STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AS MANAGEMENT TOOL

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SUMMARY

Initially, it is a review of management history and its strategic importance in the enterprise. In the sequence the five main stages of the process of strategic management are developed; as a focus of this study. The first step is to analyze the internal and external environment of the enterprise in the environment in general, operational and interior. The second step is to define the organization guidelines, in which the management determines the goals and objectives that should be reached. In the third phase the three forms of formulation of the business strategies and the functional business unit are shown. For the execution of this formulation the management should understand profoundly the strong / weak / opportunities and threats; the Analysis of the critical points, BCG Matrix and GE Growth Matrix. The fourth step examines the form of carrying out the strategic actions that arose due to the stages previous to the strategic management process. In the fifth stage the control forms are exposed which will allow the follow up of what had been foreseen; the identification of the errors in planning or execution, and to look for, through time, alternatives that reduce to the minimum or eliminate said errors. The information systems are also studied, since as you know, the whole yield is of administrative support in the use of the information that is the base of decision taking.

INTRODUCTION

One observes that the form of administering an enterprise leads to elections that determine, in many cases, the success or failure of the organization management and, therefore, they influence directly or indirectly in its quality.

Strategic management is a challenge because it goes far beyond imparting orders to the organization members. The strategic direction of an organization depends on a series of considerations. The analysis of two environments of the organization, are among them (internal and external), the establishment of organizational guidelines (aims and objectives), the formulation of the strategy (managerial, business unit, functional), the implementation of the strategy and the strategic control. The management should also know what types of information systems it should adopt, which would make viable all the information for decision taking, with greater agility and precision for obtaining positive results.

This article has as its objective to identify the management's importance in the use of strategic management processes as a managerial management tool.

If said processes discussed in this study are real and outstanding for all kinds of organizations - large, medium, small or micro, international or domestic, diversified or monoproducers, with or without objectives of lucre - it is evident that the management needs a strategic management process model to be guided in its decisions taking, which are of extreme importance in an atmosphere of constant changes in which one lives.

Therefore, the content of this article has as its purpose to cause insights in the managers' strategic management and an evaluation of its vital role for an improvement of efficiency and organizational effectiveness.

1. Strategic management

From the times of Fayol, management is defined as the process of planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling. According to Fernández and Berton (2005), the list can vary from author to author, but in general, these processes inspire thousands of writers on this area. There are still authors that affirm that another classic division in management study is to conceive it starting off from their functional areas, such as Marketing, Operations, Persons and Finances.

Olivera (2007) says that the benefits that strategic management can provide to enterprises - when appropriately developed and implemented - are the most diverse and ample possible, such as: a) more and more simple, flexible and sustainable management models; b) Facilitate identification of the capacities-and inabilities - of the enterprise professionals, as consolidation of the new profile of the executives; c) Consolidation of the posture of managerial performance directed to the necessities and expectations - current and future -of the market; d) Improvement of the motivation levels, commitment, productivity and quality in the enterprises; e) Increase in performance amplitude and in the enterprises' results.

According to Wright, Kroll and Parnell (2000), the employees, the supervisors and the medium management should be familiarized with strategic management. An appreciation of the strategy of their organization will help them to maintain the working activities nearest to the organization management, thus increasing work development and the promotion of opportunities and making them more effective.

As analyzed here forth, Strategic Management is a continuous and interactive process employed in the maintenance of the organization as a whole, integrated with its environment. This process involves the analysis of the internal and external environments of the organization, the establishment of the organizational guidelines (aims and objectives), the formulation of the strategy (managerial, business unit, functional), the implementation of strategy and strategic control.

2. Strategic Management Process

According to Certo et al. (2005), Fernández and Berton (2005), Oliveira (2007), Tavares (2005) and Wright, Kroll and Parnell (2000), among other authors mentioned in this articulate, they are identified as main stages inherent to the outline of the strategic management process model

such as: a) Analysis of the internal and external environments; b) establishment of the organizational guideline (aims and objectives); c) strategy formulation (managerial, business unit, functional); d) strategies implementation; e) strategic control.

