

EMPLOYEE IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND CORPORATE EFFICIENCY OF SELECTED COMERCIAL BANKS IN RIVERS STATE.**¹Dr. Barile Peter Nwimua and ²Jason Baritoesae****¹Department of Management, ²Student, Department of Management****^{1&2}Faculty of Management Sciences, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria***Email: lesorgoodday15@gmail.com, jasonbaritoesae@gmail.com***ABSTRACT**

The study focused on employee impression management strategies and corporate efficiency of selected commercial banks in Rivers State. This study therefore examines dimensions of employee impression management strategies (flattery and transparency) and measures of corporate efficiency (minimum waste of time and optimal use of resource). Four research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. The population was 3 selected commercial banks. The sample size was 94 respondents through purposive sampling technique. The data were generated through the use of structured questionnaire. Cross sectional research design was used to analyze the data. Findings from the study revealed that flattery has a significant relationship with minimum waste of time ($r=0.703$, $P<0.05$). Also, flattery significant relationship with optimal use of resource ($r=0.715$, $P>0.05$). Further findings of the study revealed that transparency has significant relationship with minimum waste of time ($r=0.691$, $P<0.05$) and also with optimal use of resource ($r=0.669$, $P>0.05$). Therefore, the study concluded that employee flattery and transparency enhances minimum waste of time and optimal use of resource. Hence the study recommended that commercial banks should adhere to flattery and transparency in actualizing the corporate efficiency.

Keyword: Employee impression management strategies: flattery, transparency, corporate efficiency, minimum waste of time, optimal use of resource.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, corporate efficiency is an acute influence for the success and sustainability of any business, including commercial banks. In the competitive setting of the banking sector, operational effectiveness, minimum wastage of time, optimal use of resources, reduced cost, customer service, and innovation are key components of corporate efficiency. Corporate efficiency refers to the ability of a business or commercial banks to achieve its goals and objectives while optimizing its resource allocation and minimizing waste. It involves utilizing resources such as capital, labor, and technology in a manner that maximizes output and minimizes input, thereby enhancing overall productivity and competitiveness. Understanding how commercial banks in Rivers State perform in terms of efficiency is essential for their long-term growth and profitability. Efficient banks are better positioned to allocate resources optimally and adapt to changing market dynamics. Richard (2009) defines corporate efficiency as "the extent to which an organization can produce its goods or services without wasting resources, time, or effort. However, commercial banks are streamlining their processes, utilize resources efficiently, and provide seamless services to clients.

Additionally, efficient banking operations lead to enhanced customer satisfaction, reduced operational costs, improved risk management, and increased shareholder value. However, employee impression management strategies become essential tools for efficiency of organizations. Employee impression management strategies involve the deliberate efforts made by individuals to shape the perceptions that others have of them within the workplace. In the setting of commercial banks, where customer trust and brand image are fundamental, understanding how employees manage their impressions becomes decisive for maintaining positive customer relationships and enhancing the bank's overall reputation. Employees often serve as the primary point of contact for clients, making their impression management strategies integral to influencing customer perceptions and

loyalty. Positive interactions can lead to increased customer satisfaction, repeat business, and referrals. Therefore, Banks with a customer-centric culture might encourage employees to be personable and empathetic, while those with a more formal culture might emphasize professionalism. Understanding how impression management aligns with the bank's culture is central for fostering a consistent brand image.

Smithson (2010) argued that employees often engage in impression management as a means to fit into their work environment and loyal to the complexities of interpersonal relationships. For banks in Rivers State, where customer trust and relationships are crucial, understanding these strategies could shed light on how employees contribute to corporate efficiency. Johnson and Lee (2000) suggested that when employees strategically align their behavior with the organization's goals, it positively affect the efficiency and productivity of the company. Adewale (2006) suggested that in culturally diverse regions like Rivers State, employees might employ different impression management strategies based on cultural norms and expectations. This insight is particularly relevant for banks that serve a diverse clientele, as understanding and integrating these strategies could lead to enhanced customer satisfaction and, subsequently, corporate efficiency. Chukwu et al. (2003) they argue that when employees exhibit genuine and affirmative behavior through impression management, it fosters customer trust and loyalty. This, in turn, could contribute to improved corporate efficiency by reducing customer churn and attracting new business.

