

## **INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIORS ON COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN ANIMAL FEEDS INDUSTRY IN NAKURU CITY, KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Statement of the Problem:** Animal feeds industry in Kenya faces volatility in raw material supply, increasing regulatory pressures, and rising import competition. However, gaps in strategic organizational behaviors at the individual, group, and technological levels continue to hinder optimal performance.

**Purpose of the Study:** This study sought to examine the influence of strategic organizational behaviors on competitive advantage among animal feeds manufacturing firms in Nakuru City, Kenya. Guided by the hypothesis that strategic individual behavior does not significantly influence competitive advantage

**Methodology:** The study adopted a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design under a pragmatic philosophy. The target population comprised 3,785 employees across 38 firms, with a final quantitative sample of 400 respondents determined using Cochran's formula for finite populations, and 20 key informants purposively selected for qualitative insights. Data was collected through structured questionnaires and interviews, with validity confirmed by expert review and reliability established through Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.7. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS Version 25.

**Results:** The findings revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between strategic individual behavior and competitive advantage ( $r = 0.762$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Regression analysis further showed that strategic individual behavior had a significant effect on competitive advantage ( $\beta = 0.251$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that fostering leadership development, motivation, skill enhancement, and constructive feedback strengthens employees' strategic engagement, thereby enhancing firm competitiveness.

**Recommendation:** The study recommended that firms institutionalize leadership and motivation programs, align individual goals with organizational objectives, and invest in continuous professional development to sustain long-term competitive advantage.

**Keywords:** *Strategic individual behavior, competitive advantage, leadership, motivation, employee performance.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary manufacturing environment, organizations increasingly recognize that sustainable competitive advantage arises not merely from capital and technology but from strategic organizational behaviors that align individual effort, group collaboration, and technology adoption toward shared objectives (Wang, 2021). At the individual level, behaviors such as effective leadership, employee motivation, performance alignment, skill development, and constructive feedback determine how employees contribute to organizational excellence and adaptability (Barney & Hesterly, 2020). These behaviors foster a culture of self-direction, innovation, and accountability which translates directly to higher productivity and competitiveness in dynamic business settings (Uhl Bien & Arena, 2022). Globally, manufacturing firms that integrate strategic behaviors across individual, group, and technology dimensions report significant gains in performance indicators such as efficiency, innovation, and profitability (Mousa et al., 2024). Empirical evidence shows that manufacturing organizations that encourage individual initiative and collaborative work environments achieve sustainable growth even in volatile markets (Green, 2020). In emerging economies, firms that align employee behaviors strategically with organizational goals demonstrate higher resilience and improved performance outcomes (Njagi, 2022).

In the African context, manufacturing enterprises increasingly depend on individual and collective behavior to address operational inefficiencies and strengthen competitive positioning. Research indicates that when employees are empowered through participative leadership styles, motivation programs, and performance-linked recognition, firms achieve better performance outcomes and long-term sustainability (Kiiru et al., 2022). Moreover, technology adoption, when supported by collaborative practices and employee learning, enhances coordination, improves product quality, and reduces cost factors critical to competitiveness in regional and global markets (Kairira & Obuba, 2024). In Kenya, the animal feeds industry is a crucial part of the livestock value chain, which contributes significantly to the national economy. Despite its potential, the industry faces persistent challenges such as high production costs, volatile input prices, and competition from imports, which continue to erode market share (Kenya Animal Feed Market Inquiry, 2024). In Nakuru City, the animal feeds manufacturing sector comprises many firms employing thousands of workers. However, many firms still operate below optimal capacity due to weaknesses in

