Mentoring in Gaining a Competitive Advantage

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Abstract: Businesses that want to gain a competitive advantage in the globalizing world can gain superiority over their competitors with various applications. Mentoring, with its career and psychosocial functions, which increases professional success, personal development, leadership development, organizational efficiency, and effectiveness, has become one of the practices of businesses with its new management approach. The new employee who undergoes efficient mentoring training will be able to adapt to the organization more easily, mistakes caused by inexperience will decrease, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty will increase. The individual will feel better psychologically, physiologically, and sociologically, and will increase his organizational performance while increasing his performance. Mentoring is widely used in all sectors, especially the service sector, and is seen as a competitive advantage. Even in the same institution, mentoring practice varies according to the mentor. Mentoring is an important research area that needs to be researched and developed in this context.

Key Words: Mentoring, Mente, Mentor. Service Industry, Competitive Advantage

1. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of technology, globalization, competition, information age, modern management styles, and the increase in the value given to people and humanity force businesses to differentiate from their competitors and to be the best in the sector. Especially in the 21st century, the rapid advancement of technology, the introduction of informatics applications in every sector, the increase of qualified employees, the increase in the expectations and knowledge of employees, the change in roles and responsibilities have caused radical changes in businesses. The rapid change process that emerged with digitalization prompted senior executives to rethink their way of doing business and management approaches and revealed new management approaches and practices. Mentoring, which is among the modern management styles to support and develop the employee, is among the practices preferred by businesses.

Man is constantly in the process of seeking and finding perfection. Mentoring is used to reveal individuals’ potential and use them in practice. It is known as the transfer of professional knowledge of experienced employees to inexperienced employees. Mentoring goes deep into history and dates back to Greek mythology. Traditional mentoring has changed in our age and has become a sharing of knowledge and experience integrated with technology (Ünlü, 2021: 128). Today, mentoring training is not provided both in the private and public sectors. Especially in government institutions, by assigning mentors to people who have just started or been promoted, the mentor shares their experiences with the mentee and teaches the job (Ünlü, 2021: 132). In recent years, mentees and mentors have benefited from online events such as symposia, conferences, and workshops designed to support scientific and career development and build community (Termini et al, 2021: 346).

The most important way to increase market share and increase profits is to gain a competitive advantage. In today’s increasingly global economy, it is very important to identify the factors that emphasize competitive advantage, create an effective business strategy, make successful investments, and evaluate the economy on a national and global scale. Competitive advantage can be achieved in many different ways. For example, it can go from branding to distribution channels or end-of-product service. Most of today’s companies gain a competitive advantage by offering high-quality products or services, creating a prominent and unique brand, and investing in clever marketing strategies (https://www.yenisifikleri.net/rekabet-avantaji-nedir-nasil-saglanir/). Employees are the most valuable resources of businesses. When employees are supported in career functions and psychosocial functions, the success of the business increases.

Mentoring contributes not only to institutions but also to individuals and mentors. Thanks to the experiences conveyed by the mentors and the guiding roles they display, it is seen that the commitment of the employees to the organization increases, learning accelerates, job satisfaction increases, motivation and stress decrease, and performance increases. An individual who has just started to work begins to see his job meaningfully, is self-confident, and can make business and business-related decisions (İşcan & Çağır, 2016:2)
Mentoring has two main functions, namely career, and psycho-social career functions; giving tasks to support, Express, and make visible, coach, protect and develop skills. Psychosocial functions are being a role model, accepting and adopting counseling, and friends (Özkalp et al., 2006:59).

This study examines the mentoring practices that are effective in providing a better service than other institutions, focusing on the work and the workplace, obtaining different products and services compared to other companies, reducing the mistakes caused by inexperience and ignorance, and providing cost advantage in an intensely competitive environment. Effective and efficient mentoring programs benefit the mentee, the mentor, and the organization.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The word competition comes from the Arabic word raqbat, which means control, control, observing,
paying attention, keeping an eye on it. Its Turkish meaning can be defined as keeping the opponent under surveillance. It is a race to gain an edge over opponents. There is competition in every field and it is often seen in business and social life. (https://www.manpower.com.tr/blog/rekabet-nedir). The concept of competitive advantage is among the most studied subjects in the discipline of strategic management. Competition means competition; race; The word superiority also enables one to be in a higher position than its counterparts. Competitive advantage refers to being higher in competition, competition (Dursun, 2021: 2). Unique resources that create a competitive advantage for businesses constitute the basic capabilities of businesses (Doğanay & Kırçova, 2016: 31).

