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TALENT MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS INNOVATIVENESS OF INDIGENOUS OIL AND GAS COMPANIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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Abstract: *This study examined the relationship between talent management and business innovation in indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South Nigeria. The objective was to investigate how talent acquisition, talent development, and reward management influenced service innovation, process innovation, and marketing innovation, with organizational adhocracy culture serving as a moderating variable. The research adopted a positivist paradigm and utilized a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from 117 Management Staff using structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics were analyzed using Statistical software for data Analysis (SPSS) Version 25, while the ten hypotheses were tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS Version 4.1.1.1. Findings revealed that talent acquisition significantly enhanced marketing innovation but had no meaningful influence on service or process innovation. Talent development positively influenced both marketing and process innovation, with particularly strong effects on process improvement, but had no significant effect on service innovation. Reward management showed a positive effect on service innovation but negatively affected marketing and process innovation, indicating a misalignment between incentive structures and innovation goals. Furthermore, organizational adhocracy culture significantly moderated the relationship between talent management and business innovation, but in a negative direction—implying that in highly flexible and less structured environments, the impact of talent strategies on innovation was weakened. The study concluded that while talent management is critical to innovation, its impact varies across innovation types and is influenced by the organizational culture. It was recommended that firms strengthen the alignment between recruitment practices, training programs, and innovation goals. Reward systems should be redesigned to support creativity and operational improvements, and greater structural clarity should be introduced in adhocratic environments to balance flexibility with accountability. These steps are essential to unlocking the full innovation potential of talent strategies in Nigeria's oil and gas sector.*

Keywords: Talent Management, Business Innovativeness, Indigenous Oil and Gas Companies, South-South, Nigeria.

1.1 Introduction

The Oil and Gas (O&G) industry has continued to be the mainstay of the Nigerian economy. Even though the sector is less than 10% of the country's GDP, it contributes about 65% of Government revenue and 88% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings (KPMG, 2019). The Nigerian oil and gas industry has in the past two decades seen a surge in the number of indigenous players, buoyed by the Federal Government's initiatives and divestment of assets by International Oil Companies operating in the country (Asu, 2021). Currently, indigenous companies contribute about 30 per cent of crude oil and 60 per cent of gas production as well as 40 per cent and 32 per cent of oil and gas reserves, respectively (Aduloju, 2022). Despite these impressive numbers, the sector seems to be underperforming and indigenous oil and gas companies appears not to have found innovative ways to mitigate the challenges bedeviling the sector.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The oil and gas sector is a key pillar of Nigeria's economy, generating about 65% of government revenue and 88% of the country's foreign exchange earnings (KPMG, 2019). Indigenous oil and gas companies are playing an increasingly important role, contributing 30% of crude oil production, 60% of gas production, and a substantial share of the nation's reserves (Aduloju, 2022). However, despite their growing presence, these firms struggle with business innovation, particularly in service innovation (creating distinct customer solutions), process innovation (improving operational efficiency), and marketing innovation (adopting digital and customer-focused strategies). These challenges limit their growth, reduce profitability, and hinder the sector's ability to shift from resource dependency to an innovation-driven industry.

Existing studies highlight the importance of talent management and organisational culture—specifically, adhocracy culture as key

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drivers of business innovation. However, research gaps persist. Studies such as those by Shahin et al. (2025) and Baldissarelli et al. (2024) explored the role of adhocracy culture but overlooked talent management as a contributing factor. Meanwhile, research by Altindag and Gul (2025) and Alzuod (2024) focused on talent management but did not consider how an adhocracy culture's flexibility and risk-taking mindset could enhance its impact.

The persistent innovation challenges in indigenous oil and gas firms, coupled with fragmented research and methodological weaknesses, highlight the need for this study. By examining how talent management and adhocracy culture interact to drive service, process, and marketing innovation, this research filled this critical knowledge gaps and provided practical strategies to enhance competitiveness, resilience, and long-term sustainability in Nigeria's oil and gas sector.

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

Barney (1991) studied four empirical indicators: values, rareness, imitability and substitutability in order to assess the relationship between firm resources and sustained competitive advantages. In his research, he clarified the main relevant concepts, which are, firm resources, competitive advantage and sustained competitive advantage.

