

The role of knowledge management in improving organizational competitiveness a field study at SARL BMS ELECTRIC in Draria, Algiers.

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Abstract:

This study aimed to identify the role of knowledge management in enhancing the competitive advantage of organizations a field study was conducted at SARL BMS ELECTRIC in Algiers, where the extent to which knowledge management processes contribute to the enhancement of competitive advantage was examined; these processes include knowledge generation, knowledge storage, knowledge dissemination, and knowledge application.

The study concluded that knowledge management plays a significant role in improving the company's competitive advantage, as all knowledge management processes were found to contribute to enhancing the competitive advantage at SARL BMS ELECTRIC.

Keywords: Knowledge management; knowledge generation; knowledge storage; knowledge dissemination; knowledge application; competitive advantage.

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1. Introduction

Modern organizations function within a dynamic and competitive landscape, shaped by the emergence of powerful forces that significantly influence both economic and administrative frameworks, these forces necessitate fundamental changes in organizational strategies, key among

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these forces are the increasing complexity of operations, intensifying competition, advancements in technology and information systems, and the effects of globalization, alongside shifts in economic and political structures, These influences affect all forms of organizations, compelling them to swiftly adapt and respond effectively, moreover, organizations must proactively ensure their sustainability and growth amidst these rapid transformations.

This evolution has paralleled the rise of various concepts designed to enhance managerial performance, with knowledge management standing out as one of the most prominent, over time, knowledge management, encompassing processes such as knowledge acquisition, transfer, storage, and application, has matured into a practical approach vital for navigating the fast-paced changes in the business environment, the significance of knowledge management has grown as organizations have recognized that achieving a sustainable competitive advantage hinges on intellectual and knowledge-based assets, and on investing in them strategically, however, this knowledge, in isolation, will not provide benefits unless management effectively transforms it into a strategic tool that enhances organizational competitiveness.

From the above, we can pose the following main research problem:

1.1 Study problem:

To what extent does knowledge management contribute to improving competitive advantage at SARL BMS ELECTRIC in Algiers?

From the main problem, the following sub-questions can be posed:

- To what extent does the knowledge generation process contribute to improving competitive advantage in the company under study?
- To what extent does the knowledge storage process contribute to improving competitive advantage in the company under study?
- To what extent does the knowledge dissemination process contribute to improving competitive advantage in the company under study?
- To what extent does the knowledge application process contribute to improving competitive advantage in the company under study?

1.2 Study hypotheses:

Based on the main problem and the sub-questions, the main hypothesis and the sub-hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

There is a statistically significant role for knowledge management in improving the competitiveness of SARL BMS ELECTRIC at the significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

The following sub- hypotheses fall under this main hypothesis:

-First hypothesis: There is a statistically significant role for the knowledge generation process in improving the competitiveness of the company under study at the significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

-Second hypothesis: There is a statistically significant role for the knowledge storage process in improving the competitiveness of the company under study at the significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

-Third hypothesis: There is a statistically significant role for the knowledge dissemination process in improving the competitiveness of the company under study at the significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

-Fourth hypothesis: There is a statistically significant role for the knowledge application process in improving the competitiveness of the company under study at the significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

1.3 Study importance:

The importance of this study lies in addressing a highly important and vital subject, namely, the relationship between knowledge management and competitive advantage. The study thus contributes to adding new scientific value to the field of knowledge management, which currently enjoys considerable attention. Moreover, the study calls on organizations to apply and continuously focus on knowledge management strategies to ensure access to new innovations and achieve precedence, thereby contributing to the survival, growth, and continuity of the organization in its field of activity.

1.4 Study objectives:

This study aims to achieve a primary objective, which is to clarify the concept of knowledge management and highlight its importance in

addressing the challenges that business organizations may face. The study also seeks to link the adoption of this modern administrative approach with its effective application and exploitation in building the organization's competitive advantage, thereby helping it to achieve continuity and survival in the changing business environment.

1.5 Study methodology:

In this study, we relied on the descriptive-analytical approach, which includes using the desk survey method through reference to Arabic and foreign sources and references in order to build the theoretical framework necessary for this study. In addition, the field survey method was applied to collect data using the designated research tool, and then these data were analyzed statistically to test the validity of the proposed hypotheses and to provide accurate answers to the questions posed by the study.

