

# "We Are Brave Electronic Engineers!": Organizational Identity Attainment Through Performative Strategizing

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**Abstract:** The paper seeks to study organizational identity attainment through strategic linguistic practices, understood as performative strategizing. The article focuses on the interaction of organizational identity and strategy by analyzing the evolution of an electronic engineering company from its founding to maturity over eighteen years. Combining action research and grounded theory, the study identifies the features inherent to organizational identity attainment. The author observed strategic linguistic practices in the company, studied archival documents, and delved deeply into strategy formation as a practitioner, interacting directly with strategists to comprehend organizational identity attainment. The research shows that self-fulfillment, effective communication, and readiness for external challenges are the main features of organizational identity attainment through performative strategizing.

**Keywords:** *action research, grounded theory, organizational identity, performative strategizing*

## 1. Introduction

Recently, there has been remarkable research interest in studying the relationship between strategy and organizational identity. A dynamic view of the nature of strategy and identity in their interactions is the most promising direction for research (Langley, Oliver & Rouleau, 2020). Enang, Sminia and Zhang (2021) have analyzed the discrepancies between the temporal orientations of strategy and organizational identity, showing the possibilities to overcome these discrepancies. For the *Special Issue on Exploring the Strategy-Identity Nexus*, seven articles were selected to "discuss the concepts of alignment and fit as central to the organizational identity and strategy literatures" (Ravasi, Tripsas & Langley, 2020, p. 5). The study places particular emphasis on alignment because previous research has shown that strategy and organizational identity do not have a clearly coherent relationship (Rindova, Dalpiaz & Ravasi, 2011; Anthony & Tripsas, 2016). However, looking for a fit between the two phenomena, the authors of the special issue consider strategy quite superficially, claiming that strategy is "what organizations do or intend to do to achieve superior performance" (Ravasi, Tripsas & Langley, 2020, p. 5). This approach leaves without due attention the diversity and even contradictions in strategy research, since strategy, unlike organizational identity, lacks a common understanding. Insufficiently explicit designation of strategy in interaction with organizational identity leads to vague and barely valuable outcomes.

Albert and Whetten (1985) studied organizational identity as a holistic phenomenon that aligns individual identities. It is assumed that organizational identity is something that "already is" and can be described as an entity with attached attributes such as centrality, distinctiveness, and enduring (Albert & Whetten, 1985). At the same time, the alternative approach to organizational identity, revealing how organizational members acquire organizational identity (Chia, 1996), has received less attention, despite viewing organizational identity not as an essence or a thing, but as a flow or a narrative that opens new perspectives for research (Schultz *et al.*, 2012). At the individual level, Mantere and Whittington (2021) unfold the conditions for attaining strategists' identity, such as self-measurement, self-construction, and self-actualization, calling them tactics within strategic discourse. At the organizational level, identity formation as an ongoing praxis is discussed by many scholars (Glynn, 2000; Scott & Lane, 2000; Sillince & Brown, 2009; Rockwell, 2016). However, the features of organizational identity attainment through a narrowly defined approach to

strategy formation have not been studied. Thus, in terms of the research gap, a detailed study of how organizational identity is attained through performative strategizing is required.

Considering the concept of performativity originally formulated as “doing things with words” (Austin, 1962), it could be argued that performative strategizing involves strategy attainment through linguistic practices and communication (Pälli, 2018; Vásquez *et al.*, 2018). The current research agenda on performativity in relation to strategy is not limited to the original approach, but also includes such aspects of performativity as efficiency, identity, and sociomateriality (Gond *et al.*, 2016; Cabantous, Gond & Wright, 2018; Allard-Poesi & Cabantous, 2021). There is significant research interest in studying performative aspects of strategy formation in relation to organizational identity attainment.

Based on the above, the following research question was developed: What are the features of organizational identity attainment through performative strategizing? The article consists of five chapters. Following the introduction, the second chapter provides an overview of the theoretical framework of the study. The third chapter explains methodological choices and data collection techniques. The results are placed in the context of current research in the fourth chapter. The theoretical and practical implications and limitations of the study are presented in the conclusion.