Competition; We can also define it as the race between the companies in the market with each other. Competition causes innovations to produce and sell quality and lower-cost goods. It provides dynamism to the economy and ensures that it remains active continuously. Competition is important for businesses to stay in the market. Competition changes over time. For example, while competition was production-oriented in the 1960s, it was price-oriented in the 1970s, quality-oriented in the 1980s, based on speed and flexibility in the 1990s, and based on innovation and creativity in the 2000s (as cited in Alkan, 2019: 49-50). Since imitability is an important issue in competition, the advantage that is more likely to be imitated will have a short lifespan, while the less likely to be imitated will have a greater chance of sustaining it. In this context, the competition must be held in the right place at the right time (Taşgıt and Çiček, 2020: 225).

Businesses that want to provide a sustainable competitive advantage should try to exist in the market with the right marketing strategies by identifying their strengths-weaknesses and opportunities-threats in the sector in line with their core abilities and resources (Özberk & Marangoz, 2020: 70).

If an enterprise produces a homogeneous product/service cheaper and with higher quality than its competitors, its growth and profit-making capacity will increase. If a business earns a profit above the average in the sector in which it operates, it can be said that it has a competitive advantage. If businesses analyze their resources and capabilities well and gain cost advantage and differentiation advantage over their competitors, they can create value and gain sustainable competitive advantage (Bulu et al., 2004).

Competitiveness is studied at the micro and macro level in the literature. Competitiveness of a country or nation at the macro level; At the micro-level, the competitiveness of firms is examined. Competition power; is a subject that is researched in different disciplines such as strategic management and economics (Çetindamar and Kılıçcioğlu, 2013:8). Various sources of competitive advantage have been described in the literature. These are: the sources of sustainable competitive advantage are technical knowledge (Johanessen and Olsen, 2003:278), information systems (Hemmatfor et. al, 2010), low prices (Doğan, 2017:169), strategic entrepreneurship (Ireland and Webb, 2007), firms' resources (Tekin and Nas, 2017:1211), supply chain efficiency (Yıldız and Çetindaş, 2018:881) and similar resources.

Porter (1990) developed the diamond model that explains why some countries outperform others in competition. According to Porter, there are five main forces or factors that affect the competition among existing firms in the market. These are respectively; These are the competitors in the industry (competition between existing companies), the bargaining power of the buyers, the substitute companies (the threat of entering the market for substitute products or services), the suppliers (the bargaining power of the suppliers), and the threats created by the new entrants to the industry. The main goal of competitive strategy is to find a position where the firm can defend itself against these forces in the best way or influence them for its benefit (cited in Barca and Esen, 2012: 92).

Businesses should gain an advantage when they can successfully implement both cost leadership and differentiation strategies to compete effectively in national or global markets, to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, to adapt their strategies to changing market and customer demands, to create value, and to achieve superior performance compared to competitors (Doğan, 2017: 176).

2.2. MENTORING

Mentoring; guide, counselor, mentor, guru, protector, master, internship supervisor, peer, mentor, leader, protector, Lala, guide, life coach, mentor, etc. although it does not have a clear definition. The word mentor is generally accepted in international literature. Regarding mentoring; student (student), apprentice (apprentice), protected (protege), etc. there are words. Recently, the words mentor, mentee, mentorship/mentoring have been used frequently in international academic articles. In this context, the people...
involved in this process are known as mentees and mentors, and the process itself is known as mentoring. Mentoring in the most general sense; is a personal and professional development and learning process that includes information, skills and experience sharing, mutual trust and voluntary counseling, guidance, and coaching processes in line with the individual’s personal development goals. In the mentoring process, the mentor shares his knowledge and experience with the mentee, both getting personally satisfied and having the opportunity to evaluate himself (Crisp & Cruz, 2009: 536; Kuzu & Kahraman, 2010: 678). The mentoring process means development not only for the mentee but also for the mentors.