individual employee motivation, poor team coordination, and inconsistent technology integration (Kiiru et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence highlights that the absence of strategic individual behavior including inadequate leadership development, ineffective motivation systems, and weak investment in employee capabilities negatively affects innovation and competitiveness in Kenyan manufacturing firms (Green, 2020). Similarly, firms that fail to align individual tasks with organizational objectives often struggle to achieve efficiency gains, quality improvement, and customer satisfaction (Mousa et al., 2024). Therefore, this study focuses on examining the influence of strategic individual behavior including leadership effectiveness, motivation, performance alignment, skill development, and feedback mechanism on competitive advantage measured through market share, cost/price competitiveness, quality standards, customer satisfaction, and market reputation among animal feeds manufacturing firms in Nakuru City, Kenya (Kiiru et al., 2022). The study sought to establish the influence of strategic organizational behaviors on competitive advantage in the animal feeds industry in Nakuru City, Kenya. Guided by hypotheses:  $H_{01}$ : Strategic individual behavior of employees has no significant influence on the competitive advantage of the animal feeds industry in Nakuru City.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The section presents the theoretical review, empirical review and conceptual framework.

### **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

Douglas McGregor introduced Theory X and Theory Y in his 1960 book "The Human Side of Enterprise." The theory presents two contrasting sets of assumptions about human motivation and behavior in work settings. Theory X assumes that the average worker dislikes work, avoids responsibility, has little ambition, and requires close supervision and external controls to perform effectively. In contrast, Theory Y assumes that work is as natural as play or rest, people exercised self-direction if committed to objectives, commitment is a function of rewards associated with achievement, the average person learns to seek responsibility, and creativity is widely distributed in the population.

McGregor's theory has garnered both support and criticism. Proponents like Argyris (1957) and Likert (1967) supported Theory Y assumptions, arguing that participative management approaches

lead to higher productivity, improved morale, and better utilization of human potential. Contemporary studies by Kopelman et al. (2012) found that organizations embracing Theory Y assumptions tend to experience higher employee engagement and innovation. Critics such as Morse and Lorsch (1970) argued that the theory oversimplifies human motivation and that effective leadership requires a contingency approach rather than strict adherence to either set of assumptions. Schein (1988) noted that cultural differences affect the applicability of McGregor's assumptions across diverse contexts.

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y guided the examination of strategic individual behavior among employees in animal feeds manufacturing firms in Nakuru City, Kenya. The theory explains how managerial perceptions and motivational strategies shape individual initiative, creativity, and performance alignment with organizational objectives. Firms adopting a Theory Y orientation characterized by empowerment, trust, and participative leadership are more likely to nurture innovative and self-driven employees, thereby enhancing their competitive advantage. Conversely, a Theory X approach emphasizing control and supervision may suppress creativity and limit strategic contribution. Thus, the study's findings affirm that aligning management philosophy with Theory Y assumptions fosters strategic individual behavior that strengthens organizational competitiveness.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Kairira and Obuba (2024) conducted a research study on the effect of strategic leadership on competitive advantage of animal feeds manufacturing firms in Upper Eastern and Central Kenya. The study employed an explanatory research design with a sample of 96 animal feed manufacturing firms. The study established that the adoption of strategic leadership has a constructive and significant influence on competitive advantage within animal feeds manufacturing firms. The study mainly focused on leadership aspects without examining other dimensions of individual behavior such as employee motivation and job satisfaction, and was limited to Central and Upper Eastern Kenya regions. Thus, the current study aims to fill this gap by examining the comprehensive influence of strategic individual behavior of employees on competitive advantage in the animal feeds industry specifically in Nakuru City.

Kiiyo (2019) conducted a study on the role of employee behavior and organizational structure in the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage of large manufacturing firms in Kenya. The study used a positivist research paradigm and a cross-sectional survey design with data collected from 122 large manufacturing firms. The study found that employee behavior completely mediates the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage, indicating that strategic plans influence competitive outcomes primarily through their effect on individual behaviors. The study presented a contextual gap as it examined large manufacturing firms broadly without specific focus on the animal feeds industry in Nakuru City. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap by determining the specific influence of strategic individual behavior in the context of animal feeds manufacturing firms in Nakuru City.