1.6 Literary review:

The following table presents the most important findings from studies related to the subject of our research.

Table 01: Previous studies related to the subject of the study

Author	Title of the Study	Year	Findings
Ben Youssef Abdelhakim	The Role of Knowledge Management in Enhancing Competitive Advantage in Algerian Institutions	2020	Strategies of knowledge management improve competitive excellence, especially in quality and innovation.
Alrawi, K. & Al-Mashaqba, A.	Knowledge Management Capabilities and Competitive Advantage	2016	Organizational leadership and a culture of participation enhance the effectiveness of knowledge management to achieve a sustainable advantage.
Zack, M., McKeen, J., & Singh, S.	The Impact of Knowledge Management Processes on Competitive Advantage	2009	Knowledge application has the greatest impact on competitive performance among the dimensions of knowledge management.
Darroch, J.	Role of Knowledge Management in Achieving Competitive Advantage	2005	Small companies that apply knowledge management enjoy high flexibility and competitiveness against large companies.
Nonaka, I. & Takeuchi, H.	Knowledge Management as a Tool for Competitive Advantage	1995	Tacit knowledge improves innovation and enhances internal processes, which strengthens competitive advantage.

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the findings of previous studies

2. The theoretical framework of the study

2.1 The nature of knowledge management

In the contemporary business environment, knowledge has become a critical resource that surpasses traditional factors of production such as land, labor, and capital. The growing importance of knowledge has given rise to Knowledge Management (KM), which seeks to harness and utilize this intangible asset to enhance organizational learning, innovation, and performance. As a multidisciplinary approach, KM provides organizations with the ability to adapt to dynamic changes, sustain competitiveness, and achieve long-term success.

2.1.1 The concept of knowledge management:

Researchers have addressed the concept of knowledge management from multiple perspectives; some have approached it from a technical standpoint, while others have examined it from cultural or social aspects, according to their various views and orientations.

There are several definitions of knowledge management, including:

- Skyrme defined it as “the systematic and explicit management of knowledge and the processes associated with it, including its collection, organization, dissemination, and use. It also requires the transformation of individual knowledge into collaborative knowledge that can be clearly shared within the organization” (Al-Qahawi, 2013, p. 25).
- Molhotra defined it as “an organizational process aimed at integrating information technologies that process data with individuals’ capacity for creativity and innovation” (Al-Mohammed, 2008, p. 22).
- It has also been defined as “the processes of collecting information and data carried out by business organizations for the purpose of organizing and applying them effectively to their operations, thereby

contributing to enhancing their competitive position in the market” (Kalbou, 2015, p. 12).

From the above, it can be said that knowledge management is based on three essential elements: resources, technology, and processes.

2.1.2 Knowledge management implementation strategy:

The field of knowledge management and its applications is broad and comprehensive, covering all aspects of knowledge building, from learning on the job and training programs to research and development. In other words, any organization can begin implementing a knowledge management initiative by developing a strategy tailored to it after identifying its needs and objectives.

Wiig proposed three strategies for introducing knowledge management into organizations (Al-Zayyat, 2008, p. 143):

A. Incremental growth strategy:

This strategy can be applied gradually when the company's conditions are favorable and when the participants are able to provide a high level of attention.

This strategy allows organizations with limited resources to implement knowledge management and build their capabilities. It is characterized as a low-risk strategy; however, the return for organizations with limited resources is minimal.

B. Caution and prudence strategy:

This strategy relies on adopting the knowledge management initiative with care and caution, where it is initially applied when the organization's conditions are suitable, and then its application is expanded as needed.

This strategy is characterized by enabling organizations with limited resources to implement knowledge management and build their capabilities without focusing on applying the administrative approach at the outset. It also reduces risks and allows for achieving gains.

C. Supporting advanced and active perspectives strategy:

This strategy is part of a broader attempt aimed at renewing and strengthening the organization through the presence of creative management looking toward the future.