Anderson and Shannon (1988) mentoring; is defined as an experienced and talented person who provides training and counseling to an individual who has less experience and skills in professional and personal development. A mentor is an effective individual who has advanced experience and knowledge in the work environment and is dedicated to career development and support (Forret & Janasz, 2005: 484). Mentoring is generally defined as a supportive relationship between two people who convey their experience and knowledge about individual and vocational education, learning, and development.

**Mentoring Process:** According to Kram, who has studied mentoring and pioneered the development of mentoring, the mentoring relationship is examined in four parts: the beginning stage, the training stage, the separation stage, and the redefinition stage (Genç, 2017: 10; Kram, 1983: 614).

**Initial stage:** It lasts 6-12 months, the relationship between the mentor and the mentee begins, the expectations are transferred to each other, the mentee takes the mentor as a role model, he wants to be like him, and he wants the mentee to show high performance in his mentor (Genç, 2017: 10 Kram, 1983: 614- 615). At this stage, roles and responsibilities are determined (İbrahimoğlu, 2008: 13). When the mentoring relationship between the mentor and the mentee reaches a certain maturity, the training phase begins (Şerefhanoğlu, 2014: 15).

**Educational stage:** It is the period that lasts approximately 2-5 years, increases mutual benefit, increases emotional commitment, and benefits from career support and role model functions of the mentor (Genç, 2017: 95). Çınar (2007) perceives this stage as the period when mutual satisfaction is highest, the mentor and mentee perceive the communication between them realistically and reach the goals to a large extent (Şerefhanoğlu, 2014: 16).

**Separation phase:** It is the phase that lasts 6-24 months, is stressful for both the mentee and the mentor, the mentee wants to gain independence, and they go to new workplaces depending on their job role or opportunities (Sheridan and Young, 2017: 10). In this process, emotional and structural separation occurs. Relationships decrease in both quantity and quality, interrupt the hierarchy, and initiate separation attempts on both sides (İbrahimoğlu, 2008: 11).

**Redefinition phase:** Parties experience mutual support and informal communication, further relationship develops into friendship and fellowship. At this stage, couples now define each other as equal people from the same profession, and their feelings of pride and gratitude towards each other increase (Genç, 2017: 10). After a mentoring relationship is decided to be terminated, the mentoring practice can be started again if it is reviewed by the mentee or mentor and its positive aspects are seen (Şerefhanoğlu, 2014: 16-17).

### 2.3. COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AND MENTORING

Although mentoring is considered a new concept, its roots go back to human history. It has been used with a wide variety of names and structures in history and has survived until today with changes and developments (Kuzu et al., 2012: 175). The word "mentor" was first used in 1699 in France by XIV. It was used in the novel "The Adventures of Telamak" written by Fenelon, who taught Louis' grandson. This book bases mentoring on Greek mythology (Mueller, 2004: 53). The origin of the word "mentor" goes back to mythology, the epic of Homer. It started for the first time in history when King Odeysus of Ithaca handed over his son to Mentor. Odysseus, king of Ithaca, will go to the Trojan War and entrust his son to one of his closest friends, Mentor, to raise him (Miller, 2002: .25; Mueller, 2004: 53) Kuzu et al., 2012:175; Tiryaki Şen and Alan, 2014: 100). During this time, the mentor trained and trained Telemachus in the best way in every field and also became his mentor (Allen and Eby, 2010:7). The history of mentoring practices, which is a word of French origin, dates back to ancient times. In the ancient Turkish civilizations (Huns, Uyghurs, Scythians, etc.) known for their warrior characteristics in the world, the Ottoman Empire and the ahi-order practices in the Ottoman Empire are among the best mentoring practices. From the training of statesmen in Turkish states to
Mentoring has many disciplines; education, medicine, finance, psychology, nursing, law, etc. The 20th son became popular in the twentieth century. It is used effectively in career and development processes in Europe and America (Kuzu, et al., 2012: 175). Since knowledge, which is the most important element of our age, is different from traditional ways, it has been taken from mentoring-mentored and trained full mentoring, mutual mentoring, etc. For greater success in mentoring, knowledge of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and mentoring-related information is required. These programs provide interest and satisfaction in mentoring education and careers and protect your expectations (Stel Kariyerter et al., 2021:224).

