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Case studies on Marugame and IPMI Institute: To tackle on coaching performance

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ABSTRACT

This case study explores the strategic and operational practices of Marugame Udon and IPMI Institute. By analyzing both organizations through the lenses of interaction management, problem-solving, decision-making, team development, and coaching performance, the study uncovers practical insights into effective organizational behavior across different industries. At Marugame, the emphasis on lean operations and team coordination plays a critical role in ensuring customer satisfaction and operational efficiency. Through real-time interaction management and standardized communication protocols, Marugame fosters a service-oriented culture where frontline staff are empowered to solve problems and make quick decisions. Leadership coaching is implemented at the store level to improve service performance and employee retention. In contrast, IPMI Institute emphasizes strategic decision-making and collaborative learning in academic and administrative settings. The coaching culture at IPMI Institute fosters professional growth, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence among both staff and students. The findings highlight that both organizations, while operating in different sectors, leverage similar core principles of organizational development. Interaction management and coaching serve as the backbone for efficient teamwork and agile decision-making. This comparative case analysis underscores the value of context-specific adaptations of these practices, reinforcing the need for tailored leadership approaches in hospitality and education sectors.

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ABSTRAK

Studi kasus ini mengeksplorasi praktik strategis dan operasional Marugame Udon dan IPMI Institute. Dengan menganalisis kedua organisasi melalui sudut pandang manajemen interaksi, pemecahan masalah, pengambilan keputusan, pengembangan tim, dan kinerja pembinaan, studi ini mengungkap wawasan praktis tentang perilaku organisasi yang efektif di berbagai industri. Di Marugame, penekanan pada operasi ramping dan koordinasi tim memainkan peran penting dalam memastikan kepuasan pelanggan dan efisiensi operasional. Melalui manajemen interaksi waktu nyata dan protokol komunikasi standar, Marugame menumbuhkan budaya berorientasi layanan di mana staf garis depan diberdayakan untuk memecahkan masalah dan membuat keputusan cepat. Pembinaan kepemimpinan diterapkan di tingkat toko untuk meningkatkan kinerja layanan dan retensi karyawan. Budaya pembinaan di IPMI Institute mendorong pertumbuhan profesional, pemikiran kritis, dan kecerdasan emosional di antara staf dan mahasiswa. Temuan tersebut menyoroti bahwa kedua organisasi, meski beroperasi di sektor yang berbeda, memanfaatkan prinsip inti pengembangan organisasi yang serupa. Manajemen interaksi dan pembinaan berfungsi sebagai tulang punggung kerja tim yang efisien dan pengambilan keputusan yang tangkas. Lebih jauh, analisis kasus komparatif ini menggarisbawahi nilai adaptasi spesifik konteks dari praktik-praktik ini, yang memperkuat perlunya pendekatan kepemimpinan yang disesuaikan di sektor perhotelan dan pendidikan.

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INTRODUCTION

The fast-food industry is characterized by operational demands that require speed, efficiency, and service consistency. In this highly competitive and dynamic environment, managerial competency development is a critical element in ensuring outlet performance, customer loyalty, and sustainable business growth (Luhova et al., 2021; Tyaranska, 2016). A case study of Marugame Udon, a Japanese restaurant chain with a strong presence in Indonesia, illustrates how the company implements a comprehensive competency development strategy to support its Area Managers, who oversee geographically dispersed outlets. Marugame applies a competency-based approach that emphasizes the integration of technical skills (hard skills) and behavioral leadership (soft skills). Technical competencies include capabilities in operations management, cost control, and service efficiency. On the behavioral side, essential competencies involve communication, coaching, decision-making, and team development (Bahri & Salsiati, 2025; Boyatzis et al., 2025; Gangani et al., 2004; Wen et al., 2025). To strengthen strategic thinking and conceptual understanding, Marugame partners with educational institutions such as IPMI Institute, adopting Experiential Learning Theory (Grant, 2025; Gurpinar et al., 2025). This learning framework encourages participants to link real-world job experiences with academic concepts, fostering relevant and reflective learning processes. Equally important is the development of life skills, rooted in the concept of non-cognitive skills such as adaptability, stress management, work ethics, and emotional intelligence. These skills significantly support workplace effectiveness, especially in high-pressure environments like fast-food service (Heckman & Kautz, 2012). By integrating these three pillars: technical and managerial competencies, academic ability development, and life skills exposure, Marugame not only shapes efficient managers but also nurtures resilient and visionary leaders who are prepared to meet the evolving challenges of the service industry (Bahri & Salsiati, 2025; Boyatzis et al., 2025; Gangani et al., 2004; Grant, 2025; Heckman & Kautz, 2012; Mardison, 2025; Tyaranska, 2016; Wen et al., 2025). This case study offers a novel approach by integrating corporate needs with academic-based training modules through collaboration with IPMI Institute, an initiative not yet widely explored in similar organizational contexts. As a fast-growing player in the quick-service restaurant industry, Marugame Udon faces complex operational and leadership challenges that require more than just traditional, on-the-job training. The company has taken a forward-thinking step by aligning its leadership development strategy with structured academic frameworks to holistically build technical/managerial competencies, academic ability, and life skills among its Area Managers. By combining these three pillars into a cohesive and academically supported development pathway, Marugame Udon offers a replicable model for leadership development in the service industry. The collaboration with IPMI Institute bridges the gap between corporate execution and academic rigor, creating a robust pipeline of capable, well-rounded leaders prepared for long-term organizational growth.

Referring to the official Marugame website, it is stated that Marugame Udon first opened in Indonesia on February 14, 2013, at Mall Taman Angrek. All recipes used are original recipes from Marugame Japan, which are cooked using quality and natural ingredients and processed in each outlet with special techniques from Japan and controlled with strict quality assurance standards in each outlet. Marugame Udon already has branches in various major cities in Indonesia and currently has more than 1100 branches around the world, such as in Los Angeles, Hawaii, Moscow, Sydney, Seoul, Hong Kong, and other major cities in the world (see: <https://www.marugameudon.co.id> and <https://www.sriboga.com>).

