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# Emerging Trends of Corporate Frauds and Financial Shenanigans: Analytical Review with Respect to India

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**Abstract.** As the number and importance of a corporation's stakeholders grows, they must be treated equally and fairly. Corporate fraud and misconduct can take both macroeconomic and microeconomic forms. Corporate fraud has become a major global issue as commerce and technology have become increasingly interconnected. Corporate governance and regulatory procedures are causing a lot of concern. In rapidly expanding economies, businesses and their employees are becoming increasingly concerned about ethical issues. False or misleading financial information will not be tolerated by businesses.

When a company intentionally misrepresents its financial results in order to gain an unfair advantage over its competitors, this is known as financial statement fraud. A look at a large corporation's financial health. Because of their devious accounting, they are able to get away with it. If you want to avoid making the same mistakes again in the future, you must go back and examine exactly what went wrong. Retail investors require more information about a company than is available to the general public. Researchers in India's pharmaceutical industry have discovered financial statement fraud using the Earnings Quality, De Angelo, and Beneish models. Based on the evidence presented thus far, they've been found guilty of financial statement fraud. The findings of the researchers could persuade investors that a company's financial metrics are a good predictor of its future financial success.

**Keywords:** Ethical Issues, Financial Metrics, Corporate Governance, Financial Statements Frauds

#### Introduction

A white collar criminal has a deep respect for both the public and private realms when it comes to the law. Because of the secrecy surrounding these operations, authorities have no way of catching fraudsters. Some white-collar crimes are carried out by organised crime groups, while others are carried out solely by individuals. As a result, many businesses are concerned about corporate fraud. As a result of recent fraud cases, investors are losing faith in the stock market, which can result in large losses of investment funds and damage to a company's reputation. Corporate fraud is the term for this type of white-collar crime. Corruption is an unavoidable fact of life in India. In independent India, the LIC/Mundhra scam of the 1950s was the first major financial fraud. Satyam, DHFL, Bhushan Steel, and Harshad Mehta have all been accused of massive fraud in the last decade. These are just a few of the most famous examples. An investigation into the case was carried out in accordance with the Indian Penal Code of 1860. (IPC). The Companies Act of 1956 contains no definition of fraud. Lord Macaulay's IPC already included provisions for all of these crimes, so no new IPC was required.

## **Corporate Frauds in India**

With the rapid growth of the developing world's economy and industrialization, there has been a dramatic increase in corporate fraud. This crime has been aided by rapid industrialization and technological advancement.

In recent years, an increasing number of businesses have closed their doors. The financial crisis is thought to have wiped out 2750 of the 5650 publicly traded businesses in

India's capital city, Mumbai. One out of every two projects that seek millions of dollars from investors fails when they go public (Survey on fraud in India, 2012). Due to a lack of documentation from SEBI, RBI, or the Department of Companies Affairs, stock exchange trading for 2750 companies has been halted.

A business or other organisation may omit or alter relevant information in order to appear healthy when it is not. Businesses use a variety of methods to defraud customers, including misinformation, falsification of financial records, and debt concealment. Financial information fraud encompasses deceptive accounting, exaggerated profits, and fraudulent transactions. Corporations deceive the government about tax evasion for a variety of reasons, including financial gain, brand damage, or all three. Recent technological and scientific advancements have resulted in an increase in corporate fraud, according to an anti-corruption committee report in India (Santhanam et al., 1964). The Dalmia Jain Group was one of several large corporations found to be dishonest in the Vivian Bose Commission Report of 1963 (Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1963). The Hon'ble Justice M.C. Chagla made a number of critical remarks about mogul Mundhra's massive business during the country's first successful financial scandal trial.