The mentoring process can be considered as an analytical process expressed with the letters of the word mentor: MENTOR= Model Empathize, Nurture, Teach, Organize, Respond (Stueart and Sullivan), 2010: 74. At the beginning of the career process, individuals develop their personal and professional skills and adapt to their organizational roles. They need support in adapting. This support depends on the effective regulation of the mentoring process. Mentoring is a career development tool and has an important place in the career management process. It is a process that has both individual and organizational consequences. Mentoring plays an important role in maintaining organizational continuity, job satisfaction, stress reduction, and promotion in the workplace. Different authors categorize mentoring, which has so many benefits, in different ways. Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) divide mentoring into three. These; are formal, semi-formal, and informal mentoring (Act., Klıç and Serin, 2012: 212.) Formal mentoring is generally organized by the institution, while semi-formal mentoring is organized by considering the working areas of the institution. In the informal mentoring process, a mentoring program is initiated by considering the institution’s specific goals.

Clutterbuck (1991: 11) defined mentoring as basically unstructured (informal) and structured (formal). While structured mentoring is planned and programmed mentoring, unstructured mentoring is defined as spontaneous mentoring without any planning. Kochan and Pascarelli (2012:311) report that the structured mentoring practice process generally consists of four parts: preparation, matching, interaction, and termination. The mentoring process and relationships develop through certain stages. These; initiation or initiation (Initiation), cultivation (Cultivation), separation (Separation) and redefinition (Redefinition) stages (Kram, 1983: 608-625). The most detailed and systematic research on mentoring was done by Kram et al. (Kram, 1983; Kram and Isabella, 1985). Kram analyzed mentoring under two main headings as a career and psycho-social functions in his study in 1983.

Career Functions: These are support (sponsorship), self-expression and visibility (exposure and visibility), knowledge (coaching), assigning tasks to develop skills (challenging tasks), and protection (Noe, 1988: 459). In this context, career functions are very important in the private and business life of individuals and affect the future success of the individual.

Psycho-Social Functions, on the other hand, play an important role in increasing the self-confidence of the employee, developing his personality, and fulfilling his job roles effectively. The first of these is to create a role model, the second is to ensure the acceptance and adoption of the employee in the organization, the third is called consultancy, and finally friendship.

Mentoring, which is based on the Greek civilization, has been affected by technological developments and has been updated and progressed to e-mentoring. E-mentoring is defined as a process that enables employees to engage in mentoring activities independently of time and place by making use of technological opportunities (Bierema and Merriam, 2002:211). mentoring; It is also described with the concepts of long-distance mentoring, virtual mentoring, cyber mentoring, online mentoring, and telementoring (Ünlü, 2021: 132).

Michael Porter argued that various strategies should be developed to increase the market performance of the enterprises and to maintain their competitive advantage. It is known that when businesses choose one of the competitive strategies that are suitable for them with the resources and abilities they have, they can gain an advantage and the outputs they obtain will affect their performance positively. Therefore, while planning their chosen strategies, businesses should analyze their current and future competitors and themselves well, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and thus be aware of opportunities and threats. Competition appears in every period of life in business and social life. Competition is an important issue where effective and efficient use of scarce resources is ensured. Porter (2000) explained competitive strategies in three groups as cost...
One of the most important goals of businesses is the desire to continue their existence for a long time. To achieve this, they perform various activities. To grow, to be a brand and to have a good image, to produce better quality goods and/or services, etc. To achieve this, they need to design their business resources and production power most efficiently. In addition, it is important to determine the place of the product in the market with the choice of market and the consumer audience it will appeal to (Zengin and Dursun, 2017: 39).

For a business to outperform its competitors, it must first be able to make a difference. Strategies are based on realizing activities different from those of competitors. Competitive strategies include thinking, processes, and activities that make a difference. In terms of strategy, competition means attracting new customers as well as attracting existing customers in the market (Krugman, 1994: 30). In some areas, new products have to be completely different to be considered innovative. Strategies that handle competition correctly take into account the communication between the business itself and its environment, decide how to use technology correctly, and improve its performance by using performance measurement tools in the most appropriate way (Garip, 2021: 141).