In Indonesia, Marugame Udon has received MUI halal certification on October 7, 2015, and is committed to continuing to serve the best Udon and Tempura to its loyal customers (see: <https://lifestyle.sindonews.com/berita/1060416/185/marugame-udon-tempura-resmi-dinyatakan-halal> and <https://news.republika.co.id/berita/nxlepi359/restoran-marugame-udon-raih-sertifikasi-halal-mui>). This is expected to be a reference for customers to continue to be part of Marugame Udon's daily operations.

In business management, Marugame Udon has developed 18 areas throughout Indonesia, as part of a strategy to fulfill customer needs. These 18 business areas oversee various outlets in major cities in Indonesia, spread from Medan to Manado, Denpasar, and Lombok. Each area is managed by an Area Manager, who has direct contact with the Outlet Manager and various other supporting work units at the Jakarta head office, including the LSM (local sales manager), who is responsible for sales in each area. In its development, these area managers need various competencies, both technical, operational, and managerial, in order to carry out the tasks, responsibilities, and targets assigned (Tyaranska, 2016). Overall, 10 types of competencies are identified that are needed by these area managers, consisting of 5 technical operational competencies and five managerial leadership competencies, which urgently need to be built and developed in the near future (Tusquellas et al., 2025). In detail, the 10 types of competencies form a specific competency model.

The rapid transformation of service-oriented industries, driven by globalization, digitalization, and changing consumer expectations, demands a rethinking of how managerial competencies are developed in both corporate and educational settings. In sectors such as fast food and business education, organizations face persistent challenges in cultivating leaders who can balance operational excellence with strategic agility and interpersonal effectiveness. A key problem in management development lies in the fragmented approach that often separates technical skills from soft skills, and academic learning from real-world application. Many fast-food chains, for instance, emphasize performance metrics and efficiency, but struggle to build sustainable leadership pipelines capable of driving innovation and long-term engagement. Similarly, business schools frequently deliver theoretical content without sufficient connection to the everyday realities faced by professionals. This case study examines the integrated efforts of Marugame Udon and IPMI Institute to address these limitations. Marugame's in-house competency framework focuses on developing frontline and mid-level managers through a combination of hard (operational) and soft (leadership) skills. At the same time, IPMI Institute complements this with experiential and context-based learning rooted in academic rigor. However, challenges remain in aligning these efforts consistently across diverse teams, measuring long-term outcomes, and adapting leadership development models to dynamic industry needs. This study thus explores how a hybrid model of technical training, academic engagement, and life skills exposure can serve as a more holistic and context-responsive approach to modern management development.

While the competency development program between Marugame and IPMI Institute was initially designed around managerial, academic, and corporate frameworks, the emerging needs of participants revealed a divergence from these conventional categories. Rather than focusing solely on formal managerial or academic competencies, participants expressed a strong interest in more practical and contemporary capabilities such as brand positioning, leadership styles, real-time decision-making under just-in-time operations, effective use of social media, and strategies to manage fear of missing out (FOMO) (Achsana et al., 2025; Majid et al., 2023; Ulum et al., 2025; Zahra & Kurniastuti, 2025; Zamila & Herni, 2025). All of these are crucial in driving visitor satisfaction in a competitive fast-casual dining environment. This shift

highlights a mismatch between traditional competency models and the on-the-ground realities of frontline and middle management roles in today's fast-paced service sector. Participants demonstrated a clear desire for learning that is directly applicable to customer engagement, brand relevance, and digital responsiveness. These areas are often overlooked in standardized leadership or academic programs. Therefore, future iterations of the program must recalibrate their competency framework to reflect better the hybrid demands of operational agility, digital fluency, and market-driven leadership. This not only ensures the relevance of learning outcomes but also enhances the effectiveness of leadership development efforts in dynamic service industries like Marugame.

Literature Review

The competency gaps identified among Area Managers at Marugame Udon. This literature review synthesizes key theoretical foundations and empirical studies relevant to the development of leadership and operational effectiveness across five primary domains: interaction management, problem solving and decision making, team development, planning and organizing, and coaching performance (Bae, 2017; Chourasia et al., 2025; Kertiriasih et al., 2025; Panchai & Riddell, 2020; Rahman, 2019; Sadana et al., 2025)

Interaction Management (Communication)

Interaction management (communication) in terms of effective communication is vital for leadership success. Communication effectiveness is a foundational managerial skill that supports goal alignment, conflict resolution, and performance management. The role of clear, two-way communication in service-based organizations is where frontline interactions directly impact customer satisfaction. Interaction management also includes adapting communication styles to different audiences and using various media platforms to maximize understanding (Ganado, 2025; Kanki, 2019).

Whether in a fast-paced service environment like Marugame Udon or a structured academic setting like IPMI Institute, the ability to convey information clearly, listen actively, and adapt to diverse communication needs is essential for achieving strategic goals. Communication effectiveness facilitates goal alignment, conflict resolution, performance management, and stakeholder engagement, as stated by DeVito in the book titled "*The Interpersonal Communication Book*". In the food service industry, communication is often immediate, task-oriented, and frontline-driven. At Marugame Udon, which operates under a high-volume, high-speed casual dining model, interaction management plays a pivotal role in ensuring customer satisfaction and operational efficiency (Vuong et al., 2020).

Area Managers are expected not only to oversee multiple outlets but also to guide and coach store managers and teams in real time. This requires clear, concise, and motivational communication strategies that reduce ambiguity, boost morale, and create consistent service delivery. Service leaders must use communication as a tool for "influence and alignment," especially in environments where non-verbal communication, such as gestures, tone, and physical presence, carries as much weight as verbal messages (Ganado, 2025). Marugame's focus on standardized greetings, visible kitchen operations, and customer interaction protocols reflects an embedded communication culture that prioritizes transparency and guest connection. Area Managers need to engage in multilevel communication, including upward communication (to corporate), downward communication (to store teams), and lateral communication (with peers) to maintain strategic cohesion and implement change initiatives smoothly.