## 2. Theoretical framework

As a theoretical concept, organizational identity emerged in the academic agenda after two researchers, Stuart Albert and David Whetten, observed the behavior of colleagues who feared layoffs at the University of Illinois in 1979. What happened then showed that “concerns about identity are just as profound as concerns about survival” (Whetten & Godfrey, 1998). Organizational identity is characterized by attributes such as central, distinctive, and enduring (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Centrality is based on the deepest organizational values, which in turn determine the most significant organizational practices. Centrality is what forms the core of how members perceive an organization. Distinctiveness refers to those aspects of organizational identity that members consider as distinguishing their organization from other organizations involved in the same activities. In other words, distinctiveness is a unique mix of significant organizational

characteristics. Enduring means that organizational identity is preserved over time. Although it is generally recognized that nothing in organizational life is constant, there are nevertheless organizational characteristics that exhibit striking similarities over long periods of time. Essentially, the soul of the organization remains the same, although the organization is forced to evolve in a changing environment.

At an early stage of organizational identity research, scholars, without a proper theoretical basis within organizational theory, relied on the concept of identity in related fields. Researchers have viewed organizations through a metaphorical lens as machines or organisms (Morgan, 1986), and then, more recently, as superpersons (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1993). This superperson is someone making decisions—the head of an organization or a group of executives. Like a superperson, the organization is seen as striving for consensus. Moreover, like human beings, organizations are born, go through tough formative years, acquire new theoretical knowledge and practical skills, become old, and then die. The perception of an organization as a living organism or superperson is largely determined by the requirements of interaction with various government and market institutions. The perception of organizations as individuals is reflected in everyday language: we argue that some organizations behave aggressively and unethically, while others behave nicely and abide by the law. But organizations are neither like people nor machines, nor organisms. Czarniawska-Joerges (1992) claims that organizations are sets of collective action.

Exploring the mysterious appeal of organizational identity, Gioia (2008) claimed that the concept is relevant at all organizational levels. Organizational identity resonates with members of organizations as well as researchers. This happens because the comprehension of organizational identity—both at the individual and organizational levels—involves a deep dive into the personal world of organizational members and the fundamental underpinnings of organizations. The praxis of organizational identity attainment has an ontological nature, since reflection on identity means searching for answers to existential questions related to the fundamentals of individuals and organizations. Attributes of organizational identity, such as centrality and distinctiveness, seem to be generally accepted, but enduring appears contradictory. Questioning organizational identity as something immutable, researchers have concentrated on the internal and external factors that lead to identity transformation, as well as those that hinder it. It seems counterintuitive, but historically research has first focused on organizational identity change, and only much later, on the sources and

conditions for organizational identity formation (Gioia *et al.*, 2013). The research agenda has long been enmeshed in discussions of organizational identity transformation, which was undoubtedly theoretically significant, but distracted scholars from more fundamental issues related to the emergence of the phenomenon under study.

There are three paradigms—the linguistic-discursive paradigm, the social actor paradigm, and the social-constructivist paradigm—within which the emergence of organizational identity is studied (Rockwell, 2016). The first of these paradigms considers organizational identity as emerging through linguistic practices that structure reality for members of the organization. The praxis of attaining organizational identity involves articulating, grasping, and adjusting the generated meaning through all available means of communication at all organizational levels. The second and third paradigms view the emergence of organizational identity as a dynamic construct determined by internal factors. In the social actor paradigm, organizational identity is defined by leaders to invite others to adopt a top-down approach. Within this paradigm, organizational identity is seen and understood primarily through the eyes and hearts of leaders. One of the drawbacks of this widely used paradigm is the inevitable gap between how executives and employees perceive the organization. The social-constructivist paradigm seeks to bridge this gap by claiming that it is not only leaders that determine organizational identity. Wertsch (2012) argues that all organizational members form a collective identity, which is strengthened in the organizational space by adding new meanings based on the personal values of all members. Within the social-constructivist paradigm, the emergence of organizational identity represents an ongoing praxis of interpreting organizational events. Thus, the first paradigm draws directly on the linguistic perspective of organizational life, while the second and third include organizational members in the game and consider their roles.