Statement of the Study

Commercial banks are experiencing lack of flattery and transparency. Furthermore, flattery often manifesting as insincere praise and approval-seeking behavior, has the potential to influence these dynamics expressively. Likewise, the level of transparency maintained by these banks in their interactions with stakeholder's impact the establishment of trust and ethical standards. In the setting of commercial banks in Rivers State, the difficult relationship between flattery and transparency poses a complicated challenge to the achievement of optimal corporate efficiency. Secondly, flattery within the banking environment raises questions about the authenticity of interactions among employees and between employees and clients. The occurrences of flattery lead to miscommunication, obscured feedback, and a culture that prioritizes superficial harmony over constructive dissent. Such an environment hinder open discussions, hinder the identification of potential risks, and limit the exploration of innovative solutions, all of which are critical for making sound financial decisions.

Finally, a lack of transparency; Transparency is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of ethical business practices, particularly in the financial sector but in this case it is now baseless stone. Lacks of transparency erodes trust and create an atmosphere of uncertainty, potentially resulting in reputational damage and reduced customer loyalty. Furthermore, muddy communications hinder effective collaboration among employees and hinder the alignment of individual efforts with the bank's overarching goals. Despite the significance of employee impression management and corporate efficiency, there is a gap in the literature regarding the specific relationship between these two factors within the perspective of commercial banks in Rivers State. Hence, this study seeks to discover the extent to which flattery and transparency practices are present in the operations of commercial banks in Rivers State and their impact on the overall corporate efficiency of these institutions.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

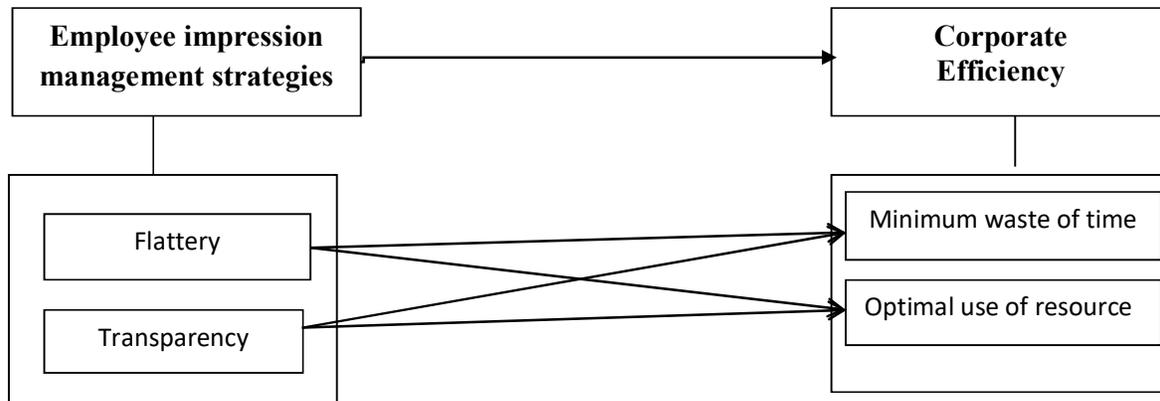


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework on the relationship between employee impression management strategies and corporate efficiency.

Source: Researcher’s Conceptualization from Reviewed of Related Literature (2024).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the extent of relationship between employee impression management strategies and corporate efficiency of commercial Banks in Rivers State. More specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Ascertain the relationship between flattery and minimum waste of time of selected commercial Banks in Rivers State.
- ii. Know the relationship between flattery and optimal use of resource of selected commercial Banks in Rivers State.
- iii. Ascertain the relationship between transparency and minimum waste of time of selected commercial Banks in Rivers State.
- iv. Know the relationship between transparency and optimal use of resource of selected commercial Banks in Rivers State.