Drawing on aviation and hospitality communication models highlights the importance of closed-loop communication, where feedback is used to confirm message understanding (Kanki, 2019). This is especially relevant in Marugame's high-pressure environments, where miscommunication can result in service delays, food safety errors, or team conflict. Area Managers thus must master tools such as briefings, debriefings, huddles, and visual dashboards to manage operations effectively, as stated by Belbin and Brown in their book titled "*Team Roles at Work*".

In contrast, IPMI Institute operates within a learning-centered framework where communication is reflective, strategic, and developmental. Here, interaction management is not just about information transfer but also about building consensus, fostering dialogue, and facilitating learning. Faculty, students, and administrators engage in continuous communication that supports both academic achievement and institutional growth. Communication serves four key functions: instructional, relational, organizational, and transformational, as stated by DeVito in his book titled "*The Interpersonal Communication Book*". At IPMI, faculty members use dialogic pedagogy, encouraging students to question, critique, and collaborate through case discussions, group projects, and presentations. These practices develop not only cognitive competencies but also social-emotional intelligence, which is crucial for leadership communication (Deepa et al., 2024).

Problem-Solving and Decision-Making

Problem-solving and decision-making are fundamental executive competencies that significantly influence organizational performance, especially in fast-paced sectors such as food retail, hospitality, and service industries (Chourasia et al., 2025; Sadana et al., 2025). These cognitive functions enable managers to navigate complex challenges, make informed choices, and implement effective solutions within time-sensitive and resource-constrained environments. For companies like Marugame Udon, where operational precision, customer responsiveness, and team leadership are critical to daily success, the ability to swiftly identify problems and make data-driven decisions becomes a strategic necessity, as stated by Belbin and Brown in their book titled "*Team Roles at Work*". Traditional decision-making theories, such as bounded rationality, assert that managers often operate under limited access to complete information and must make satisfactory rather than optimal choices (Pathirannehelage et al., 2025; Ranjan, 2025). This understanding is particularly relevant to middle-level leaders like Area Managers, who face real-time trade-offs between speed, quality, and cost. Building upon this, the Rational Decision-Making Model provides a step-by-step framework: identifying the problem, gathering and analyzing relevant data, developing multiple alternatives, evaluating the consequences of each, choosing the best solution, and implementing and monitoring it. This model enhances structured thinking and reduces errors caused by bias or intuition alone.

In highly dynamic settings such as food service operations, decision-making is not just about process but also about agility, which is the capacity to adapt when initial decisions lead to unforeseen results. Effective problem solvers are those who engage in double-loop learning, which involves revisiting assumptions and questioning systemic causes rather than only addressing surface symptoms (Csaszar et al., 2024). For example, if a particular Marugame outlet consistently receives low customer satisfaction scores, a competent Area Manager will not only fix immediate staff issues but also re-examine workflow design, inventory procedures, or leadership gaps. Additionally, one should stress the importance of collaborative decision-making, especially in team-based environments (Chourasia et al., 2025; Rahman, 2019; Rahman & Feis, 2009; Sadana et al., 2025). Managers must know when to consult, delegate, or make executive

calls, balancing democratic input with authoritative clarity. The ability to weigh qualitative and quantitative information, manage conflicting interests, and remain decisive under pressure is what distinguishes high-performing leaders from average ones. Equipping managers with advanced problem-solving and decision-making skills is essential for operational resilience, customer satisfaction, and long-term business growth. Embedding these competencies through structured training and real-world exposure will prepare organizations like Marugame to thrive amid uncertainty and change.

Developing High-Performing Teams (Team Development)

In organizations with decentralized operational models, such as Marugame Udon, which manages multiple outlets across diverse regions, developing high-performing teams is critical to ensuring consistent service quality, productivity, and organizational alignment, as stated by Belbin and Brown in their book titled “*Team Roles at Work*”. Teams in such settings must operate with a high degree of autonomy while still adhering to the company’s standards and goals (O’Neill & McLarnon, 2018). As such, effective team development becomes not just a support function but a strategic driver of business success. A foundational model in understanding team dynamics is Tuckman’s Stages of Team Development (Zirar et al., 2025). This model outlines the phases of forming, storming, norming, and performing, each of which presents unique challenges and leadership responsibilities.

In the context of Marugame, where frontline teams handle customer interaction, kitchen operations, and real-time decision-making, understanding and navigating these stages is vital for Area Managers. Leaders must intentionally facilitate team development by setting clear expectations, creating a safe environment for feedback, and building trust, as stated by Belbin and Brown in their book titled “*Team Roles at Work*”. Mutual accountability is emphasized with regular performance check-ins, and communicated goals are essential attributes of high-performing teams, especially in customer-centric industries (Giao et al., 2020). Moreover, continuous feedback loops and recognition systems significantly improve team motivation and reduce turnover (Mushtaque & Siddiqui, 2020). For decentralized teams, technology-enabled communication tools and structured coaching sessions can maintain alignment and morale across geographically dispersed units. Finally, high-performing teams are not just born but built through purposeful leadership and systems of support, as stated by Belbin and Brown in their book titled “*Team Roles at Work*”. At Marugame, Area Managers who invest time in coaching team leaders, fostering psychological safety, and promoting a shared vision can unlock stronger collaboration, innovation, and service delivery across stores (Panchai & Riddell, 2020). Team development is not a one-time initiative but an ongoing leadership function. Organizations like Marugame that prioritize intentional team-building practices will not only improve operational efficiency but also cultivate a resilient and engaged workforce capable of sustaining long-term performance.

Strategic Cascading and Goal Setting (Planning and Organizing)

Strategic cascading and goal setting (planning and organizing) are foundational managerial competencies that ensure corporate strategies are effectively implemented at the operational level. In decentralized business models such as Marugame Udon, where multiple outlets operate under regional supervision, the process of strategic cascading, which involves translating high-level goals into actionable tasks at the store level, is essential for consistency, efficiency, and growth. This competency is especially critical for Area Managers, who serve as the bridge between corporate leadership and frontline execution.