## **Legal Mechanism**

Financial, economic, and legal experts have recently discovered numerous flaws in government control systems. After a scam is discovered, federal regulators should hold all parties involved accountable. As a result of the decrease in frauds, frauds requiring more public disclosure of business, profession, and bank connections have decreased. Corporate fraud is a constantly changing field. Financial crime in India is unavoidable and unavoidable. As a result of these schemes that reveal regulators, defaulters face harsh penalties. When a company is defrauded in the stock market, investors' trust in the company is immediately jeopardised. Around the world, laws and organisations have been established to regulate the market and protect investors' interests. This law will result in increased board accountability and transparency. Despite a slew of regulations, fraud is rampant in India. Anti-money laundering and anti-criminal profit trading legislation is being passed by an increasing number of governments. Criminal proceeds can be seized and forfeited under current laws in the country. This category includes, but is not limited to:

- Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance. 1944
- Customs Act, 1962
- Companies Act, 2013
- Law of Criminal Procedure Code 1973
- Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1973
- Smugglers and Foreign Exchange Manipulators Act, 1976

The board of directors, CEOs, senior managers, CFOs, IT departments, and other levels of middle and operational management are becoming increasingly involved in corporate fraud, according to recently exposed fraud schemes. There are five broad categories to what happened and how to fix it:

The ability to maintain one's own integrity is a necessary component of self-integrity. Business ethics and personal ethics are similar in that they are both based on universally accepted norms of good and bad behaviour. The way we do business is heavily influenced by our ethical code. As a result, businesses must stress the importance of developing strong personal ethics as a precondition for strong corporate ethics.

How well-versed in your options are you? It's difficult to spot unethical behaviour at work because companies rarely consider whether their actions are ethical. When making decisions, ethics is not taken into account.

Because of this, there are only a few options available when it comes to business ethics. The values and norms of a company's culture have a significant impact on how ethical decisions are made.

External pressures, such as those from parent companies, the economy, and society as a whole, are common causes of corporate fraud (FE Online, 2018).

The company's top executives are at the centre of everything it does. The culture of a company is heavily influenced by the example set by its leaders. Employees are more likely to engage in unethical behaviour in companies where the leaders are also dishonest (Akar, 2021).

## **Financial Shenanigans**

"Financial shenanigans" can deceive companies and organisations, distorting their real-world results and financial positions. Financial irregularities encompasses everything from minor infractions to outright fraud. Ponzi schemes and other fraudulent activities, such as the formation of fictitious corporations, are examples of financial shenanigans.

When a company is found to have engaged in financial sleight of hand, shareholders and investors are almost always devastated. Unethical business practises can result in stock price drops, bankruptcy, and even criminal charges.

Several types of financial deception can be classified as follows:

- Schemes that use aggressive, inventive, or deceptive tactics to influence financial reporting.
- Entities that were founded fraudulently or serve as a cover for criminal activity.
- Scammers who work alone or in groups to steal financial information such as credit card numbers or account numbers.

Individuals and businesses can engage in financial espionage in a variety of ways. Innovative corporate reporting techniques can help companies gain a competitive advantage, raise capital rates, and improve management performance. A number of companies have previously made headlines and paid fines as a result of financial fraud. The Bernie Madoff, Lehman Brothers, and Enron scandals are just a few examples (Hayes, 2020).

## **Research Problem**

Fraud is a major threat to businesses all over the world. The role of management in implementing effective fraud management systems is increasingly being emphasised by the government and regulators. 'Fraud is always a possibility, regardless of how big or small your company is, where you are located, or what industry you work in. This investigation aims to uncover the extent of financial statement fraud in the Indian pharmaceutical industry in order to benefit both shareholders and society as a whole.

# **Research Significance**

Financial statement fraud occurs when a company's financial statements are falsified. Because accrual accounting is used, this deception is possible. It's time to start thinking about how to maximise profits at this point. Creative accounting techniques allow major corporate financial shadiness to go unnoticed. It is critical that past frauds be thoroughly investigated in order to learn from past mistakes and avoid them in the future. Investors, particularly the average person, need to know more about the company than what is publicly available. This study, which aims to uncover financial statement fraud, will benefit investors in India's pharmaceutical sector. One of India's most promising industries is pharmaceuticals. As a result of the fierce competition, these aggressive accounting practices are becoming more volatile, and Indian corporations must warn financial users about them.

## **Research Objectives**

- To gain a deeper grasp of the corporate fraud and financial shenanigans through the review of related literature.
- To get a quick brief of the corporate fraud and its legal mechanism.
- To recommend the steps that can be taken to avoid corporate fraud and how it can be fixed.
- To assess the quality of earnings for suggestive earnings manipulation for a chosen group of firms.
- To determine the quantity of discretionary accruals in the context of probable financial statement fraud.
- To draw attention to the primary areas of worry in accounting manipulations in these businesses that might jeopardize their long-term survival.