Research Questions

Based on the specific objectives, our research questions are hereby stated:

- i. What is the relationship between flattery and minimum waste of time of selected commercial Banks in Rivers State?
- ii. What is the relationship between flattery and optimal use of resource of selected commercial Banks in Rivers State?
- iii. What is the relationship between transparency and minimum waste of time of selected commercial Banks in Rivers State?
- iv. What is the relationship between transparency and optimal use of resource of selected commercial Banks in Rivers State?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses was proposed to guide the study

- H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between flattery and minimum waste of time of selected commercial Banks in Rivers State.
- H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between flattery and optimal use of resource of selected commercial Banks in Rivers State.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between transparency and minimum waste of time of selected commercial Banks in Rivers State.

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between transparency and optimal use of resource of selected commercial Banks in Rivers State.

Significance of the Study

Understanding the relationship between employee impression management strategies and corporate efficiency is of utmost importance for management, managers, academic and practical reasons to the students. From an academic perspective, this study will contribute to the limited body of literature on impression management within the banking sector, particularly in the context of Rivers State. From a practical standpoint, the findings can offer valuable insights to bank management and policymakers about the role of employee behavior in achieving optimal corporate efficiency. This research can guide the formulation of targeted strategies to enhance employee performance and subsequently improve the overall efficiency and competitiveness of commercial banks in the region. Finally add value to the existing body of knowledge.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on first **content scope** which is the relationship between employee impression management strategies with dimensions (flattery and transparency) and Corporate efficiency with measures (minimum waste of time and optimal use of resource).

Geographical scope: The study would be carried out in 5 selected commercial banks in Rivers State.

Level/Unit of Analysis: The level/unit of analysis is the macro level study while the measurements are the branch managers, customer service manager and head of operations in the commercial banks in Rivers State.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Employee impression management strategies

Employee impression management strategies involve deliberate efforts to control how others perceive them in the workplace. Employees may engage in impression management by concealing negative emotions, such as frustration or anger, to maintain a positive image in the workplace (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). Employees may use assertiveness as an impression management strategy by clearly expressing their opinions and desires, which can project confidence and competence to others (Bolino et al., 2008). Employees may use intimidation to exert control or power over others by adopting assertive and dominant behaviors. This can be a strategy to gain compliance or respect (Ferris et al., 2007).

Dimension of Employee impression management strategies

Flattery

The fact that flattening is a common and increasingly popular response to changing contemporary business environments (Littler et al. 2003; Shaw & Schneier, 1993; Rajan & Wulf, 2006) means that understanding what is known about the consequences for stakeholders becomes important. Flattery is excessive praise or compliments, often insincere, with the intent to gain favor, manipulate, or deceive. Flattery can be described as the art of using flattering language or gestures to appeal to someone's ego or vanity. Flattery involves the expression of admiration or approval, sometimes to an exaggerated degree, in order to win someone's approval or goodwill. Corporate flattening is defined as the elimination of layers in a firm's corporate hierarchy, and the broadening of managers' spans of control (Wulf, 2012). Corporate flattening activities is reducing or removing middle management (Littler et al. 2003). Flattening or delayering is focused specifically on the reduction or removal of hierarchical levels within the middle of an organization (Wulf, 2012; Littler et al., 2003). Flattery may refer to the act of making someone feel good about them by praising their abilities, appearance, or achievements. Flattery is often used in social and interpersonal relationships as a

way to build rapport, establish trust, or gain the favor of others. Following an Corporate flattening, both groups felt they had more responsibility but many reported significantly less role clarity. All groups were disappointed with the effectiveness of communication, and some also felt that power relationships remained unchanged (Powell, 2002). While it is clear that organisational flattening is often a response to internal challenges, the resulting additional challenges introduced must also be considered (Rajan & Wulf, 2006; Kubheka et al., 2013).

Transparency

Employee transparency refers to providing employees with access to relevant Corporate information, enabling them to make informed decisions and better understand the company's goals and operations (Miller, 2013). Employee transparency is a multi-dimensional concept encompassing the disclosure of information, accessibility of management, and the openness of communication channels within an organization (Siobhan, 2019). Employee transparency is the act of sharing information, both positive and negative, with employees in a timely manner, helping them understand the rationale behind decisions and fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility (Adam, 2016). Employee transparency is the practice of making Corporate decisions and processes more visible to employees, thereby promoting a sense of inclusion, fairness, and accountability (Dennis, 2013). Employee transparency refers to the practice of providing employees with access to relevant information about the organization's goals, performance, and decision-making processes (David, 2009).