According to Goal Setting Theory (Safari & Mazdeh, 2018), employees perform better when they are given specific, challenging, yet attainable goals. Goals help to focus attention, regulate effort, and encourage persistence. When Area Managers communicate what success looks like, whether in terms of customer satisfaction scores, food preparation time, or labor cost efficiency, store teams are more motivated and aligned toward results. Strategic cascading refers to the process by which organizational goals are broken down into departmental, team, and individual objectives, ensuring vertical and horizontal alignment (Hadiyanto & Dermawan, 2025). In Marugame's operational environment, this might involve taking a national marketing initiative or a productivity improvement strategy and turning it into weekly sales targets or quality benchmarks at each outlet. When properly executed, this alignment ensures that every team member, from line cook to store supervisor, contributes meaningfully to the organization's strategic vision. Effective planning and organizing allow Area Managers to balance daily demands with long-term improvement. By using tools such as scheduling systems, Gantt charts, KPIs, and weekly operational reviews, they can optimize the use of time, labor, and resources, reducing waste and improving service delivery. Strategic goal setting also supports decision-making under pressure by prioritizing actions that yield the highest impact. Strategic cascading and goal setting empower Area Managers at Marugame to act as proactive leaders rather than reactive supervisors. When high-level goals are articulated and broken down into achievable plans, teams perform with greater clarity, accountability, and purpose, ultimately leading to improved performance, customer satisfaction, and sustainable business outcomes.

Coaching for Performance (Coaching and Developing Others)

Coaching for performance (coaching and developing others) is increasingly recognized not only as a support mechanism but as a strategic leadership function that drives employee growth, team effectiveness, and organizational resilience. Unlike traditional supervision or instruction, coaching emphasizes unlocking a person's potential to maximize their performance (Panchai & Riddell, 2020). This shift from directive management to developmental leadership is particularly vital in decentralized operational environments like Marugame Udon, where Area Managers must oversee multiple stores and empower frontline leaders to take initiative, solve problems, and deliver consistent service quality (Panchai & Riddell, 2020).

One of the most widely used frameworks in coaching is the GROW model, which structures developmental conversations around four key stages: Goal, Reality, Options, and Will (see: https://www.disruptiveleadership.institute/grow_model) (Panchai & Riddell, 2020). This model encourages reflection, personal ownership, and solution-focused dialogue between the coach (manager) and the coachee (employee) (Huang, 2025). Rather than dictating answers, leaders using the GROW model facilitate clarity around objectives, assess the current situation, explore alternatives, and secure commitment to action steps (Kertiriasih et al., 2025). For Area Managers, applying this model during store visits, performance reviews, or staff mentoring sessions builds both competence and confidence across teams. According to research published by the Harvard Business Review, coaching-oriented leadership leads to higher employee engagement, lower turnover, and stronger team capabilities (Kertiriasih et al., 2025). These outcomes are especially relevant for fast-paced industries such as food service, where talent retention and frontline leadership consistency directly affect customer experience and brand reputation. Coaching contributes to a culture of continuous learning (Panchai & Riddell, 2020) whereby feedback is framed constructively and linked to individual development goals, employees are more likely to take initiative and perform beyond minimum expectations. In this sense, coaching is not merely a tool for

correcting poor performance but a proactive method for unlocking high performance (O'Neill & McLarnon, 2018; Panchai & Riddell, 2020).

In addition to these competencies, the development model for Marugame incorporates three overarching pillars:

1. The first and perhaps most fundamental pillar is Managerial and Technical Competency Development. This pillar is informed by the competency-based human resource model (Bahri & Salsati, 2025; Buryk et al., 2025; Gangani et al., 2004), which integrates technical expertise with behavioral and leadership capabilities. Effective job performance stems not only from knowledge and skill but also from personal characteristics and motives (Huang, 2025). In the context of Marugame, this means developing leaders who are equally proficient in store operations and interpersonal management. At the technical level, Area Managers are expected to master core operational processes: food quality control, inventory management, labor scheduling, sanitation compliance, and customer service standards. These competencies ensure consistent service delivery and adherence to Marugame's brand values across locations. However, technical expertise alone is not sufficient. Managers must also demonstrate behavioral competencies such as problem-solving, team motivation, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence. Through structured workshops, real-time coaching, and scenario-based simulations, Marugame equips its Area Managers with the tools and behaviors needed to lead under pressure. This dual focus mirrors the competency-based HRM framework, which argues that managerial effectiveness is best cultivated when organizations develop both "threshold competencies" (technical skills) and "differentiating competencies" (interpersonal and leadership traits). By embedding this pillar into the training curriculum, Marugame ensures that its managers are not just supervisors but adaptive leaders capable of navigating complexity and inspiring performance.
2. The second pillar, Academic Ability Development, supports the formal and cognitive side of leadership preparation. This dimension draws upon Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which emphasizes learning as a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Grant, 2025). Kolb's model consists of four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. When combined, these stages form a continuous learning cycle. Marugame integrates this model by encouraging Area Managers to engage in structured academic learning, often in partnership with institutions such as IPMI Institute or other accredited training bodies. These programs may include short courses, professional certifications, or even advanced diplomas in business administration, operations management, or leadership studies. The goal is not just to enhance theoretical knowledge, but to bridge the gap between theory and practice. For example, a course on operations strategy may be paired with a real-world outlet efficiency project, allowing learners to apply frameworks such as Lean Management or Six Sigma to Marugame's specific context. This application reflects Kolb's assertion that effective learning must move beyond rote memorization to involve active engagement with real-life challenges. Furthermore, academic development nurtures critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and strategic planning, competencies that are increasingly necessary as Area Managers take on broader organizational responsibilities. By incorporating formal education into its leadership pipeline (Gurpinar et al., 2025; Peng & Kievit, 2020), Marugame ensures that its managerial talent is not only operationally efficient but also strategically literate—capable of contributing to long-term business growth and innovation (Mamman et al., 2024).