Busienei (2013) conducted research on business strategy, organizational structure, human resource strategic orientation and performance of large private manufacturing firms in Kenya. The study relied on primary data collected through structured questionnaires administered to senior managers. The study revealed a high positive correlation between human resource strategic orientation and firm performance, with significant influence of individual employee development and alignment with strategic goals. The study primarily focused on large manufacturing firms across Kenya and did not examine the unique characteristics of the animal feeds industry or the specific context of Nakuru City. Thus, the current study aims to address this gap by establishing how strategic individual behavior specifically influences competitive advantage in animal feeds manufacturing firms in Nakuru City.

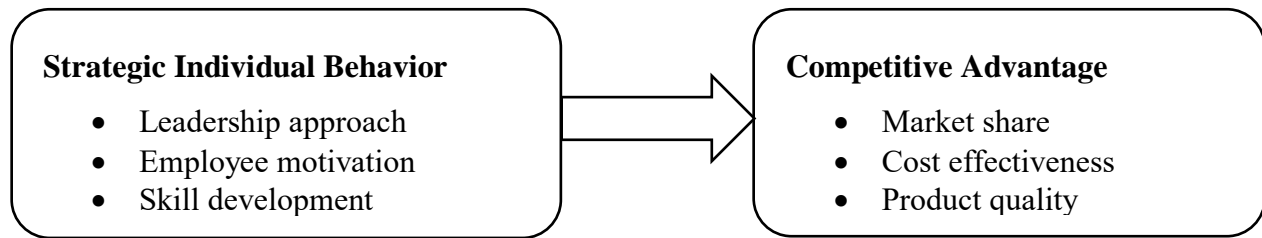
Judge, Thoresen, Bono, and Patton (2001) conducted a meta-analysis on the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. The study analyzed 312 samples with a combined sample size of 54,417 to evaluate the satisfaction-performance relationship. The study established a significant mean correlation between overall job satisfaction and job performance, with satisfied employees exhibiting higher productivity, better attendance, and greater willingness to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors. The study presented a methodological gap as it relied on secondary analysis of existing studies rather than primary research in specific industries, and did not examine the African manufacturing context. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap by examining how job satisfaction and other individual behavioral factors specifically influence competitive advantage in the animal feeds industry in Nakuru City through primary research.

Musyoka (2017) conducted a study on procurement ethics and organizational performance of animal feeds manufacturing firms in Kenya. The study employed a descriptive design with a census approach covering 38 animal feeds manufacturing firms in Nairobi, using questionnaires administered to supply chain and procurement management personnel. The study found a positive and significant relationship between procurement ethics and organizational performance, indicating that individual ethical behaviors contribute to gaining and maintaining competitive advantage. The study was limited to procurement ethics in Nairobi-based firms without examining the broader spectrum of strategic individual behaviors or the specific context of Nakuru City. Thus, the current study aims to address this gap by determining how comprehensive strategic individual behaviors influence competitive advantage in the animal feeds industry in Nakuru City.

Ruttoh (2019) conducted research on the influence of leadership on management of strategic organizational change in Nakuru County Government. The study used a descriptive research design with a sample of 304 respondents selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. The study established that leadership communication, strategic direction, organizational culture, and group dynamics management all had significant influence on strategic organizational change, with organizational culture showing the strongest effect. The study presented a contextual gap as it focused on county government rather than manufacturing firms, and did not specifically examine how leadership influences competitive advantage in private sector organizations. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap by examining how strategic individual behavior, including leadership approaches, influences competitive advantage specifically in animal feeds manufacturing firms in Nakuru City.

