



Employee Voice Architecture in Rapidly Scaling Enterprises

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Abstract

Rapid organizational growth can create a structural paradox. As enterprises expand their workforce, geographical footprint, managerial layers, and functional specialization, the volume of operational knowledge distributed among employees increases, while the organizational capacity to capture and act upon that knowledge may become progressively weaker. Employee voice is therefore not merely an interpersonal behavior but an organizational design problem. This study develops the concept of Employee Voice Architecture (EVA) as an integrated system of formal channels, informal communication pathways, psychological safeguards, managerial response routines, escalation mechanisms, and feedback-closure processes designed to preserve employee influence during rapid organizational scaling.

The study adopts a simulation-based methodological design because no real enterprise dataset was supplied. An Employee Voice Architecture Maturity Index was constructed using seven dimensions: accessibility, psychological safety, routing clarity, managerial openness, cross-level reach, response timeliness, and feedback closure. Five simulated organizational scenarios representing architecture maturity levels from 20% to 100% were analyzed. The modeled results indicate that the proportion of employee concerns resolved within a defined response window increases from 38% under fragmented voice architecture to 84% under highly mature architecture. Simultaneously, simulated misrouting, response delay, and repeated unresolved concerns decline.

The findings suggest that rapid scaling requires organizations to move beyond isolated surveys, suggestion systems, and open-door policies toward a deliberately engineered voice infrastructure that connects expression with decision authority and visible organizational response. The proposed framework contributes to employee voice literature by shifting attention from individual willingness to speak toward the organizational capacity to receive, route, interpret, protect, and close employee input. Because the results are simulation-based, they should be interpreted as theoretically informed scenario evidence rather than empirical estimates of actual firms.

Keywords: employee voice, organizational scaling, psychological safety, voice architecture, organizational design, managerial openness, employee participation, organizational communication

1. Introduction

Rapidly scaling enterprises experience organizational changes that extend far beyond increases in employee numbers or revenue. Growth frequently produces additional managerial layers, specialized



departments, geographically distributed teams, more formalized procedures, and increasingly differentiated decision authority. Research on organizational growth has long suggested that expanding organizations encounter recurring coordination, knowledge, and managerial challenges as earlier structures become inadequate for greater organizational complexity. Phelps, Adams, and Bessant similarly emphasized that growing organizations face changing knowledge requirements rather than progressing through entirely predictable linear stages. In this environment, information that once travelled informally between employees and founders can become fragmented across departments, reporting lines, digital systems, and managerial hierarchies.

Employee voice becomes particularly important under these conditions because frontline and specialist employees often detect operational problems, customer dissatisfaction, process inefficiencies, emerging risks, and opportunities for improvement before senior decision makers do. Morrison conceptualized employee voice as discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or information intended to improve organizational functioning, while also emphasizing that employees continually evaluate whether speaking up is worthwhile and personally safe. Voice therefore depends not only on the quality of an employee's idea but also on expectations regarding managerial receptiveness, interpersonal consequences, procedural fairness, and the probability that the organization will act.

The challenge becomes more complicated when an enterprise scales rapidly. A company may continue to describe itself as open, entrepreneurial, and collaborative while its underlying communication infrastructure gradually becomes more hierarchical and fragmented. Employees may have access to engagement surveys, team meetings, human-resource portals, digital suggestion systems, direct supervisors, skip-level meetings, and anonymous reporting channels, yet these mechanisms can remain disconnected. Research by Detert and Burris demonstrated that managerial openness is strongly associated with employee willingness to speak, while Detert and Treviño showed that voice perceptions are influenced by both immediate supervisors and higher-level leaders. Consequently, adding additional channels does not necessarily create meaningful employee voice if those channels do not lead to competent listening, appropriate escalation, accountable decisions, and visible closure.

Psychological safety further complicates organizational scaling because interpersonal risk can increase when employees are unfamiliar with rapidly changing managers, teams, or organizational norms. Edmondson's foundational work demonstrated that psychological safety supports interpersonal risk taking and learning behavior in teams. Liang, Farh, and Farh subsequently showed that psychological safety plays an important role in different forms of employee voice, particularly when employees raise concerns that challenge existing practices. Digital or anonymous channels can reduce certain barriers, but technology alone cannot guarantee meaningful voice. Abdulgalimov and colleagues' work on designing employee voice systems identified safety, civility, validity, and egalitarian participation as important design considerations for digital voice environments.