Organizational identity is directed both inside the organization—this is how members of the organization form a shared understanding of what the organization is, and outside—external actors through various communication channels “read” positive or negative manifestations of organizational identity, which can significantly favor or hinder the achievement of the desired organizational goals. Rockwell (2016) found that disruptions to the shared understanding of organizational identity have a profound impact on organizational effectiveness. In this way, a coherent organizational identity is strategically significant. Therefore, organizational identity—at all levels

of analysis—is often studied in relation to organizational strategy (Oliver, 2015). Strategy looks forward to the future, while organizational identity, being the unchanging soul of the organization, inevitably turns to the past events of organizational life. Although the distinct temporal orientation of the two concepts studied is obvious, both strategy and organizational identity share common approaches to finding coherent interactions in organizations, which largely determines efficient decision-making. Each of the concepts strives to find a balance between external challenges and internally determined factors. Besides, both strategy and organizational identity cannot be considered as static phenomena without taking into account their dynamic formation.

Organizational identity as a modern institution has a narrative character (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994). Being socially constructed, organizations form their identities primarily through linguistic practices. Narrative plays a significant role in strategizing. In a broad sense, strategy formation can be viewed as fiction, because strategy develops narratives about an imaginary future that has not yet arrived, and may never arrive (Barry & Elmes, 1997). In essence, organizational strategy is like a book plot that is attractive and credible—all organizational members believe in their own Harry Potter, as well as the other inhabitants of Hogwarts and the Muggle world. Strategic linguistic practices form dominant narratives that reflect organizational policies, as well as the distribution of power in the organization. There are various genres of strategic narratives based, on the one hand, on the widely accepted tools for strategy formation, and on the other hand, on the gut feeling, manifested through prescribed and intuitive practices for strategic decision-making (Prokushenkov, 2023). Narrative approaches to strategy formation favor strong connections between micro and macro levels in organizations. The narrative fills organizational activities with the proper meaning, sets the right directions for strategic development, and contributes to rethinking of organizational identity (Fenton & Langley, 2011).

Attaining organizational identity through performative strategizing requires collective effort. Within the framework of language-based strategy formation, strategists act as experts performing their linguistic roles, and strategizing is a language game where the rules imply a correct use of strategically significant labels (Mantere, 2013). Strategy triggers organizational practices through performativity (Merkus *et al.*, 2019). In turn, organizational practices are mutually dependent on organizational identity. The interaction between identity and strategy is complex, indirect, and inertial (Ashforth & Meal, 1996). At the individual level, organizational identity coupled

with strategy form a space of opportunities and constraints. This space encourages organizational members to integrate their personal identities into a collective identity. Considered as action at all organizational levels in multidirectional time orientations, organizational identity attainment can be viewed as strategizing. Here are three lines of research on the link between identity and strategy: identity as strategic resource, identity as a framing device and identity as a form of work (Oliver, 2015). Identity as a resource can serve as the basis for competitive advantage. Besides, identity can be viewed as a lens for analyzing the external and internal environment and making strategic decisions. Additionally, identity as a form of strategic work relates closely to the concept of strategy-as-practice.

### 3. Method and data collection

Action research as a method involves active interaction between the researcher and practitioners in real-world settings (Cornish *et al.*, 2023). The methodological choice allows the author to be immersed in the study of strategy formation at all organizational levels. Action research is aimed at transformative changes in the studied phenomena. The chosen method is focused on studying organizational life simultaneously with the implementation of organizational practices using integrative methods (Davison, Martinsons & Malaurent, 2021). Initially, Lewin (1946) assigned a comparative nature to action research, aimed at analyzing the conditions and causes of the emergence and evolution of various forms of social interactions. Torbert (1981) argues that action research seeks to find answers to practical problems with deep involvement of researchers; it is empirical questioning that produces insights through action rather than through external observation. Over the many years of the widespread use of action research, contradictions have arisen in determining the priorities of research, namely, whether more attention should be paid to the actions themselves or to the study of diverse activities as a way of analyzing actions (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005, pp. 3–5). One of the most significant disadvantages of using action research is that this method is often chosen by insiders for whom it is difficult to obtain an outside perspective on the phenomena being studied. An undeniable advantage of action research is the opportunity to gain a fresh research perspective, one free from generally accepted theories.

