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## Workforce Agility Strategies for Improving the Success Rate of Change Initiatives

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Marvia Evangelist-Roach

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

Workforce Agility Strategies for Improving the Success Rate of Change Initiatives

by

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MBA, Florida International University, 2009

BSc, University of the West Indies (Mona), 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2020

## Abstract

Failure to implement change initiatives is a direct result of low employee resilience and adaptability. Successful agility strategies are important to financial business leaders to remain competitive in financial markets. Grounded in the dynamic capabilities theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore workforce agility strategies used by financial business leaders to improve the success rate of change initiatives. The participants were 4 financial business leaders in Jamaica who successfully improved the success rate of change initiatives. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, organizational strategic plans, annual reports, and change management plans. Four themes emerged through thematic analysis: effective leadership practices; appropriate talent management practices to attract, retain, and develop a knowledge-based workforce; change management best practices, and measuring and monitoring performance against key performance indicators. A key recommendation for financial business leaders to increase the success rate of change initiatives is to improve talent and change management practices that promote an agile workforce prepared for the fluidity of organizational change. The implications for positive social change include the potential for financial business leaders to create and enhance a sustainable local economy and stimulate positive behavior change in employees and community members.

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## Dedication

God has blessed me exceedingly and abundantly with His grace and mercy! I share this accomplishment and dedicate this doctoral study to my husband Derrick Roach, for your continued love and support. You have always believed in me and supported me since the first day we met. Fast forward 16 years into our relationship and you are still a tower of strength and support. To my daughter, Taraji Roach, I also dedicate this study to you as a guide for your successes in life as you climb the career ladder and discover your potential. The completion of this doctoral study serves as a testament to your mom's dedication and perseverance. On several occasions you wanted me to put away my computer and focus only on you, but as much as it pained my heart, I had to make the sacrifice and press ahead on this journey. Thankfully, I completed the journey before you turn five years old. I promised to pave the way for your success, and this is a big part of me keeping that promise. I love you both unconditionally.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

In Section 1 of this study, I provide a background to the business problem to be solved and the purpose of the study. I also discuss foundational elements such as the nature of the study, research question, and corresponding interview questions. To ensure clarity of terminology and definition of scope, I provide key operational definitions, as well as outline the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Section 1 concludes with a critical review and analysis of the professional and academic literature. During the critical review and analysis of existing literature, I provide a detailed discussion on my chosen conceptual framework and the rationale for its selection, along with related themes such as workforce agility and organizational change management.

### **Background of the Problem**

Financial business leaders struggle to position their organizations competitively due to failure to implement successful change initiatives. The background of the problem was that some business leaders fail to develop agile workforces to reduce the number of failed change projects to position the organization for competitive advantage (Schweiger, Kump, & Hoormann, 2016). According to Meredith and Zwikael (2019), when measured against their original goals, 85% of projects failed. The problem is compounded as business leaders often neglect the importance of an employee's ability to respond to and keep abreast of unexpected internal and external environment changes. According to Kuntz, Malinen, and Naswall (2017), to develop employee and organizational resilience, business leaders must value employees and their contributions, promote high-involvement practices, model proactive behaviors, facilitate and foster continuous

learning, and ensure goal clarity and alignment. Leadership strategy is critical in defining success and ultimately driving an agile workforce that is adaptable to change.

Furthermore, Schweiger et al. (2016, p. 13) indicated that organizational change capabilities reduce structural inertia and path dependencies and prolong competitive advantage over time, hence increasing the likelihood of long-term organizational survival. During my study, I explored workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives.

### **Problem Statement**

Some business leaders fail to develop agile workforces to reduce the number of failed change projects to position the organization for competitive advantage (Schweiger et al., 2016). Meredith and Zwikael (2019) confirmed that 85% of projects failed to achieve their goals. The general business problem was that some business leaders experience high failure rates for change implementation due to a lack of workforce agility. The specific business problem was that some financial business leaders lack workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the workforce agility strategies that financial business leaders use to improve the success rate of change initiatives. The population included financial business leaders in four Jamaican financial organizations who used a workforce agility strategy to improve the success rate of change initiatives. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to improve the quality of service to customers through convenient, relevant, and appropriate service

channels. Organizational leaders may also be able to invest in more local school programs and community improvement projects that drive public education, individual resilience, and adaptability to environmental change.

### **Nature of the Study**

The methodology for this study was qualitative. The qualitative method was appropriate to explore workforce agility strategies that financial business leaders used to improve the success rate of change initiatives. Researchers use the qualitative method to see beyond the obvious interpretations, solutions, and superficial readings to gain creative insights from collected data (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & de Eyto, 2018). Bansal, Smith, and Vaara (2018) indicated that inductive theorizing was a cornerstone of qualitative research, while the quantitative method aligned with deductive reasoning. With the quantitative method, researchers are required to measure the relationships among variables as well as the testing of associated hypotheses (Claydon, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). There were no quantitative variables or hypotheses for testing in this study as I asked financial business leaders to share proven workforce agility strategies used to improve the success rate of change initiatives. Similarly, the mixed methods approach was not appropriate despite the opportunity to leverage the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative studies in that approach. Furthermore, McKim (2017) indicated that researchers expend additional time, resources, and funding in a mixed methods approach. My primary reason for not selecting a mixed methods approach for this study was because there were no quantitative variables or hypotheses for testing.

The design for this study was a multiple case study. Marshall and Rossman (2016) indicated that with a case study design, researchers could benefit from exploring rich data that addresses the purpose of the study. Other designs considered included phenomenology and ethnography. The objective of an ethnographical study is to gain a deeper understanding of the values, beliefs, and languages of individuals within a specific group (Kassan et al., 2020). Phenomenological studies are effective for fostering sociocultural transformations because of their focus on personal meaning and the relationship between person-and-world (Gupta, 2019; Larkin, Shaw, & Flowers, 2019). An ethnographical design was not appropriate for this study because there was no intention to study the culture and everyday behavior of research participants. Phenomenology was not appropriate because there was no intention to explore recollections and interpretations of the participants' lived experiences. Case study was the best design to use for this study to understand specific workforce agility strategies in financial institutions. The decision to use a multiple case study over the single case study design stemmed from a need to achieve data saturation and to demonstrate research validity. Bansal et al. (2018) indicated that in multiple case studies, researchers use a replication-and comparison logic to see patterns in a data set. Battistella, De Toni, De Zan, and Pessot (2017) also indicated that the use of a multiple case study design allows researchers to do holistic and contextualized research through cross-case comparisons to recognize emerging patterns of relationships among constructs that can lead to important theoretical insights. Furthermore, multiple cases with similar outcomes strengthen the reliability of the findings of the research (Bansal et al., 2018).



### **Research Question**

RQ: What workforce agility strategies do financial business leaders use to improve the success rate of change initiatives?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What workforce agility strategies did you use to improve the success rate of change initiatives?
2. What issues determined the need to develop and implement workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives?
3. How did you decide the appropriate time to develop and implement the workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives?
4. How, if at all, did you involve employees in developing the workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives?
5. How did you communicate the approved workforce agility strategies to employees to improve the success rate of change initiatives?
6. How did you manage resistance to the workforce agility strategies from employees to improve the success rate of the change initiatives?
7. How did you measure the efficacy of the workforce agility strategies implemented for the improved success rate of change initiatives?
8. What were the major challenges, if any, experienced during the implementation of the workforce agility strategies that your organization addressed to assure the success of change initiatives?

9. How did you address the key workforce agility implementation challenges to improve the success rate of change initiatives?
10. How did you ensure buy-in from executives and managers for supporting the workforce agility strategies implemented for the success of change initiatives?
11. What additional information do you have to share regarding the workforce agility strategies and the success rate of change initiatives?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997) developed the dynamic capabilities (DC) theory as an improvement on the resource-based view (RBV). Organizational leaders struggle to position organizations competitively because of the continuing inflow of competing and conflicting information (Teece, 2018b). As a practical solution, leaders may use the DC theory to purposefully create, extend, or modify the organization's resource base (Bleady, Ali, & Ibrahim, 2018). Teece's concept of DC is synonymous with corporate agility. Teece (2017, 2018b) identified three clusters in the DC theory that were sensing, seizing, and transforming to improve the success rate of organizational change initiatives. Bleady et al. (2018) indicated that with DC, organizational leaders are responsible for enabling organizations to integrate, marshal, and reconfigure their resources and capabilities to adapt to rapidly changing environments. The DC theory aligned with the purpose of the study to understand how leaders develop workforce agility by integrating, developing, and reconfiguring human resources (HR) to adapt better to change. The DC theory was, therefore, an applicable and appropriate conceptual framework for this study.