3. The third and equally vital pillar is Life Skills Exposure, which encompasses the development of soft skills such as adaptability, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and professionalism. These skills are especially crucial in service industries, where managers must juggle human interaction, operational pressure, and organizational alignment daily. This pillar draws from the work of Heckman and Kautz, who argue that life skills—or "non-cognitive skills"—are just as predictive of success as cognitive abilities (Heckman & Kautz, 2012; Strielkowski et al., 2023). In Marugame's environment, life skills support resilience, agility, and leadership presence—qualities that allow Area Managers to respond effectively to change, motivate diverse teams, and represent the company's values. Life skills are often best developed through experiential exposure, mentorship, and self-directed learning. Marugame integrates these methods into its development strategy through rotational assignments, reflective journaling, peer feedback, and exposure to real-time crises or high-pressure decision-making scenarios. For example, an Area Manager may be tasked with resolving a cross-store conflict or responding to a supply chain disruption—situations that test emotional intelligence and decision-making under stress. Moreover, the cultivation of professional identity—understanding one's role not only as a manager but as a role model and brand ambassador—is emphasized through coaching and performance review systems. This reinforces the idea that leadership in hospitality is not just about task completion, but also about presence, character, and consistency in behavior. Ultimately, the life skills pillar ensures that Marugame leaders are equipped to handle both the technical "what" and the human "how" of leadership. It prepares them to deal with ambiguity, nurture team trust, and navigate the social complexities inherent in customer-facing businesses (Deepa et al., 2024).

METHODS

This activity was attended by 30 participants from various divisions, including the Operations Division and the Restaurant Support Center (RSC) Division. This program uses an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) learning method with a combination of class sessions, group projects, and coaching sessions (Gurpinar et al., 2025). The event was attended by approximately 30 participants, comprising Area Managers, Restaurant Managers, and Divisional Managers from Marugame. However, no formal registration records were available at the time of the event. The program had been publicly announced and promoted three months in advance of the scheduled date.

OBE emphasizes the alignment of learning processes and training activities with clearly defined outcomes—focusing on what learners are expected to know, do, and demonstrate upon completion of a learning experience. In both Marugame Udon and IPMI Institute, OBE serves as a unifying framework for developing competencies that are directly relevant to real-world professional performance (Amanda et al., 2025; Haque, 2025). At Marugame Udon, OBE is implicitly applied in its managerial training programs, which are structured around specific performance outcomes such as operational efficiency, team leadership, customer satisfaction, and cost control. The company outlines core competencies expected of Area Managers, including both technical, such as kitchen workflow, inventory systems, and behavioral skills, such as decision-making, coaching, and communication. These outcomes guide the design of learning interventions such as hands-on training, peer coaching, and performance evaluations, ensuring that managerial development is purposeful, measurable, and aligned with organizational goals. Meanwhile, IPMI Institute explicitly integrates OBE principles into its academic programs through a competency-based curriculum and experiential learning methods. Learning outcomes are defined for both cognitive, such as; critical thinking, strategic analysis, and non-cognitive skills, such as; leadership,

collaboration, adaptability. These are assessed through consulting projects, simulations, and reflective learning tasks—ensuring that students are not only academically capable but also prepared for professional challenges.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the competency development program jointly conducted by Marugame Udon and IPMI Institute, a pre-test and post-test methodology was implemented. This assessment approach was designed to measure changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes before and after the learning intervention. The pre-test was administered at the beginning of the program to establish a baseline of participants' existing competencies in key areas, including operational management, leadership behavior, communication, and decision-making. The test also included self-assessment and scenario-based questions to gauge participants' understanding of both technical and interpersonal skills relevant to their roles within Marugame. Following a series of structured learning activities—ranging from classroom workshops, case discussions, role plays, and experiential learning exercises—a post-test was conducted at the end of the program. The same domains were assessed, allowing facilitators and researchers to compare pre- and post-program results. Initial findings revealed measurable improvements in areas such as strategic thinking, coaching effectiveness, and real-time problem-solving. Participants demonstrated stronger conceptual understanding and applied skills, validating the impact of the integrated training model that combined academic rigor from IPMI Institute with practical, industry-based learning from Marugame. This pre- (low) and post-test (high) framework not only provided evidence of learning outcomes aligned with the principles of OBE, but also offered valuable feedback for refining future leadership development programs.

One of the key components is a field trip to the Marugame outlet in Kota Bintang, Bekasi, which allows participants to apply the theories they have learned in a real work environment. The evaluation results showed a significant increase in participant competency, especially in the aspects of communication, decision-making, and team management. This program also opens up opportunities for participants to continue their academic level through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) scheme (Peng & Kievit, 2020). With this comprehensive approach, the program has succeeded in providing a positive impact in improving participants' managerial readiness and effectiveness in a dynamic business environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Program Planning and Development

Program Planning and Development is the initial stage of the program, where Marugame, as the program owner, will work together with IPMI Institute, as the program implementer, to develop various activities related to this proposed program. Thus, this stage is intended to build, develop, and prepare the program implementation plan, both related to the participant preparation process (considering the length of the program, which requires commitment and coordination between Marugame management and participants) and related to material content, supporting instruments, methodology, and learning evaluation. Program Planning and Development represents the foundational stage of the Marugame-IPMI Institute collaboration. In this phase, Marugame functioned as the program originator and content stakeholder, while IPMI Institute assumed the role of academic co-designer and program executor. The overarching goal was to co-develop a learning framework that aligns Marugame's operational goals with IPMI's academic expertise, ensuring both organizational relevance and pedagogical integrity. This stage focused on two principal dimensions: (1) participant preparation, including readiness, availability, and time commitment, and (2) learning infrastructure, encompassing curriculum design, instructional delivery

methods, assessment tools, and evaluation mechanisms. Collaborative consultations between Marugame leadership and IPMI faculty enabled the formulation of key learning objectives and milestone deliverables. Emphasis was placed on the duration and intensity of the 12-week program, which necessitated well-coordinated schedules and human resource allocation from Marugame’s operational divisions. **Table 1** shows key components of the program planning phase.