Coupled with action research, the constructivist grounded theory was applied, suggesting that "the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 523). Data was not considered as a given reality—on the contrary, comprehension of reality occurred through the interaction of the researcher and the phenomena being studied in a physically and socially determined context. Data analysis in grounded theory involves the researcher's active participation and is done through coding. Glaser (1978) described coding as a process that involves the researcher going beyond the empirical level and conceptually grouping the data which then becomes theory. Following Glaser (1978; 1992), substantive and then theoretical coding were conducted. Substantive coding included two stages: open and selective coding. During open coding, data was "opened" through a line-by-line analysis by taking notes related to conceptual claims that emerged during the comparative analysis process. At that stage, three core categories of data related to organizational identity attainment were identified: organizational members' individual experiences, interaction within the organization, and external environment. In the process of selective coding, emerging properties were assigned to one of three core categories and an interim table of key quotes was compiled. Then, theoretical codes were formed from hints signaled by data to get a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study. Theoretical coding integrated meaningful codes into a theory.

To carry out an inductive longitudinal study, the author used the working materials of a strategic retreat that took place from February 10 to 11, 2012, semi-structured interviews with the company's founder, archival documents, and observation of the organization's members. The working materials of the strategic retreat are transcripts of group work by company employees, divided into groups tasked with writing fairy tales about the past, present, and future of the company. Seven interviews were completed with the company's founder and CEO between March 2021 and August 2022. The structure of interviews was formed on the basis of four questions, each of which was worked out in due depth. The questions touched upon (a) the essence of the strategic problems that the company faces; (b) the influence of prescribed and intuitive narratives (Prokushenkov, 2023) on the possibility of solving these problems; (c) the significance of solving these problems for the organization; and (d) practical steps for implementing the decisions made. Online video interviews were conducted using Skype and recorded with the respondents' permission and then transcribed. The total duration of the interviews was 9 hours 22 minutes. Five interviews were done with

the company's founder and CEO between September and November 2022, of which the first four interviews were completed online, and the last one was held in person. Video interviews were conducted using Skype and recorded with the respondent's permission and then transcribed. The face-to-face interview was tape-recorded with the respondent's permission and then transcribed. The total duration of the interviews was 6 hours 48 minutes. The archival documents cover the entire history of the company's evolution from its founding in 2004 to maturity in 2022. There are corporate statistics, PowerPoint presentations, press articles, and a website—25 documents in total. Besides, the author observed employees and interacted with top managers in the company's offices in Minsk, Belarus in May–June 2014, as well as in Vilnius, Lithuania in November 2022.

## 4. Results and discussion

The initial impetus for the start of the company in 2004 was the founder's insight into the striking gap between the high qualifications of electronic engineers from Eastern Europe and their undervaluation in the global context. At its core, the company grew out of a deeply personal experience of the inferiority of knowledgeable and capable engineers. The company was founded to “correct the injustice” that was in the unfairly low assessment of valuable professionals, one of whom was the founder. It turned out that the company was conceived as the best place for electronic engineers—this maxim drove the company's development from inception to maturity. According to the founder, the metaphor of the company is a living organism, “namely an octopus, which has a small head, an awkward body and long tentacles.” The main characteristics of such an organism are survivability due to the decentralization of decision-making and distributed competencies. In the process of evolution, the company developed “from a family to a micro-holding, and then to a divisional structure.” In the first eight years of the company's existence, strategizing was carried out solely by the founder in an authoritarian style until, in 2012, there was “a mutiny on board,” which forced the founder to invite employees to jointly form strategy during the first strategic session in the company's history.