2.1. Analysis of the Internal and External Environments

This topic is focused in the initial stage of the process: the analysis of the environments. Certo et al. (2005) inform that said analysis is a verification of the organizational environment process, to identify the opportunities and the current and future risks that can end up influencing the capacity of the enterprises to reach its goals. Within this context, Taylor (1985) says that organizational environment is a group of all the factors, be they internal or external that can influence the progress achieved by means of the realization of the objectives. Therefore, to know the organizational environment is essential for the success of an enterprise. For that reason, the management should constantly gather the data related with important environmental factors and to consider its implications.

To carry out an analysis of the environment in an efficient and effective way, the management should well understand the way in which the organizational environments are structured. According to Certo et al. (2005), the environment of an organization is generally divided in three levels: general, operational and internal.

As it was described by Wolf et al. (2005), the general environment is the most complex in the environmental segments. Their frontiers are difficult to outline, it is constituted by a group of variables that affect not only the enterprises, but the competitive structure of each one of the existent industrial sectors and to society as a whole. This group of variables, according to Morais (2005) constitute large environmental segments, such as: the economic, social, political, technological and cultural ones. While, the number of forces of the macro-environment is variable, according to diverse authors.

According to Porter (1999), the operational environment is constituted by a group of variables and should be seen, considering the following matters which the management will respond to in each one of them: to) Threats of new entrances: do there exist entrance barriers for new competitors?; b) Rivalry between competitors: Does there exist a war of prices, advertising, or

products?; c) Existence of substitute products: Does there exist a threat of substitution for products or services that satisfy the same necessities? d) Clients negotiating power: Which is their power to influence in the variations of prices of products or services? e) Suppliers negotiator capacity: Which is their negotiating power to raise prices or to reduce the quality level offered?

Fernández and Berton (2005) say that when approaching Porter's five competitive forces one observes that, to face them it is necessary to find offensive or defensive actions with the purpose of creating a good position within the industry, as the intention of maintaining a long term successful position within the industry and of overcoming the competitors, the necessity exists of analyzing Porter's "Generic Strategies": Total leadership in costs, Differentiation and Focus.

According to Oliveira (2005) it is at this stage when the threats and the opportunities are analyzed which are within the external context of the enterprise and it is the best way to avoid or to usufruct those situations. The enterprise must look outwards, towards the external context where the opportunities and threats are found.

According to Craig and Grant (1999), one tries to identify within the internal context of the enterprise: resources (physical, financial, human, technological, organizational, etc.), functionaries' capacities / abilities / talents (abilities that reside in the routines of an organization), functionality (to diagnose the main functions of the enterprise, such as: marketing, production, logistics, materials, human resources and financing), organizational structures (enterprise environment), culture and organizational environment (group of values, beliefs, attitudes and shared norms that model the behavior and each member's organizational expectations), etc.

According to Costa (2006), the first task to carry out in an analysis of the internal atmosphere is to elaborate an ample, general and unrestricted list of strong, weak, neuter points and those that need to be improved, that is to say, those that favor or harm the enterprises.

According to Olivera (2005) the internal analysis has as its objective to evidence the deficiencies and qualities of the enterprise that it is being analyzed, i.e. the strong (strengths) and weak points (weaknesses) of the enterprise should be determined according to its current position: product versus market. This analysis should have as perspective, for its comparison, other enterprises of its performance sector, be they direct or simply potential competition.

Therefore, the purpose of gathering this whole information is to help the management to

establish the future directive of the organization. The exams involve the revision and evaluation of the whole information on the internal and external environments that can be obtained from different sources. Sources such as reports, lecture books, newspapers, among others.

Thus, only after the ponderation of the results of a complete analysis of the internal and external environment of the enterprise, the management will be able to formulate an appropriate organizational mission and to establish consistent objectives to it and compatible to one another.

2.2. - Establishment of the organizational directives: Aims and Objectives

This topic approaches the mission and the objectives which are two important considerations usually used by the management to establish and document an organizational directive.

According to Caravantes, Panno and Kloeckner (2005, p.415), the definition of mission should respond to three basic questions: "to) Who are we? b) Why do we exist?, c) Which is our reason of being?."

Therefore, the declaration of the mission should provide a sense of purpose and the direction of the organization. It involves the essential objectives of the business and is generally focused outside the enterprise, i.e., in the attention of society, market or client's demands.