Table 1. Key Components of the Program Planning Phase

Component	Responsibility	Output
Curriculum & Module Design	Joint (Marugame & IPMI)	Competency-based modular syllabus
Learning Instrument Development	IPMI	Pre-/post-tests, case studies, peer review rubrics
LMS Setup (Ed-Link)	IPMI	LMS integration with customized dashboards
Program Schedule & Timeline	Marugame (with IPMI input)	12-week implementation calendar and HR alignment
Socialization & Information Pack	Marugame (lead), IPMI (support)	Program handbook, expectations, assessments overview

Source: Research 2025

The three main activities that will be carried out in this stage are;

1. Program Planning in this exercise, Marugame management and IPMI Institute will work together to prepare a program implementation plan, including the program curriculum, learning syllabus per topic, and program implementation (place, time, participants, teachers, and others). All information generated in this activity must be compiled in the form of an information pack that will be socialized to the participants. Thus, this activity will be dominated by Marugame management, especially in the preparation and socialization of information
2. Development of Learning Materials and Instruments. This activity is the core of all these stages, where IPMI will develop learning materials and instruments related to the program that has been developed. The program curriculum and learning syllabus produced from previous activities will be expanded into materials, instruments, and other supporting activities for each topic that will be delivered during the program, including monitoring or assessment instruments and learning evaluation (pre- and post-test). This activity will also include the trial and finalization of the instrument, so that all materials and instruments will be ready for use during the program
3. Development and Preparation of Learning Management System (LMS) requires an online supporting learning system, which allows all data and information related to the program to be documented and monitored in real-time. This activity will prepare the LMS using Ed-Link as the primary LMS, which IPMI students also use in carrying out the daily learning process. Overall, this stage must be mutually agreed upon by Marugame Management and IPMI, so as to enable the achievement of optimal final results in preparing for the following program implementation process.

The Preparation for Implementation

The Preparation for Implementation stage is a critical transitional phase between program design and delivery. It ensures that all human and institutional resources, participants, instructors, coaches, and supporting staff, are aligned and adequately equipped to maximize the learning impact of the program.

The focus at this stage is on comprehensive readiness, both in terms of mindset and logistical execution. **Table 2** shows preparation for implementation.

Table 2. Preparation for Implementation: Key Components and Roles

Component	Responsible Party	Purpose/Outcome
Kick-off Meeting	Marugame Leadership	Align expectations; set program tone and strategic goals
Program Information Pack	Marugame + IPMI Institute	Provide curriculum, schedule, guidelines, and assessment details
LMS Orientation (Ed-Link)	IPMI Admin + IT Support	Familiarize participants with digital tools and submission protocols
Faculty & Coach Briefing	IPMI Institute	Ensure pedagogical consistency and coaching readiness
Pre-Test & Profile Submission	Participants (via LMS)	Assess baseline knowledge; introduce self-reflection and learning diagnostics.

Source: Research 2025

Preparation for Implementation is a stage to prepare the program as a whole, including participants, teachers, coaches, and other supporters, in order to be able to provide optimal impact on the program. Thus, the most significant part of this stage is preparing the human resources involved, so that the two main activities that will be carried out during this stage are:

1. Program Socialization is actually where all information about the program that has been compiled in the form of an information pack that has been produced in stage 1, will be socialized to the participants. This socialization process will begin with a program kick-off, which should be carried out by Marugame's top manager, attended by all participants and various other related parties. This kick-off process will be used by Marugame management to explain in detail and completely the reasons, objectives, results to be achieved, and the processes that will be carried out during the program. It is hoped that this explanation will provide a deep understanding for the participants so that they can prepare intensively. On the other hand, this explanation is expected to provide an overview to all HR related to the program, regarding the importance of the program in the Marugame HR development process in supporting the achievement of overall business results. In this activity, participants will also be introduced to the details of the program in detail, including the process, assignments, final results, guidance, and subsequent follow-up programs. This is intended as part of the program introduction before carrying out the program as a whole, so that participants can understand and explore the process that will be carried out next.
2. Pre-work Work and Delivery will begin with individual assignments as initial tasks before the program (pre-work). Basically, this pre-work is intended to provide participants with an overview of the material that will be studied during the program, as well as a database for the program regarding the level of knowledge and skills currently possessed by participants. This pre-work consists of 2 parts, namely:
 - a. Compiling Individual Profiles as an effort to build the profile and self-image of the participants, according to the image they have
 - b. Completing Pre-tests to test the level of understanding of participants towards the learning material in general. Overall, all of this pre-work must have been sent via LMS before the program begins.

The Implementation

The Implementation stage is the core of the Marugame-IPMI collaborative development initiative. This is where the curriculum and learning strategies, designed in earlier stages, are executed through structured learning activities. It spans a 12-week period and includes a progression of individual, group, and project-based tasks, aimed at developing the identified technical, managerial, and life skill competencies.

This stage operationalizes the program's learning philosophy, which blends experiential learning (Grant, 2025), competency-based education (Bahri & Salsiati, 2025; Wen et al., 2025), and coaching-centered development (Kertiriasih et al., 2025). The learning journey is segmented into four phases that incrementally build learners' knowledge, capabilities, and confidence. **Table 3** shows implementation timeline and learning focus.

Table 3. Implementation Timeline and Learning Focus

Phase	Duration	Learning Mode	Competency Focus
Phase 1: Knowledge Building	Week 1	Lecture, case discussion	Technical & managerial core concepts
Phase 2: Group Assignment	Weeks 2-6	Project-based, peer learning	Teamwork, delegation, coaching, collaboration
Phase 3: Individual Focus	Week 7	Self-study, coaching, assessment	Strategic decision-making, initiative, and personal leadership
Phase 4: Final Project	Weeks 8-12	Proposal development, presentation	Applied business strategy, innovation, and communication

Source: Research 2025

Implementation is the core part of the entire process that has been prepared, where this stage will entirely focus on the implementation of the program, including the implementation of tasks, both individually and in groups. Overall, this stage will be carried out in 12 weeks and will consist of 4 interrelated phases, which can be seen in detail in the following slides, namely.

1. Phase 1 Basic Knowledge, which is carried out during the first week, will focus entirely on efforts to build and develop a deep understanding of the various competencies expected of the participants. The 10 competencies that have been described previously (5 technical competencies and five managerial leadership competencies) will be built, developed, and deepened during this phase. Given that this phase is an in-class learning phase, the learning method will focus on lectures, discussions, and skills training. The case method will also be introduced in this phase, where participants will have in-depth discussions during class on cases that are similar to everyday cases. In this phase, participants will study 10 competencies simultaneously, plus various assignments, both group and individual, as an effort to deepen the material given and prepare themselves for the material on the following day.
2. Phase 2 Group Assignment, which is carried out for the next 5 weeks, where participants are divided into groups (maximum four people) and given group assignments. Each group in this assignment will be fully guided by one coach who will provide feedback, observation, and documentation of the entire process carried out.