## Operational Definitions

The following terms and phrases are referenced throughout this doctoral study. A basic understanding of the terms was necessary to understand the conceptual framework and research topic.

*Agile workforce:* An agile workforce is a workforce in an organization that can swiftly adapt to the changing needs of customers, employees, and the marketplace (Al-kasasbeh, Halim, & Omar, 2016).

*Dynamic capability:* Dynamic capability is the ability to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external organizational competencies to quickly seize opportunities and remain competitive in a changing environment (Bleady et al., 2018; Teece, 2018a, 2018b).

*Organizational change:* Organizational change refers to modifications to the structure, strategies, operational methods, technologies, or culture of an organization and the effects of these changes on the organization (Castillo, Fernandez, & Sallan, 2018).

*Organizational resilience:* Organizational resilience is the capability within an organization to absorb strain and preserve or improve functionality despite difficulty (Khan, Fisher, Heaphy, Reid, & Rouse, 2018).

*Transferability:* Transferability is the ability to apply (transfer) the original findings, conclusions, or other accounts based on a study to another context, individuals, or groups, other than those directly studied (Morse, 2015).

*Workforce agility:* Workforce agility refers to the ability of employees in an organization to swiftly respond to, keep abreast of, and exploit the benefits of unexpected internal and external environmental changes (Al-kasasbeh et al., 2016; Muduli, 2017).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

The results of this study could benefit business leaders seeking to develop workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of their change initiatives. While it is paramount for readers to understand the potential benefits, it is also imperative to understand the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) indicated that by reporting the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of their studies, researchers improve the quality of their findings and the interpretation of the evidence presented to readers. I discuss the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations that guided the study in the following sections.

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are potentially influential aspects of this study that were outside my control, but which were relevant to the development of the study. Ellis and Levy (2009) indicated that assumptions are the beliefs a researcher holds to be true without proof. The first assumption for this study was that financial business leaders could develop workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives. The second assumption was that each financial business leader would respond to the interview questions honestly and candidly. The final assumption was that participants would have the ability to understand the interview questions and would be able to convey their strategies effectively.

**Limitations**

Limitations existed for this study that could have affected the outcome if they were not considered. According to Connelly (2013), limitations are potential weaknesses or constraints of the study that are mostly outside of the control of a researcher. Marshall and Rossman (2016) indicated that limitations are restrictions due to the selected framework and chosen design. My choice of a multiple case study design was a limitation of this study because of the inability to generalize results due to small and specific sample size. Yin (2018) indicated that a common concern of the case study design is the inability to generalize or transfer findings to other settings. Yin, however, clarified that although both single and multiple case study designs are considered variants of the same methodology, multiple case study as a design is perceived to be more robust and capable of producing more compelling results. Another limitation of this study was the potential unwillingness of participants to share relevant information regarding their workforce agility strategies used to improve change implementation success.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations of this study consisted of the type of organizations included for analysis and their geographic setting, the research participants selected, and the design of the study used to explore the problem and answer the research question. Leedy and Ormrod (2016) defined delimitations as the specific factors or characteristics a researcher uses to reduce the scope and boundaries of a study. The focus of this study was on four financial organizations in the country of Jamaica. I selected two commercial banks, one mutual building society, and one credit union in which leaders used workforce agility

strategies to improve change implementation success. The study was limited to financial organizations in Jamaica because of (a) ease of access to research participants, (b) the nonexistence of research into workforce agility strategies to improve change implementation success in the Jamaican context, and (c) unavailability of financial resources to research other geographic locations at the time. The research participants included members from the middle to senior management levels in each organization. I did not include employees below the middle management level to participate in the study, nor did I include the customer perspective. Transferability to other industries, sectors, or geographic regions may not be applicable. Future researchers exploring workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives should consider replicating the study in other sectors and with other participants.

### **Significance of the Study**

Business leaders who struggle to position their organizations competitively because of an inability to implement change initiatives successfully may find value in the results of this study. Business leaders may use the results of this study to improve workforce agility and the success rate of change initiatives for creating and sustaining organizations' competitive advantage. Business leaders may also gain valuable insights into leadership strategies that can enable organizational employees to respond effectively to environmental changes. The resilience of organizational members could align with the contribution of leaders and employees, greater involvement practices, modeling proactive behaviors, continuous learning, and goal clarity (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2017; Kuntz et al., 2017). The improved business practices may be effective strategies and robust change

management practices by business leaders that could strengthen the resilience of their employees and organization. Moreover, the extent to which an organization meets its strategic objectives is determined by the implementation success of its change initiatives (Paquin, Gauthier, & Morin, 2016). The implication for positive social change includes the potential to improve the quality of service to customers through convenient, relevant, and appropriate service channels. An increase in change implementation success could result in an improvement in the financial performance of an organization. With improved financial performance, business leaders may also be able to invest in more local school programs and community improvement projects that drive public education, individual resilience, and adaptability to environmental change.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

#### **Literature Review Opening Narrative**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the workforce agility strategies that financial business leaders use to improve the success rate of their change initiatives. The research question addressed was:

RQ: What workforce agility strategies do financial business leaders use to improve the success rate of change initiatives?

The foregoing considerations influenced my search for scholarly guidance in pursuing an understanding of this research topic.

During the literature review for this study, scholarly works from peer-reviewed journals, books, applicable seminal research, and other additional sources were encapsulated. I obtained extant literature through searches performed on online databases

such as Business Source Complete, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insights, Directory of Open Access Journals, ProQuest Central, SAGE Journals, and Ulrich's Periodicals Directory. I accessed each peer-reviewed journal via the Walden University Library, Google Scholar, and Semantic Scholar. Verbiage from the problem statement, purpose statement, and research question guided my literature search. Key terms and concepts researched included (a) *workforce agility*, (b) *dynamic capabilities*, (c) *organizational change*, (d) *organizational change management*, (e) *organizational change behavior*, (f) *organizational change capability*, and (g) *change success*.

I organized the literature review in subsections commencing with the DC theory, the lens for viewing the study. I discuss several themes relating to the DC theory including DC and leadership, DC and organizational climate, workforce agility, and organizational change management, and close out with a discussion on competitive advantage. The total number of references used for this literature review was 130, including peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings, textbooks, master's theses, doctoral dissertations, as well as content from reputable websites. Of the 130 sources, 118 (91%) of the references and publications were published within 5 years of my expected graduation date. Conversely, 9% were published before 2015. Also, 125 sources in the literature review, accounting for 96% of the references, were peer-reviewed.

### **Dynamic Capabilities Theory**

The DC theory was developed to help business leaders succeed in adapting the resource base of their organization to change. Recognizing the limitations of the RBV, in 1997, Teece et al. (1997) developed the DC theory to improve organizational



performance through the creation or modification of its resource base. To varying extents, both RBV and DC emphasized the resources and capabilities of an organization as sources of competitive advantage. For clarity, seminal works on RBV distinguished resources from capabilities. According to Barney (2001) and Grant (1991), resources are inputs into the production process, while capabilities refer to the capacity of a team of resources to perform tasks or activities. According to Grant, while resources are the source of a company's capabilities, competitive advantage is achieved through its capabilities. The RBV focused on valuable, rare, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable (VRIN) resources as the solitary source of sustainable competitive advantage. It was important to have a clear understanding of the foundation of the DC theory and the rationale for its selection as the conceptual framework of choice.

While VRIN resources are important, their mere existence is inadequate to sustain a competitive advantage in a dynamically changing environment. According to Teece (2018a), the RBV provided a partial approach to developing a competitive advantage as it was limited to using VRIN resources as the source of competitive advantage. In addition, Bledy et al. (2018) indicated that the RBV was limited in its effectiveness at developing and mobilizing resources and capabilities in changing business environments. In a dynamic environment, organizational competitive advantage goes beyond the acquisition or existence of VRIN resources (Bledy et al., 2018). From Felin and Powell's (2016) standpoint, the DC theory was developed to explain competitive advantage in a volatile industry. The DC theory offered a more balanced approach to understanding how leaders

develop capabilities in their workforce that enable change adaptability and the achievement of competitive advantage.