## **Research Methodology**

#### **Data Collection**

The study covers the companies in the pharmaceutical sector of India. This research is based on secondary data collected over a period of 7 years, from 2012 to 2018. Below are the firms that were picked based on data availability.

- Cipla Ltd
- Lupin Ltd
- Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd
- Cadila Healthcare Ltd.
- Divi's laboratories Ltd
- Dr.Reddy's laboratories Ltd
- Torrent Pharmaceuticals Ltd
- AurobindoPharma Ltd
- Biocon Ltd
- Piramal Enterprises Ltd

## **Tools and Techniques**

To detect false financial statements, the following tools and techniques are used:

Quality of Earnings Model: The operating cash flow-to-net income ratio is used to assess a firm's earnings quality. When the income generated is of higher quality, income manipulation is less likely.

*The De Angelo Model:* The De Angelo Model is used to calculate discretionary accruals in this case. It's calculated like this:

$$DAC_{it} = TA_{it} - TA_{it-1} / A_{it-1}$$

Where DACit is discretionary accruals for firm i in period t; TAit and Ait -1 are Total Accruals and Total Assets for period t and t-1 for firm I;

The above-mentioned model was used to calculate the financial statement fraud risk for these units.

The M-Score Model of Beneish: The Beneish M-Score Model (Beneish Model) can be used as a financial forensics tool to determine whether a company's earnings have been manipulated and to identify problematic areas. The Beneish M-Score can be used to spot companies that have a history of lying about their financial statements (Beneish, 2012).

Companies with a higher M-Score, according to one study, are more likely to commit fraud. There is evidence of financial fraud at the organisation if the M-score is greater than or equal to 2.22.

The M score is calculated using the eight indices listed below:

- 1. Days' Sales in Receivables Index (DSRI). The number of days sales in receivables are compared to the same period last year to determine revenue growth.
- 2. *GMI stands for Gross Margin Index*. Gross profit as a percentage of the previous year's. A business with a bleak outlook is more likely to falsify its financial results.
- 3. The Asset Quality Index (AQI) The Asset Quality Index uses non-current assets other than plant, property, and equipment to determine asset quality (AQI). The asset quality index (AQI) compares this year's asset quality to last year's AQI.
- 4. SGI stands for Sales Growth Index. This is the rate of sales growth from one year to the next. Manipulation of a company's sales growth metric may jeopardise its public image, despite the fact that this metric is not itself a metric of manipulation.
- 5. DEPI stands for Depreciation Index. The rate of depreciation is divided by the previous year's rate of depreciation. With a lower depreciation rate (DEPI greater than 1), the company may be increasing the useful asset life estimates or pursuing a more income-friendly strategy.
- 6. SGAI (Sales, General, and Administrative Expenses Index) All sales, general, and administrative costs are covered. In comparison to the previous year, this indicator shows how much money SGAs spent. The fact that sales have grown disproportionately informs an analyst's view of a company's future prospects.
- 7. LVGI stands for Leverage Index. The debt-to-assets ratio from the previous year is compared to this year's. The goal of this project is to quantify debt covenant incentives for profit manipulation.
- 8. TATA (Total Accruals to Total Assets) Total Assets to Total Accruals is an acronym for Total Assets to Total Accruals. Managers can use this metric to see how often they skew their results with discretionary accounting decisions. Total accruals are calculated by subtracting depreciation from the change in non-cash working capital accounts.

The following formula is then used to combine these eight variables:

$$M = -4.84 + 0.92*DSRI + 0.528*GMI + 0.404*AQI + 0.892*SGI + 0.115*DEPI - 0.172*SGAI + 4.679 * TATA - .327*LVGI$$

A score of less than -2.22 (i.e. less negative than this) is required to be considered manipulative. A company with an M-Score of less than -2.22 is unlikely to be manipulative. To uncover unexpected events, financial statement analysis requires at least two periods of financial reporting. However, in order to get a sense of the company's reporting patterns, data from the previous reporting period should be examined.

#### **Literature Review**

Corporate fraud raises financing costs and decreases a company's market value in addition to damaging a company's reputation and decreasing investor confidence (Yu & Yu, 2011). This means that a thorough understanding of corporate fraud is necessary to protect investors' interests and promote a healthy capital market.