This study consequently introduces Employee Voice Architecture as a broader organizational design construct. Rather than treating employee voice solely as a behavior generated by courageous employees or supportive managers, EVA conceptualizes voice as a socio-organizational infrastructure through which information is expressed, protected, routed, evaluated, escalated, acted upon, and closed. The study develops a maturity framework and evaluates it using explicitly simulated organizational



scenarios. Its purpose is not to claim empirical causal effects but to demonstrate how a structured voice architecture could provide a more scalable alternative to fragmented voice mechanisms. The resulting approach connects organizational growth research with employee voice, psychological safety, procedural fairness, and communication-system design.

2. Objectives of the Study

2.1 Conceptualizing Employee Voice as an Organizational Architecture

The first objective is to reconceptualize employee voice from a predominantly behavioral phenomenon into an organizational architecture. Existing research provides extensive insight into why employees speak, remain silent, promote improvements, or challenge harmful practices. Morrison's integrative work demonstrates that employee voice is shaped by individual perceptions, job attitudes, leadership behavior, organizational context, and anticipated consequences. However, these factors can be difficult to sustain consistently when organizations expand rapidly.

The present study therefore examines voice as a system composed of mutually reinforcing structural elements. The proposed architecture incorporates accessible channels, psychological safeguards, clear routing rules, leadership receptiveness, escalation capacity, response standards, and feedback closure. The objective is to determine whether this architectural perspective provides a useful framework for explaining why some organizations may preserve meaningful voice while others accumulate disconnected communication mechanisms.

2.2 Developing a Voice Architecture Maturity Framework

The second objective is to construct a measurable maturity framework for evaluating how well an enterprise converts employee expression into organizational response. A voice system cannot be considered mature merely because employees are permitted to communicate concerns. Effective architecture requires employees to know where an issue should go, trust that speaking will not generate retaliation, reach decision makers capable of acting, and receive information concerning what happened after the issue was raised.

The study therefore develops an Employee Voice Architecture Maturity Index (EVAMI) consisting of seven dimensions. These dimensions are used to distinguish fragmented, emerging, developing, integrated, and mature voice architectures. The index is intended as an analytical framework rather than a validated psychometric instrument and would require empirical testing before managerial application.

2.3 Examining Simulated Organizational Outcomes

The third objective is to explore how increasing architecture maturity could theoretically influence voice-system outcomes in rapidly scaling enterprises. Five synthetic scenarios are examined to estimate changes in resolution rates, routing failure, response delay, repeated unresolved concerns, and perceived speaking safety.

The analysis is intentionally simulation based. No actual employees were surveyed, and no enterprise performance records were analyzed. Consequently, the modeled results serve as structured



theoretical illustrations that make the proposed architecture testable rather than as statistical evidence concerning a particular company or population.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Employee Voice, Silence, and Psychological Risk

Employee voice literature has progressively moved away from the assumption that employees automatically communicate useful information when organizations request it. Van Dyne, Ang, and Botero distinguished voice and silence as multidimensional behaviors rather than simple opposites. Morrison subsequently demonstrated that employees frequently make implicit assessments of efficacy and personal risk before deciding whether to communicate suggestions or concerns. This distinction is important because a workplace may possess numerous communication channels while still producing organizational silence.

Psychological safety provides one explanation for this disparity. Edmondson demonstrated that employees are more willing to engage in learning-oriented interpersonal behaviors when they perceive the work environment as safe for interpersonal risk. Liang, Farh, and Farh differentiated promotive voice, which proposes improvements, from prohibitive voice, which highlights harmful or dysfunctional practices. Chamberlin, Newton, and LePine's meta-analysis later reinforced the importance of distinguishing different voice forms and their antecedents. These findings imply that voice architecture must accommodate both innovation-oriented contributions and potentially sensitive challenge-oriented information.

3.2 Leadership Receptiveness and Hierarchical Transmission

Voice does not end when an employee speaks. Managers function as interpretation and transmission points that can amplify, redirect, neutralize, or suppress employee input. Detert and Burris found that perceived managerial openness was especially important for employee voice, suggesting that employees observe whether leaders genuinely listen and act rather than relying on formal assurances alone. Burris further demonstrated that managers can respond differently depending on how employee voice challenges prevailing organizational practices.

Hierarchical structure also shapes whether employee information reaches decision makers. Detert and Treviño showed that employees form voice-related perceptions through both supervisors and higher-level leadership. McClean, Burris, and Detert similarly demonstrated that leadership conditions influence whether voice contributes constructively to organizational outcomes or becomes associated with employee exit. In scaling organizations, where reporting chains lengthen quickly, a voice architecture therefore requires escalation pathways that do not depend entirely upon the goodwill or competence of a single immediate manager.