Since its conceptualization in 1997, the DC theory has undergone several adjustments including a restatement of the definition of DC. Mohamud and Sarpong (2016) indicated the adjustments and restatement are due to contradictory conceptualizations of what constitutes DC, coupled with subtle contradictions in definition and the measurement of the concept. To address this concern Mohamud and Sarpong provided a comprehensive review of the existing literature on DC to stimulate and shape the current discussions on the relevance of DC on competitiveness. Albort-Morant, Leal-Rodriguez, Fernandez-Rodriguez, and Ariza-Montes (2018) contributed valuable information pertinent to the analysis and deepening of understanding of DC. Albort-Morant et al. clarified the concept of DC and subsequently developed a bibliometric analysis of the existing research on DC during a period of 24 years (1991–2015). During the period 2000–2012, Albort-Morant et al. found exponential growth in the number of publications on DC. Although this growth has decelerated since 2012, the number of publications on the DC topic remains noteworthy.

An explicit and definitive understanding of the concept of DC and its influence on competitiveness is yet to emerge. Following a systematic literature review of management and business journals, Gremme and Wohlgemuth (2017) found discrepancies regarding the nature of DC and the impact on organizational performance. Teece et al. (1997) originally defined DC as the ability of organizational leaders to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly

changing environments. Zollo and Winter (2002) defined DC as a learned and stable pattern of collective activity used by organizational leaders to systematically generate and modify operating routines towards improved effectiveness. Later, Wang and Ahmed (2007) described DC as the behavioral orientation in organizations to constantly integrate, reconfigure, renew, and recreate resources and capabilities in response to changing environments. Recent scholars have also added their contribution to defining DC. Teece (2018a) extended Teece et al.'s definition of DC to include the ability to bring about changes in the business environment as a result of integration and reconfiguration of internal and external competencies. Despite the variations in the definition of what DC are, there is a commonality in the underlining components.

**Tenets of the DC theory.** Teece et al. (1997) premised the DC theory on three tenets critical to successful change adaptation. For successful change adaptation, sensing, seizing, and reconfiguration (or transformation) must be present (Day & Schoemaker, 2016; Teece, 2017; Teece, 2018b). In dynamic business environments, Pitelis and Wagner (2018) found that sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring had a direct relationship with the achievement and maintenance of sustainable competitive advantage. Furthermore, an understanding of the three tenets of the DC theory could help business leaders understand their role in developing DC in their organizations.

The journey to change adaptability begins with an ability to sense change. Sensing involves recognizing and evaluating opportunities and threats (Matysiak, Rugman, & Bausch, 2018). While not an indication of implementation success, the sensing capability delineates the potential to adapt to change in an organization

(Fainshmidt & Frazier, 2017). Sensing change enables leaders to devise strategies to enable employees to cope, respond to, and adapt to change. Felipe, Roldan, and Leal-Rodriguez (2016) reminded that organizational agility, a key DC, is the ability in an organization to sense and respond to environmental changes efficiently and effectively. Day and Schoemaker (2016) indicated that the ability to sense threats and opportunities is central to adapting to volatile markets, competitors, and technological changes. During the sensing phase, leaders should ensure that they create new ideas while identifying the need for change (Cyfert & Krzakiewicz, 2016). In addition to business leaders, a workforce that can sense change is better able to respond to and adapt to change.

After sensing a change in the environment, the next step requires using the insights gained to seize opportunities or reduce threats. The seizing capability involves the creation of competitive advantage by investing in activities that enable the exploitation of opportunities and removal or reduction of threats (Matysiak et al., 2018). Fainshmidt and Frazier (2017) argued that without coordination and commitment to new initiatives, efforts in an organization to seize opportunities might take longer or go unrealized. Furthermore, if leaders are themselves ill-prepared and unresponsive to change, they will not be able to effectively lead employees or effectively develop strategies to enable the employees to adapt to change. When leaders consider the diverse perspectives of employees, they enable employees to seize opportunities (Felin & Powell, 2016). A requirement, therefore, of seizing capability is using different approaches to learning. Day and Schoemaker (2016) recommended using a probe and learn experimentation approach to balance risk and reward when deciding which opportunities

to invest in and which to seize. According to Day and Schoemaker, the probe and learn experimentation is most useful to business leaders when they (a) nurture an experimental mindset, including the willingness to challenge status quos and existing beliefs; (b) encourage employees to collect and share insights; and (c) look beyond their organizational and market boundaries in search of new insights. Employees are better able to adapt to change when leaders actively cultivate and support an experimental and entrepreneurial mindset.

The sensing and seizing capabilities in organizations help to create opportunities. However, business leaders may not realize these opportunities if there is no reconfiguration (or transformation) to support the implementation of new initiatives or strategies. Matysiak et al. (2018) indicated that the reconfiguring (or transforming) capability involves managing change by reconstructing the resources and capabilities of the organization. During reconfiguration, leaders must create, secure, and integrate new skills and innovations, while ridding the organization of redundant resources and skills (Cyfert & Krzakiewicz, 2016). The reconfiguring capability in an organization is evidenced by the cultivation of an active entrepreneurial mindset (Day & Schoemaker, 2016). The process of shaping DC is continuous and makes it possible not only to anticipate, but also to respond appropriately to change. In dynamic business environments, a key function of leaders is to create a fertile atmosphere for sensing, seizing, and transforming (or reconfiguring) of resources that better adapt to change.

**Dynamic capabilities versus ordinary capabilities.** Organizational capabilities may be ordinary or dynamic, even though both are interconnected. From a conceptual

standpoint, capabilities are routine organizational activities that develop over time based on problem-solving and collective learning (Fainshmidt & Frazier, 2017). According to Teece (2017), ordinary capabilities are operational and focused on doing the right things, whereas DC are more strategic and focused on doing things right. Pitelis and Wagner (2018) indicated that ordinary capabilities enabled leaders to create and capture value through best practices, while DC enabled leaders to change their way of creating and capturing value through foresight, agility, business model innovation, and forward-looking strategy. Routines and processes are important components of DC; however, DC are not entirely based on routines.

To develop DC, human capabilities should also be considered. Cyfert and Krzakiewicz (2016) differentiated on the basis that DC emphasized the change management process. Teece (2018b) indicated that DC involved activities and assessments that channel other capabilities and resources to maintain external fitness. Jiang (2014) concluded that DC emphasizes the conscious human action in transforming existing routines, potentially disrupting order and stability. Business leaders should not only be able to distinguish the different types of capabilities in an organization but should also be able to devise effective strategies to develop and sustain DC that will improve organizational performance and ultimately competitive advantage.

**Contrasting theories or conceptual models.** As a prerequisite, the conceptual framework should closely align with the research topic and be able to help the researcher adequately explain and provide insights into the research question. According to Nakano and Muniz (2018), the conceptual framework underpins the research, defines, and

clarifies the main concepts that are used throughout the study. I considered several theories as possible lenses for this study including Kotter's eight steps to change model, the RBV theory, and the awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement (ADKAR) change management model.

*Kotter's eight steps to change model.* In 1995, Kotter developed the eight-step model of change (Kotter, 2009). As a popular change model, Kotter's theory is based on the premise that the role of a leader is essential in the ultimate success of an organization (Kotter, 2009, 2012). Thornhill, Usinger, and Sanchez (2019) found that Kotter's change model was an effective method of implementing systematic change while encouraging capacity building, proactive involvement, and deep understanding among stakeholders. According to Wheeler and Holmes (2017), Kotter's change model facilitated ongoing change by engaging employees in the change process and enabling leaders to identify necessary resources and activities to empower the evolution of their organizations. Mork, Krupp, Hankwitz, and Malec (2018) found Kotter's change model useful for preparing employees to anticipate challenges and proactively engaging in problem-solving activities. Kotter's eight-step model is a useful model for leading organizational change and engaging employees during the change process.

Kotter's (2009) change management model, however, is limited as it does not build capability for ongoing change. Grobler, Van Wyk, and Magau (2019) found that Kotter's change model was effective for successfully implementing change as an event. The model, however, adopted a top-down approach that does not encourage real participation from employees (Galli, 2018). Furthermore, Kotter's change model failed to

assist with the identification and implementation of clear measures for estimating change effectiveness (Rajan & Ganesan, 2017). Whereas Kotter's model may be effective for managing the change process in some environments, it does not adequately address ongoing change or change initiated from the bottom-up, nor does it facilitate employee participation in the change process. Considering the limitations, Kotter's eight-step change model would not have been an appropriate conceptual framework for this study.