3. Phase 3 Individual Empowerment, which is carried out during the 7th week and focuses on efforts to empower individuals in optimizing various competencies that have been owned, developed, and carried out daily. This phase is the IPMI certification phase, so participants are expected to be able to optimally follow this phase in full, including individual and group assignments, considering that this phase is very dense with assignments.
4. Phase 4 Final Project, which is carried out during weeks 8 to 12, where each individual will be guided by one coach in the same topic group. The final results of this phase, in the form of an activity proposal, will be presented in week 12 and will also close the entire series of this program.

This program is held, as per the following timeline:

1. The first month is about the introduction and pretest. This pre-test was relatively low as compared to the post-test. This is to conduct the introduction to basic concepts, which is to cover both technical and leadership skills, including several assignments (group and individual) related to the topics studied (5 days of training). Then, the next one is about the introduction to group assignments, where the group consists of 5 participants guided by one coach (will be carried out in 3 weeks of assignment)
2. The second month is about group assignment presentation (1 day), presentation competency development for obtaining the IPMI Institute certifications (2 days of training), strategic leadership development (1 day of training), introduction to individual assignments, which are intended as the preparation of the 2025 Strategic Plan for Task Areas where every 5 participants will be guided by one coach (1 day of training) with the next one to individual assignments (3 weeks of assignment)
3. The third month is about the finalization and preparation of the individual assignment exhibition (1 day of training), individual assignment exhibition and presentation (1 day), post-test, program evaluation, program closing, and submission of program certificates.

Table 4. Result of pre-test and post-test

Factors to Consider	Pre-Test (average)	Post-Test (average)	Improvements
Technical & Leadership Skills			
Group Assignment	36	88	53
Individual Assignment			
Competency Development			
Group Assignment	44	92	48
Individual Assignment			
Strategic Plans	47	89	42
Program Evaluation			
Average	127	269	143
Per batch	42.33	89.67	47.67

Source: Research 2025

Table 4 shows result pre-test and post-test. The score improvement of 47.67 points indicates how much experiential learning and coaching methods can improve managerial skills, showing that the design of the program works well, and demonstrating the relevance of the content being delivered. Real-life situations, case discussions, and guided project work have allowed participants to internalize concepts before

immediately applying them to their operational contexts. Competency building through group assignments and coaching interventions showed the highest improvement, wherein participants were more confident to report an increase in leadership behaviors concerning delegation, communication, and team coordination. This indicates that the interactive-coach-supported team projects could bring about positive effects on relational and managerial abilities, thereby validating the importance of collaborative learning and individualized feedback in leadership development.

Referring to the learning process that has been carried out during the program and the final results achieved through this program, there are a series of programs that IPMI Institute can propose as a form of follow-up to this program. Overall, these three proposals are not entirely related to competency development, but rather focus on efforts to develop the various potentials possessed by participants.

It is pertinent to note that one consequence of the Marugame-IPMI Learning and Development Program involves defining some structured learning in a competency-based framework that primarily focuses on managerial, technical, and leadership competencies, geared toward employees in Marugame. An evaluative analysis has been conducted on the evaluation results of this program, which has brought together pre-test and post-test results, engagement levels during program sessions, and final project evaluations; hence, evidence points to huge improvements as far as present learning in important areas is concerned.

Assessment of Learner Gains

Quantitative data from the program using records of pre-/post-program assessment show improvements on the part of participants in terms of competencies. In Technical & Leadership Skills, Competency Development and Strategic Planning, the average score increased by 47.67 points per domain. These increases reflect successful knowledge transfer and skill acquisition, most notably in (1) mastering technical skills within the framework of an individual assignment, (2) teamwork and collaboration, evidenced by a qualitative assessment of the group assignment, and (3) exhibiting strategic thought and leadership in the final individual project and presentation. The average scores of the pre-test were recorded at 42.33, and the post-test averages at 89.67, an increase of 112%, and an indicator of a successful adoption of blended learning methodology during 12 weeks. In line with Marugame's initiative for technical/managerial competency development, these findings are consistent with previous research that states managers are becoming more innovative and operationally-oriented at outlet levels. The case speaks to extending the technical pillar by virtue of entrepreneurial training to advance agility and performance (Aramand & Valliere, 2012).

Program Structure and Appropriate Phasing

The implementation model commonly applied in the four phases is Knowledge Building, Group Assignments, Individual Empowerment, and a Final Project. This was effective at creating a scaffolding for learning. Each phase builds on the prior one's ideas logically and allows them to internalize foundational concepts before applying them to increasingly complex situations. Phase 1 quickly ramped up baseline understanding through lecture and case-based learning. Pathway two nurtured team collaboration, delegation, and coaching, thus providing peer learning opportunities. Phase 3 dedicated some time for introspection and individual learning consolidation, as well as an IPMI certification, whereas the last stage involved actual translation into strategic outputs, culminating in presentations testing communication and innovativeness. This phased option promotes long-term competency development and an integrated

learning journey. Comparable findings were noted in prior studies, such as those on knowledge-based dynamic capabilities and entrepreneurial orientation. A survey of 132 fast food store managers in Taiwan revealed that entrepreneurial orientation and organizational learning augmented knowledge-based dynamic capabilities that propel store performance (Aramand & Valliere, 2012; Qu et al., 2025). This parallels the Marugame-IPMI program, where a combination of structured knowledge building, peer collaboration, and applied learning phases contributed to the development of adaptive managerial competencies essential for decentralized food service operations.