Morais (2005) explains that when it is recognized that an organization should have very defined objectives, it is in fact, establishing its directive behavior in short, medium and long term. The enterprises which have them clearly defined, create the necessary sustenance for the realization of their mission and make clear the future situation which they want to reach as a corporation.

One can conclude that an appropriate management begins with the establishment or, at least, with the clear understanding of the objectives to be reached. So that they be useful, the objectives should be more than words; they should possess a concrete meaning for the management, with the purpose of obtaining their participation and commitment in a real, effective and continuous way.

According to Certo et al. (2005), the process of establishment of the organizational directives, consists on three main stages that are presented as follows.

In the first stage the consideration on the results of the analysis of the environment is looked

for. This analysis should provide appropriate information to the management for its consideration. The data should be obtained from all levels of the organizational environment - general, operational and domestic. The study of these data should establish the relevance of the organizational environment levels, and of several strategic matters for the organization.

In the second stage one proceeds to the establishment of an effective organizational mission. Being that the derivative information of the environmental analysis, it serves as solid foundation on which the organizational mission can be constituted. Once the management understands the internal and external environments, it is better prepared to sketch a proposal or an appropriate mission for the organization. An effective organizational mission is that which reflects the organizational environment and, for that reason, it increases the probability of survival, of the long term organization.

In the third stage the establishment of the effective organizational objectives is carried out. Therefore, after the organizational mission has been developed, the effective organizational objectives should be formulated - objectives that are consistent with the established mission. Through time, the process that the managements use systematically in the development of the organizational objectives evolves in four stages: a) in the first stage the environmental tendencies are analyzed; b) in the second stage the objectives are developed for the organization as a whole; c) in the third stage a hierarchy of objectives is developed; d) in the fourth stage the individual objectives are developed.

After the environmental analysis and the establishment of the organizational directive, the management is able to trace the alternative courses of action, assuring the success of the organization through the formulation of strategies. This formulation of strategies is carried out in three organizational levels: managerial, business unit and functional.

2.3. - Strategy formulation: managerial, business unit and functional.

The third stage of the strategic management process is the formulation of the strategy in its organizational levels (managerial, business unit and functional). According to Certo et al. (2005, p.11).

> The strategy is defined as an action course with the purpose of guaranteeing that the organization reaches its objectives. To formulate strategies is, then, to project and to select the strategies that lead to the realization of the organizational objectives. […]

Therefore, to formulate the organizational strategy appropriately, the management should profoundly understand the diverse focuses for strategic formulation, such as: the Analysis of points be they: strong / weak / opportunities / threats; the Analysis of the Critical Points, Growth Matrix -Participation of the Boston Consulting Group and the General Electric Multifactor Portfolio Matrix.

Initially, two techniques are remembered, used in the study of the environment, because this study is essential for the development of the success strategies. Both techniques are tools that provide useful information for the strategic formulation in the organizational levels, business and functional.

According to Certo et al. (2005), the management believes that of the analysis of the internal and external environment, the necessary information comes so that the process of strategy formulation begins. Consequently, two focuses are sketched here after, that focus on that: the analysis of the critical points and the analysis of the internal and external factors.

According to Certo et al. (2005), the analysis of the critical points provide a necessary structure for the study of the current situation of the organization and propitiates the formulation of effective strategies. For this to be effective, it is necessary, first, to respond to four basic matters: a) Which is / are / the objective (s) / of the organization?, b) Where is the organization at present?, c) What critical environmental factors does the organization face at present?, d) What can be done so that the organizational objectives be reached in a more effective way in the future?

According to Certo et al. (2005), although the questions can help directly in the evaluation of the internal and external factors, a large part of the work consists on responding to them in a correct way. This means that the relative importance of each one of them needs to be determined, and their potential impact on the formulation of the strategy, valued. For this reason, the relative importance of each question can vary according to the level in which the strategy is formulated (organizational, business or functional level).

As for the study of the external factors, Tavares (2005) says that the formulation of a successful strategy requires a comprehensive evaluation and predictive of the external atmosphere. It should result, starting off from the establishment of the competitive objective, of the perspectives presented by the macro-environmental scenarios, the analysis of the relationships and of the competitive environment. Its elaboration, at external level, should seek to explore the

opportunities, neutralize or minimize the present and future threats for the performance of the organization and to identify and establish the means to materialize the desired relationships.