Jehanzeb and Bashir (2012) conducted a study on the impact of employee training and development on organizational performance. The research used a quantitative approach with survey data from multiple organizations. The study found that organizations offering employee training achieve lower turnover and higher satisfaction levels, creating a competitive edge through enhanced retention of skilled personnel. The study presented a contextual gap as it was conducted outside the African manufacturing context and did not examine the specific dynamics of the animal feeds industry. Thus, the current study aims to address this gap by establishing how strategic individual development approaches influence competitive advantage in the unique context of animal feeds manufacturing in Nakuru City, Kenya.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



*Source: Researcher (2025)*

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design anchored on a pragmatic philosophy, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively analyze the influence of strategic organizational behaviors on competitive advantage in Nakuru's animal feeds industry. The design allowed quantitative findings to be statistically tested and then clarified through qualitative insights. The study targeted 3,785 employees across 38 animal feeds manufacturing firms in Nakuru City. The quantitative sample size was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for finite populations:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{n_0 - 1}{N}}$$

Where:

$n_0$  = initial sample size

$Z = 1.96$  (95% confidence level)

$p = 0.5$  (assumed population proportion)

$q = 1 - p$

$e = 0.05$  (margin of error)

$N = 3,785$  (population size).



This yielded a sample of 364 respondents, which was increased by 10% to account for non-response, resulting in a final sample of 400 respondents. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was applied across departments to ensure representativeness. For the qualitative phase, 20 key informants (managers and supervisors) were purposively selected based on expertise and decision-making roles. Data was collected using structured questionnaires. The questionnaire, designed on a five-point Likert scale, measured employees' perceptions of strategic individual behavior in relation to competitive advantage. A pilot study was carried out among 40 employees and 3 managers in Kericho County to test the clarity, reliability, and validity of the instrument. Content validity was confirmed through expert review, while construct validity was assessed using factor analysis. Reliability was verified through Cronbach's alpha, with all coefficients exceeding 0.7, indicating strong internal consistency. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 25, producing both descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and inferential statistics, including Pearson's correlation and simple linear regression to test the hypothesis. The regression model applied was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

$Y$  = Competitive Advantage

$X_1$  = Strategic Individual Behavior

$\varepsilon$  = Error Term.

Diagnostic tests were conducted to ensure statistical soundness, including normality using the Shapiro–Wilk test, linearity using scatterplots, and multicollinearity using Variance Inflation Factor ( $VIF < 10$ ). Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically using NVivo, providing interpretive depth to the quantitative findings. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board, and permission was granted by the participating firms. Respondents provided informed consent, and the principles of voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality were strictly upheld throughout the study.



## RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study targeted a sample size of 400 respondents from animal feeds manufacturing companies in Nakuru City, Kenya, out of this, 330 were completed and returned, while 70 were unreturned, representing an overall response rate of 82.5%.

### STRATEGIC INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR

The study sought to determine the extent to which firms promote strategic individual behavior through effective leadership, innovation, motivation, performance alignment, skill development, and constructive feedback. The findings are summarized in Table 1, presenting the descriptive statistics for strategic individual behavior.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Strategic Individual Behavior**

	SD F %	D F %	N F %	A F %	SA F %	Mean	Std Dev
Our managers consistently demonstrate effective leadership approaches that inspire employee performance.	0 0.0%	2 0.6%	6 1.8%	171 51.8%	151 45.8%	4.43	0.56
The leadership style in our organization encourages innovative thinking and problem-solving among employees.	8 2.4%	11 3.3%	14 4.2%	262 79.4%	35 10.6%	3.92	0.70
Our company has effective employee motivation programs that drive high performance and engagement.	6 1.8%	18 5.5%	74 22.4%	192 58.2%	40 12.1%	3.73	0.81
I feel personally motivated to contribute my best efforts to achieving the organization's strategic goals.	16 4.8%	10 3.0%	81 24.5%	134 40.6%	89 27.0%	3.82	1.02
Our performance management system effectively links individual goals to organizational objectives.	20 6.1%	28 8.5%	77 23.3%	116 35.2%	89 27.0%	3.68	1.14
The company invests adequately in skill development programs that enhance employee capabilities.	30 9.1%	46 13.9%	32 9.7%	137 41.5%	85 25.8%	3.61	1.26
Employees regularly receive constructive feedback that helps improve their performance.	27 8.2%	34 10.3%	24 7.3%	131 39.7%	114 34.5%	3.82	1.24
Overall						3.86	0.96