A company's ability to commit corporate fraud is strongly linked to its internal and external governance structures. In publicly traded companies, independent directors elected by local residents reduce the likelihood and impact of corporate fraud (Zhou & Liu, 2017). The authors (Zhou & Liu, 2017). Because their largest shareholder owns a significant number of shares, corporations are unable to engage in illegal activities (Chen et al., 2005). According to a 2005 study by Chen et al. According to Chen et al., the characteristics of a company's board of directors are linked to the frequency of fraud in the board (2006). The frequency of board meetings, the number of outside directors, and the length of the chairman's term are all factors that influence the probability of fraud. Executive pay is increasingly linked to corporate fraud because incentives in the form of options can lead to

fraud, and fraudulent actions result in abnormally high earnings manipulations. A company's level of corporate fraud is influenced by factors such as institutional ownership, media attention, and analyst follow-up, according to studies on external governance. To put it simply, institutional ownership lowers the likelihood of a company breaking the law.' External governance can reduce corporate fraud and media attention in a variety of ways (Zhou et al., 2016). In other words, it's not a good idea.

Corporate fraud is also affected by a company's finances. Debt-related concerns have a positive impact on the likelihood of unlawful disclosure activities, which can help avoid delisting and loss. In no way are these actions related to a lack of funds (Wu and Ma, 2010). The short answer is yes. Companies listed on the Chinese stock exchange are particularly vulnerable to fraud because senior management strives to keep their financial demands as low as possible (Zhang & Jian, 2008).

By exploiting opportunities to gain private advantages, insiders of publicly traded corporations (such as controlling shareholders, company directors, or management) commit corporate fraud (Lei et al., 2020). A company's business model can be influenced by its ownership structure, according to previous studies (Wang & Salas, 2020). The first reason is that a company with many influential shareholders is less likely to defraud investors. There is a direct supervisory influence if there are many stockholders. They may be persuaded to reduce related-party transactions and capital occupations if the controlling shareholders are persuasive enough (Zhao, 2019). If a large number of significant stockholders are present, the likelihood of corporate fraud may rise. According to the collusion hypothesis, multiple major shareholders may conspire to harm smaller shareholders and commit fraud. Information disclosure fraud is a type of dishonesty that can be used to cover one's tracks (Cheng et al., 2015).

Investors may be deceived by financial sleight of hand by management. An accounting menyesatkan can be deceived by intentionally skewed data, and the reader's perception of that data may be affected as a result (Schilit, 2018).

Central and Eastern European companies were analysed by Bistrova and Lace (2012). According to their findings, there is a negative correlation between accruals and the quality of corporate governance.

No statistically significant evidence is provided by accruals on the balance sheet. An under-governed company has less earnings plausibility than a well-governed one, so it's more important to look at the difference between net income and operational cash flow. According to Sandeep Goel (2013), the Beneish Model was used to look into financial irregularities in the Indian telecom industry. He has used a wide range of metrics, including profit quality, revenue quality, income volatility, discretionary accruals, and manipulation score, to try to improve the company's financial performance. It's abundantly clear that the companies under investigation committed financial misdeeds, according to the findings. Local MMHB fraud and detection are the focus of an investigation by Normah Omar and colleagues (2014). These methods were used in this case: Beneish Model and Ratios Analysis. RM 198,727 in fictitious revenue was generated by the company, according to the study of the operating efficiency ratio (OER). According to our investigation, we can conclude that the company is manipulating its financial reporting.

#### **Data Analysis**

The following are the outcomes of using various analytical tools.

## **Quality of Earnings**

The following is a test of the sample firms' earnings quality.

**Table 1. Quality of earnings of sample companies (%)** 

Years	Cipla Ltd.	Lupin Ltd.	Sun Pharma Ltd.	Cadila healthcare Ltd.	Divi's Lab	Dr. Reddy's Lab	Torrent pharma	Aurobindo Pharma	Biocon Ltd.	Piramal Pharma
2012	146.36	59.402	78.891	56.531	61.165	153.77	127.888	-1182.5	62.818	-577.29
2013	91.662	79.882	20.614	89.176	78.946	22.831	-12.88	125.886	126.225	756.711
2014	130.466	65.765	85.035	97.184	70.944	46.836	40.673	27.978	57.43	512.482
2015	89.026	118.942	-10.05	85.216	97.092	106.52	134.231	28.854	34.608	-903.45
2016	123.64	32.81	115.93	97.031	93.021	206.589	170.934	118.713	22.735	-671.41
2017	127.86	35.99	118.46	95.21	91.89	210.55	122.78	114.67	42.786	-341.8
2018	129.44	43.332	121.82	99.42	87.9	212.29	119.54	109.45	78.667	225.96