Tavares (2005) explains that one should also explore within the internal level all the potentialities and aptitudes of the organization synthesized in its essential and distinctive competences, transforming them into forces to take advantage of the opportunities and neutralizing the weaknesses so that the threats are not presented in the organization.

Tavares (2005) says that starting off from these objective considerations, the executives pass to have a prominent role to consider the type and the urgency of the strategy action, the resources that it will demand and the level of acceptable risk.These will happen at a later moment, but each strategic alternative corresponds to a combination, in different degrees, of these components for the establishment of the competitive advantages of the organization.

In conformity with Certo et al. (2005), the analysis of the external and internal factors are useful tools for the understanding of the global situation of the organization. This approach tries to balance the opportunities and risks that the external environment presents with the strong and weak points of an organization.

When the portfolio business models, according to Certo et al. (2005), are tools that are good for analyzing, (1) the relative position of each one of the businesses of the organization in their sector, and (2) the relationship among the organization businesses. Two examples of approaches to develop business portfolios is the Growth-Participation Matrix of the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and General Electric's (GE), Multifactor Portfolio Matrix.

According to Certo et al. (2005), the basic idea of the matrix growth of the participation of the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), is that the enterprise should have a balanced business portfolio, so some generate more funds than they use and they can support other businesses that need the funds to develop themselves and become lucrative. The role of each business is determined by two factors: the growth rate of their market and their holding in that market.

As to General Electric's (GE), multifactor portfolio matrix structure, Wright, Kroll and Parnell (2000) explain that this classifies the units of business agreement according to the attractiveness power of their sector (low, medium, high) with the business force of the unit (weak, medium, strong). The ideal business unit is that which is strong in relation to its competitors and acts within

an attractive sector. Wright, Kroll and Parnell (2000) explain that the structures of portfolios BCG and GE can be used by the management at managerial level to evaluate each one of their business units, to make strategic decisions and to assign resources.

Therefore, the managerial strategies are formulated for the realization of the global objectives of the enterprise; the business strategies are elaborated to help each division or unit of business, with the purpose of contributing in the most effective way in the organization of which it is subsidiary; and the functional strategies are developed by specialists in the diverse areas of the enterprise, such as finances, marketing, human resources, among others. Although analyzed separately, the three strategies should be synchronized and coordinated to achieve maximum efficiency.

After examining the formulation of the strategies in the three levels, the discussion changes as to how these strategies can be implemented.

2.4. - Implementation

The fourth stage of the strategic management process is its implanting. This stage should put into action the strategies that emerged from the previous stages within the strategic management process. Without the effective implementation of the strategy, the organizations are unable to obtain the benefits of the realization of an environmental analysis, of the establishment of the organizational directive and of the formulation of the organizational strategy.

Cero et al. (2005) present five tasks of strategy implementation, which are: a) analysis of the strategic changes; b) analysis of the organizational structure; c) analysis of the organizational culture; d) selection of an implementation approach; e) strategy implementation and evaluation.

In the first place, the changes caused by the strategies should be analyzed. According to Fernández and Berton (2005), the implementation of a strategy always involves some degree of change. In some cases, the change will be ample, in others, partial and localized. While, as a reference to the analysis, it is convenient to consider three groups of changes that should happen in a balanced way and aligned to the strategy. These changes imply transformations in the structure, in people and in the organizational processes.

The analysis of the organizational structure is a useful stage in the strategic implementation,

because it forces the management to consider the effects of the structure in the tasks that should be carried out. In many cases, the structure and the personnel's involvement are hardly adapted to achieve a successful implementation. In others, a temporary alteration in the structure can facilitate the implementation without causing undue problems. In some other rare cases, nevertheless, when an organizational structure in particular is shown as inefficient to the point of impeding the effective implementation of a good strategy, the structure needs to be revised. However, before the management concludes that the structure of an organization should be redone, other factors should be considered and, among them, one of the most important is the organization culture.

There exist diverse ways of developing, maintaining or altering the organizational cultures. However, to change an organizational culture is a difficult task that, if it has to be carried out, it could take many years in being carried out. In a general way, to develop, to alter or to maintain the routine of not very ambitious strategies is something that can be implemented in the existent organizational culture. In this case, the formulated strategies are possibly implemented without much guarantee in the organizational culture, in the case of radical changes in the strategy and of the organizational rerouting, perhaps it be necessary a long term change in the organization culture. Nevertheless, many times it is more efficient to maintain separate the cultures radically different from the acquired companies, in order to avoid greater cultural crashes and the problems potentially serious as resultants of this coalition.