3.3 Formal Channels, Digital Systems, and Voice-System Design

Formal employee voice mechanisms may include surveys, grievance procedures, consultation structures, suggestion systems, town halls, employee representatives, digital portals, and reporting channels. Informal mechanisms include direct conversations with managers, peer networks, workplace communities, and spontaneous communication. The challenge is not necessarily selecting one channel

but ensuring that channels interact coherently. Research has increasingly recognized that employee voice operates across both formal and informal organizational mechanisms.

Digital systems can support scalability because they enable distributed employees to submit, classify, discuss, and potentially track issues. Yet technology creates its own governance requirements. Abdulgalimov and colleagues developed a digital employee voice system around design principles including assured anonymity, constructive moderation, controlled access, and mechanisms intended to create safer participation. Their work is particularly relevant to rapidly growing enterprises because it demonstrates that voice technologies should be designed around organizational and psychological conditions rather than treated as neutral communication tools.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study adopts a simulation-based conceptual-methodological research design. This approach was selected because no real employee survey, organizational communication archive, grievance dataset, or enterprise growth dataset was supplied. Creating empirical-looking results without such data would misrepresent the evidentiary basis of the research. The simulation therefore serves as an analytical demonstration of the proposed Employee Voice Architecture framework.

Five organizational scenarios were defined, representing EVA maturity levels of 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%, and 100%. These values should not be interpreted as real enterprises. They represent progressively stronger combinations of accessibility, psychological safety, routing quality, managerial receptiveness, cross-hierarchical reach, response timeliness, and closure transparency.

4.2 Construction of the Employee Voice Architecture Maturity Index

A represents accessibility of voice channels; S represents psychological safety; R represents routing clarity; M represents managerial openness; C represents cross-level reach; T represents response timeliness; and F represents feedback closure.

Each component is scored from 0 to 100. The weights are theoretical design parameters rather than empirically estimated coefficients.

Table 1: Operationalization of Employee Voice Architecture

Dimension	Weight	Operational Meaning	Illustrative Organizational Evidence
Voice accessibility	0.20	Ability to raise issues through appropriate channels	Multiple accessible formal and informal routes
Psychological safety	0.20	Expected interpersonal safety when speaking	Non-retaliation norms, confidential routes
Routing clarity	0.15	Probability that input reaches the appropriate decision owner	Defined ownership and triage rules

Dimension	Weight	Operational Meaning	Illustrative Organizational Evidence
Managerial openness	0.15	Perceived willingness of managers to receive challenge	Listening behavior and evidence of consideration
Cross-level reach	0.10	Ability to bypass blocked hierarchical points appropriately	Skip-level and protected escalation mechanisms
Response timeliness	0.10	Speed with which submitted issues are acknowledged and assessed	Service-level response standards
Feedback closure	0.10	Degree to which employees learn what happened after speaking	Decision explanation and case closure

Source: Developed by the author from employee voice, psychological safety, leadership, and voice-system literature. The weighting scheme is theoretical and requires empirical validation. Relevant theoretical foundations are supported by Morrison, Detert and Burris, Edmondson, and Abdulgallimov et al.

4.3 Simulation Procedure and Evaluation Metrics

The simulation examines five synthetic architecture conditions. Each condition represents a hypothetical enterprise in which the seven EVAMI components have reached approximately the designated maturity level. The modeled outcome relationships were bounded conservatively so that architecture improvement produces progressive rather than implausibly perfect organizational outcomes.

Five evaluation metrics were used: percentage of submitted voice cases resolved within the target period, median response time, percentage of cases misrouted or structurally blocked, percentage of substantively similar concerns repeated within 60 days, and an illustrative perceived-safety score. These indicators represent different stages of the voice process: expression, transmission, organizational response, learning, and employee perception.

Because the model is illustrative, no significance tests, confidence intervals, structural equation estimates, or causal coefficients are reported. Such procedures would imply statistical information that the synthetic scenario design cannot legitimately provide. Future empirical validation should collect multilevel employee and organizational data and test whether EVAMI predicts actual voice utilization, resolution, retention, innovation, or risk-detection outcomes.

5. Analysis

5.1 Architecture Maturity and Voice Resolution

The simulation produces a consistent increase in the proportion of cases resolved within the designated response window as architecture maturity improves. At 20% maturity, only 38% of modeled cases reach closure within the target period. At 60% maturity, the corresponding value increases to 61%, while the fully developed scenario reaches 84%.

The pattern should not be interpreted as evidence that raising EVAMI by a particular number of points will generate an equivalent improvement in real firms.

Instead, it demonstrates the theoretical proposition embedded in the model: an organization becomes more capable of converting employee expression into organizational action when voice channels are connected with routing, protection, authority, and closure.