2.1.2 Innovation Diffusion Theory

Innovation Diffusion Theory, proposed by Everett Rogers in 1962, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how new ideas, practices, or technologies spread within a social system. At its core, the theory seeks to elucidate the processes and factors that influence the adoption and acceptance of innovations by individuals and organizations. This theory has been widely applied across various fields, including business, technology, healthcare, and communication.

2.1.3 The Competing Values Framework

Cameron and Quinn (2011) formulated with the competitive values framework. This has many applications with respect to establishing good leadership to create a more effective organization and also create values. It essentially aids leaders to figure out how they want to effectively communicate their expectations and implement certain practices and how they want to lead and in doing so, influences their service innovativeness process. This process has been practiced for over 25 years now, and many companies swear by it as their go-to device when it comes to new ideas or establishing a new system.

The Competing Values Framework can help in determining which of the four cultural categories a company falls into: the hierarchy culture; the market culture, the clan culture; or the adhocracy culture. Then, once that is established, it can be studied in-depth to determine the changes to be made for a more efficient and promising outcome in the future.

2.2 Conceptual Review

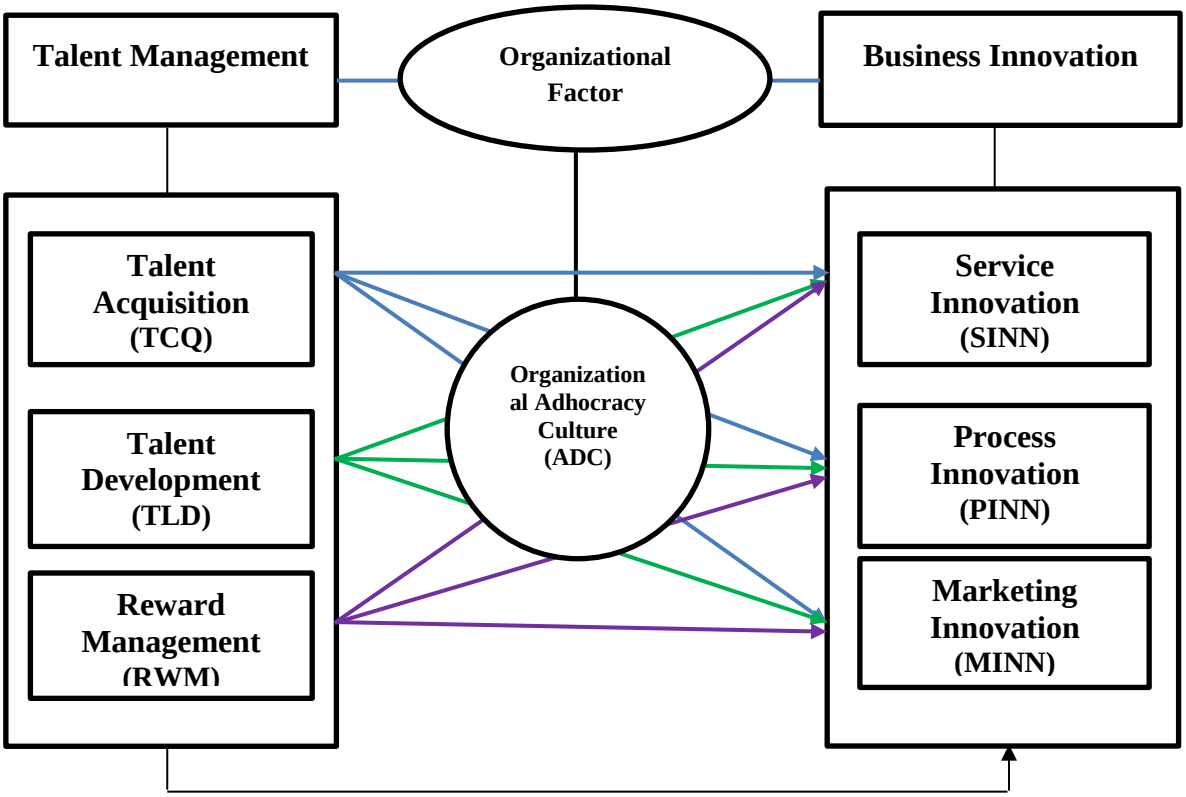

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual/Operational Framework of the Relationship between Talent Management and Business Innovation.

Source: The dimensions of Talent Management were adapted from the work of Jayaraman et al. (2018); while the measures of Business Innovation were adapted from the works of Chuang et al. (2010), Manohar et al. (2023), and Preciso (2021). The moderating variable is organizational adhocracy culture, with the items validated by Cameron and Quinn (2011).