Today, businesses; are faced with fierce competition pressure due to technological developments, rapidly changing market conditions, and increasingly complex consumer needs and demands. These require the implementation of quite different competitive strategies compared to the past. Competitive strategies are the total of decisions that create value for customers in a given market and provide competitive advantage through acquired core competencies. While creating value for customers comes to the fore in positioning their competitive strategies, creating more value than their competitors provides a competitive advantage. The biggest characteristics of successful businesses are their core competencies. These capabilities are seen as the most important source of sustainable competitive advantage. The main factors that affect the competitive advantage of today’s businesses are the leadership skills of the organization, a strong organizational culture in which the values are shared by the employees, and the ability to innovate. Businesses due to global competition, continuous technological innovation, and the growing pressure of change in business processes have changed the dominance of businesses over products, quality, functionality, and sales. In this context, mentoring has become obligatory for both the inexperienced employee who has just started to work and the employee who cannot follow these processes sufficiently. Organizational learning takes place through innovation and knowledge sharing in organizations, and this is only possible with well-planned and managed mentoring practices.

Today, the locomotive of the developing human resources process is the talents of the employees. It is known that talented employees are a value-creating, productive and creative workforce. In this context, businesses will have to offer various opportunities such as education, career, and leader mentoring to attract talented individuals, retain them, and ensure their loyalty (Çelik and Zaim, 2011: 34).

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Businesses today; facing much more competition on the way, in the trendy process, and more complex needs and reviews. From this point of view, it can be improved comparably. In the competition, they will be valued for winners in a particular market and will come, come and achieve success from all completions that can be selected from the core competencies possessed. It is thought for a future that can be thought of as more value that can be thought of in the forefront to be created for people, in the advantages of businesses’ competition. These living spaces, possessed talents are a sustainable competitive advantage.

For the sustainable competition, make facilities from a comprehensive whole system consisting of elements from the structure of the organization, having the ability to spread the strategy throughout the organization and having a structure that can be owned, this is the main target point, and the whole development. Considering that they will create their strategies for businesses, businesses need to recognize correctly, to be able to make the right decision about their preferences, to reach the right estimation, and possibly result in a worldview about how a SWOT analysis can be created in a world within businesses.

Today’s economic, technical, health, security, legal, political and political, corporate restructurings from the customer person to the technologies are caused. In terms of the Covid-19 pandemic, which implements the entire attack, it has become appropriate in the example and restructuring accordingly. Businesses liken their designs to virtual environments. Creating pressure in technological
In the globalizing world, rapidly developing technology, globalization, and challenging conditions of competition have pushed businesses to benefit from different resources. For the production, learning, and teaching of knowledge, previously existing programs, methods, procedures, etc. are replaced by various methods, and the known method should be arranged according to the needs and conditions of the day. The mentoring process should be reviewed and reorganized according to these developing and changing conditions. It is known that the most effective method in learning a workplace and a job is the master-apprentice relationship. Businesses that want to gain competitive advantage and gain competitive advantage focus on mentoring. Mentoring, which has existed since the history of humanity, has undergone some changes, although it is known as an experienced and older person guiding another inexperienced and younger individual. Technological advances and the differences of the new generations from the old generations, especially the fact that the Y generation is in the working life, changed the structure of traditional mentoring and made it reinterpret it (ÖZdemir and Ardıç, 2019: 137). Mentoring contributes to increasing employee motivation, performance, loyalty, and retention (Lo, et al, 2014:4).

There is a wide variety of mentoring practices; One-to-one mentoring, peer mentoring, group team mentoring, reverse mentoring, self-mentoring, etc. (Crisp and Cruz 2009:529). The most widely used traditional mentoring in businesses is to develop the individual and organizational goals of the experienced employees, namely the mentors, to the new employees (mentees), to make them get used to the job and the institution, to provide consultancy and guidance for the teachers of the details of the job (Özkalp et al., 2006: 57). This practice is known as the master-apprentice relationship, mentor-mentee relationship and it is a type of mentoring that is accepted in many societies. However, as a result of technological developments and especially in social media, young employees generally have more valuable information than senior managers. revealed a new type of mentoring called “reverse mentoring”, in which a young employee assumes the role of mentor for the senior manager (Burdett, 2014: 13) For a sustainable competition, businesses should make good use of all their resources and apply that method if it is appropriate for them and their employees.