During the strategic session in February 2012, employees, divided into four groups, participated in strategic linguistic practices, which included writing fairy tales about the past, present, and future of the company. Narrative

strategizing gave birth to metaphorical stories of collective authorship about three donkeys, three little pigs, three heroes and a king. The donkeys were "scary and grimy," but when they heard the call of a "beautiful white horse to become big and strong," they responded to the call and set off on a journey full of trials to find their strength. Then, the misadventures of the donkeys on their dangerous path are described. The tale ends with hope for the eventual construction of a bright corporate future—a symbolic bridge, over which the donkeys can reach their goals. In the tale of the three little pigs, the protagonists set out to build something big, meaningful, and lasting, but were unable to reconcile their intentions. As a result, one pig could not cope with his complex and expensive project; the second pig, who focused on cheap straw houses, was forced to leave the market due to competitors from Asia; and the third pig, who decided to build a ship instead of a house, faced failure when his ship froze in the ice as soon as winter came. In the third tale, a ruler set ambitious goals for the executives playing the roles of heroes but did not clearly indicate how to achieve these goals. As a result, the heroes got lost in their ways. The tale of the tsar tells the story of the discrepancy between the leader's intentions and the employees' capabilities, as well as the company's resources.

Viewing performative strategizing through storytelling as a language game (Mantere, 2013), where not only the roles of the participants are significant, but also the manner in which they use strategically significant concepts, provides a reliable basis for interpreting corporate narratives. It could be argued that corporate fairy tales have temporal, individual, as well as organizational dimensions. As for the temporal dimension, participants clearly identify events in the past by giving these events an explicit assessment, then describe the ongoing present and sketch out an uncertain future. Fairy tales are intensely emotionally charged: there are complexly intertwined dreams of a bright future, hopes, pride in achievements, joy, excitement and, at the same time, confusion, disorientation, dissatisfaction, and even aggression. Analyzing the world described in corporate fairy tales, one could discern motifs of "the big house" as a symbol of power and influence, ambitious goals, innovation, and creativity. In this way, plausible stories shape corporate fiction (Barry & Elmes, 1997). Besides, strategic linguistic practices integrate micro and macro levels in the multi-level space of company strategic work where narratives are understood as a way of giving meaning to the practice of attaining organizational identity (Fenton & Langley, 2011).

The 2012 crisis led to the company “becoming loose.” According to the founder, one of the reasons for the crisis was that the engineers “felt like kings”—which was inherent at the company’s inception—while other employees vehemently protested against such inequality. During a strategic session, which came about as a consequence of the collision of the prescribed organizational identity and the spontaneous reaction of strategists, claims of multiple identities were made through personal self-representation (Sillince & Brown, 2009). This was a precondition for breaking the homogeneity of organizational identity, which had a significant impact on strategic decision-making (Brinkerink *et al.*, 2020) and, unexpectedly, influenced the strengthening of competitive advantages (Sillince, 2006). Glynn (2000) argues that the construction of organizational identity is related to strategic capabilities and resources, which is clearly seen in all the most significant crises that the company has experienced over 18 years. Two years after its founding, the company experienced its first growth crisis, but at the same time reached the understanding that “now we can do business.” The loss of a massive portion of clients in 2010 tested the accuracy of the chosen strategy and the viability of the organizational identity. In 2011, new partners joined the team, which then brought the company to the brink of the abyss, primarily due to an organizational identity crisis.

The question “who we as an organization” began to be discussed for the first time by all members of the organization after the company overcame the 2012 crisis. Up to this point, the founder had single-handedly outlined the prescribed values and principles, as well as the desired organizational identity. The main claim was akin to youthful maximalism and sounded as follows: “We are brave electronic engineers who can handle any task!” On the one hand, such an approach created drama, which is necessary for the development of the plot. Using this, the author claims to understand the development of the company, taking a linguistic perspective to be in tune with the entire study. On the other hand, the personality of a revolutionary type of founder, who created a company to challenge the status quo in the electronics industry, is not inclined to adaptive and flexible behavior, even despite changes in the competitive environment and a decrease in the company’s efficiency (Zuzul & Tripsas, 2020). As a result, the company demonstrated inertial behavior, which was due to the work of the mechanism for confirming the personal identity of the founder, which in turn influenced the organizational identity. Inertial processes largely determined the subsequent crises, which the company went through after 2012. It is critical to note that each crisis was strongly associated with reconsidering

organizational identity. In the crisis of 2015, the founder stepped away from active involvement in the daily business routine. In that year, the company was forced to fire half of the employees, debugging business processes during the transition to regular management—one that would be free from the founder's voluntarism. Then, to overcome the 2017 crisis, caused by changing customer needs, the founder returned to managing the company, but in a new role—as a mentor and coach.