2.3 Review of Empirical Literature

Shahin et al. (2025) demonstrated the role of organizational culture on innovative performance. However, there is limited focus on the role of adhocracy culture in facilitating open innovation in organizations, especially in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that are constrained by a lack of adequate resources, making them dependent on dynamic innovative culture such as adhocracy culture. This study used a quantitative methodology, using both exploratory and descriptive methods. Five hundred manufacturing SMEs in Jordan were chosen through systemic random sampling from a registered list of 2,310 manufacturing SMEs. A questionnaire was used as the study's instrument on these SMEs. In sum, 335 responses (67%) were considered suitable for analysis. This paper supports the previous studies that suggest that the success of open innovation rests largely on creating an effective organizational culture (e.g., adhocracy culture). However, this paper indicates the positive influence of adhocracy culture on the features of open innovation (i.e., inbound innovation, outbound innovation).

Altindag and Gul (2025) investigated the extent to which the concepts of social innovation and talent management will affect the innovation performance of enterprises as a result of the literature studies on the concepts of social innovation and talent management in family businesses in the Marmara Region. A questionnaire consisting of 78 questions was applied to the employees of small, medium and large-sized family businesses operating in the Marmara Region. A total of 460 questionnaires were evaluated. SPSS program was used for the survey results and the answers were analyzed by reliability analysis, factor analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis methods. With the analysis study, the impact of social innovation and talent management on innovation performance was tried to be determined. As a result, it has been determined that there is a significant relationship between talent management practices and innovation performance. In other words, it has been determined that talent management is a strong factor in increasing the innovation performance of enterprises. In addition, no effect of social innovativeness on innovation performance was observed. In the light of the findings, the results of the research are discussed and recommendations are presented for both managers and academicians.

Akpa et al. (2022) carried out a study titled, "service innovativeness and firm innovativeness of small and medium-sized enterprises in Ogun State, Nigeria." The study adopted a survey research design. The population was 2,465 registered small and medium scale enterprises in Ogun State, Nigeria. A sample size of 432 was determined using Cochran formula. Proportionate stratified sampling technique was adopted. A validated questionnaire was used to collect data. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the constructs ranged from 0.79 to 0.92. The response rate was 87.9%. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that service innovativeness components had significant effect on innovativeness (Adj.R2 = 0.792; F (3,407) = 522.888, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that service innovativeness had a significant effect on firm innovativeness of SMEs in Ogun state, Nigeria. The study recommended that service innovativeness components enhanced small and medium enterprises' innovativeness and therefore, owners/managers should continually create value in other to enhance SMEs innovativeness.

3.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design was adopted. This approach was deemed appropriate because the study aimed to examine the interrelationship among variables at a single point in time, thereby providing a snapshot of the phenomena under investigation (Coltman, 2007; Sedgwick, 2014). The cross-sectional survey method also proved to be cost-effective, time-efficient, and suitable for reaching a diverse range of respondents across the indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South Nigeria (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2009).

3.2 Population of Study

For this study, the target population comprised top-level executives in indigenous oil and gas firms, selected based on their strategic responsibilities and influence over organizational innovation outcomes. These individuals were considered best positioned to provide informed insights into the company's talent management practices and innovation activities. However, in consideration of practical constraints such as accessibility, geographical proximity, and time limitations, the study was delimited to nineteen (19) indigenous oil and gas companies within the region.

The geographical and organizational breakdown of the participating companies in South-South Nigeria, along with the distribution of their top management staff, was detailed in Table 3.1, which served to clearly define the structure of the study's population base.

Table 3. 1*:* Study population

S/N	Company Name	State	Respondents
1	Aiteo Exploration & Production Ltd	Bayelsa	7
2	Seplat Petroleum Development Company	Delta / Edo	6
3	Niger Delta Petroleum Resources (NDPR)	Rivers	9
4	Eroton Exploration & Production	Rivers	7
5	First Exploration & Petroleum (FEPO)	Bayelsa	5
6	Shoreline Natural Resources	Delta	4
7	Belemaoil Producing Limited	Rivers	8
8	Brittania-U Nigeria Limited	Bayelsa	5
9	Green Energy International Ltd	Rivers (operational base)	7