*Resource-based view.* Likewise, the RBV was inadequate as a conceptual framework because of its limited focus on VRIN resources as a source of competitive advantage. Researchers such as de Faria, Junior, and Borini (2019) and Yang, Fia, and Xu (2019) criticized the RBV for its focus on internal resources as the solitary source for competitive advantage. Teece (2018b) clarified that VRIN resources are often intangible and can be used to support competitive advantage. Nason and Wiklund (2018) however found that VRIN resources were not associated with higher organizational growth levels or competitive advantage. Li-Ying, Wang, and Ning (2016) argued that organizational performance is influenced only by the extent to which business leaders leverage and renew the resources in their organization. For a more comprehensive approach, leaders should look beyond the existence of VRIN resources to create DC in their organizations.

Leadership strategies to develop workforce adaptability and competitive advantage should consist of a combination of internal and external perspectives. The key distinction between the RBV and the DC theory was that the RBV concerned locating the source of profitability in the organization, whereas, DC were developed and could not be bought (Mohamud & Sarpong, 2016). Matysiak et al. (2018) indicated that while leaders



may gain vital explanations for competitive advantage at a specific time, the DC theory excelled at explaining how leaders may create sustainable competitive advantages in changing environments over time. The DC theory has a unified perspective of organizational resources. According to Lin, Chen, and Su (2017) and Sukmawati (2016), competitive advantage is the result of implementation strategies consisting of a variety of organizational resources and knowledge gained from external sources. Although the RBV complemented the DC theory, the DC theory was a more suitable lens for exploring change capability building, change adaptation, and implementation success.

*ADKAR change model.* Another conceptual framework considered inappropriate for this study was the ADKAR change model. In 2004, Prosci founder, Hiatt, developed the ADKAR change model (Hiatt, 2006). According to Hiatt (2006), the ADKAR model consists of five elements that define the basic building blocks for successful change: awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement. The premise of the ADKAR model is that organizational change happens only when individuals change (Galli, 2018; Kiani & Shah, 2014). Although the ADKAR model had employees and their acceptance of change as the primary focus, it was better suited for smaller groups and less complex environments (Galli, 2018). The DC theory was better suited for use in larger environments and covered a wider scope when building organizational capabilities. As a conceptual lens, the DC theory was better aligned with exploring the workforce agility strategies used by financial business leaders to improve the success rate of change initiatives.

**Reasons for choosing the DC theory as a conceptual framework.** With effective strategies, business leaders may use DC in their organization to respond dynamically to changes in the business environment. The role of management is dominant in developing DC, especially when transforming or reconfiguring the organization's resource base (Prieto & Easterby-Smith, 2006). Wojcik (2015) indicated that the essence of DC lies in changing ways of allocating and combining resources, processes, and capabilities that aim at increasing productivity and ultimately, value creation potential. Teece (2017) argued that organizations with robust DC have leaders with strong *animal spirits* that enable them to sense, seize, and reconfigure (or transform) their organizations. Business leaders with animal spirits act in the face of uncertainty, rather than be paralyzed by it. Teece further indicated that the management teams of organizations with weak or no DC are indecisive, waiting for greater certainty before action is taken. In these weaker organizations, by the time uncertainty is resolved, competitive advantage is lost. Wojcik cautioned that DC do not constitute a sufficient condition for competitive advantage, as they may also be a source of rigidity and may lead to a competency trap. Depending on the HR strategies used by business leaders, DC can enable or impede adaption to a rapidly changing environment.

HR capability, if used appropriately, can be a major source of competitive advantage for any organization. Garavan, Shanahan, Carbery, and Watson (2016) recognized the importance of DC theory to HR management and introduced the concept of dynamic strategic HR development capabilities. Strategic HR development contributed to organizational performance through the development of capabilities. Garavan et al.

found three sets of enablers and processes that underpin dynamic strategic HR development capabilities: HR scalability, organizational learning capability, and capability for change and innovation. Nold and Michel (2016) synthesized 10 years of case studies and data analysis and emerged with the performance triangle model based on adaptability, agility, and resilience. According to Nold and Michel, culture, leadership, and systems are key factors driving organizational success within a rapidly changing environment. Nold and Michel also found that leaders facilitated change adaptation when they design organizations to maximize the tacit knowledge base of their organizations. When coupled with senior management support, HR initiatives are vital to fostering organizational responsiveness to changing environments (Amarakoon, Weerawardena, & Verreynne, 2018). Business leaders may leverage HR policies and practices to acquire, cultivate, and retain the capacity to develop HR.

Contrary to the findings of some scholars, management strategies, and barriers to imitation by themselves are not sufficient to sustain competitive advantage. Chuang, Liu, and Chen (2015) posited that HR capabilities are critical to sustaining competitive advantage because HR capabilities are valuable, rare, irreplaceable, and difficult to imitate. Matysiak et al. (2018) emphasized that the DC approach embraces environmental dynamism by diverting attention from protecting rare and valuable resources or capabilities from imitation, towards attaining recombinations that are rare and valuable in the future. Similarly, Jiang (2014) argued that even with VRIN attributes, an organization's superior returns may be short-lived if and when the environment changes. It is prudent for business leaders to develop DC that are strategically and deliberately

used to improve the responsiveness of the workforce to changing environments. In this regard, diagnostic tools are required to define fundamental strengths and weaknesses to begin targeted conversations and provide a basis for measurement.

Business leaders often approach the development of DC as a business strategy to boost workforce adaptation. Teece (2018a) indicated that the strength of an organization's DC determines the proficiency of its business model design. When reconfiguring resources to respond to changing environments, business leaders often integrate new knowledge and resources as part of the process. One business strategy is to recruit employees who possess specific capabilities. Finch, Peacock, Levallet, and Foster (2016) conducted a study to determine the employee-specific capabilities most suited for employability and organizational success. Based on a research population of university graduates, Finch et al. (2016) found that to be competitive, new, or prospective employees must possess intellectual, personality, meta-skill, and job-specific skills. Finch et al. concluded that integrated DC were crucial to enhancing these competitive skills. Using the DC theory as a conceptual framework lens through which to view this study provided valuable insights into the interrelations that need to be understood if business leaders are to develop workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives.

My decision to use the DC theory for this study was two-folded. First, it presented a balanced approach to improving organizational performance and competitive advantage by focusing on both internal and external resources. Second, the DC theory had at its core the integration, marshaling, and reintegration of resources for effectiveness during

dynamic business environments. Moreover, researchers indicated that the DC theory is a leading lens for exploring how business leaders create and sustain competitive advantage in a changing environment (Matysiak et al., 2018). Through the lens of the DC theory, business leaders may gain valuable insights into the significance of developing workforce agility strategies to increase change adaptation and the success rate of change initiatives.

### **Dynamic Capabilities and Leadership**

The role of leadership is foundational and dominant in creating DC. Grobler et al. (2019) argued that the strategies that leaders use to introduce and sustain organizational change are more important than a well-managed change. Day and Schoemaker (2016) indicated that in their role as the last line of change defense, it is critical for strategic leaders to selectively adapt and refine the DC of their organizations. If business leaders can sense and seize new opportunities, and further reconfigure resources and capabilities in line with recognized opportunities and environmental changes, they can create and sustain competitive advantage for their organization. Day and Schoemaker further indicated that business leaders may use the DC theory to explain organizational-level differences, as well as to make better capability decisions. Pisano (2017) however indicated that research on the DC theory has focused largely on the problem of adaptability and has ignored the important managerial problem of choice. The underlying assumption is business leaders can create and sustain competitive advantage for their organizations by developing agile workforces that are better able to adapt to change.

While developing organizational capabilities, business leaders will encounter uncertainty or challenges. Two sources of uncertainty that business leaders will face are

(a) the ability to predict the outcome of a capability-building process, and (b) the economic value of a capability in particular markets (Pisano, 2017). Uncertainty about the economic value of a capability stems from a lack of information about future customer needs and rival actions. It is however impossible for business leaders to accurately predict all the capabilities to accumulate and the ultimate value of those capabilities. Managerial intent, routines, and capabilities in influencing how resources are configured are indications of dynamic managerial capabilities (Badrinarayanan, Ramachandran, & Madhavaram, 2019). Ambrosini and Altintas (2019) indicated that dynamic managerial capabilities are a form of DC concerned with the role of managers in refreshing and transforming the resource base of the organization so that it maintains and develops its competitive advantage and performance. Badrinarayanan et al. (2019) further clarified that both DC and dynamic managerial capabilities (DMC) focused on strategic change; the primary focus of DMC was on the managerial impact on strategic change. Furthermore, DC encompasses various organizational processes and require leaders who can design and operationalize them in a specific organizational setting. Researchers recommended that leaders integrate functions and processes within the organization to create DC (Millar, Groth, & Mohan, 2018). Despite the challenges that business leaders face, all attempts should be made to explore alternative approaches to success.

