

**MIDDLE MANAGERS IN STRATEGIC PROCESSES AND PRACTICES: An empirical study based on the theory of intraorganizational ecology**

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### **Introdução**

Strategic renewal (SR) or adaptive strategy, an iterative process of belief, action, and learning that enables the organization to adjust its strategy to environmental changes, can be facilitated by the roles of the Middle Managers (MM). This article uses intraorganizational ecology to explain the contribution of MM through processes of variation, selection, and retention in the strategic process. It adopts the strategy-as-process-and-practice (SAPP) approach, through a longitudinal case study in a manufacturing industry with five industrial units in Brazil, analyzing their strategic practices

### **Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo**

Effective strategy processes require continuous adaptation and re-evaluation of strategies to changes in environment. This empirical study considers the relationship of variation, selection, and retention in the strategy's renewal. MM were planning and execution cycles through use of Lean Manufacturing (LM) in a Strategic Workshop (SW). Since 2013, MM engaged in strategic initiatives construction and are accountable to accomplish it, though strategic contracts, in an ongoing interaction. Therefore, this study investigates how the role of MM in strategy practices influences the process of SR.

### **Fundamentação Teórica**

MM play a key role by being closer to operations and the market and identifying business opportunities. Wooldridge et al. (2008) consolidated a framework to explain the involvement of MM in strategy, considering antecedents, process, and outcomes, inserting SR and its subprocesses (generating ideas, initiative development, executing). The roles of MM in strategy involved upward and downward activities in the process of SR. The SAP perspective focuses on strategy as an active undertaking carried out by individuals and emphasizes providing detailed descriptions of these activities.

### **Metodologia**

A longitudinal case study covering the period from 2012 to 2022, were conducted in a manufacturing industry with 5 industrial units in Brazil. A qualitative and integrated study of strategic processes and practice examined the role of MM in strategic renewal. The methodology involved hybrid progression and instantiation approach and a total of 125 semi-structured interviews with MM participants of the strategic workshops in 2020, 2021, and 2022. The study focused on the involvement of MM in strategy development and implementation practices related to Lean Manufacturing, as A3 plans and tables.

### **Análise dos Resultados**

The progression of strategy practices and the SW summarized 28 events that recur in cycles throughout the years under investigation. Focusing on how MM contributed to the evolution of SW were facilitated by organized the study into four distinct phases: professionalization, recognition, depression; resumption. This allowed to identify distinct and successive behavioral mechanisms related to the MM's role in the strategic renewal practices, as causal flows: reducing resistance and promoting integration; cognitive development and learning; recursion and institutionalization; evolution.

### **Conclusão**

The process of SR can facilitate interaction among TMT, MM, enabling the integration of deliberate and emergent strategies. The roles of MM over the 10-year period, reveals the MM evolution in: involvement in strategy; role definition and conflicts; idea promotion; emotional balance; sensemaking, through practices, like SW with LM and the development of A3 Plans across five dimensions (delivery, quality, cost, morale, safety), aligned with the evolution model involving: variation; selection: retention. These explains how the involvement of MM in strategic practices influences the process of SR

**Referências Bibliográficas**

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