10	Neconde Energy Limited	Delta	6
11	Energia Limited	Delta	6
12	Midwestern Oil & Gas Company	Delta	6
13	Pillar Oil Limited	Rivers	7
14	Amni International Petroleum	Rivers	5
15	Conoil Producing Limited	Rivers	6
16	Oando Production & Development	Rivers / Bayelsa	7
17	Platform Petroleum	Delta	5
18	Excel Exploration & Production	Bayelsa	5
19	Sahara Energy Fields Limited	Rivers	6
Total			**117**

3.3 Sample Size Determination

The sample size for this study was determined using the Taro Yamane sampling formula (Ali, 2006). The Taro Yamane was considered as appropriate in this study based on its adoption of the 95% confidence interval, implied through its specification of the 0.05 error precision. According to Ali (2006), it offers social research studies a strong statistical estimate of population representativeness and modelling. The Taro Yamane formula is presented as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N\,(e)^2}$$

Where: N = Population (117),

n = sample size, e = 0.05

Hence the calculation follows:

$$n = \frac{117}{1 + 117\,(0.05)^2}$$

$n = \frac{117}{1.2925}$ Therefore, n = 91

The Bourly's (1926) Proportion Allocation Formular was employed to determine the copies of the questionnaire that would be administered to the respondents in each of the firms.

The formula is given as:

$$nh = \frac{nNh}{N}$$

Where,

nh = The number of questionnaire for each firm

Nh = The number of employees in each firm

n = The copies to be distributed

N = The population

Table 3. 2*:* Sample Distribution Based on Bourley's Appropriation Formular

S/N	Company Name	State	Original Respondents	Bowley's Allocation (Rounded)
1	Aiteo Exploration & Production Ltd	Bayelsa	7	**5**
2	Seplat Petroleum Development Company	Delta / Edo	6	**5**
3	Niger Delta Petroleum Resources (NDPR)	Rivers	9	**7**
4	Eroton Exploration & Production	Rivers	7	**5**
5	First Exploration & Petroleum (FEPO)	Bayelsa	5	**4**
6	Shoreline Natural Resources	Delta	4	**3**
7	Belemaoil Producing Limited	Rivers	8	**6**
8	Brittania-U Nigeria Limited	Bayelsa	5	**4**
9	Green Energy International Ltd	Rivers	7	**5**
10	Neconde Energy Limited	Delta	6	**5**
11	Energia Limited	Delta	6	**5**
12	Midwestern Oil & Gas Company	Delta	6	**5**
13	Pillar Oil Limited	Rivers	7	**5**
14	Amni International Petroleum	Rivers	5	**4**
15	Conoil Producing Limited	Rivers	6	**5**

16	Oando Production & Development	Rivers / Bayelsa	7	**5**
17	Platform Petroleum	Delta	5	**4**
18	Excel Exploration & Production	Bayelsa	5	**4**
19	Sahara Energy Fields Limited	Rivers	6	**5**
Total			**117**	**91**

4.1. Presentation of Data

4.1.1 Survey Response Rate

Table 4. 1: Distribution and Retrieval Frequency of Questionnaire

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Copies of Questionnaire distributed	91	100 per cent
Copies of Questionnaire retrieved	89	97.8 per cent
Copies of Questionnaire not retrieved	2	2.2 per cent
Copies completed but not useable	3	3.4 per cent
Copies completed and usable	86	96.6 per cent

Table 4. 2: Educational Level Distribution of Respondents

		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Graduate	34	39.5	39.5	39.5
	Post Graduate	38	44.2	44.2	83.7
	Doctorate	14	16.3	16.3	100.0
	Total	**86**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

4.3: Test of Hypotheses

Table 4. 3: Results of Hypotheses Testing

	Original sample (O)	**T statistics (|O/STDEV|)**	**P values**
TCQ -> MKTI	0.456	2.824	0.005
TCQ -> PINN	-0.095	0.711	0.477
TCQ -> SINN	0.027	0.230	0.818
TLD -> MKTI	0.319	3.040	0.002
TLD -> PINN	0.997	8.577	0.000
TLD -> SINN	-0.107	1.288	0.198
RWM -> MKTI	-0.414	2.744	0.006
RWM -> PINN	-0.375	3.567	0.000
RWM -> SINN	0.329	2.322	0.020
ADC x Talent Management -> Business Innovation	-0.607	5.116	0.000

4.1.2 Interpretation of Results

4.1.2.1 Relationships between Talent Acquisition and Business Innovation

The results of the hypotheses testing revealed varying degrees and directions of relationships between talent acquisition and the dimensions of business innovation. The relationship between talent acquisition and marketing innovation was positive and moderate in strength ($\beta = 0.456$), and it was statistically significant ($t = 2.824$, $p = 0.005$). This indicated that higher levels of talent acquisition were moderately associated with improvements in marketing innovation. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H03) was not accepted, confirming a significant relationship between talent acquisition and marketing innovation.