The managers consistently demonstrate effective leadership approaches that inspire employee performance (M=4.43, SD=0.56). The mean of 4.43 implies that, on average, respondents indicated managers demonstrate effective leadership to a very large extent. The standard deviation of 0.56, falling between 0.5 and 1, suggests a moderate level of consensus among the respondents on this interpretation. The frequency distribution shows that 51.8% and 45.8% of respondents

selected "Agree" and "Strongly Agree," respectively, supporting the conclusion that effective leadership approaches are prevalent in the surveyed firms. The leadership style in our organization encourages innovative thinking and problem-solving among employees ( $M=3.92$ ,  $SD=0.70$ ). The mean of 3.92 indicates that, on average, respondents felt the leadership style encourages innovation to a large extent. The standard deviation of 0.70, falling between 0.5 and 1, suggests a moderate level of consensus among the respondents. The frequency distribution reveals that 79.4% of respondents selected "Agree," highlighting the firms' efforts in promoting innovative thinking.

The company has effective employee motivation programs that drive high performance and engagement ( $M=3.73$ ,  $SD=0.81$ ). The mean of 3.73 suggests that, on average, respondents indicated the company has effective motivation programs to a large extent. The standard deviation of 0.81, falling between 0.5 and 1, indicates a moderate consensus among the respondents on this interpretation. The frequency distribution shows that 58.2% of respondents chose "Agree," emphasizing the firms' focus on employee motivation. I feel personally motivated to contribute my best efforts to achieving the organization's strategic goals ( $M=3.82$ ,  $SD=1.02$ ). The mean of 3.82 implies that, on average, respondents felt personally motivated to a large extent. The standard deviation of 1.02, being greater than 1, suggests a low level of consensus among the respondents. The frequency distribution reveals that 40.6% and 27.0% of respondents selected "Agree" and "Strongly Agree," respectively, highlighting varying levels of personal motivation among employees.

Performance management system effectively links individual goals to organizational objectives ( $M=3.68$ ,  $SD=1.14$ ). The mean of 3.68 suggests that, on average, respondents indicated the performance management system links goals effectively to a large extent. The standard deviation of 1.14, being greater than 1, indicates a low consensus among the respondents on this interpretation. The frequency distribution shows that 35.2% and 27.0% of respondents chose "Agree" and "Strongly Agree," respectively, while 23.3% remained neutral. The company invests adequately in skill development programs that enhance employee capabilities ( $M=3.61$ ,  $SD=1.26$ ). The mean of 3.61 implies that, on average, respondents felt the company invests in skill development to a large extent. The standard deviation of 1.26, being greater than 1, suggests a low level of consensus among the respondents. The frequency distribution reveals that 41.5% of

respondents selected "Agree," while 13.9% and 9.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed, respectively.

Employees regularly receive constructive feedback that helps improve their performance ( $M=3.82$ ,  $SD=1.24$ ). The mean of 3.82 suggests that, on average, respondents indicated employees receive constructive feedback to a large extent. The standard deviation of 1.24, being greater than 1, indicates a low consensus among the respondents on this interpretation. The frequency distribution shows that 39.7% and 34.5% of respondents chose "Agree" and "Strongly Agree," respectively. The overall mean for strategic individual behavior is 3.86, indicating that, on average, respondents felt their firms exhibit strategic individual behavior practices to a large extent. This suggests that the surveyed animal feeds manufacturing firms generally recognize the importance of effective leadership, employee motivation, performance management, skill development, and feedback mechanisms. The overall standard deviation of 0.96 falls between 0.5 and 1, suggesting a moderate level of consensus among the respondents regarding their perceptions of strategic individual behavior practices in their organizations.

## CORRELATION ANALYSIS

The study sought to determine the relationship between strategic individual behavior and competitive advantage among animal feeds manufacturing firms in Nakuru City, Kenya. It aimed to establish the strength and significance of this relationship, showing how individual-level strategic actions enhance organizational competitiveness. The results are summarized in Table 2, presenting the correlation between strategic individual behavior and competitive advantage.