Table 2: Simulated Outcomes Across Employee Voice Architecture Maturity Levels

EVA Maturity	Voice Cases Resolved Within Target Window	Median Response Time	Misrouted/Blocked Cases	Repeated Concerns Within 60 Days	Perceived Voice Safety
20%	38%	17.2 days	39%	32%	46/100
40%	49%	14.3 days	31%	27%	54/100
60%	61%	10.9 days	22%	22%	63/100
80%	73%	7.5 days	14%	17%	72/100
100%	84%	5.1 days	8%	12%	81/100

Note: All values are simulated scenario outputs and do not represent observations from real organizations.

5.2 Reduction in Routing Failure and Organizational Delay

The largest structural change occurs in the modeled rate of blocked or misrouted concerns. Under fragmented architecture, 39% of cases fail to reach an appropriate decision path. The rate falls to 22% under the 60% maturity condition and 8% in the highest-maturity scenario. This suggests that the architecture concept is concerned not simply with encouraging more communication but with creating decision connectivity.

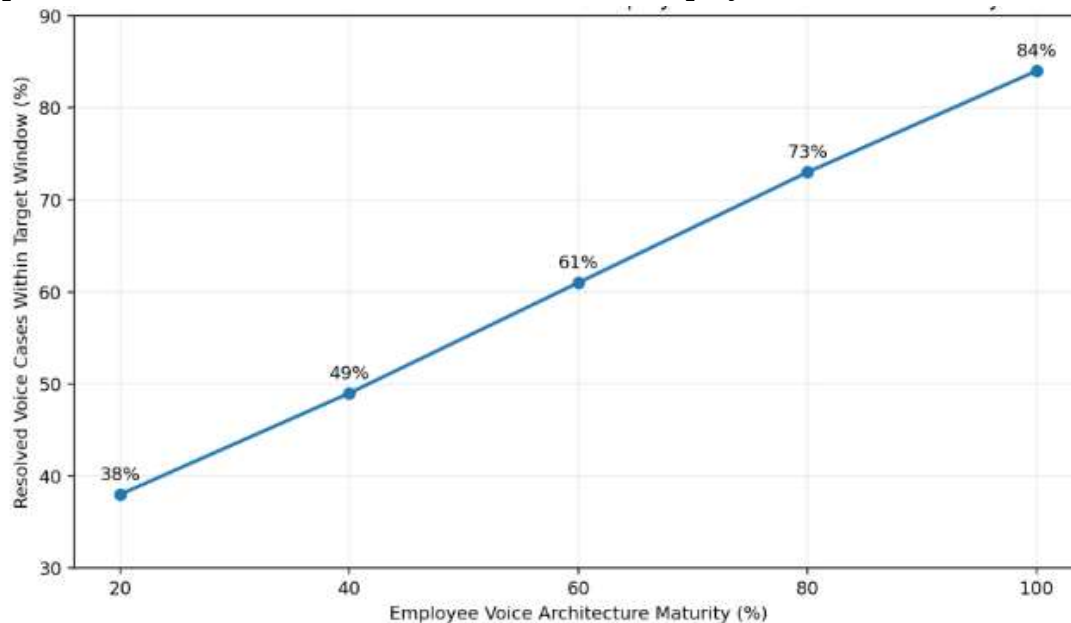
Response times display a parallel pattern. Median modeled response time declines from 17.2 days at the lowest maturity level to 5.1 days in the mature architecture. Rapid acknowledgment and accurate routing may be particularly important in growing enterprises because new employees, managers, and units can otherwise create uncertainty concerning organizational responsibility.

5.3 Voice Closure and Repeated Organizational Problems

Repeated concerns provide an additional indication of whether employee voice generates organizational learning. A system that continuously collects the same concerns but does not address underlying causes can create an appearance of participation without meaningful influence. The simulated recurrence rate falls from 32% to 12% as architecture maturity increases.

Perceived voice safety also rises across scenarios. This is conceptually consistent with psychological-safety research because employees are likely to infer organizational norms not simply from stated policies but from their observation of how previous voice episodes were handled. Visible, fair, and non-retaliatory closure may therefore reinforce future willingness to speak.

Graph 1: Simulated Voice Resolution Rate Across Employee Voice Architecture Maturity



Interpretation: The simulated trend illustrates a progressive relationship between the structural maturity of employee voice architecture and the organization's modeled capacity to close employee concerns within the defined response period.

Key finding: The largest practical implication is not simply that more employees should speak. Rapidly scaling enterprises require sufficient organizational infrastructure to ensure that voice reaches a responsible decision owner and receives a traceable response.