## Interpretation

The ratio is considered to be of high quality for a company's earnings quality as long as it remains stable and does not fluctuate significantly. Only Torrent Pharma Ltd. has shown a quality of earnings of more than 100 percent in terms of financial stability. In contrast, "the performance is not encouraging." The earnings quality ratio of Dr. Reddy's Ltd. is 93.5 percent, indicating that the company's financial results are improving. The earnings of Aurobindo Pharma and Piramal Enterprises frequently fluctuate dramatically. The companies chosen offer a wide range of earnings. In this situation, both efficiency and clarity are lacking in the management of these organisations.

## **Discretionary Accruals (De-Angelo Model)**

As a proxy for earnings management, the use of Discretionary Accruals reflects a company's ability to manage its income accrual. Depreciation increases or decreases, as well as inventory increases or decreases, are examples of accrual choices that reduce (increase) earnings. The De-Angelo model was used to calculate accruals.

**Table 2. Discretionary accruals** 

Years	Cipla Ltd.	Lupin Ltd.	Sun Pharma Ltd.	Cadila healthcare Ltd.	Divi's Lab	Dr. Reddy's Lab	Torrent pharma	Aurobindo Pharma	Biocon Ltd.	Piramal Pharma
2012	-0.0584	-0.0037	-0.026	0.064	0.044	-0.11	-0.06	-0.14	-0.003	-1.28
2013	-0.0714	-0.005	-0.005	-0.049	-0.028	0.14	0.25	0.05	-0.06	0.05
2014	-0.0467	-0.09	-0.0021	-0.004	0.032	0.004	-0.05	0.14	0.07	0.0003
2015	-0.0416	-0.086	-0.142	-0.024	-0.055	-0.07	-0.21	0.009	0.03	0.13
2016	-0.0306	0.046	0.048	-0.017	0.011	-0.05	-0.02	-0.12	0.12	0.27
2017	-0.0301	-0.032	0.039	-0.013	0.09	-0.023	-0.022	-0.19	0.09	0.29
2018	-0.0211	0.211	0.31	-0.011	0.07	-0.024	-0.01	-0.11	0.05	0.33

## Interpretation

During the research period, the selected companies used discretionary accrual practises, as shown in Table 2. The pharmaceutical industry is expected to have an average positive discretionary accrual performance, according to the earnings management trend.

In comparison to the other companies in the table, Piramal Enterprises Ltd. has the most discretionary accruals (Table 2). When compared to its competitors' financial statements, the company's financial statements show a significant number of fictitious assets.

Cipla Ltd, Sun Pharma Ltd, and Torrent Pharma Ltd, among others, use incomedecreasing management. Torrent Pharma, Sun Pharma, and Cipla all use income-increasing management techniques to deceive their investors.

## The Beneish M-Score Model's Manipulation Score

For the period 2012-2018, the manipulation score was determined using the Beneish model with eight variables for the selected organisations.

Table 3. Manipulation score of sample companies

Years	Cipla Ltd.	Lupin Ltd.	Sun Pharma Ltd.	Cadila healthcare Ltd.	Divi's Lab	Dr. Reddy's Lab	Torrent Pharma	Aurobindo Pharma	Biocon Ltd.	Piramal Pharma
2012	-2.175	-1.508	-2.814	-2.889	-1.9986	-2.556	-2.143	-0.512	-1.811	-3.605
2013	-2.352	-2.669	-1.324	-2.268	-2.3007	-2.022	-1.458	-2.429	-2.735	-3.067
2014	-2.125	-2.125	-7.556	-4.124	-2.0137	-1.438	-1.366	-1.678	-2.345	-3.116
2015	-2.154	-1.771	-1.87	-2.574	-2.1189	-2.311	-1.697	-2.153	-2.53	-11.99
2016	-2.37	-1.2217	-2.35	-2.051	-1.7171	-2.7	-2.83	-2.552	-2.441	-4.068
2017	-2.46	-1.701	-2.15	-2.041	-1.5252	-2.53	-2.53	-2.644	-2.31	-4.034
2018	-2.57	-1.502	-2.89	-2.024	-1.4367	-2.48	-2.86	-2.424	-2.281	-4.774