Mentoring practices can be a competitive advantage for the business as well as a disadvantage. A good mentoring practice depends on the preparation of a mentoring program suitable for the purposes and a leader who can manage this program well and choose a good mentor. A good mentor should have good organizational and interpersonal skills. The organizational skills of the mentor are prioritizing, facilitating, structuring, timing, determining the boundaries with the mentee, and managing the process most efficiently. Interpersonal skills are to convey their talents, skills, and knowledge in the best way, to give constructive feedback, to be an active listener, to motivate, to encourage, not to be prejudiced, to encourage questions, to inspire, to express well, to create personal awareness, to make the mentee feel-good career and psychosocially.

A good mentor is willing to improve both himself and his mentees. Thanks to his easy communication skills, he establishes and manages the mentees effectively. Despite its intensity, it is accessible and takes the necessary time. He has extensive knowledge and experience in his field. Thanks to his management and leadership skills, he can be a good role model for his mentees.

The roles of a mentee that can provide a competitive advantage to businesses are as follows:

- **Role of Discussion Partner:** Argues with his mentee and prompts him to question
- **Storytelling Role:** Tells the subject with anecdotes so that the mentee can better understand the subject.
- **Idea Reflection Role:** It encourages the mentee to express their opinions on the subject by asking questions and helps the mentee to say what he or she thinks.
- **Advice Role:** Provides advice to the mentee on the subject.
- **Experience Sharing Role:** k mentors combine their own experiences with the mentee’s story.
• Knowledge Sharing Role: sharer Shares professional knowledge when needed
• Critic's Role: Gives constructive feedback.
• Networking Role: Helps the mentee to network and use it.
• Listener Role: He should listen to his mentee well and allow the mentee to express himself.
• The Door Opener Role: It opens new doors for the mentee and becomes a reference inside
• Protector Role: To guide and support the mentee regarding his career and to exchange views with the mentee about their career and business development.
• Friend Role: Encourages and supports his mentee
• Counselor Role: He/she can discuss the problems with the mentee and solve matters related to the mentee's career and psychosocial development.
• Career Coach Role: helps the mentee to think about Career options.
• Networking Coaching: It should teach the mentee how to use a good network.
• Behavior Coaching: The mentor should be able to positively differentiate the behavior of the mentee.
• Motivator Role: It should motivate the mentee’s self-confidence.

Business managers or organizational leaders should pay attention to the following to gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

• Sequencing of Goals: Mentoring practices are used to reach the goals of the organization to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the enterprises. Mentoring enables both the employee and the organization to achieve their goals.

• Having a Good Mentor: The most important change in business life is to have a good mentor. A good mentor changes the mentee’s perspective and teaches him to look from a window he has never looked at before. You benefit from the mentee’s experiences, you can understand how they achieved their success, you can learn from their mistakes, it helps you to evaluate them in a versatile way and turn them into opportunities. It increases trust, loyalty, motivation, job satisfaction towards the institution. Stress is reduced, adaptation to corporate culture becomes easier. A good mentor strengthens the mentee both career and psychosocially.

• Sharing expectations: Mentoring provides an understanding of what the expectations of mentees and employees are to be seen as the key to success. Thus, turmoil and conflicts decrease cooperation increases.

• Positions and Responsibilities: The responsibilities of mentees and mentors should be well defined.

Mentoring programs are based on mutual trust and confidentiality. The program is provided through one-on-one meetings between the coach/mentor and the client. The scope and duration of the program are determined according to the client's needs. The mentor needs to be a good listener throughout the process, to establish empathy with the client, to guide him to find his solutions with questions, to encourage, to give continuous feedback, and to provide a safe environment. Mentoring program; It causes them to discover their strengths and areas open to development, to determine their priorities, to learn from negative achievements and mistakes, to increase their performance, to adapt easily to changes and developments, to use time well, to increase their talents, skills, and knowledge, to increase their leadership characteristics and self-confidence. Mentoring practices increase business, employee, and business performance, focus on goals and strategies, provide low-cost development, increase motivation, organizational commitment, organizational trust, effective interaction and communication, and participation in processes with harmonious, flexible, and fast decisions.

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