairness.

Motivation Strategy

The McClelland's Needs Theory can be implemented in Sport Chek's organization to acknowledge the importance of achievement in the workplace, power in the organizational structure and affiliation in networking. Although one need is usually more vigorous, the theory looks at the links between motivating aspects (Fisher, 2009). The three components of the theory can be comprehended subconsciously, and their impacts are unique in a group of people (Nelson et al., 2020).

Intrinsic Incentive

The need for achievement is a category within McClelland's Needs Theory that highlights those that admire challenges and defeat obstacles (Nelson et al., 2020). An example of an intrinsic incentive is an intrinsic reward, such as a sense of satisfaction after fulfilling a demanding task. An employee is given a chance to run a staff meeting and handle it effectively fulfils achievement needs. Satisfaction is linked to emotions associated with mastery (Fisher, 2009). The task's difficulty is a motivating factor to perform effectively in the workplace.

Extrinsic Incentive

Another component of McClelland's Needs Theory is the need for power, which is based on the control and authority of individuals and occasions (Nelson et al., 2020). An example of an extrinsic factor is fame which is linked to individual benefits and compliance from others. The individual can benefit the workplace environment by bringing socialized strength to the organization. Fame has vast advantages, one of the most important ones is its influences on internal and external networking in an organization. Organizational power also has its shortcomings in coercion and domination of others as a result of positioning and authority (Fleming & Spicer, 2014). Furthermore, fame has impacts on decision-making and structure within the organization.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Teams

There are many practical reasons to form a team. Teams can often overcome problems because they bounce off each other's ideas when people work together. In contrast, sometimes teams are rather inefficient because individuals have differing opinions and may become lazy while others handle the work. Although having a team increases costs, sometimes it is more beneficial to have a team (Wilton, 2016). The immense success of Sport Chek is a result of not being afraid to take risks.

An example of a problem Sport Chek had to overcome was the shift in technology. When the management of Sport Chek realized that everything was becoming more digital, they needed a large team to create websites, digital advertising, and figure out how to ship products to people's homes. Sport Chek developed a marketing team and a design team rather than having one individual solve this issue, which is laborious.

Teamwork is essential to finding innovative ideas as solutions to demanding situations. When people work as a team, it allows multiple opinions, more efficient work, and increased problem-solving. Working in a team in the Sport Chek environment is necessary because individuals alone could not produce comparable results given the demand in-store and online.

A reason that enforces the use of teamwork is marketing within the corporation. A marketing team approaching projects can save the company resource costs and time allocated on task completion. If Sport Chek only had one person in charge of marketing, the outcomes would concentrate on less of a variety of ideas. In contrast, a team of marketing personnel could brainstorm ideas that increase work quality and improve company morale

(Ansary, 2021). Moreover, the need to strategically engage both quality and logistics, in the designing of a holistic process oriented to the present and future customer satisfaction, under the vision of continuous improvement cycle. (Martínez & El Kadi 2019).

Another critical reason a company like Sport Chek would hire a team rather than an individual is fewer mistakes and less burnout (Middleton, 2022). If your work is getting double-checked, there is less room for error, and other people's opinions will overall give you a better result. When your employees are happier, they work more efficiently and tend not to burn out, moreover it will have a positive impact on productivity and makes working together as team giving the opportunity to take vacations and rest. (De Pelekais & El Kadi, 2019).

Sport Chek may have difficulties with group cohesion and clarity. Team members must be on the same page about how the company wants to improve digitally and how the team will achieve this together. Many aspects can be touched on to be improved upon, such as advertising, website creation, and supply chain; there is bound to be something that will impact the team and its members and its interpersonal glue.

With so many different jobs and tasks involved in completing such a big project of creating more of an online presence, Sport Chek must have team members that will be comfortable creating and committing to norms. The most important norms that are needed are "commitment to the team, communication, and finding a way to keep every member satisfied with the overall product and task completion" (Nelson et al., 2020). Lack of group cohesion without creating norms and clarity can lead to breakdowns in the team and errors in the final product as it may not be what Sport Chek needs to succeed. Sport Chek needs a digital platform, and online presence that can attract consumers to purchase products from the company and to have group cohesion and clarity of what tasks need to be completed will ensure the project is successful.

Suggestions for Improvement

Clear and consistent meetings provided by Sport Chek team leadership will support the scope of the entire project as well as the goals of the project for the team to achieve. "Team leaders can supply questions to be answered every meeting that pertains to the progress of the team and project, and this will help to make sure everyone is on the same page" (Pante, 2020). Meetings with clear outlined information and objectives for each team member will provide the team with support and clarity on which team member is

responsible for each objective leading to completion of the project. With group work, “if the group members do not realize their purpose, the project can fall apart quickly” (Bhasin, 2016). When everything and everyone involved in a project “is clear, the team’s goals, values, and motivations all start to align, and group work becomes easier and quicker” (Bhasin, 2016). At the same time, having a strong employee retention and loyalty; and a sense of goodwill built up over time and inclined to take better care of employees and offer better benefits than traditional businesses. (El Kadi 2020). For Sport Chek to become a competitive online retailer, the team assigned to this project will have to find a way to compete with larger stores that already have a foothold on the digital market. The group will need to have clarity and cohesion on all levels to complete this project of creating a competitive digital platform to contend against bigger retailers.

CONCLUSION

Sport Chek has shown substantial domination in the dimension of technological innovation and workforce advancements. Some of the major developments are their accessibility plan, headway in cultural differences and work-related attitudes that contribute to their inclusive cooperation in the workplace. The atmosphere and environment are unprecedented through its operation of telecommuting and satellite offices. The understanding of personality within the organization is a strength that allows for growth and development in attitude and persuasion in the workforce. With the diversification of digital communication methods in the organization, it is essential to have effective and open communication. Sport Chek utilizes technology as a means to communicate to their gain because of the mastering and defeating of communication barriers. Sport Chek expresses a strong sense of motivation within internal users of the organization that can be used as an advantage to learn and adapt to new technologies. With the explicit recognition of team importance, improvements can be made to address conflicts and any interferences with organizational structure within the organization. The use of power from executives in the industry has positively impacted both internal and external forces. As an entirety, all these factors have catalyzed upheaval in the application of technology to empower and make growth in Sport Chek’s personnel.

The organization has manifested robust dedication to technological innovations. In the future, it is anticipated that Sport Chek will be a figurehead in the sports retail industry, employing technology and automation to ease organizational practices. Furthermore, the

dynamic nature of today's workforce will lead to significant transformations in the use of technology.

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