Discussing the interaction of strategy and organizational identity, the founder argues that organizational identity comes first, being a necessary condition for achieving organizational goals, while strategy comes second, as a sufficient condition for organizational success. This approach contradicts the claim that "strategy is meaningfully framed by identity, while strategy serves to enact identity" (Schultz & Hernes, 2020). When analyzing the relationship between strategy and organizational identity, it is critical to clearly articulate the basic assumptions underlying the latter. The first assumption is that organizations have a default identity that has clearly distinguishable characteristics—and if these characteristics are not present, then it turns out that there is no organizational identity. The second assumption is formulated by Whetten (2006) as an attempt to form a stronger version of Albert and Whetten (1985): the claim is that organizational identity is treated as an analogue of individual identity. The third assumption is that organizational identity is unchanged from the birth to the death of the organization (Kjærgaard, 2009). The fourth assumption is that organizational identity is something special and clearly different from other concepts such as organizational culture or image (Ravasi & Canato, 2013; Hatch, Schultz & Skov, 2015). The apparent vulnerability of the above basic assumptions gives rise to an ongoing crisis in the concept of organizational identity (Pratt, 2003). Consequently, attempts to analyze the strategy-identity nexus (Ravasi, Tripsas & Langley, 2020) must take into account both the lack of agreement on what strategy is and the weak foundations of the organizational identity concept.

Substantive coding outcomes are presented in Table 1

**Table 1.** Substantive coding outcomes.

| Illustrative quotations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Conceptual claims                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Core categories                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <p>We respect clients and colleagues, support self-criticism, openness, and bold decisions. We recognize every employee's right to make mistakes in innovative actions.</p> <p>Once upon a time there lived 3 donkeys: Om, Am and Um. They dreamed of being big and strong. One day a beautiful snow-white horse came to them and asked: Do you want to be like me, scary grimy donkeys? Yes, the donkeys said in unison. Then go. Behind the 9 mountains there is a country of Hardware, there is horse-grass. If you eat this herb, you will become big and strong like me.</p> <p>The donkey Um went his own way but came to a swamp along the way. He walked right through the swamp, catching algae and snags. In the distance one could see a forest and a clearing in which forest animals frolicked. The donkey was proud that he was walking through the swamp and all the forest animals were surprised at how patient he was, that he was walking this way.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Psychological safety</p> <p>Dream of being big and strong</p> <p>Overcoming difficulties and being proud of achievements</p>                                                                                           | <p>Organizational members' personal experiences</p> |
| <p>We create core value for the client in teams through mutual exchange of ideas, joint efforts, support, and shared responsibility, and do not refuse to help others.</p> <p>The donkeys walked for a long time and found themselves on 3 rocks, between which there was a canyon. The fog dropped and they finally saw each other. There was a tree growing on every rock. The donkeys, having shouted at each other, agreed to knock down the trees so that they would form a stable bridge. Having crossed the canyon, they moved on.</p> <p>Naf-Naf was building the house. But his strength was running out, his health was deteriorating, his blood pressure was skyrocketing. And Naf-Naf realized that without like-minded people he would not be able to build a house.</p> <p>One day, all the friends came together, heatedly discussed the current situation, and actively decided on how to live further.</p> <p>Tsar the Father lost his patience and slammed his fist! And he spoke loudly: When will I see these interpersonal proceedings? You are united in spirit, united in purpose, you must come together, complement, unite the households, and create a miracle! I can only give you a hint and advice: we will build a catapult, all together, in order to expand our gates and let a miracle in... and lay out a path and a road into foreign principalities!</p> | <p>Exchange of ideas and joint efforts</p> <p>Striving for effective communication</p> <p>Desire to find like-minded people</p> <p>Desire to discuss problems together</p> <p>Coming together to achieve common goals</p> | <p>Interactions within the organization</p>         |