## Interpretation

The M-score of the selected firms is shown in table-3. M-Score of -2.22, on the other hand, indicates that an individual is very likely to be a manipulator. The research suggests that

- (1) Unusual increases in receivables,
- (2) Deteriorating gross margins,
- (3) Sales growth, and
- (4) Increasing accruals all enhance the likelihood of manipulation.

Cipla Lupin Cadila Divis Torrent Pharma, Cipla Lupin Cadila Divis Torrent Pharma, As a result, Dr. and Reddy's Aurobindo's average M-score is being scrutinised for possible manipulation. These three companies have the lowest levels of product manipulation, indicating that their products have not been tampered with.

## **Findings & Conclusions**

The practise of corporate fraud has a long history in India. Financial penalties have been imposed on the perpetrators of business frauds that have been made public. Investors and the government have lost a significant amount of money as a result of financial fraud. In the end, it makes no difference who gets fired because the taxpayers lose a lot of money regardless. Victims of corporate financial fraud frequently have a difficult time recouping their losses. It takes a long time to compensate for lost time. This suggests that, despite the harsh penalties and stringent corporate requirements, legislation alone will not be enough to prevent these crimes. Corporate fraud is one of the most serious social and financial issues. This crippling disease is caused by moral decay on the part of individuals and organisations. If social change and strong leadership aren't enough to improve the situation, there may be only one option: a return to the status quo.

As a result, in today's corporate cultures, it is easier for people to defraud others for personal gain. The ethics of corporate decision-making are influenced by the company's values and norms, as well as its culture. Unrealistic expectations imposed by the parent company, as well as the economy and society as a whole, are responsible for more than a quarter of all corporate frauds.

Discretionary accruals are used in this case to replace inflated profits. This study looks at the accrual management practises of a few Indian pharmaceutical companies.

The majority of companies' operating cash flow has been artificially increased, according to data on earnings quality. The majority of units are benefiting from disposable

accruals, as evidenced by their positive average. Cipla Ltd., Sun Pharma Ltd., and Torrent Pharma Ltd. are the only three pharmaceutical companies that use income-decreasing management techniques. As a result, these three companies' financial statements are significantly skewed. Because the financial reporting system is opaque, management risks misusing a powerful tool for profit management when an organisation decides to manage profits through accruals on a discretionary basis. All but Sun Pharma Ltd., Biocon Ltd., and Piramal Enterprises Ltd. were found to be manipulating financial accounts, according to the Beneish M-score model.

Here are a few of the research project's findings:

- Only Torrent Pharma Ltd. has an Earnings Quality ratio greater than 100 percent. Piramal Enterprises Ltd and Aurobindo Pharma Ltd have a poor Earnings quality.
- The earnings management trend forecasts a positive discretionary accrual performance in the pharmaceutical industry, on average, according to an analysis of discretionary accruals using the DeAngelo model. All of the firms chosen are involved in income management methods, either income-decreasing or income-increasing manipulation.
- Cipla Ltd, Lupin Ltd, Cadila healthcare Ltd, Divi's laboratories Ltd, Dr. Reddy's laboratories Ltd, Torrent pharmaceuticals Ltd, and AurobindoPharma Ltd are manipulators according to the Beneish M-Score model, whereas Sun Pharma Ltd, Biocon Ltd, and Piramal Enterprises Ltd are not manipulators during the study period.

## **Recommendations & Suggestions**

The ethical conduct of the company's senior management is required for effective corporate governance. Working in a moral and ethical environment necessitates a strong whistleblower policy. A whistleblower mechanism is defined in Clause 49 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India's Listing Agreement, which deals with corporate governance requirements (SEBI). It has been in place since 2003, which is in line with expectations, but the results have been disappointing. Companies can conduct psychological assessments and inquire about the reputations of previous employers when hiring new employees. In addition to looking for employees with high moral standards in their personal lives, companies must educate potential new hires about the company's organisational leadership."

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