Concept of Corporate Efficiency

Corporate efficiency is the ability to minimize waste and unnecessary steps in processes to achieve desired outcomes (Hammer, 2001). Dessler (2008) saw corporate efficiency as "the achievement of goals with the least amount of resources possible." This definition underscores the importance of resource utilization. Henry (2000) views efficiency as how well resources are used to achieve corporate goals. It underscores the relationship between resource allocation and goal attainment. Rue and Byars (2003) opines corporate efficiency is the ratio of output to input in achieving corporate goals, emphasizing the importance of productivity and resource utilization. Also, efficiency is the extent to which an organization's structure and processes are designed to minimize friction and achieve its objectives effectively.

Measures of Corporate Efficiency

Minimum waste of time

Peter (2001) saw minimum waste of time as allocating one's resources with the goal of achieving maximum productivity and results within the available time. Stephen (2004) sees minimum waste of time as the art of accomplishing the most important tasks with the least amount of time invested. Nir (2014) saw minimum waste of time as minimizing distractions and time-wasting behaviors to maximize time spent on meaningful pursuits. Tim (2007), Minimum waste of time involves identifying and eliminating tasks that do not significantly contribute to one's objectives, allowing for more efficient and effective use of time. Cal (2016) sees minimum waste of time as synonymous with deep work, where individuals concentrate without distraction on cognitively demanding tasks, maximizing productivity and quality. Brian (2001), Minimum waste of time is the outcome of setting clear goals, developing plans, and focusing on high-value tasks that align with one's goals and priorities. Malcolm (2008), Minimum waste of time occurs when individuals reach the hour rule,' suggesting that mastery and expertise are attained by investing a significant amount of focused practice and effort in a specific field.

Optimal use of resource

Maximizing resource use is by ensuring long-term sustainability is another key aspect. Optimal resource use refers to the efficient allocation and utilization of resources to maximize output or

benefit while minimizing waste and inefficiencies. Optimal resource use is the application of resources in a manner that achieves the highest level of output or benefit, considering factors such as cost, time, and environmental impact (Vilfredo, 2000). Optimal resource use involves striking a balance between economic efficiency and income equality to ensure fair distribution of resources. Optimal use of resource involves the process of allocating resources in a manner that maximizes output or outcomes while minimizing waste (Robert & David, 2000). Optimal resource use requires considering the opportunity cost of allocating resources to one use over another, ensuring that resources are directed toward their highest and best use (Samuelson, 2001).

Relationship between the variable

Flattery and Corporate efficiency

Flattery can sometimes lead to the misallocation of resources within an organization. Employees who use flattery to gain favor may receive more resources or opportunities than those who are more deserving, which can hinder overall efficiency. Excessive flattery in the workplace can erode trust among employees. Excessive flattery may lead to conflicts among employees, especially when favoritism is perceived (Robbins & Judge, 2009). When employees receive insincere praise instead of constructive criticism, they may not be aware of their shortcomings and miss opportunities for growth and development. When employees are constantly praised without merit, it may lead to a lack of accountability. Flattery that is not based on genuine merit can discourage employees from offering constructive criticism or innovative ideas. This can hinder the organization's ability to adapt and innovate (Amabile & Pratt, 2000).

Transparency and Corporate efficiency

Employee transparency can lead to improved trust and morale within an organization. When employees feel that they have access to information and are kept in the loop about important decisions, they are more likely to trust their leaders and feel valued. This increased trust and morale can result in higher job satisfaction and productivity (Sims, 2002). Transparency can facilitate better communication within an organization. When employees have access to information about company goals, strategies, and performance, they can align their efforts more effectively with corporate objectives. This alignment can lead to greater efficiency (Branham, 2005).

Theoretical Review

However, we consider two well-known impression management theories and their relevance to employee impression management strategies and corporate efficiency:

Self-Presentation Theory (Erving Goffman, 1959):

Goffman's self-presentation theory focuses on how individuals manage their impressions to create a desired identity in social interactions. In the workplace, employees use self-presentation to shape how they are perceived by colleagues, supervisors, and clients. This can impact corporate efficiency as employees who present themselves positively and professionally may have better working relationships, leading to smoother collaboration and improved overall efficiency.