It is characterized as a medium-risk strategy, and it has a high return for ambitious organizations committed to achieving a lasting competitive advantage quickly.

McElroy distinguished between two types of knowledge management strategies (McElroy, 2003, pp. 45-46):

- **Supply-side strategies:** These tend to focus only on distributing and disseminating the organization's current knowledge, thus emphasizing mechanisms for sharing knowledge.
- **Demand-side strategies:** These focus on meeting the company's need for new knowledge. This strategy is oriented toward learning and creativity, i.e., focusing on mechanisms for generating knowledge. It also contributes to enhancing the organization's ability to innovate and adapt to continuous changes in the work environment.

2.1.3 Challenges and obstacles to knowledge management:

Despite the benefits and facilities provided by the implementation of knowledge management, it faces many challenges. Implementing knowledge management is considered a complex process; therefore, it is necessary to reward and encourage organizations that succeed in applying this management. Knowledge management programs in organizations face a number of obstacles, the most prominent of which are the following (Hamshari, 2013, p. 144):

- Weak commitment of top management to knowledge management and its support.

- Weak understanding of the concept of knowledge management, its content, requirements, and the importance of its role in the organization.
- Weak infrastructure for knowledge management, including an unsupportive organizational culture.
- Dependence on vertical organizational structures, weak technological environment, and unsuitable organizational environment.
- Ambiguity in defining the boundaries between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge, overlap between them, and difficulty in distinguishing between them, which leads to challenges in organizing and sharing knowledge effectively within the organization.
- Sometimes placing too much emphasis on databases, knowledge bases, and related technologies at the expense of tacit knowledge available in individuals' minds.

2.2 The concept and determinants of competitive advantage:

2.2.1 Concept of competitive advantage:

The concept of competitive advantage is multifaceted and varies according to the field of activity and the time in which the researcher defined it. Due to the abundance of definitions, we opted for the non-overlapping and similar ones, highlighting the most comprehensive and precise.

Competitive advantage is described as the outcome of strategically creating value through a firm's distinctive activities and resources that allows it to perform better than its rivals in the marketplace, typically by achieving superior value for customers through cost leadership, differentiation, or focus. This advantage reflects how effectively an organization uses its resources and capabilities relative to competitors to achieve sustained performance above the industry average (David, Forest, & Meredith, 2024).

Competitive advantage is the systematic creation and reinforcement of unique value for customers and stakeholders by configuring and leveraging a firm's activities so that it outperforms competitors. This perspective builds on the value-creation and value-chain frameworks of Porter and emphasizes strategic choice and environmental analysis as the basis for an organization's edge in competition (Ateljević, Kulović, Đoković, & Bavčić, 2023)

Dr. Salah Abdul Qadir Al-Nuaimi summarized the concept of competitive advantage as “the organization's ability to be unique in occupying an advanced competitive position, based on the efficient inputs it possesses that enable it to perform its internal activities effectively, with the aim of increasing value and offering products (goods or services) that are difficult for competitors to match in the areas of excellence it achieves” (Al-Nuaimi, 2022, p. 83).

Competitive advantage denotes the firm's capacity to generate superior value that is difficult for competitors to replicate. It is realized either through cost leadership that ensures comparable benefits at lower prices, or through differentiation that provides unique attributes justifying premium pricing. Fundamentally, it reflects the organization's strategic use of resources and innovation to sustain a distinctive and enduring market position.

2.2.2 Determinants of competitive advantage:

The competitive advantage of the institution is determined through two main elements (Morsi, 1998, p. 76):

- **The Size of the Competitive Advantage:** the sustainability of competitive advantage depends on the company's ability to maintain it in the face of competition. The greater this advantage, the more difficult it is for competing institutions to imitate or eliminate it.

Every competitive advantage has a life cycle similar to that of new products, beginning with the introduction or rapid growth stage, followed

by the adoption stage by competing institutions. After that comes the stagnation stage when competitors imitate and replicate the competitive advantage and attempt to surpass it, and finally the necessity stage appears the need to develop this advantage by reducing costs or enhancing product distinctiveness, prompting the company to renew the current advantage or introduce a new competitive advantage that offers greater value to the customer.