At this stage, the task of the management is to determine an appropriate approach for the strategy implementation. Based in their research as to management practices in diverse companies, Brodwin and Bourgeois III (1984) suggest five fundamental focuses for the implementation of strategies which are: direction, organizational change, collaboration, cultural, from the base to the top or growing.

These focuses go from simply requesting the functionaries to implement a strategy already formulated up to offering professional conditions so that they grow and have a base to elaborate and to implement strategies of their own authorship. In each focus, the manager has a very particular role in the process and uses methods different from strategic management.

By now, the management has a clear idea of the level of strategic change that should be implemented. Beyond this, based in an analysis of the structure and of the organizational culture,

the management already knows what factors within the organization will facilitate or will impede the implementation. An implementation focus is well chosen when it capitalizes the opportunities and the strong points, and it avoids, or minimizes the problems in an organization. At this stage, the task consists on carrying out the strategies and to evaluate the results.

Next the last and main stage of the process of the strategic management is presented: the exercise of strategic control. Its objective consists on teaching how the strategies can be developed according to what planned.

2.5. - Control

As the strategies are implemented, the process of strategic control begins. This consists on determining to what extent the objectives of the organization are being achieved. This process generally demands that the management modify its strategies or its implementation somehow, so the capacity of the enterprise in achieving its objectives be enlarged.

According to Santiago et al. (2004), the strategic control is important and necessary, because it facilitates the accompaniment of what was planned, like an identification of the errors made in the planning or in the implementation, and it looks for in time, alternatives that minimize or annul said errors.

For Wright, Kroll and Parnell (2000) the focus of the strategic control is as much external as internal. None of these elements can be examined in an isolated way, because the function of high management is to align in an advantageous way the internal operations of the enterprise in its external environment.

In fact, Wright, Kroll and Parnell (2000) explain that the strategic control can be visualized as a "mediator" of the interactions between the environmental variables and the internal dimensions of the enterprise. Based in performance measures, be they qualitative as quantitative, upper management uses the strategic control to maintain the internal dimensions of the enterprise in balance with the external environment.

In the practice, the management really controls the agreement with three different stages that should be continued to carry out the process of strategic control within an organization. Starting off from these stages it is possible to measure the organizational acting, comparing it with the and

patterns, and to make the necessary corrective actions.

These three stages, according to Certo et al. (2005), are: a) to measure the organizational performance; b) to compare the organizational performance with the objectives and the established patterns; c) to determine the necessary corrective action of the organizational performance.

In the first stage, according to Bateman and Snell (2006), the management can measure the performance levels by means of diverse sources, such as written or verbal reports and personal observations. Lacombe and Heilborn (2006) say that the measures correspond to the registration of the work carried out, as this is being realized, so the performance (result) can be compared with the pattern's established value.

These measures, according to Lacombe and Heilborn (2006), can be expressed in units of production volume, productivity, unitary cost or quality level. The control stage that represents the measure, embraces the sending of precise information of the result of the work to the responsible of its analysis and possible correction.

In the second stage, according to Certo et al. (2005), the results of the measures of the organizational performance should be compared with two established marks: objectives and organizational patterns. The patterns are developed to reflect the organizational objectives; they are the marks that indicate the acceptable levels of organizational performance. The specific patterns that the organizations really settle down to, vary from enterprise to enterprise. As a rule, the management should develop patterns in all the performance areas tied to organizational objectives such as: lucre, positioning in the market, productivity, leadership, personal development, the officials' attitude, public responsibility, balance between the short and long term objectives, among others.

According to Bateman and Snell (2006), the last step of the control process is to take the measures to correct the significant deviations. This step guarantees that the operations be adjusted where necessary so that the initially planned results are achieved. When the significant variations are discovered, the management should take immediate and vigorous measures. Effective control cannot tolerate unnecessary delays, excuses, or exceptions.

According to Certo et al. (2005), to achieve success of the strategic control, the management

should have valid and reliable information that reflects the diverse measures of organizational performance. The information is vital for the efficient strategic control, therefore, the information system is examined next.