6. Discussion

6.1 From Employee Speaking to Organizational Receiving Capacity

The central implication of the study is that employee voice should be examined from both the supply and receiving sides of organizational communication. Traditional voice research appropriately asks why employees speak or remain silent. Morrison's reviews demonstrate the importance of individual motivation, leadership, perceived efficacy, contextual signals, and anticipated risk. The architecture perspective adds another question: what happens organizationally after the employee has spoken?

An enterprise may possess psychologically willing employees but still lose important information through unclear ownership, managerial bottlenecks, duplicated channels, excessive escalation layers, or lack of feedback. Rapid scaling can intensify this risk because organizational headcount can expand more quickly than communication routines mature. Research concerning organizational growth similarly indicates that knowledge, learning, and structural needs evolve as



organizations expand. EVA therefore interprets voice capability as an organizational absorptive problem rather than exclusively an employee-behavior problem.

6.2 Leadership as a Routing and Legitimacy Mechanism

Managers occupy a critical position within the architecture because they determine whether voice is legitimized, translated, escalated, or suppressed. Detert and Burris' findings concerning managerial openness are particularly relevant: formal declarations that employees may speak are unlikely to overcome repeated evidence that managers respond defensively or dismissively. Burris similarly demonstrated that managerial reactions can vary depending on the form and challenge represented by employee voice.

However, the architectural approach deliberately avoids making the direct supervisor the sole gateway for employee influence. Detert and Treviño's research highlights the importance of both supervisory and skip-level leadership in shaping voice perceptions. A scalable system should therefore preserve managerial accountability while allowing appropriate alternative routes for concerns involving local conflicts of interest, ethical risk, discrimination, serious operational danger, or repeated non-response.

6.3 Designing Voice for Organizational Scale

The architecture framework suggests that scaling requires channel differentiation rather than channel multiplication. Routine suggestions, operational process improvements, people-management concerns, ethical issues, safety matters, strategic proposals, and protected disclosures need not follow identical paths. A mature system should distinguish issue categories while maintaining a simple employee-facing entry experience.

Digital systems may contribute significantly to this design. Abdulgalimov and colleagues demonstrated that secure employee voice environments can incorporate anonymity, controlled access, moderation, and other safeguards intended to improve participation. Yet technology should remain subordinate to governance. An anonymous portal that generates thousands of unresolved submissions could increase cynicism rather than voice effectiveness.

The simulation also highlights feedback closure as a critical but frequently underestimated element. Employees cannot reasonably expect every suggestion to be accepted, but organizational credibility depends on evidence that input has been considered through a legitimate process. Procedural fairness research concerning employee silence supports the broader importance of fair decision environments for whether employees continue speaking about important work issues. Closure may therefore involve acceptance, partial implementation, referral, deferral, or reasoned rejection; what matters is that organizational silence does not follow employee voice.

7. Conclusion

Rapid organizational growth transforms employee voice from a relatively informal communication process into a structural governance challenge. As enterprises accumulate employees, business units, geographical locations, technologies, and managerial levels, valuable operational knowledge becomes more widely distributed. Without a deliberately designed system for collecting and processing that



knowledge, organizational growth can inadvertently create silence even when senior leaders publicly encourage openness.

This study introduces Employee Voice Architecture as an integrated framework combining accessibility, psychological safety, routing clarity, managerial openness, cross-level reach, response timeliness, and feedback closure. The framework extends conventional employee voice thinking by emphasizing that effective voice requires not only an employee willing to speak but also an organization capable of receiving and processing what is said. This position is consistent with established research demonstrating the importance of managerial openness, psychological safety, procedural fairness, and hierarchical leadership conditions.

The simulation indicates how this proposition might operate structurally. Under the modeled scenarios, higher EVA maturity is associated with greater resolution of employee concerns, lower routing failure, faster organizational response, fewer repeated problems, and stronger perceived safety. These patterns are not empirical estimates and should not be used to predict real enterprise performance. Their purpose is to generate transparent and empirically testable propositions.

Future research should validate the EVAMI framework using longitudinal data from high-growth enterprises and examine whether voice architecture maturity predicts employee speaking behavior, concern resolution, organizational learning, innovation, retention, ethical-risk detection, and operational reliability. Comparative research could also examine whether architecture requirements differ between founder-led firms, multinational scale-ups, digital platform companies, professional-service organizations, manufacturing firms, and organizations experiencing rapid merger-driven growth. The broader conclusion is that voice should be designed as organizational infrastructure rather than treated as an occasional employee behavior.

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