



BEYOND BOUNDARIES THROUGH APPLIED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Talent Management in Small and Micro Businesses: Can Soft Skills be Trained?

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Introduction



- Industry 5.0 and Generative AI make adaptability, innovation, and effective HR management crucial for business competitiveness.



- Constraints include reliance on imports (materials, labor) and the cultural legacy of colonialism.



- For sustainability, small businesses must hire individuals aligned with company culture and maintain employee connection to foster resilience.



- Soft skills are essential for cultural alignment but often lacking in candidates; these “non-cognitive skills” are influenced by attitudes and personality traits.



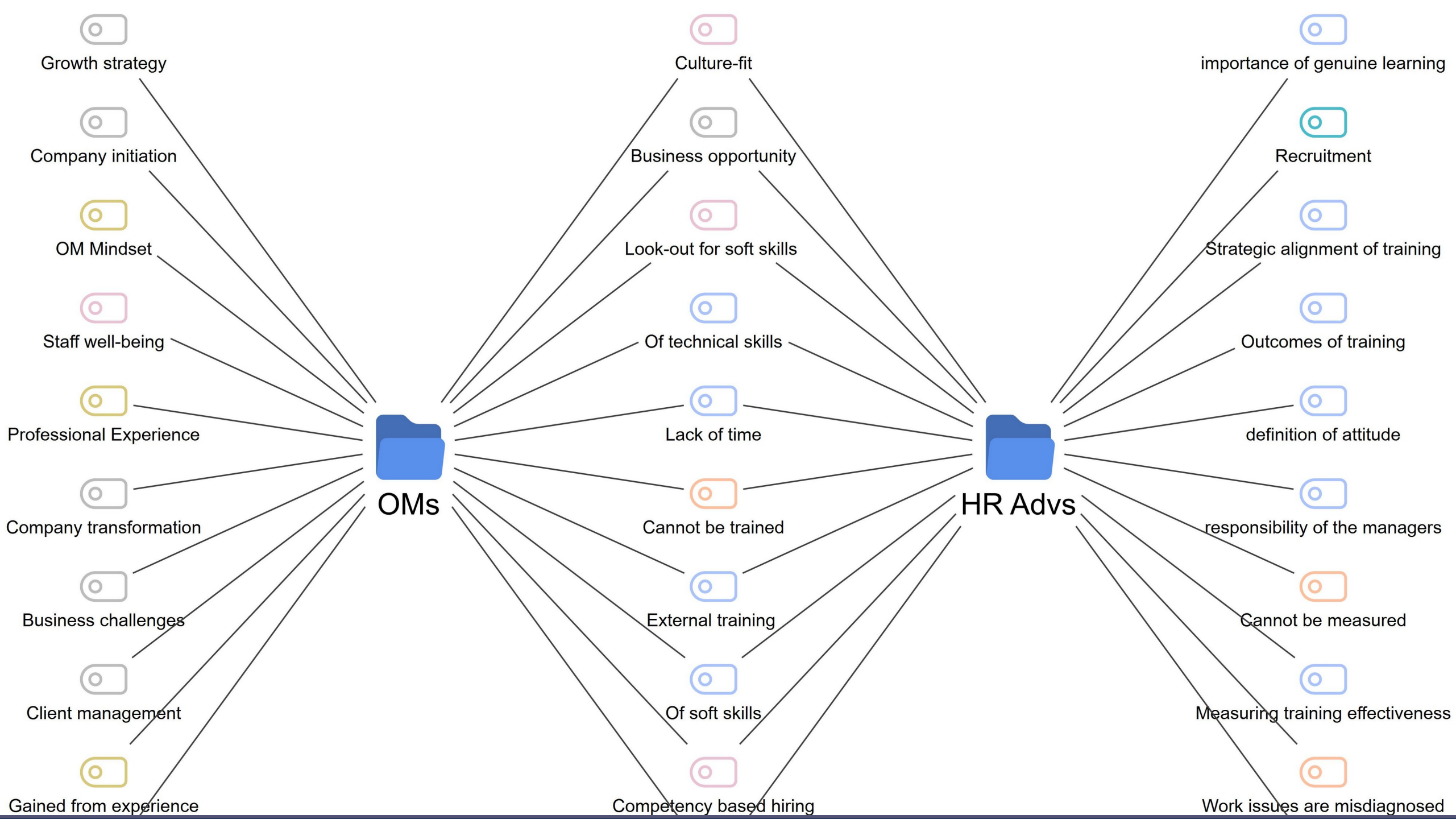
- Some owner-managers doubt the trainability of soft skills, viewing them as rooted in personal values, while others see training as a potential bridge for skill gaps.

Methodology

- Grounded Theory
- Theoretical and convenience sampling
- Semi-structured interviews from 14 participants – owner-managers and HR consultants

Research Aims

- To explore real-world attitudes and challenges relating to talent management in small and micro businesses.
- To understand the concept of trainability of soft skills and their impact on business strategies are identified.



Findings

- Owner-managers see training as a potential tool for talent management and employee retention but have concerns about negative training outcomes.
- Owner-managers prioritize operations, organizational goals, and growth, valuing a clear vision and passion for success.
- They question if employees align with company culture and often consult HR for guidance on managing teams and addressing behavioral issues.
- Soft skills (communication, empathy, leadership) are considered essential for aligning employees with company values, though views on their trainability vary.
- Values like curiosity, humility, and accountability are highlighted as critical but are seen by some as challenging to instill through training.

Findings

- Some owner-managers see issues with training effectiveness due to behavior concerns, while others focus on addressing core beliefs for better efficiency.
- A divide exists: some view soft skills as innate qualities shaped by upbringing, while others attempt to train employees despite mixed results.
- Mixed results on training effectiveness: some managers see positive impacts, while others question its ability to instill desired behaviors and values.
- Maintaining customer loyalty and timely delivery is crucial, requiring customer service skills that are difficult to develop if not already present.
- Limited resources, tight deadlines, and budget constraints are major barriers to effective training; some suggest hiring individuals with pre-existing skills as a solution.

Application of Findings and Practical Implications



1. Prioritising organisational efficiency and growth



2. Improving employee retention



3. Developing skills and alignment with employees' values



4. Addressing skills gaps with effective training



5. Adopting skills based recruitment strategies

Conclusion

- Strategic Role of Training in Talent Management
- Soft Skills: Essential but Hard to Train
- Cultural Fit and Employee Values
- Resource Constraints Impact Training
- Mixed Perceptions on Training Outcomes
- Future Considerations