Social Identity Theory (Henri Tajfel and John Turner, 1986):

Social identity theory suggests that individuals categorize themselves into various social groups and derive their self-concept from their group memberships. In the workplace, employees may engage in impression management strategies that align with their group identities, which can influence their interactions and relationships with coworkers. Effective impression management based on social identity can enhance team cohesion and collaboration, contributing to corporate efficiency.

Empirical Review

Several worked were reviewed but few were mentioned. Joseph and Taiye (2022) studied impression management and organizational citizenship behaviour of hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria. With a cross-sectional survey employed, covering a population of 341 workers (341) from twenty hotels. The study drew a sample size of 181 workers. The study employed a basic random sampling method. Findings indicating that, self-promotion and exemplification have a strong correlation with indicators of corporate citizenship behavior. Chelagat and Korir (2017) investigated the impact of employee political abilities, organizational culture, and affective commitment on employee retention in Kenyan public universities. A sample size of 351 respondents was chosen using a combination of stratified and random sampling techniques. With multiple regressions employed. The findings indicate that a proactive disposition and networking capacity significantly influence affective engagement. konne (2015) tried to ascertain library personnel's views of the link in career satisfaction and OCB. The population consisted of 125 library staff, and the report employed a purposive and final enumeration sampling strategy. The collected data where analyzed using frequency, percentage, and mean counts. The findings indicate that respondents are pleased with all intrinsic aspects of job satisfaction, including the fact that prospects for personal development are not limited; opportunities for promotion; good support from coworkers an equal promotion process in the workplace; and the way my work allows for stable jobs.

Methods

The study adopted cross sectional survey research design. The target population was 3 selected commercial banks and purposive technique was used in accepting the 94 respondents (Branch Managers, Customer Service Manager and Head of operations) as a sample size. 5 likert scaling was used on the validated structured questionnaire. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used for the data analysis.

Analysis, Results and Discussions**Table 1: Number of Commercial Banks**

S/N.	Descriptive of Banks	No. of Branches	Target Population taken
1.	Access Bank	19	38
2.	Polaris Bank	16	32
3.	Zenith Bank	12	24
	Total	47	94

Source: Survey Data (2024).

Table 4.2: Questionnaire administration and response rate

S/N	Category	No. Distributed	No. Returned	% Rate of Return
1.	Employees	94	90	96%
	TOTAL	94	90	96

Source: Survey Data (2023)

The above data is clear that out of 94 copies of questionnaire that were distributed, 90 returned representing 96 percent retrieved and used for the analysis of the study.

Test of Hypothesis one and two

H₀₁: There is no statistical significant relationship between employee flattery and minimum waste of time.

H₀₂: There is no statistical significant relationship between employee flattery and optimal use of resource.

Table 3: Employee flattery and measures of corporate efficiency

		Employee flattery	Minimum waste of time	Optimal use of resource	
Spearman's rho	Compromise strategies	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.703**	.715**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
		N	90	90	90
	Absence of strike	Correlation Coefficient	.703**	1.000	.720**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	90	90	90
	Mutual trust	Correlation Coefficient	.715**	.720**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	90	90	90

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table above shows a positive and significant relationship between flattery and measures of corporate efficiency (minimum waste of time and optimal use of resource). The level of variability as indicated in the table is rho = 0.703 that is minimum waste of time variance to impress the employee is 70 percent and the level of variability as indicated in the table is rho = .715 that is optimal use of resource. Also, the level of significance as indicated in the table is p = 0.000 and it is statistically significant. However, since this lies within the rejection region as indicated by 0.01 preferred levels of significance; we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative that employee flattery has a positive impact on measures of corporate efficiency (minimum waste of time and optimal use of resource) in the commercial banks in Rivers State.

Test of Hypothesis Three and Four

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between transparency and minimum waste of time.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between transparency and optimal use of resource.

