(IJ-01) A New Method for Using Feedback to Improve Team Process Effectiveness

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Intervention Processes for Strategic Planning, Change Management and Training & Development have been commonplace since the 1960s or even earlier. However, recently the escalation of change has reached a fever pitch and being able to adapt quickly has never been more important. Many executives in 2025 believe that having effective teamwork is crucial to the success of their businesses. It is effective teamwork that makes quick adaptation possible.

Using an Intervention Process, organizations can often improve a team's effectiveness. In general, intervention processes only work about 50% of the time. This research proposes a method for taking advantage of feedback so that the process can be accelerated and improved. A new method for using feedback, called Observed Objective Feedback (OOF), will be presented along with support for the approach and an illustration for a specific process example. The example will include a description of the key players involved, a description of the variables that make up the feedback (for this example), plus a description of how they will be used to improve team processes. This study presents a new method for monitoring team process interventions. This tool aims to improve team awareness and ultimately team performance.

INTRODUCTION

Scharmer noticed that sometimes their tools and processes worked for an intervention with clients and sometimes they didn't (Scharmer & Yukelson, 2015). Upon looking into this further, he realized that the quality of their results depended on the quality of awareness of those that participated in the intervention. This led to my notion that if awareness could be increased during the intervention, it might be possible to transform an ineffective intervention into an effective one. This means that a method for using feedback to improve team processes might be able to facilitate that team and enable it to be productive.

BACKGROUND

Some type of qualitative technique is needed. A number of Observation Methods have been used in the past for various research purposes. They can involve participant observation or non-participant observation, and they can be a result of direct or indirect observation.

(See Table1)

Table 1 Comparison of 4 Main Types of Observations

Type	Participant	Direct	Indirect	Non-participant
How?	Observing from an insider perspective, as an active participant of a group or organization. It requires full cultural immersion (although only temporarily) while sustaining analytical mindset	Active observing of events unfolding in front of our eyes to record behavior in the environment where it naturally occurs. Usually requires some immersion in the field of study but not necessarily in the culture itself	Research through collecting information, for instance, in the form of videos or written descriptions of events. Also, self-ethnography, remembering events and environments in order to analyze them	Observation from an outsider perspective without interacting with subjects of an observation. The researcher may take the position of an "alien" from a different planet or reality in order to achieve a distance from the well-known
When?	Useful when insider's point of view is important and to gain access to tacit knowledge	In-depth understanding of a social group or an organization but from an external/ independent point of view	Useful when direct observation wasn't possible when the events naturally occurred	Useful when observing a well-known reality, for example, a public place, and there is a need for regarding it from a totally new perspective

(Source: Ciesielska, M.; et al. Chapter 2, p. 43, Observation Methods.*Qualitative Methodologies in Organization Studies. Copyright 2018.)*

Observation Methods are not considered to be scientific methods unless they are carried out systematically using a very structured approach. However, the context of the situation will ultimately determine the way observation can be useful.

Observation Methods are often used in market research. A company called QuestionPro (2025) identified various steps for their Observational Research including: 1) Have a Clear Objective; 2) Get Permission from Participants to watch them; 3) Make sure the observations are unbiased and only "what is seen" is documented, not opinions; 4) Hide Observers so that participants are not aware of them and therefore will not skew their behavior due to being watched; 5) Document the observations; & 6) Use Data Analysis to draw conclusions or confirm a hypothesis. Observations can be done in a natural or a controlled setting, so this must be determined prior to the implementation process.

The biggest problem when using Observation Methods is Researcher Bias because the researcher often conducts the observations and isn't able to separate the actual behavior observed from the view they see through their own filters.

A company called Fuel Cycle (2025) states that Observational Data is appropriate

1) when you need to look at sensitive information and you don't trust participants to be honest in self-reporting; 2) when you need to gain a better understanding about a research question; 3) when it's a new topic and you need to understand participant's behavior better; 4) when behavior in a controlled setting is critical for your research; & 5) when self-reported data might differ from actual actions (even unintentionally). All of these criteria apply for this study regarding team processes.