Understanding the nature of the environment is key to leaders seeking to transform ordinary capabilities to DC. Schoemaker, Heaton, and Teece (2018) examined how business model innovations, DC, and strategic leadership intertwined to help organizations thrive in a volatile, unpredictable, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world.

In VUCA environments, the capacity of a leader must develop and adapt to fit the social and situational contexts of their various roles, assignments, and organizations (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015). Effective leaders use multiple perspectives to envision and design strategies for success during times of change. Bolman and Deal (2015) proposed that leaders use their structural, HR, political, and symbolic lenses to identify and choose strategies that lead to success in VUCA contexts. During their research, Schoemaker et al. identified anticipation, challenge, interpretation, deciding, alignment, and learning as six leadership skills critical to success in a VUCA world. According to Schoemaker et al., the ability of business leaders to anticipate, challenge, and interpret underpins how to sense change. The disciplines of deciding, aligning, and learning are closely tied to how to seize opportunities (Schoemaker et al., 2018). All six leadership disciplines feature prominently in how to transform an organization.

Leadership ability to sense change, seize opportunities, and transform is critical to setting the direction for organizational adaptation. Leaders create new opportunities and clarify goals for employees (Pitelis & Wagner, 2018; Raziq, Borini, Malik, Ahmad, & Shabaz, 2018). According to Schoemaker et al. (2018), the three elements of DC entail the collective skills that business leaders need when pursuing disruptive innovation, radically new business models, and strategic leadership. In their study aimed at recognizing DC as a source of competitive advantage in IT firms, Breznik and Lahovnik (2016) found that ignoring the deployment of a single DC could negatively affect the deployment of other capabilities since they are correlated and interwoven. Business leaders seek not only operational capabilities but also DC that enable the reconfiguration

of existing core capabilities into new capabilities that better align with environmental conditions.

Leadership style influences the development and strengthening of HR capabilities in an organization. According to Mandanchian, Hussein, Noordin, and Taherdoost (2017), effective leaders create ideal situations for their organization through the use of skills and processes. Through the lens of Bass' (1985) theoretical frameworks of transformational and transactional leadership, Lopez-Cabrales, Bornay-Barrachina, and Diaz-Fernandez (2017) analyzed the antecedents to the development of DC from the HR management (HRM) perspective. Lopez-Cabrales et al. found that through HR systems, both transactional and transformational leadership styles had a direct, indirect, and positive association with DC (sensing, seizing, and reconfiguration). Para-Gonzalez, Jimenez-Jimenez, and Martinez-Lorente (2018) contributed to the discourse by explaining the link between transformational leadership and organizational performance. Para-Gonzalez et al. (2018) found that the adoption of transformational leadership styles improved performance when specific systems of HRM practices, learning, and innovation are developed in an organization. Furthermore, the CEO of an organization is the primary influencer of DC under his or her strategic leadership (Lopez-Cabrales et al., 2017). Leaders seeking to enable employees to adapt to organizational change should also seek to develop DC in their workforce.

Employee adaptation to change can be developed when leaders engage in different approaches. Of importance, is that the relation between senior leadership, project implementation, and organizational performance is mediated by operational and



DC building (Hermano & Martin-Cruz, 2016). As an enabler, leaders should make room for creativity and imagination of new solutions and ways of doing business (Pidgeon, 2017). Through intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders promote problem-solving and generative thinking processes in employees (Lopez-Cabrales et al., 2017). Moreover, there is a significant positive effect of transformational leadership behavior of individual support on the affective commitment of employees to change (Abrell-Vogel & Rowold, 2014). Business leaders can gain employee support and buy-in through employee empowerment, support teams, open door communication, and a clear understanding of how initiatives will better the company, individual jobs, and security. Researchers also found that transformational leaders had a direct impact on the building of DC since they were able to promote the full range of sensing, seizing and reconfiguration capabilities (Lopez-Cabrales et al., 2017). When leaders expand their thinking and imaginative skills, they position themselves and those they lead for successful adaptation to change.

Not all leadership practices are favorable to the creation of DC. Bolman and Deal (2015) argued that when leaders have narrow thinking and imaginative skills, they fail to develop strategies and solutions that result in success. From the perspective of organizational knowledge creation, Nonaka, Hirose, and Takeda (2016) argued that creative DC are rooted in the activities of teams in the middle levels of the organization. According to Prieto and Easterby-Smith (2006), DC and knowledge management are linked to sustained competitive advantage. Felin and Powell (2016) agreed that leaders must bring together the knowledge and capabilities that resides with employees to

achieve the shared objectives of the organization. Nonaka et al. presented leadership practices that were favorable to fostering DC and identified six ideal abilities of senior and middle management that cultivated DC. According to Nonaka et al., the wiser leader can (a) judge goodness, (b) grasp the essence, (c) create shared context, (d) communicate the essence, (e) exercise political power, and (f) foster phronesis in others. Binci, Cerruti, and Braganza (2016) and Caulfield and Senger (2017) underscored the importance of the leaders' awareness of how their actions affect employees' perceptions of leadership during the change. Perceptions of ideal leadership behavior aligned more closely with transformational leadership behaviors which lead to positive work engagements and increased potential to improve change outcomes through a highly engaged workforce.

Idle or dormant DC is useless to organizational success. Ambrosini and Altintas (2019) argued that the possession of DC does not induce improved organizational performance. It is the management of the capabilities that enable superior performance and benefits to an organization (Ambrosini & Altintas, 2019). During their investigation of the relationship between capabilities and business success, Simon et al. (2015) found that good leadership with an innovative vision, selection, and retention of good staff, and the development of employee skills and capabilities were stand out strategic capabilities of leadership. Strategic thinking about the big picture and the long-term and flexible leaders who can lead and manage adaptation to change were the most important DC according to Simon et al. Furthermore, strategic capabilities were more often associated with indicators of financial success, while DC was more often associated with non-financial measures of organizational performance (Simon et al., 2015). Measuring DC

remains the biggest barrier to progress in developing directions for theory and research in this area (Mohamud & Sarpong, 2016). A key responsibility of leadership is, therefore, to understand how DC work and how leaders develop and deploy capabilities in their organizations to be able to develop and sustain competitive advantage.

### **Dynamic Capabilities and Organizational Climate**

The development and sustainability of DC are driven by the climate of the organization. Organizational climate, according to Ahmad, Jasimuddin, and Kee (2018), is one of the most significant determinants of individual and group attitudes and behaviors in organizations. Steinke, Dastmalchian, and Baniasadi (2015) argued that an organization's climate reflects the perception of its employees of the policies, practices, and procedures that are expected, supported, and rewarded in the organization. Through the lens of the DC theory, Fainshmidt and Frazier (2017) argued that a climate of trust facilitated the type of adaptability and coordination among members of an organization that resulted in higher sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring capabilities. For change adaptation to be successful, business leaders must develop an organizational climate that is conducive to trust and a willingness to change.

Shared values and goals impact the development of DC. According to Liu, Horng, Chou, and Huang (2018), DC in an organization are developed according to whether the members of the organization share values or goals embedded in the organizational structure. A fundamental task of leaders is creating alignment. According to Benson (2015), alignment is critical for employees to make a transition from an old to a new paradigm. Heckelman (2017) indicated that employees are better able to adapt to change

when their individual beliefs are aligned with organizational results. Liu et al. also found that organizational learning was the most critical attribute for improving the relationships between shared goals, DC, and social capital to achieve competitive advantage. Cyfert and Krzakiewicz (2016) found that skills relating to the transfer of knowledge in an organization were of the highest importance in the learning process. When leaders actively design strategies to develop HR DC, they improve the possibility of workforce agility.

### **Workforce Agility**

Agility is an important attribute and capability of employees operating in dynamic business environments. Cai, Huang, Liu, and Wang (2018) described agility as the ability of an employee to promptly and appropriately react and adapt to change for the benefit of the organization. In an agile workforce, not only can employees react and adapt to change promptly and appropriately, they are also capable of making changes (Harsch & Festing, 2019). Business leaders may use workforce agility, which is a DC, to improve change adaptation and implementation success. Sherehiy and Karwowski (2014) indicated that workforce agility requires the development of an adaptable workforce that can handle unexpected and dynamic changes in the business environment. Carvalho, Sampaio, Rebentisch, and Saraiva (2017) posited that organizational culture, organization commitment, and employee empowerment are enablers of workforce agility. Similarly, workforce agility is an enabler for organizational competitive advantage in dynamic business environments.