- The Scope of Competition or the target Market: this refers to the extent of the company's activities and operations that contribute to achieving competitive advantages by realizing cost savings compared to competitors. This can be achieved through the use of shared production facilities, unified technical expertise, or the use of the same distribution channels to serve different market segments, geographical areas, or industries, thus achieving economies of scale. A narrow scope can also achieve a competitive advantage by focusing on a specific market segment and offering it at the lowest cost or by providing a distinctive product for that segment.

3. Field study at SARL BMS ELECTRIC

3.1 Introduction to SARL BMS ELECTRIC:

BMS Electric is a limited liability company (SARL) headquartered in Draria, with production units located in Bir Khadem and Baba Hassen, Algiers. The company's capital amounts to 40 000 000.00 Algerian dinars.

- The company was established in 2000, specializing in the manufacturing of electrical equipment and accessories, and began production in 2001.
- It employs a highly skilled workforce of more than 200 employees, making it well-qualified to meet various customer requirements, particularly in providing diversity in the company's multiple product lines.
- Regarding production units, the company owns two modern factories equipped with the latest manufacturing technologies, with a production capacity of 130,000 high-quality units per day, reflecting

the efficiency and technical level achieved by the company. All the company's products are made in Algeria and comply with national and international, especially European, standards.

- Today, the company covers 90% of the national market and exports to 11 African countries: Tunisia, Niger, Benin, Mali, Sudan, Togo, Senegal, Mauritania, Libya, Cameroon, and Burkina Faso.

The objectives of SARL BMS ELECTRIC are as follows:

- Maintain leadership in the national market.
- Increase the growth and development of its business by sustaining operations and increasing its capital.
- Improve quality and competitiveness in the national market.
- Direct consumers toward the national product.
- Contribute to the growth of the national economy.
- Provide excellent customer service that meets their various needs.
- Penetrate foreign markets in the long term and promote the Algerian product.

3.2 Quantitative study and drawing conclusions:

The final step in the methodology of our quantitative research is to draw conclusions, and the method is implemented based on data analysis. This also involves interpreting the data and drawing conclusions supported by the data collected.

3.2.1 Study population and sample:

SARL BMS ELECTRIC was selected due to its suitability for our research topic, as it possesses all the strategic functions of knowledge management. The company is characterized by a modern management style aimed at enhancing its competitive advantage and improving employee performance through effective communication between the company's

departments and the clear and understandable transfer of information and instructions.

A total of 55 forms were distributed and collected within a maximum period of 8 days to allow enough time for responses. They were distributed at the management level of SARL BMS ELECTRIC. Fifty-two forms were retrieved and completed, of which 41 forms were adopted, pertaining to the general manager and department heads. Eleven forms from executive workers were discarded due to their random responses to the questionnaire questions, which was attributed to their lack of understanding of the questions. After that, we analyzed the contents of the forms to facilitate placing them into tables and interpreting them to reach the final results of the field study.

3.2.2 Validity and reliability of the study tool (questionnaire):

The validity of the study tool refers to the comprehensiveness of the form in including all the elements that should be part of the analysis, in a way that is understandable to all users. The validity of the study tool was verified by checking the construct validity using the square root of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient.

As for the reliability of the questionnaire, it means that it yields the same result if redistributed several times under the same conditions, in other words, it refers to the stability of the results and the lack of significant change when it is redistributed to the study sample members over a certain period of time.

To verify the validity and reliability of the questionnaire for our study, we relied on Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, and the results are shown in the following table:

The role of knowledge management in improving organizational competitiveness

Table 02: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Coefficient (Square Root of Alpha)
Knowledge Management	12	0.674	0.785
organizational Competitiveness	6	0.862	0.861
Total Questionnaire	18	0.810	0.900

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs

Table 03: Results of testing the Sub-Hypotheses

Company Competitiveness (Dependent Variable)						
Independent Variable	Regression Coefficient B	Pearson Correlation Coefficient R	Coefficient of Determination R ²	Beta Value	Calculated T Value	Probability Value (Sig)
Knowledge Generation	0.119	0.318	0.101	0.318	2.68	0.045
Knowledge Storage	0.307	0.268	0.072	0.268	1.714	0.025
Knowledge Dissemination	0.365	0.444	0.068	0.344	1.547	0.032
Knowledge Application	0.327	0.421	0.177	0.421	1.862	0.007

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS outputs

It is clear from the above table that the value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is high, estimated at (0.898), which indicates the reliability of

the questionnaire. In addition, the square root of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient equals 0.9, which confirms the validity of the questionnaire. Hence, we can rely on the study tool (questionnaire) to analyze the results and test the hypotheses.