3. - Information System

During the last years, Fontes (2006) explains that there has been a significant change in the way in which the organizations operate in the market. With an accented growth of the Internet, this became a vital platform for the enterprises that explore electronic communications, tools for collaboration and e-commerce, be it between officials, clients and suppliers. Companies are becoming more globalized and interconnected, and Internet arrives as a resource to give infrastructure support to this market tendency.

According with Alecrim (2004), information is a patrimony, it is something of value. It is not a heap of agglomerated bytes, but of a classified data set and organized so that a user or a enterprise can take advantage of it. Information is, inclusive, a factor that can determine the survival or the discontinuity of the activities of an enterprise.

Fontes (2006), comments that the information systems, become of vital importance, for the organizations business. Every day, there is a search to understand how to apply these technological resources in the specific situations of the companies.

According to Leles (2007), the information systems play three vital roles in any kind of organization: a) support for its processes and operations, b) support in the decisions taking of its officials and managers, c) support in their strategies in search of a competitive advantage.

The whole administrative performance leans on the use of the information which is the base of the process of taking of decisions. Olivera (2005) says that in consideration of the information which is necessary for the control and the evaluation of the process of strategic planning, some aspects should be analyzed, such as:

a) Kind of Information: they are necessary for the control and evaluation of strategic planning process, they are the most varied possible embracing, among other, the following aspects: temporary quantification of the activities, data of occurrence of events such as reports about the progress, objectives, functional objectives, challenges, goals, values of financial liberation, value of

the realized costs, value of the committed costs, volume of applied manpower, manpower quantification, and work quality quantification.

b) Frequency of the Information: it is not much easier to establish the frequency of the information, although you can determine it, by means of one's own experience that can be judged as being valid in the following situation: in terms of strategic or managerial control (upper management), it can be from two or three to six or seven months; in terms of sector control (tactical), it can be from one to two or three months; and in operational terms (project and action plan), it can be from one or two weeks to one month.

c) Information Quality: the executive should pay a lot of attention to the content, forms, channels, periodicity, speed and precision of the information for the control and the evaluation of the strategic planning. In general, one can set off from following situations: in terms of managerial strategic control (upper management), one can have a low degree of detail and a high degree of consolidation of the analyzed information; in terms of sector control (tactical), one can have a low detail degree and a high synthesis degree; in terms of operational control (project and action plan), one can have a high detail degree.

d) Information Sources: there are two information sources of the performance of strategic planning: the coordinators of the performance, in this case one is receiving from the performance coordinators of realization for the objectives, challenges, goals, strategies, programs and projects; and for the users of the system, because, in the previous case, basically there is an self-evaluation. As there can be inadequacies in relationship to this information, it is necessary to cross-check the information of the performance coordinators with the system users' information.

Maximiano (2004) explains that one needs information on all the activities as an agent. To make decisions, to produce or analyze reports, to evaluate performances and to work with groups, information is needed. Therefore, a high performance agent needs to know how to obtain process and disclose the necessary information to his subordinates.

Silva (2004) affirms that any communication control system should provide correct information, at the opportune moment and to appropriate people, if the objective is the effective realization of the task.

Therefore, the management and other people of the enterprise that make decisions should

have useful information in this matter of the results of the performance, if they want to plan, give support and to make the appropriate decisions. Thus the importance of the information systems.

CONCLUSION

Right in XXI century, to carry forward an enterprise within a dynamic context, of constant changes, information in abundance and of demanding consumers, it requires management abilities, performance (roles) and functions that will help to manage and to choose the best "road" for the success of the enterprise.

Meantime, if the management does not use the process of strategic management in the taking of decisions, it will probably let go by, a lot of important information in the analysis, due to this, it could cause a lot of damage to the enterprise.

Beyond the exposed context, which shows the unavoidable necessity of the enterprises' management to use the strategic management processes, one observes how the efficient use of information is presented to reinforce the importance that the enterprises adopt formal strategies, that provide a sustentation base for taking of decisions, and this way, to strengthen the enterprise in an environment in constant change.

Therefore, the strategic management processes constitute a management tool that will guide the management with a clear and precise vision of his business, or even better, of his performance environment. This will help him in the performance of his activities and, consequently, in the achievement of his objectives.

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