High Engagements and Completion Rates

Just like engagement stands very high during program delivery, so were enrollment statistics in the LMS. The Ed-Link LMS was thus structured to allow real-time monitoring of participants' progress while ensuring efficient administration and access to learning resources. Equally, Marugame's leadership was very much present from the beginning, establishing momentum and buy-in from participants through the kick-off meetings and socialization of the program. The presence of leadership developed high levels of commitment towards the program through effective communication all the time. Soft Skills Development for Hospitality Leaders, whereby successful organizations have been found to endorse behavioral qualities over and above other technical skills in hiring managerial candidates, is revealed in her case study on the development of soft skills for future hospitality leaders (Janjua et al., 2025; Pranic et al., 2025). This applies to the life skills exposure pillar at Marugame: leading under stress, team maintenance, and service quality all depend on competencies beyond standard operation.

Strategic Alignment to Organizational Goals

Individual projects were strategic plans developed for specific task areas to show that the participants could apply their learning, combined with Marugame's interest. Program content was almost in sync with Marugame's priorities involving business innovation, process improvement, and leadership succession planning. Marugame-specific cases and simulation tasks also made the program more contextually relevant to the organization, which became another factor increasing the transferability of learning to the workplace. These findings are consistent with previous studies on university-industry collaboration, which reveal that cross-sector partnerships often lead to innovation and effective knowledge transfer (Lazzarotti et al., 2025; Sassi & Mshenga, 2024). Research quality within universities is a strong predictor of effective collaboration. This advocates the Marugame-IPMI alliance: the legitimacy and learning quality of IPMI increase the worth of the relationship made, contributing to effective academic integration in corporate training.

Impacts beyond Competency Building

Skill development was the primary objective, but the findings also indicate that the program was associated with additional intangible benefits, 1) greater self and personal brand awareness through exercises profiling the individual; 2) enhanced cross-boundary communication and collaboration, with team projects developing such; and 3) the emergence of leadership potential during such time as final project presentations and coaching sessions. These outcomes indicate that the program not only supports the development of life skills but also personal growth, thus widening the long-term impact of this program on human capital within Marugame. This approach aligns with the broader concept of corporate universities

in the fast-food industry, such as McDonald's Hamburger University, which integrates operational training and leadership development through structured internal curricula (Ketchen et al., 2025; Pahlefy & Putri, 2025). In contrast, Marugame's partnership with IPMI blends corporate needs with academics, but through an external academic institution as opposed to an in-house university. Both are aimed at bringing out the strategic need for formalized learning among middle managers for their operations in retailing.

Recommendations for Follow-Up Programs

Based on success, IPMI situations for three post-follow-up areas: 1) the advanced strategic leadership bootcamp-the advanced strategic pathway, targeting outstanding high-potential graduates for further change leadership and organizational agility development (Ulum et al., 2025; Zahra & Kurniastuti, 2025); 2) on-the-job application support-mentoring/coaching initiative to help learners use their learning on live task forces or pilot projects within Marugame, noting that improvements in communication, decision-making, and team management (53-point increase in technical and leadership skills); 3) internal trainer developmentan empowerment program for selected alumni as future facilitators to build internal capacity for continued learning and cascading knowledge, while the case study emphasizes the strategic value of Marugame's partnership with IPMI Institute, which mirrors corporate university models like McDonald's Hamburger University (Ketchen et al., 2025), and developing internal trainers reduces reliance on external partners, enhances organizational knowledge retention, and aligns training with Marugame's specific operational context.

Synthesis for Marugame-IPMI Model is as follows in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Synthesis for Marugame-IPMI Model

External Theme	Marugame Context
Entrepreneurial orientation enhances adaptive performance	Extending technical competency pillar to include innovation mindset
Soft skills prioritized in hospitality leadership	Reinforces life-skills pillar importance
Corporate universities institutionalize training	Validates strategic value of academic partnerships
University-industry collaboration benefits organizational learning	Supports legitimacy and effectiveness of Marugame-IPMI collaboration
SCT-based interventions foster behavioral change through self-efficacy and modeling	Aligns with academic ability development and coaching simulations

Resource: Research 2025

This comparison confirms that Marugame's 3-pillar model-technical/managerial competencies, academic ability development, and life skills exposure-reflect larger, empirically supported trends in fast food and hospitality management more generally. The Marugame-IPMI initiative stands out in that it directly integrates formal academic learning into corporate training. Outside examples offer validation and suggest enhancement in further embedding entrepreneurial orientation training, leveraging SCT-based behavioral reinforcement, and perhaps a possibility for the future-establishment of a corporate university.

CONCLUSION

This learning process highlights how Marugame Udon's integrated training model addresses the complex demands of decentralized food service management. By combining internal corporate needs with academic partnership, the program serves as a scalable model for leadership development. The success of this initiative points to the potential of corporate-academic collaborations in building adaptive, future-ready leadership pipelines.

The implementation of the Marugame and IPMI Institute development program revealed several critical areas for enhancement, particularly in academic development, leadership capability, and peer collaboration. First, academic development emerged as a necessary focus, especially for participants whose prior educational background did not meet the general expectations for analytical thinking and structured decision-making. The program highlighted a clear need to strengthen academic competencies to foster broader perspectives, critical reasoning, and self-confidence, which are key attributes that support initiative and creativity in the workplace. Second, leadership capability development was identified as a pressing issue. Many participants demonstrated limitations in areas essential to effective leadership, such as task delegation, creativity, decision-making, and team motivation. This points to the need for a structured leadership development initiative that equips individuals with the confidence and skills required to lead both formally and informally. The current gaps suggest that participants are not yet fully prepared to assume leadership roles, underscoring the urgency of focused interventions in this domain. Lastly, the program underscored the importance of peer collaboration. Throughout its duration, participants increasingly recognized the value of cross-functional teamwork, knowledge sharing, and inter-unit cooperation. This growing awareness presents an opportunity to institutionalize collaborative practices and build a stronger culture of mutual support and synergy across Marugame's organizational levels. In sum, the program provided valuable insights into the developmental needs of participants and laid a foundation for more targeted and impactful capacity-building efforts moving forward.

The program successfully achieved its primary objective of improving the technical and leadership competencies of Area Managers, as demonstrated by improved post-test scores, final project success, and participant evaluations. The results of this activity provide a strategic contribution for Marugame in building a sustainable training system, as well as opening up opportunities for further partnerships between the industrial world and higher education.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The authors declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The author confirms that the data and content of the article are free from plagiarism.

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