Table 4: Transparency and measures of corporate efficiency

		Transparenc y	Minimum waste of time	Optimal use of resource	
Spearman's rho	Transparenc y	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.691**	.669**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
		N	90	90	90
	Minimum waste of time	Correlation Coefficient	.691**	1.000	.673**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	90	90	90
	Optimal use of resource	Correlation Coefficient	.669**	.673**	1.000

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
	N	90	90	90

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table above shows a positive and significant relationship between transparency and measures of corporate efficiency (minimum waste of time and optimal use of resource). The level of variability as indicated in the table is $\rho = 0.691$ that is minimum waste of time variance to impress the employee is 60 percent and the level of variability as indicated in the table is $\rho = .669$ that is optimal use of resource. Also, the level of significance as indicated in the table is $p = 0.000$ and it is statistically significant. However, since this lies within the rejection region as indicated by 0.01 preferred levels of significance; we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative that employee transparency has a positive impact on measures of corporate efficiency (minimum waste of time and optimal use of resource) in the commercial banks in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one and two shows a positive and significant relationship between flattery and measures of corporate efficiency (minimum waste of time - .703 and optimal use of resource - .715). Also, the level of variability as indicated in the table is $\rho = 0.703$ and 0.715 that Flattery can lead to the wastage of time when individuals engage in unnecessary conversations or activities solely based on receiving compliments is 70 percent. Also, the level of significance as indicated in the table is $p = 0.000$ and it is statistically significant. However, since this lies within the rejection region as indicated by our 0.01 preferred level of significance. Flattery when used judiciously and sincere it has positive impact on minimum waste of time. Also, person who are flattered are more likely to assign credibility to and like the flatter than observer. Flattery can lead to the wastage of time when individuals engage in unnecessary conversations or activities solely based on receiving compliments. Finally, flattery can distort resource allocation by influencing decisions based on personal relationships rather than merit or strategic objectives. This can lead to inefficient use of funds, time, and manpower, ultimately hindering the organization's overall performance. This is evidence in the research work carried out by Joseph and Taiye (2022).

Hypothesis Three and four

Hypothesis three and four shows a positive and significant relationship between transparency and measures of corporate efficiency (minimum waste of time and optimal use of resource). Also, the level of variability as indicated in the table is $\rho = 0.691$ that is minimum waste of time variance to 70 percent. And $\rho = 0.669$ that is optimal use of resource, the level of significance as indicated in the table is $p = 0.000$ and it is statistically significant. However, since this lies within the rejection region as indicated by our 0.01 preferred level of significance. Transparent processes provide clarity, enabling stakeholders to make informed decisions swiftly. When information is readily accessible, individuals can evaluate options effectively, reducing the time spent deliberating and increasing efficiency. Transparency in resource allocation ensures that resources are allocated judiciously based on actual needs and priorities. With clear visibility into resource availability and usage, organizations can prevent over allocation or underutilization, thus optimizing resource utilization. This is evidence in the research work carried out by Chelagat and Korir (2017).

CONCLUSIONS

Positive impression management enhances corporate efficiency: Employees who use positive impression management strategies, such as displaying competence, professionalism, and strong interpersonal skills, can contribute to improved Corporate efficiency. When employees are perceived as reliable and capable, it can lead to smoother collaboration, increased trust, and more effective teamwork. This, in turn, can reduce conflicts and communication breakdowns, ultimately leading to greater efficiency in achieving corporate goals. While impression management can be beneficial, an excessive focus on self-presentation at the expense of genuine work performance can backfire and

diminish corporate efficiency. Employees who prioritize creating a positive image rather than delivering tangible results may become distracted and less focused on their job responsibilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are some recommendations to be considered:

1. Management of the commercial banks should maintain a professional appearance and adhere to the organization's dress code policies. Dressing appropriately not only helps you make a positive impression but also reflects respect for the workplace standards.
2. The bank should improve on communication skills, both verbal and written. Clear and concise communication fosters better understanding, reduces misunderstandings, and enhances teamwork, ultimately contributing to Corporate efficiency.
3. The banks should invest in your professional growth by staying updated on industry trends, acquiring new skills, and seeking opportunities for development. A knowledgeable and skilled workforce can help the organization stay competitive and efficient.
4. The banks should adhere to flattery and transparency in actualizing the Corporate efficiency.

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