A lot of research has been done on what it takes for team processes to be effective. Here I will mention some of it, but it's important to note that the studies that have been done are voluminous. Attah, et al (2024) talks about the effectiveness of cross-functional teams, especially for innovation and for technology challenges. Such teams work across silos and are able to accomplish a lot more in a shorter amount of time than more traditional teams

that work within departments. They also talk about the need for leadership and effective communication in order to get the most out of cross-functional teams. They mention that emotional intelligence and conflict resolution are two ways to enhance team dynamics. Finally, they talk about developing teams that have resilience and that are agile and adaptable and able to respond quickly to rapidly changing circumstances.

Moleka (2024) offers a transdisciplinary framework for driving innovation. His approach is transdisciplinary which means that it integrates knowledge, methods, and frameworks from many different academic fields. These include management, psychology, sociology, economics, and technology. Using a synthesis of these diverse perspectives allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the way innovation actually happens. It involves Multilevel Analysis which is at the individual, team, organizational, and eco-system levels. It involves Contextual Embeddedness and acknowledges that contextual factors play a role in shaping innovation. His framework aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice by allowing insights to shape management practices as well as ecosystem-level initiatives. Finally, he's a big believer in collaboration and that interventions can bridge the gap between innovation theory and practice.

Moleka (2024) has identified a number of factors that can be observed to contribute to team process effectiveness, particularly for innovation purposes. However, these factors are also useful for many other types of teams.

Kozlowski & Ilgen (2006) sought to identify promising team processes that influence team effectiveness and that can be shaped by deliberate intervention. They found specific levers that could be applied in a very targeted way for the purpose of improving team functioning.

Their review was quite extensive and many of their findings had substantial support from previous researchers, and some of it even had Meta-analytic levels of support. Meta-analytic support means that numerous studies provided support, essentially "studies of studies" provided evidence for the same factors and levers. Factors included in their study were:

team cognitive processes and structures, team climate, team mental models, team interpersonal, motivational, and affective processes, team cohesion, and team efficacy. Team action and behavioral processes make a difference, particularly when it comes to competence in resolving conflict. Key to the effectiveness of these processes are factors such as coordination, cooperation and communication, as well as individual team member competence.

Leadership was found to be a major leverage point for enhancing team effectiveness. Transformational leadership, which relies on charisma, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation, has been found to be especially effective when those leaders provided rewards that correlated with performance.

Kozlowski & Ilgen (2006) identified interventions or levers that shape, influence and align team processes. Each of the levers that they addressed: team design, training and development, and leadership was richly supported by research studies. Their recommendations include: 1) fitting patterns of member capabilities and characteristics together to create a team; 2) creating optimal allocations of resources, responsibilities, and interdependencies across team members; & 3) developing technologies that aid team members in using their resources collaboratively. They also emphasized the value of feedback and situation assessment for adaptation processes.

PROPOSED NEW INTERVENTION

Observed Objective Feedback Method (OOF)

This method was developed in order to avoid problems identified by other researchers. For example, according to Fuel Cycle (2025) researchers often view self-reported research as the Achillie's heal of data collection, because it is not very reliable. The OOF method does not use self-reported data. Additionally, Stephens-Davidowitz (2017) found that participants' perceptions on sensitive topics can even lead to having them lie in order to present a better view of themselves.

Observational research gets around this problem, because it uses other people to do the observing instead of having it be self-reported. It is also important to note that it also does not involve the researcher or facilitator, so that source of bias is also removed from the process. The idea is that those chosen to serve as observers will be in a position to offer the best feedback possible, so that the primary participants can raise their collaboration skills to a higher level-- during the intervention process.

The Observed Objective Feedback Method (OOF) was created to address the job of providing feedback and making improvements in processes involved in the Systems Approach to Modern Management (SAAM) process technique (Taylor, 2025).

(See Figure 1)