| Illustrative quotations                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Conceptual claims                                            | Core categories      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| We have evolved only in projects with high challenges.                                                                                                                                                                                         | Challenges                                                   | External environment |
| The king gathered his squad and ordered to make sure that the kingdom would become famous throughout the world! Three heroes volunteered for this unknown journey. The goals are noble, but no one knows how to fulfill them.                  | A leader's ambitions to meet challenges in the outside world |                      |
| Alyosha is saddened, he understands, but does not know how to achieve this noble goal.                                                                                                                                                         | Confusion                                                    |                      |
| Dobrynya became sad. For a long time, he thought about what to bring to the new lands... Everything that is in our kingdom is indecent on foreign lands... In thought, he set off on a journey to look at foreign lands and their way of life. | Uncertainty                                                  |                      |
| Boyar 1: Of course, we can, Tsar the Father, it is a good thing (a malicious smile with anticipation of easy money), but I would like to understand what they want from us, what task is set before us, what resources can I count on?         | Lack of confidence                                           |                      |

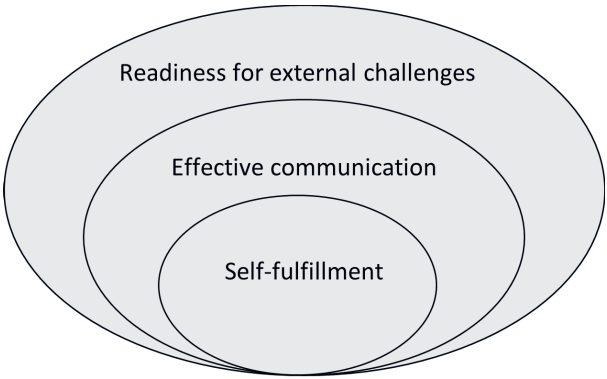
By placing the findings of the study into the current research agenda, it could be stated that the organizational identity attainment in the company under study occurred within the framework of an attribute-based claim (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2019). Being “brave electronic engineers” is a clearly articulated manifestation of the organizational soul, which is something that has remained unchanged throughout the company’s history from inception to global success. Comparing organizational identity to soul may be appropriate because organizational identity, like soul, does not seem to be a top priority for practitioners—as if it were impossible to live without it. The opposite is true: strategy, finance, and market positioning are of decisive importance for board members and executives, while organizational identity is remembered, like the soul, only in the most extreme cases. Revealing the features of organizational identity attainment, such as self-fulfillment, effective communication, and readiness for external challenges through performative strategizing, can be considered as part of identity work (Oliver, 2015). By analyzing the relationship between strategy and organizational identity, both phenomena could be seen not as two separate entities, but as mutually reinforcing narratives.

## 5. Conclusion

To answer the research question, it could be argued that the features of organizational identity attainment through performative strategizing are manifested at three interconnected levels. The first level is associated with the individual experiences of the organization’s members, their motivation and efforts, satisfaction with personal effectiveness, and achieved results. The first feature of organizational identity attainment is self-fulfillment. The second (meso-) level relates to the interactions between organizational members. This level involves the active participation of individuals in implementing their theoretical knowledge and practical skills to achieve organizational goals. The second feature of organizational identity attainment is effective communication, which allows members to align their personal values and intentions with the organization’s strategic goals. The third level relates to the environment outside the organization. The readiness for external challenges is the third feature of attaining organizational identity through performative strategizing.

The features of organizational identity attainment through performative strategizing at three levels are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** The features of organizational identity attainment through performative strategizing at three levels.



The theoretical and empirical limitations of the study are determined by the nature of the phenomena studied in the context of the individual psychological reality of strategists, as well as the choice of data collection methods, the data themselves, and their subsequent analysis. The

methodological choices made by the author, along with the explicitly stated approaches to strategizing, led to significant limitations of the study. The study did not take into account the social status, cultural attitudes of the strategists, or their position in the organization. Although practitioners formed strategies in real-life settings, they were obviously limited to apply their authentic approaches to strategizing. It is also important to note that the study was conducted within an entrepreneurial organization, which resulted in additional limitations.

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