Conversely, the relationship between talent acquisition and process innovation was negative and very weak ($\beta = -0.095$), with the effect not being statistically significant ($t = 0.711$, $p = 0.477$). This suggested that talent acquisition had no meaningful influence on process innovation, and as such, the null hypothesis (H02) was accepted.

Similarly, the relationship between talent acquisition and service innovation was positive but extremely weak ($\beta = 0.027$) and statistically insignificant ($t = 0.230$, $p = 0.818$), indicating no substantial effect. Thus, the null hypothesis (H01) was also accepted.

In summary, talent acquisition demonstrated a moderate and positive significant relationship with marketing innovation but weak or no significant relationships with service and process innovation.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The test of the hypotheses revealed the following findings:

i. Talent acquisition had a moderate and positive impact on marketing innovation, suggesting that investing in the right recruitment strategies helped drive fresh, innovative marketing approaches.

ii. Talent acquisition showed no meaningful influence on process innovation, with a weak and negative relationship, indicating that simply hiring talent without aligning it to process goals adds little operational value.

iii. The link between talent acquisition and service innovation was negligible, pointing to a very weak and statistically insignificant effect, which signals a need to rethink how new hires are integrated into service functions.

iv. Talent development demonstrated a moderate and positive influence on marketing innovation, confirming that building internal capabilities enhances a firm's ability to innovate in market-facing activities.

v. A very strong and highly significant relationship was found between talent development and process innovation, emphasizing that upskilling and continuous learning directly improve how work is executed and optimized.

vi. However, talent development showed no meaningful effect on service innovation, as the relationship was weak, negative, and statistically insignificant, suggesting this area may require a different developmental approach.

vii. Reward management negatively affected marketing innovation, implying that current incentive structures may be discouraging creative or market-driven ideas instead of supporting them.

viii. Similarly, reward management had a significant negative impact on process innovation, indicating a possible disconnect between what is rewarded and what drives operational improvements.

ix. On the other hand, reward management had a positive and significant effect on service innovation, showing that well-targeted rewards can enhance service delivery innovation.

x. Finally, organizational adhocracy culture weakened the positive influence of talent management on business innovation, suggesting that in highly flexible, less-structured environments, talent strategies may be less effective unless better aligned with the culture.

5.2 Conclusion

This study set out to examine the relationship between talent management and business innovation in indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South Nigeria, with a particular focus on how organizational adhocracy culture moderates this relationship. The study arrived at several important conclusions based on the analysis of data collected.

i. First, it was concluded that talent acquisition plays a meaningful role in enhancing marketing innovation. Organizations that invest in effective recruitment strategies are more likely to experience improvements in how they reach and engage their markets. However, talent acquisition on its own did not contribute significantly to either process innovation or service innovation, suggesting that hiring talent without aligning their skills with internal systems or service structures may not lead to substantial innovation outcomes.

ii. Second, the study concluded that talent development is a critical driver of both process and marketing innovation. Firms that continuously develop and upskill their workforce tend to improve their internal processes and become more innovative in market-facing activities. However, talent development did not significantly influence service innovation, which implies that standard training approaches may not be sufficient to transform customer-facing services unless more targeted or experiential learning is introduced.

iii. Third, the findings led to the conclusion that reward management produces mixed outcomes in relation to innovation. While well-designed reward systems can positively influence service innovation by motivating employees to improve delivery, existing reward practices were found to have negative effects on both process and marketing innovation. This suggests a possible misalignment between what organizations reward and the types of innovative behavior they wish to promote.