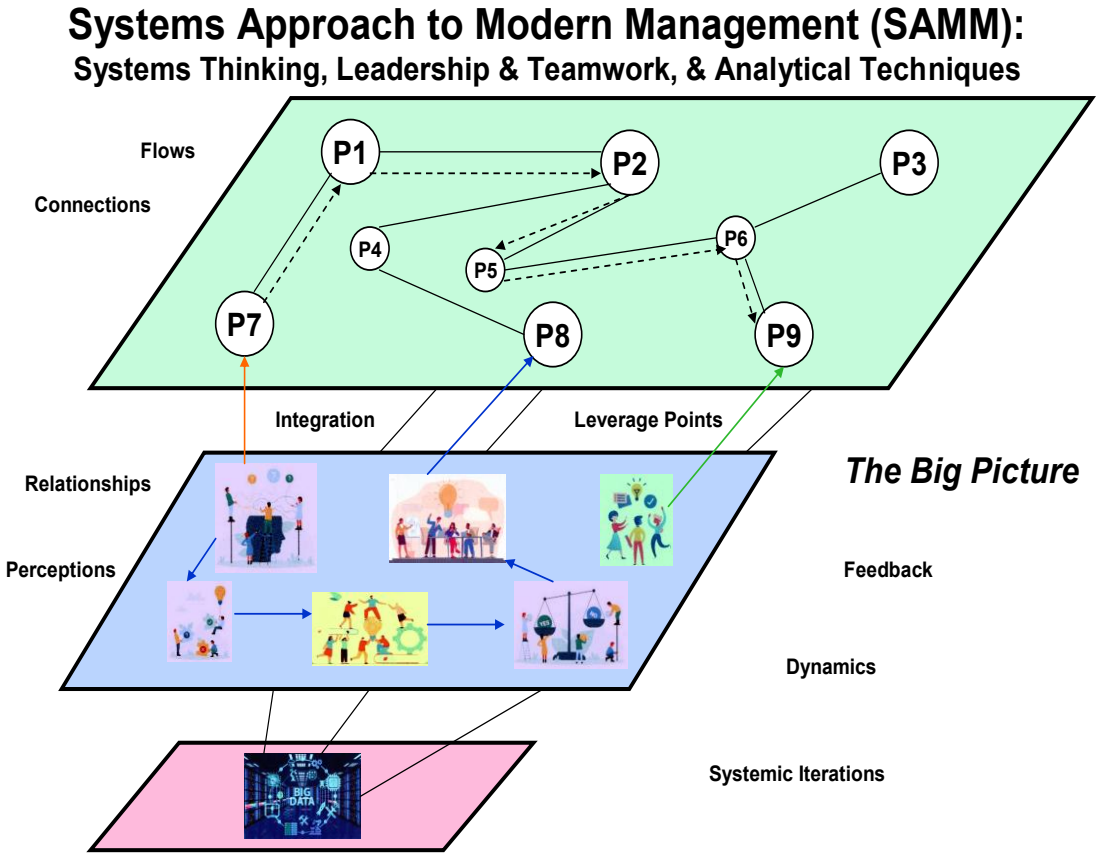

Figure 1

(Source: Includes Google Images-See Refs, Dr. Julia Taylor, Copyright 2024)

This process involves several different collaboration methods including Rich Pictures and Systemigram Mapping. The process involves iterative versions of Rich Picture creation and Systemigram Map creation, which are teamwork exercises. This feedback method (OOF) further enhances the efficacy of SAMM. Each version of teamwork exercises can be improved by taking feedback into account and using it to make improvements.

Although OOF was designed with SAMM in mind, it is important to note that it can be applied to any team process where feedback is likely to improve the outcome. These include processes for goal setting, planning, problem solving, training or even implementing a new project such as incorporating new technology or switching to different technology due to an innovation breakthrough.

This method is advantageous because it takes advantage of the objectivity of specially designated observers who are there to observe the key participants and offer them feedback, so that they can improve their process of working together. Dedicated observers are much more likely to be able to be objective than the actual primary participants. In addition, they are able to devote more of their attention to the task (of observation) than the primary participants would be able to do. (See Figure 2)