Workforce agility is beneficial to an organization and determines the extent of organizational agility. Researchers indicated that an organization with workforce agility can respond proactively to unexpected environmental changes (Appelbaum, Calla, Desautels, & Hasan, 2017a, 2017b). Business leaders of organizations operating in more volatile markets or who underwent crises or anomalous events, stand to benefit the most from workforce agility (Baskarada & Koronios, 2018). According to Hodges (2017), the value of building workforce agility is three-folded and includes a reduction in the cost of change, an improvement in the ability of the workforce to execute a greater number of changes more effectively, and an increase in the competitive advantage of the organization. Business leaders should not expect to achieve workforce agility overnight. According to Appelbaum et al. (2017b), workforce agility requires a commitment to continuous transformation and agility strategies involving structure, leadership, decision-making dynamics, skills, and interpersonal relationships of employees at all levels. Furthermore, Karre, Hammer, and Ramsauer (2019) asserted that employees are at the center of agility and require employees across all hierarchical levels to adapt to and thrive on change. Workforce agility is a crucial enabler of organizational agility and the survival of organizations in a dynamic environment.

Business survival is, however, at risk when leaders fail to develop workforce agility using appropriate strategies. Moreover, Alavi (2016) argued that organizations that fail to keep up with market trends and technological changes lack workforce agility. Khodabandeh, Mohammadi, Doroudi, and Mansouri (2018) asserted that in the long run, the lack of agility could threaten the survival of an organization. Business leaders will

continue to struggle to successfully implement initiatives and innovations to position their organizations competitively unless they recognize the potential impact of employee adaptability and responsiveness to change. Anca-loana (2019) concluded that the HR of an organization are the only resources that can differentiate it from other organizations and create a real competitive advantage. Workforce agility requires deliberate and focused attempts by leaders to develop employees who are adaptable to change and who are better able to contribute to the success of the organization.

**Indicators of workforce agility.** A workforce that is agile consists of employees who are proactive, adaptive, and resilient. Azuara (2015) argued that although workforce agility is emerging as a crucial organizational development need, there is little clarity regarding the competencies that influence the development of an agile workforce. Moreover, workforce agility is not limited to a specific personality type or trait but is demonstrated by observable agile behaviors (Snyder & Brewer, 2019). Cai et al. (2018) and Sherehiy and Karwowski (2014) indicated that workforce agility is demonstrated by proactivity, adaptability, and resilience. An understanding of the indicators of workforce agility could help business leaders gauge and measure the effectiveness of their strategies to develop agile workforces.

**Proactivity.** Proactivity is vital to the initiation and implementation of innovative changes in an organization. Cai et al. (2018) described proactivity as employee initiative regarding activities that positively affect the changing environment. According to Sherehiy and Karwowski (2014), proactive activities include (a) the anticipation of change-related problems, (b) initiations of activities that lead to a solution of the change-

related problems and improvements in work, and (c) a solution of the change-related problems. Proactivity is a potential driver of innovation in organizations and is demonstrative of employees who are self-starters and change-oriented (Lee, Pak, Kim, & Li, 2019). Proactive employees form a part of a workforce that actively seeks opportunities to problem solve and devise new solutions for the organization.

***Adaptability.*** Adaptability promotes organizational learning and indicates an inclination to change. Cai et al. (2018) indicated that adaptability refers to the willingness of employees to modify their behavior (such as interpersonal and cultural) to better fit the new environment. According to Alavi (2016), adaptability requires employees to use different skills, experiences, and knowledge to create new ideas. Adaptable employees can take on multiple roles, shift readily from one role to the other, as well as the capacity and skill to concurrently work in separate teams (Sherehiy & Karwowski, 2014). Lifelong learning is a passion of adaptable employees. Friedman, Gerstein, and Hertz (2018) clarified that employees who are lifelong learners have the interest, capacity, and drive to constantly acquire new information so that they have the flexibility to adapt to changes. Notwithstanding, the need to position and enable employees for adaptability in the face of an increasingly dynamic and demanding environment is one of the biggest challenges facing business leaders (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Misalignment with organizational values often results in limited adaptability in employees. Alas and Mousa (2016) found that a strong correlation existed between adaptability and employee alignment with the values of an organization. To promote adaptability, business leaders should use strategies

and programs designed to unleash the potential of employees to cope in the face of change and uncertainties.

**Resilience.** Agile employees demonstrate resilience by functioning effectively under stress. Naswall, Malinen, Kuntz, and Holiffe (2019) described resilience as a key capability that enables employees to manage and adapt to changing environments and circumstances. Resilience can help a workforce to quickly rebound from shocks and crises in the business environment (Heilmann, Fortsen-Astikainen, & Kultalahti, 2018). Kuntz et al. (2017) indicated that employee resilience includes adaptive, learning, and network-based activities that show the availability of resources and the motivation and ability of employees to use these resources. Resilience can be developed through training, work experience, task or company-specific knowledge, and personality traits relevant to working efficiently (Heilmann et al., 2018). According to Britt, Shen, Sinclair, Grossman, and Klieger (2016), employers are recognizing that the development and retention of resilience must begin early, represents a lifelong activity, and is indispensable for success. As a benefit, Snyder and Brewer (2019) indicated that when leaders build resilience within their teams, they equip employees to transform challenges into growth experiences. Leaders should direct early efforts to develop employee resilience to cope with and rebound from adversity.

Several organizational characteristics and initiatives are emerging as ways to develop workforce agility. When building DC, Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018) indicated that collaborations and partnerships were vehicles to learning. Of the organizational characteristics and initiatives that fostered workforce agility, Muduli (2017) found that an



environment that encouraged teamwork had the most influence in promoting agility. Following closely were programs that addressed reward systems, employee involvement, organizational learning and training, and information systems (Muduli, 2016, 2017). Business leaders may develop incentive programs to boost the favorable attitudes and agility enabling behaviors of employees (Qin & Nembhard, 2015). Other strategies for developing workforce agility included cross-training (Muduli, 2017), and employee autonomy (Varghese & Bini, 2018). Learning is central to the creation of DC.

Collaboration and cooperative relationships also promote workforce agility. Muduli (2017) argued that employees who are the most agile capitalize on their skills by proactively innovating ahead of need. Pitafil, Liu, and Cai (2018) indicated that collaboration and communication were important for promoting workforce agility because they facilitated the exchange of information among employees. Preikschas, Cabanelas, Rudiger, and Lampon (2017) found that co-creation processes promoted the generation of DC linked to adaptation, knowledge, innovation, and relationship management. Accordingly, relevant and timely information is essential for employees responding to changing environments.

Robust talent management strategies may enable business leaders to secure a pipeline of agile leaders and successors. Harsch and Festing (2019) explained how talent management shaped talents based on organization-specific agility needs. Harsch and Festing argued that talent management was a DC that served to attract, induct, develop, retain, or release HR for competitive advantage. Succession planning reinforces the commitment of business leaders to develop an agile workforce through the constant

preparation of its human capital (Martin, 2015). The implementation of talent management strategies stimulated and encouraged a culture of learning (Martin, 2015). Other strategies include managerial skills training, putting employees in decision-making situations along their career path, taking advantage of the cultural diversity of employees with communication skills training, and elimination of emerging fields of destructive conflict (Sohrabi, Asari, & Hozoori, 2014). Tucker and Jones (2019) viewed workforce diversity as a way to bridge skills gaps in their organization. Without leveraging the knowledge and skills of employees, workforce agility cannot be achieved. The key to developing workforce agility is a commitment to learning and continuous performance management of employees.

Two strong indicators of workforce agility are intelligence and competency. Singh and Rao (2016) examined the effects of intellectual capital on DC in banking firms in India and found that human and social capital had the most profound effect on learning, integration, reconfiguration, and alliance management capabilities. In intelligent organizations, employees collaborate to exploit opportunities, co-create products and services, as well as find and solve problems. Adamczewski (2016) posited that an intelligent organization was a learning organization, with the capacity for creating, gaining, organizing and sharing knowledge, and using the knowledge to increase the operational effectiveness and competitiveness on the global market. In a quantitative correlation study, Sohrabi et al. (2014) explored the relationship between workforce agility and organizational intelligence and found that organizational intelligence was a significant predictor of workforce agility and vice versa. Besides, cognitive, emotional,

and behavioral aspects of organizational intelligence could facilitate agile behavior, and simultaneously, workforce agility could enhance the level of organizational intelligence (Sohrabi et al., 2014). With an agile workforce, business leaders benefit from intelligent capabilities that propel their organizations towards competitive advantage.