A. First hypothesis:

There is a statistically significant role for the knowledge generation process in improving the competitiveness of the company under study at the significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

- Beta Value: 0.119
- Calculated T Value: 2.68
- Probability Value (Sig): 0.045

Based on the Sig value (probability value), which is 0.045 and less than the significance level α (0.05), we conclude that there is a significant role for the knowledge generation process in improving the competitiveness of the company under study, and therefore we accept the first hypothesis.

B. Second hypothesis:

There is a statistically significant role for the knowledge storage process in improving the competitiveness of the company under study at the significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

- Beta Value: 0.307
- Calculated T Value: 1.714
- Probability Value (Sig): 0.025

The probability value (Sig) here (0.025) is less than the significance level α (0.05), so it can be said that there is a significant role for the knowledge storage process in improving the competitiveness of the company under study, and therefore we accept the second hypothesis.

C. Third hypothesis:

There is a statistically significant role for the knowledge dissemination process in improving the competitiveness of the company under study at the significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

- Beta Value: 0.365
- Calculated T Value: 1.547
- Probability Value (Sig): 0.032

The Sig value (0.032) is less than the significance level α (0.05), which indicates a significant role for the knowledge dissemination process in improving the competitiveness of the company under study, and therefore we accept the third hypothesis.

D. Fourth hypothesis:

There is a statistically significant role for the knowledge application process in improving the competitiveness of the company under study at the significance level $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

- Beta Value: 0.327
- Calculated T Value: 1.862
- Probability Value (Sig): 0.007

The Sig value (0.007) is less than the significance level α (0.05), which indicates a significant role for the knowledge application process in improving the competitiveness of the company under study, and therefore we accept the fourth hypothesis.

Based on these results, it can be said that all knowledge management processes have a statistical role in improving the competitiveness of the company under study, based on the results of the questionnaire analysis using the SPSS program.

Table 04: Results of Testing the Main Hypothesis

Independent Variable	Knowledge Management Processes
Dependent Variable	Company Competitiveness
Regression Coefficient B	0.413
Correlation Coefficient R	0.312
Coefficient of Determination R ²	0.174
BETA Value	0.388
Calculated T Value	2.739
Significance Level Sig	0.009

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on SPSS analysis results

- The Sig value is 0.009, which is less than the significance level α (0.05). This means there is a statistically significant relationship between knowledge management processes and the company's competitiveness, i.e., there is a significant role for knowledge management processes in improving the competitiveness of SARL BMS ELECTRIC. There is a moderate positive relationship between these two variables, where the company's competitiveness increases with the increase in the level of knowledge management processes.
- The calculated T value is 2.739. This value indicates that there are statistically significant differences between the groups in knowledge management processes.
- The BETA value indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables; in this case, the BETA value is 0.388, which indicates a positive relationship between knowledge management processes and the company's competitiveness.
- The correlation coefficient R and the regression coefficient B indicate the strength and direction of the relationship; here, the R value is 0.312, which indicates a moderate positive relationship between knowledge management processes and the company's competitiveness, the B value here is 0.413, meaning that knowledge management processes contribute 41.3% of the factors influencing the competitiveness of the company under study, while the remaining $100 - 41.3 = 58.7\%$ is due to other factors not addressed in our study.

3.2.3 Drawing and interpreting results

After testing the hypotheses, we arrived at the following:

Acceptance of the main hypothesis, which states that there is a statistically significant role for knowledge management in improving the competitive advantage of the institution under study. Furthermore, after testing the hypotheses, we found that all knowledge management processes (knowledge generation, knowledge storage, knowledge dissemination, knowledge application) have a statistically significant role in improving the company's competitiveness. This means that the first, second, third, and fourth sub-hypotheses are confirmed. This is due to the importance of knowledge management processes in modern organizations, which ensure they can keep pace with developments and compete with companies in the industry.