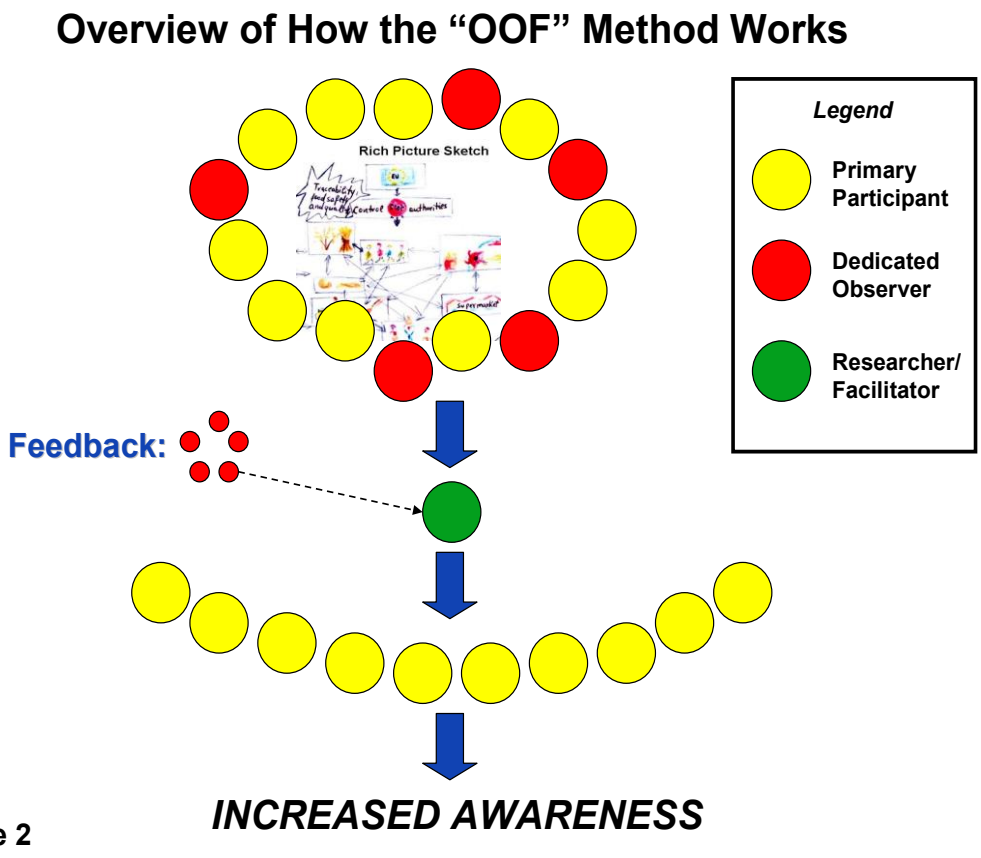

Figure 2

(Source: Dr. Julia Taylor, Copyright 2025)

The way it works is by adding designated observers to the group of collaborators who are participating in the SAAM process. They will appear to the original participants as additional collaborators who are just joining the group. However, they will try to conceal their true role so that the real collaborators are not aware that they are being observed and will therefore be able to behave as they normally would during their collaboration.

Several researchers from recent years have identified factors that make a difference in team processes (Moleka, 2024; Badriyah, et al 2024; & Attah, et al 2024). (See Figure 3)

Inspired Factors (Currently Have Limited Support)

Explore New Possibilities
Experiment with Novel Ideas
Persist in the Face of Uncertainty
Intrinsically Driven to Explore, Experiment, & Create
Psychological Safety
Task Interdependence
Knowledge Sharing
Establish a Framework for Resolving Disagreements
Identify Underlying Causes of Conflict
Voice Dissenting Views without Fear of Negative Consequences
Present Alternative Viewpoints & Consider Each Viewpont
Engage in Creative Problem-Solving
Conflicts Viewed as Opportunities for Growth
Integration within Teams
Working Interdependently to Tackle Complex, Ill-defined Problems
Evidence of Designing Team Structures, Processes, & Leadership for Innovation

Figure 3

(Source:Moleka, Pitshou. September 9, 2024. Attah, R., et al, December 2024. Badriyah, N., et al, April 2024, Copyright 2024)

Figure 3 shows a list of these inspired factors. These factors may make a dramatic difference in team outcomes, but there is currently very little or only limited research that supports them.

Kozlowski & Ilgen (2006) have compiled a research review which consists of "studies of studies" to substantiate their team factors, and in fact most of these factors are supported by Meta-analytic studies. (See Figure 4) Figure 4 shows each factor and its corresponding type of support.