Business leaders stand to gain a wide range of benefits when they develop workforce agility using appropriate strategies. Sohrabi et al. (2014) reminded that quality improvement, better customer service, and learning-curve acceleration were benefits of workforce agility. Moreover, established employee feedback systems, enhanced employee work-life quality and participation, and facilitated learning with the application of various techniques were useful strategies to develop workforce agility (Sohrabi et al., 2014). In addition to speed, responsiveness, and flexibility, Snyder and Brewer (2019) indicated that workforce agility enables organizations to thrive in a competitive, unpredictable, and ever-changing environment. The DC theory was an appropriate lens for exploring workforce agility strategies considering its focus on sensing environmental changes, seizing opportunities by aligning resources, and adapting resources to overcome threats (L'Hermitte, Bowles, Tatham, & Brooks, 2015). Workforce agility moderates the relationship between turbulence in the business environment and organizational competitiveness.

### **Organizational Change Management**

To improve the success rate of change initiatives, business leaders must understand the importance of change management and how it contributes to workforce agility. Organizational change is a cyclical process that involves managerial cognition,

organizational capabilities, and organizational resources (Altmann & Lee, 2016).

Besides, the capabilities in an organization that enable change are considered organizational change capabilities and are a form of DC (Schweiger et al., 2016). Due to the importance of organizational change, change management is becoming a highly required managerial skill. Creasy, Chief Innovation Officer at Prosci, defined change management as the application of a structured process and set of tools for leading the people side of change towards the desired outcome (Galli, 2018). Ugoani (2017) metaphorized change management as the lubricant that oils the wheels of organizations in the race for competitive advantage. Furthermore, Florea (2016) indicated that change management is an indication that leaders are committed to continuous development that improves the overall success of their organization. Business leaders should be clear about the desired future state of their organization and how to manage the changes required to getting there.

Several researchers introduced concepts and methods to improve organizational change capabilities. Andreeva and Ritala (2016) contributed novel insights into bridging the theories of strategic management and change management by examining the nature of DC and the sources of the dynamism. According to Andreeva and Ritala, organizational change capability has a generic nature and therefore represented the fundamental essence of higher-order or generic DC. With a primary focus on desired outcomes, Schweiger et al. (2016) introduced an outcome-oriented approach and intervention model for diagnosing and developing change capabilities. Schweiger et al.'s intervention model is a standardized and outcome-oriented learning framework that fosters the development of

organizational change capabilities for pro-active organizational change. According to Schultz (2014), an organization can become nimble if it has empowered employees who can respond to changing conditions with the use of their initiative. Janicijevic (2017) concluded that the structure of the collective organizational values should be accounted for in both the research and practice of change management. Moreover, empowerment creates a culture in which employees at all levels willingly confront problems and successfully adapt to change.

Researchers agree that the change management process does not begin at implementation; instead, the process involves different stages. Kurt Lewin's change management model involves the unfreezing, movement, and refreezing stages (Hussain, et al., 2016; Rosenbaum, More, & Steane, 2018). Prosci's change management methodology involves preparing for change, managing change, and reinforcing change (Hiatt & Creasey, 2003; Prosci, 2019). Kotter's change model involves eight steps to change (Appelbaum, et al., 2017a; Seijts & Gandz, 2018; Thornhill et al., 2019). To emphasize the importance of preparation for change, Krogh (2018) expanded the conceptualization of organizational change to include the neglected pre-implementation phase. Based on extant literature, change implementation cannot be successful if leaders neglect crucial stages of the change management process.

Sensemaking, positioning, and scripting the future are three constructs of the anticipation cycle. The anticipatory pre-implementation phase is more than just a passive waiting time for employees during times of change (Krogh, 2018). While anticipating change, employees look inside and outside the organization to understand and make

sense of change (Krogh, 2018). Also, while anticipating change, employees assess and renegotiate their ability and the ability of others to cope with and navigate the new organizational landscape (Krogh, 2018). Moreover, employees make sense of pending changes by adjusting their inner concept of the organization and considering the new features of the organizational landscape. Due to the potential impact on actual implementation, Schweiger et al. (2016) recommended that DC or processes to enable successful change be activated ex-ante, in anticipation of the change event. Hechanova, Caringal-Go, and Magsaysay (2018) found that the strongest predictor of change management effectiveness was how leaders execute change. While employees anticipate change, they develop expectations about how the change should be managed, and leadership traits and behavior that would be effective (Hechanova et al., 2018). The ability to adapt to ongoing organizational change depends on how leaders address each stage of the change management process and DC developed to enable change adaptation.

With organizational change management, business leaders prepare, equip, and support employees to successfully adapt to changes that drive organizational success. According to Grobler et al. (2019), organizational change management involves setting a new vision, consulting with employees, leadership skills, commitment, using available and appropriate resources for implementation. Castillo et al. (2018) posited that organizational change management served primarily to improve the state of an organization to achieve better adaptation to its environment or to adjust to the changes in mission and objectives. According to Castillo et al., understanding the emotional stages of employees during times of change not only represent a powerful force to moderate

resistance to change, but also serves as an indicator of successful change implementation. To achieve success when implementing organizational change, business leaders must use appropriate change management strategies.

Employees are crucial to successful change management. Moreover, business leaders can enable successful change by creating the right atmosphere for their employees through positive engagement and a positive organizational culture (Parent & Lovelace, 2018). An indication of employees adapting to organizational change successfully is their ability to adequately perform new tasks while remaining engaged on the job (Petrou, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2018). Leaders can bolster employee engagement and input with critical feedback loops embedded into the change management process (Heckelman, 2017). Furthermore, organizations with a positive culture foster both job and organizational engagement in their employees.

Business leaders have positioned their organizations competitively by initiating and managing change programs to transform structures, processes, and cultures. Although organizational change should foster resource optimization and organizational adaptation, Castillo et al. (2018) indicated that researchers found numerous examples where it produced the opposite effect. Akarsu, Gencer, and Yildirim (2018) found that even in successfully implemented change efforts that realized the planned targets, change does not occur directly and fully, and with some elements of employee discourse being more persistent than others. Failure to realize the intended benefits or to achieve implementation success is caused by several factors.

Change implementation is often challenging and requires the buy-in and commitment of all stakeholders involved. Before business leaders can lead change efforts, they first need to prepare themselves to lead the change (Heckelman, 2017). According to Heckelman (2017), for leaders to promote a change, they first need to embrace the change and manage their reactions to it. Leaders cannot address the reactions and resistance of employees without addressing their own reactions and resistance. Middle managers have a crucial role in strategic change that leads to adaptation and organizational success. In a correlation study conducted by Ukil and Akkas (2017), factors such as the relationship with senior management, strategy, role, and skills were essential for effective change implementation. In addition, Ukil and Akkas recommended that all levels of management participate to formulate and implement strategy since middle managers (especially) work as a bridge between senior management and line staff.

**Resistance to organizational change.** Resistance to change is recognized as the primary reason for the failure of change initiatives. Caruth and Caruth (2018) described resistance to change as the extent to which employees oppose the introduction of anything in the organization. Krogh (2018) argued that resistance to organizational change may be better understood as resistance to having to give up institutionalized rights and responsibilities. The cognitive dissonance theory has proven influential in understanding why and how resistances arise. When employees sense inconsistencies in attitude and behavior they experience dissonance (Burnes, 2015; Levy, Harmon-Jones, & Harmon-Jones, 2018). Seijts and Gandz (2018) argued that if employees feel misled,



manipulated, or forced into accepting changes, they will retaliate with lukewarm support or resistance.

Several researchers contributed to understanding why employees resist change. To address this concern, Amarantou, Kazakopoulou, Chatzoudes, and Chatzoglou (2018) examined the factors affecting resistance to change. Amarantou et al. found that disposition towards change, the anticipated impact of change, and attitude towards change mediate the impact of various personal and behavioral characteristics on resistance to change. Resistance to change was indirectly influenced by four main factors: employee-management relationship, personality traits, employee participation in the decision-making process, and job security (Amarantou et al., 2018). Besliu (2018) indicated that the ambiguities and insecurity found in resistant employees may be combated, clarified, and elucidated only through open, trust-based, active, continuous communication. Persuasion supports change communication and strategies. When used as a parallel process of readiness for change, persuasion addresses resistance by ensuring that employees will engage with the change (Rosenbaum et al., 2018). Resistance to change has a negative impact on employee performance and the successful implementation of change initiatives.