According to the results of the regression coefficient B, the ranking of the role of knowledge management processes in improving the company's competitiveness is as follows:

- **First place:** The knowledge dissemination process with a BETA coefficient of 0.365, meaning that with an increase of one unit in the knowledge dissemination process, the company's competitiveness increases proportionally by 36.5%. This is due to the efforts of the company's management in encouraging knowledge dissemination among all members of the organization, reflected in training and development programs and in the attempt to transfer knowledge through the exchange of knowledge and skills among all members of the organization.
- **Second place:** The knowledge application process with a BETA coefficient of 0.327, meaning that with an increase of one unit in the knowledge application process, the company's competitiveness increases proportionally by 32.7%, this results from the company under study relying on the latest information systems and modern

operational methods based on informatics in production, marketing, and human resources management.

- **Third place:** The knowledge storage process with a BETA coefficient of 0.307, meaning that with an increase of one unit in the knowledge storage process, the company's competitiveness increases proportionally by 30.7%, the company has an internal website containing the aforementioned operational methods, and it also relies on an internal data-receiving server containing digital archives of all the company's documents and various training manuals from previous training courses so that organization members can benefit from them when needed.
- **Fourth place:** The knowledge generation process with a BETA coefficient of 0.119, meaning that with an increase of one unit in the knowledge generation process, the company's competitiveness increases proportionally by 11.90%. This is due to the company's lack of a laboratory for generating knowledge, as is the case for all Algerian companies.

The results also showed that knowledge management processes contribute 41.3% of the factors influencing the competitiveness of the company under study, while the remaining $100 - 41.3 = 58.7\%$ is due to other factors not addressed in our study.

4. Conclusion:

In today's economic landscape, organizations across various sectors are experiencing unprecedented levels of competition, making knowledge a critical asset that institutions, regardless of their size, strive to harness effectively, this heightened emphasis on knowledge has even played a role in differentiating societies from one another, as a result, the shift toward knowledge management has emerged as one of the foremost challenges for organizational leaders, irrespective of the institution's type or scale, this transition aims to align organizational practices with the dynamic changes in the external environment while securing a stable and competitive position, central to this transition is the symbiotic and influential

relationship between knowledge management and competitive advantage, which drives the organization's uniqueness and growth.

From the discussions presented, it is evident that knowledge management is an essential function in any organization striving for success, through this function, both informational and intellectual resources are transformed into valuable assets through a series of processes: knowledge generation, storage, dissemination, and application within the organization, consequently, it is imperative for organizations to recognize the value of both their explicit and tacit knowledge, as well as their intellectual endeavors, to secure the most advantageous competitive position, based on the results of hypothesis testing, we reached the following:

Acceptance of the main hypothesis, which states that there is a statistically significant role for knowledge management in improving the competitive advantage of SARL BMS ELECRIC. The results of hypothesis testing also found that all knowledge management processes (knowledge generation, knowledge storage, knowledge dissemination, knowledge application) have a statistically significant role in improving the company's competitiveness. This is due to the importance of knowledge management in increasing individuals' skills and experiences, which affects their performance in the company and improves its competitiveness.

4.3 Recommendations:

To achieve an effective role for knowledge management in improving the company's competitiveness, those in charge of the company must follow a set of solutions, including:

- Contributing to the dissemination of knowledge in the company by providing reading spaces and concluding agreements with universities to open digital repositories containing books and various references for company employees.
- Conducting training courses on how to use global research and artificial intelligence platforms.

- Adding a special score in employee evaluations related to their knowledge of accessing and benefiting from these platforms.
- Concluding agreements with Algeria Telecom to provide internet access to employees' homes at reasonable rates.
- Contributing to the dissemination of knowledge by assisting university students in carrying out their research and graduation projects, and opening a dedicated office for this purpose.
- Arranging with retired employees who have high expertise and knowledge to conduct training courses for the company's employees.

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