Substantiated Factors (Have Substantial Support)

Team Design & Goal Setting (Holistic Approach) Meta-analytic Support
Positive Team Climate (Integration of Diverse Perspectives) Body of Knowledge (theory, methods, & research)
Shared Experience of Team Mental Model Body of Knowledge (theory, methods, & research)
Group Seems to Know "Who Knows What" Body of Knowledge (theory, methods, & research)
Shared Experience & Team Cohesion Body of Knowledge & Meta-analytic Support
Leadership in Action with Team Response Body of Knowledge & Meta-analytic Support
Transformational Leadership (Inspiring & Motivational) Meta-analytic Support
Leader-Member Exchange Meta-analytic Support
Leader-Task & Developmental Functions Meta-analytic Support
Conflict Management & Interpersonal Skills **(Transform Conflict Dynamics)** Meta-analytic Support
Evidence of Coordination, Cooperation & Communication Meta-analytic Support
Demonstrated Competencies of Participants Meta-analytic Support
Demonstrated Team Flexibiity, Dynamics & Adaptation Meta-analytic Support

Figure 4

(Source: Kozlowski, Steve W. J. & Ilgen, Daniel R. Copyright 2006)

The designated observers for the OOF process will each have specific factors from these two lists that they look for during the SAMM process or whatever other teamwork process is taking place. In addition, they will document their findings about how well the primary participants are doing on those factors by using open ended input to support their views. These factors are used because they were identified as factors that contribute to creative, innovative, successful collaborations that result in useful outcomes.

An example of the Designated Observer role is shown in Figure 5.

Example of Designated Observer Role

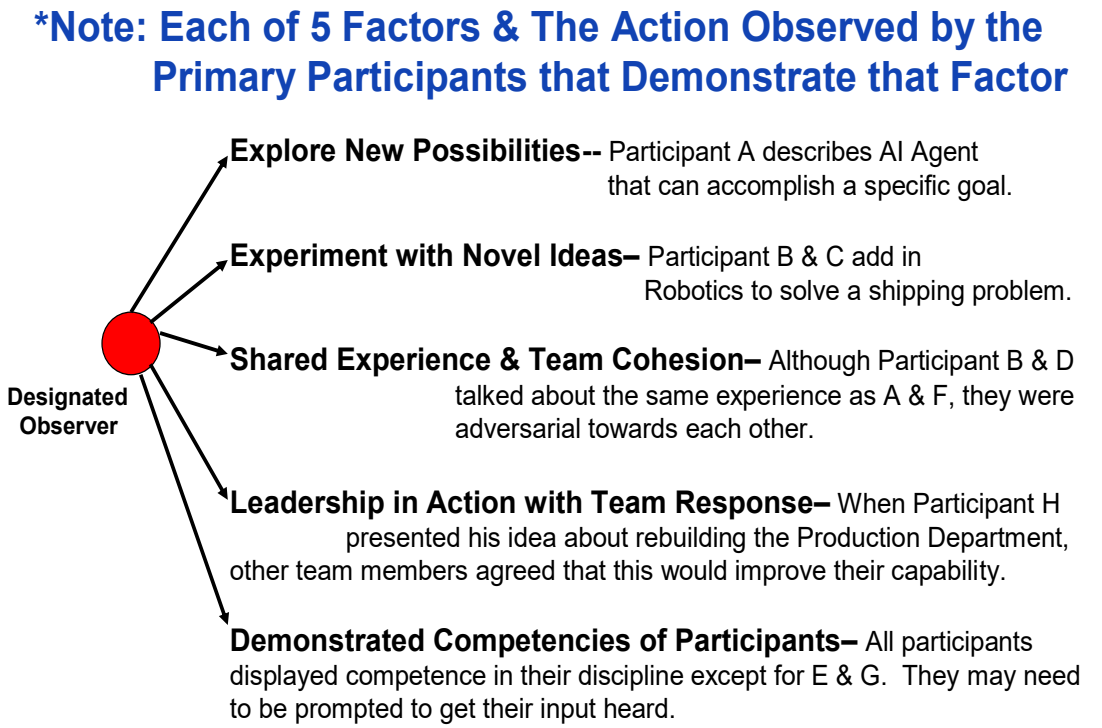

Figure 5

(Source: Dr. Julia Taylor, Copyright 2025)

As you see here, each observer will have a limited number of factors to observe during the team process. In this example, five factors were selected (from Figure 3 & Figure 4) for the observer. The observer is to note (discreetly) what is taking place with the primary participants that might be useful feedback for helping them to improve their teamwork. For instance, in terms of the last factor, "Demonstrated Competencies of Participants", other team members could take a leadership role and prompt the non-participating participants in order to turn them into participating participants.