iv. Finally, the study concluded that organizational adhocracy culture significantly moderates the talent

management–innovation relationship, but in a negative direction. In highly flexible, less structured organizational environments, the positive effects of talent management on business innovation may be undermined. This calls for better alignment between cultural practices and strategic talent initiatives to ensure that flexibility and empowerment do not dilute accountability or focus.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, it is evident that the relationship between talent management and business innovation in indigenous oil and gas companies in South-South Nigeria is complex and multidimensional. While certain talent strategies show strong links to innovation outcomes, others require rethinking, realignment, or structural support. The following recommendations, aligned with each of the ten tested hypotheses, offer clear, practical actions for management to implement in order to enhance both talent outcomes and innovation performance:

i. Enhance Talent Acquisition Strategies to Support Marketing Innovation: Management should prioritize strategic hiring practices aimed at identifying candidates with strong market awareness, digital communication skills, and creative problem-solving capabilities. Recruitment should go beyond technical qualifications to include candidates who demonstrate an ability to contribute to branding, customer engagement, and innovative product positioning. This can be achieved by incorporating innovation-related criteria into job descriptions, using scenario-based interviews, and recruiting from non-traditional sectors where marketing agility is high.

ii. Align Recruitment with Operational Innovation Goals: The finding that talent acquisition did not influence process innovation indicates a disconnect between who is hired and what internal processes require. Management should establish closer collaboration between the human resource and operations departments to ensure that recruitment is informed by current and projected process innovation needs. Practical steps include conducting joint talent needs assessments, involving operations managers in recruitment panels, and hiring for adaptability and systems-thinking skills relevant to operational transformation.

iii. Integrate New Hires into Service Functions More Effectively: Since talent acquisition had no practical effect on service innovation, onboarding processes must be redesigned to support service delivery goals. Management should introduce structured induction programs that expose new employees to customer service standards, innovation protocols, and client feedback systems. Additionally, assigning service-oriented mentors to new hires and involving them in client-facing projects early can help translate talent into meaningful service improvements.

iv. Strengthen Learning Pathways for Market-Driven Talent Development: Given that talent development improved marketing innovation, firms should invest in continuous learning tailored to market-facing teams. Management can provide access to marketing certifications, digital platforms, and trend-analysis workshops. Encouraging employees to participate in cross-industry marketing forums and innovation incubators can also help develop a future-ready marketing workforce equipped with current and actionable insights.

v. Institutionalize Technical Training for Process Innovation: The strong relationship between talent development and process innovation reinforces the need to prioritize skill enhancement in operational areas. Management should create structured technical training programs focused on process optimization, lean methodologies, and digital transformation. Encouraging job rotations, process improvement competitions, and knowledge-sharing platforms across departments can further embed a culture of process-based innovation among staff.

vi. Customize Service Training to Improve Customer-Facing Innovation: Since general talent development efforts did not improve service innovation, a targeted approach is necessary. Management should design customer experience labs or simulation environments where employees can test new service models, receive immediate feedback, and apply learning in real time. Engaging customers directly in co-creating service enhancements through focus groups and frontline employee involvement will also make training more responsive and impactful.

vii. Redesign Reward Systems to Promote Marketing Innovation: The negative impact of reward management on marketing innovation highlights the need for incentive reform. Management should develop performance metrics that recognize creative marketing campaigns, customer acquisition results, and brand influence. Recognition programs could include innovation-based bonuses, public acknowledgment of innovative contributions, and opportunities for career advancement tied to idea generation and execution.

viii. Realign Rewards with Operational Efficiency Goals: To address the negative effect of rewards on process innovation, firms should ensure that operational improvements are included in performance appraisal systems. Managers should reward teams not only for meeting output targets but also for implementing new systems, reducing waste, or introducing safer and faster workflows. Non-financial incentives, such as innovation showcase events or peer recognition, can also reinforce desired behaviors.

ix. Reinforce Service Excellence through Targeted Incentives: As reward management showed a positive effect on service innovation, this success should be built upon. Management should continue to incentivize frontline employees who contribute to better customer experiences, client retention, or service delivery efficiency. Establishing "service innovation awards," feedback-based recognition, and fast-tracked promotions for service excellence can further motivate employees to improve how services are delivered.

x. Align Talent Strategies with Cultural Realities in Adhocratic Environments: Since adhocracy culture weakened the overall effect of talent management on

innovation, management must work to better align flexibility with structure. Firms should clarify expectations around accountability, performance, and innovation ownership—even in decentralized settings. Developing hybrid structures that balance creative autonomy with measurable outcomes, using cross-functional innovation councils, and ensuring regular review of talent policies in light of cultural shifts will help strengthen alignment.

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