**Table 2: Correlation between Strategic Individual Behavior and Competitive Advantage**

Variables	Competitive Advantage	Strategic Individual Behavior
Competitive Advantage	1.000	
Strategic Individual Behavior	.762**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

The results indicate a strong positive and statistically significant correlation between strategic individual behavior and competitive advantage ( $r = .762$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This suggests that firms where

employees demonstrate initiative, adaptability, and goal-oriented performance tend to achieve superior competitive outcomes.

## REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The study sought to analyze the effect of strategic individual behavior on competitive advantage among animal feeds manufacturing firms in Nakuru City, Kenya. A simple linear regression model was used to determine how individual behavior predicts organizational competitiveness. The results are presented in Table 3, showing the regression coefficients for strategic individual behavior.

**Table 3: Regression Coefficients for Strategic Individual Behavior**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.785	0.116		6.760	0.000
Strategic Individual Behavior	0.251	0.052	0.301	4.835	0.000

The regression results in Table 3 show that strategic individual behavior had a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage ( $\beta = 0.251$ ,  $t = 4.835$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This implies that improving individual behaviors such as initiative, motivation, and goal commitment enhances a firm's overall competitiveness, demonstrating the importance of employee-level strategies in achieving sustained performance.

The regression equation was expressed as:

$$CA = 0.785 + 0.251(SIB) + \varepsilon$$

Where:

CA = Competitive Advantage (dependent variable),

SIB = Strategic Individual Behavior (independent variable), and

$\varepsilon$  = Error term representing unexplained variation.

Accordingly, the null hypothesis was tested as follows:

H<sub>01</sub>: Strategic individual behavior has no significant influence on competitive advantage.  
Decision: *Rejected* ( $\beta = 0.251$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

The hypothesis test indicated that strategic individual behavior has a statistically significant influence on competitive advantage ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming that improvements in individual-level actions such as motivation, creativity, and responsibility directly enhance a firm's competitive position. This finding emphasizes that employee behaviors are essential drivers of sustained organizational success in the animal feeds manufacturing sector.

## **FINDINGS**

The study found that strategic individual behavior significantly enhances competitive advantage among animal feeds manufacturing firms in Nakuru City, Kenya. Results showed that effective leadership, innovation, motivation, and performance alignment were strongly practiced, leading to improved employee engagement and productivity. Firms demonstrated sustained market share growth, cost effectiveness, high product quality, and customer satisfaction. A strong positive correlation ( $r = .762$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and significant regression results ( $\beta = 0.251$ ,  $p < .001$ ) confirmed that proactive, motivated, and strategically aligned employees directly strengthen organizational competitiveness and long-term sustainability.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concluded that strategic individual behavior significantly enhances competitive advantage among animal feeds manufacturing firms in Nakuru City, Kenya. Employees who demonstrate initiative, innovation, adaptability, and a strong commitment to organizational objectives contribute directly to improved competitiveness and performance outcomes. The strong positive correlation ( $r = .762$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and significant regression results ( $\beta = 0.251$ ,  $p < .001$ ) confirmed that individual-level strategic actions such as effective leadership, motivation, and alignment of personal goals with organizational strategy are key drivers of success. These findings emphasize that empowering employees and nurturing their strategic potential strengthens a firm's market position and long-term sustainability.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that firms should promote leadership development programs that cultivate innovation, accountability, and self-driven performance among employees. In addition, management should enhance motivation systems through structured recognition and reward mechanisms that sustain engagement and productivity. Firms should also ensure that individual goals and performance targets are clearly aligned with broader organizational strategies to reinforce purpose and direction. Continuous investment in skill development is essential to build employee adaptability and sustain innovation in a competitive market. It is also recommended that, organizations should establish constructive feedback channels that support learning, improvement, and the reinforcement of strategic individual behavior across all levels.

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