Once the feedback has been documented by the designated observers, it is then compiled and reviewed by the Researcher/ Facilitator. (See Figure 2) The Researcher then presents the findings to the primary participants (with the designated observers present, so as to

maintain the secrecy about them being the designated observers) so that they can assimilate it and contemplate how to use it to uplift their teamwork. If this is successful, they now have a newfound level of awareness to apply to their work.

Next as Figure 6 shows (See Figure 6), after the participants go through another iteration of their work together, they are able to achieve better collaboration and a better outcome due to the feedback that they have received.

Results of Application of Observed Objective Feedback Method (OOF)

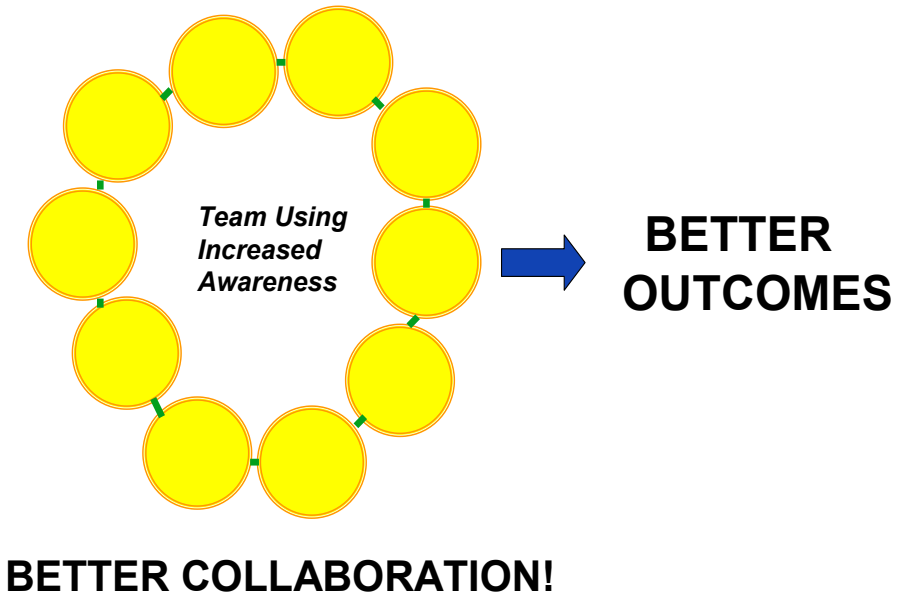

Figure 6

(Source: Dr. Julia Taylor, Copyright 2025)

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY & FUTURE RESEARCH

The biggest drawback of the study is that it hasn't been tested in the actual circumstances for which it was designed. It is a preliminary, exploratory study with a proposed methodology for using feedback to help teams make immediate improvements during team intervention processes.

Another potential problem is that the "observers" may not turn out to be as unbiased as it is

intended. Even though they are not the primary participants, they still might be biased towards certain outcomes, especially if they are motivated by the desire to look good to their associates. It's important to note that realistically, there isn't any approach in this regard that could be completely bias free, so the best that can be done is to use a system that presents results that contribute to better teamwork. If that is accomplished, then it doesn't matter so much about biases.

Future research could be about refining the approach so that observers can use less open-ended feedback. Using open-ended feedback is necessary initially because we don't know what factors can really make a substantial difference to the team process. However, open-ended feedback is very tedious, difficult to record and difficult to interpret. As an intervention, it may be the best approach, but as research it is much harder to work with.

Eventually, research that is quantitative, instead of just qualitative and antidotal, could possibly lend a lot more credibility to the OOF method. It might also allow interventions to be a lot easier to implement.

CONCLUSION

This paper presents a new method, the Observed Objective Feedback Method (OOF), for improving teamwork and team processes that a team is undertaking. This method builds on previous methods as described in the background section of this paper. It helps a team to receive rapid, unbiased feedback "during the process of their work together" which enables and empowers them to immediately adapt and raise their level of collaboration to new heights, so that their ultimate outcome is much better than it would be otherwise. It is applicable to many different types of team processes.

A key mechanism that gives this method its vigor is the devotion of the designated observers to the task of observing. Plus the fact that these observers are concealed from the other participants, who think they are just additional participants, allows for unbiased reporting on the factors.

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