Many organizational change efforts face employee resistance because of the method of implementation and the involvement or lack of management involvement throughout the process. Caruth and Caruth (2018) argued that no amount of communication, training, or support from the staff can substitute for a compelling reason for the change. In addition, successful change requires constant acceptance of the change

(Caruth & Caruth, 2018). A central force for change is a clear sense of purpose to motivate employees to take the desired actions. Resistance to change affects the capacity to respond to environmental demands and undermines performance (Burnes, 2015). Business leaders can help reduce resistance to change by providing employees with greater job autonomy and by explaining how change affects their workload.

When considering organizational changes, business leaders should be cognizant of the attributes that are necessary for agility and those most conducive to change adaptation. Hodges (2017) indicated that when leaders build internal capabilities such as resilience, employees become more confident to create, anticipate, and respond to change efficiently and effectively. Grobler et al. (2019) recommended using an integrated approach to drive methodical and successful change, mitigate resistance, and address consequences of the change. Thakur and Srivastava (2018) found that readiness to change reduced the impact of resistance to change during organizational change. In addition, trust, perceived leadership support, and emotional attachment mediated the relationship between resistance and readiness and reduced the gap between resistance and readiness for change (Thakur & Srivastava, 2018). Despite the inability to anticipate all threats or disruptions, leaders must take a comprehensive and proactive approach to manage uncertainties (L'Hermitte et al., 2015). To ensure success, business leaders must involve employees in the planning and execution of change initiatives.

### **Competitive Advantage**

Organizational competitive advantage is central to strategic management studies with many business leaders and researchers seeking answers to what generates

competitive advantage. To survive in highly competitive business environments, business leaders must participate in activities that yield not only high performance but also a competitive advantage (Alinejad & Anvari, 2019). According to Kaleka and Morgan (2017), organizations with a competitive advantage occupy a privileged position in the minds of the customer, as creators of superior value. Organizational competitive advantage includes the ability to survive in difficult markets and economic environments; creativity in overcoming bureaucracy; low-cost production; and highly technically educated and talented people (Lathukha, 2018). Developing an agile workforce, therefore, enables business leaders to achieve organizational objectives through innovation, enhanced strategic capabilities, and reduced structural workforce expenses (Muduli, 2017).

### **Summary of Literature Review**

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the workforce agility strategies used by financial business leaders to improve the success rate of change initiatives. I conducted this literature review to gain a better understanding of extant research and debates relevant to my research topic. During my literature review, I synthesized, discussed and critiqued literature about key concepts such as (a) the DC theory, which is the conceptual framework for this study, (b) DC and leadership, (c) DC and organizational climate, (d) workforce agility, (e) organizational change management, and (f) competitive advantage.

My decision to use the DC theory as a lens for this study was based on (a) its balanced approach to improving organizational performance and competitive advantage,

and (b) its emphasis on integrating, marshaling, and reintegration resources for effectiveness during dynamic business environments. A key responsibility of leadership is to understand how DC work and how leaders develop and deploy capabilities in their organizations to be able to develop and sustain competitive advantage. To improve the success rate of change initiatives, business leaders must understand the importance of change management and how it contributes to workforce agility. A workforce that is agile consists of employees who are proactive, adaptive, and resilient. When leaders actively design strategies to develop HR DC, they improve the possibility of workforce agility. In conclusion, workforce agility strategies that enable employees to quickly adapt to environmental change may result in the successful implementation of organizational change initiatives that position organizations for competitive advantage.

### **Transition**

The beginning of Section 1 included a discussion of the foundation of the study, the background of the problem, the problem statement, the purpose statement, the nature of the research, the research questions, and the interview questions. Other items discussed in this section include the conceptual framework, the operational definitions, the assumptions, the limitations, the delimitations, and the significance of the study. Section 1 concluded with a review of the professional and academic literature. The literature review included a description and analysis of several sources about the DC theory, workforce agility strategies, and organization change management.

In Section 2 of the study, I include a detailed account of the research process and explanation of my role as a qualitative researcher, a description of the research population

and sampling method, research method, and design. Other key areas include (a) population and sampling, (b) ethical research, (c) data collection instruments, (d) data collection and organization techniques, (e) data analysis, and (f) reliability and validity. To conclude, Section 3 contains the presentation of my findings, a detailed discussion of the applicability of the findings to professional business practice, the implication for social change, the recommendation for future action, as well as future research considerations.

## Section 2: The Project

Section 2 of the study contains a detailed account of the research process and explanation of my role as a qualitative researcher. In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is critical to data collection and data analysis. Using the purposive sampling technique, I deliberately selected participants for the study. In this chapter, I include my rationale for using the purposive sampling technique and outline the specific set of criteria for selecting participants of the study. To ensure the protection of study participants, it is important to maintain high ethical standards throughout the study. For accountability, I explain in detail the measures that I took to assure the ethical protection of participants during and after the study. Section 2 also contains a description of my data collection and data organization techniques. I describe in detail the logical and sequential data analysis process that I used to manage data. To conclude Section 2, I discuss my strategies used to enhance the reliability and validity of my data collection instruments.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the workforce agility strategies that financial business leaders use to improve the success rate of change initiatives. The population included financial business leaders in four Jamaican financial organizations who used a workforce agility strategy to improve the success rate of change initiatives. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to improve the quality of service to customers through convenient, relevant, and appropriate service channels. Organizational leaders may also be able to invest in more local school

programs and community improvement projects that drive public education, individual resilience, and adaptability to environmental change.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is critical to data collection and data analysis. It was my role as a researcher to gather and interpret data in a way that demonstrated an understanding of the study phenomenon. For this qualitative research study, I was the primary data collection instrument. Clark and Veale (2018) posited that focus and interpretive thinking are fundamental to researchers in their role as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Furthermore, my role as a qualitative researcher involved establishing trust with research participants, actively listening, accurately recording data, and clarifying my understanding of the responses provided by the research participants.

The relationship with research participants was also important to the process of data collection and analysis. Karagiozis (2018) indicated that the researcher-participant relationship is based on a sense of trust and respect between the researcher and participants. My relationship with participants helped to determine the quality of data I gathered for the research. As a leader and change practitioner, I have experience and background in the Jamaican financial industry. To mitigate personal bias, Robinson (2014) discouraged personal connection or affiliation with participants of a research. To satisfy this requirement, my employer was not included in this study. I did not select financial organizations with which I had previous relationships, contact, or exposure to participants.

Interactions between qualitative researchers and participants can be ethically challenging for researchers. According to Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, and Cheraghi (2014), researchers have a responsibility to protect all participants in a study from potentially harmful consequences that might affect them because of their participation. Throughout the process of the research, my role involved minimizing flaws in observation and endeavoring to gain truthful knowledge. In addition to a researcher's primary role to protect the rights of all participants, *The Belmont Report* serves as an ethical framework for research (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects and Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Researchers have a responsibility to research in an ethical manner using the principles of *The Belmont Report*.

*The Belmont Report* includes three principles. According to the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects and Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979), the three major principles of the report are (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice. *The Belmont Report* was used as a framework to guide researcher boundaries, ethical considerations, and risk-benefit assessments. Based on Sanjari et al.'s (2014) recommendation, three key strategies were used to ensure ethical standards were met during this research. I specified in advance which data would be collected and how the data would be used in the informed consent form. Research participants were provided with an understanding of the research scope and its risks and benefits by way of an informed consent form. Informed consent provides individual protection and is necessary when conducting ethical research (Greenwood, 2016).



Researchers gain informed consent to alleviate bias in research (Yin, 2018). I asked participants to indicate they understood their rights as participants by reviewing an informed consent form and responding in an e-mail to me with the words “I consent.”

Understanding that my biases as a researcher could have influenced the study’s outcomes was important. Contrary to quantitative research, in which the researcher is objective and distant, qualitative researchers do not require adherence to objectivity (Karagiozis, 2018; Sanjari et al., 2014). Karagiozis (2018) concluded that the interpretation of a study’s findings is primarily shaped by a researcher’s personal experiences (life stories, beliefs, thoughts, and worldviews). I used the technique of bracketing to mitigate biases and avoid viewing data through a personal lens. Sorsa, Kiikkala, and Astedt-Kurki (2015) indicated that bracketing involved setting aside personal assumptions and looking at a phenomenon with an open mind. As an additional measure, I minimized and disclosed personal assumptions and biases while collecting, coding, and sorting qualitative data to acquire an accurate representation of the phenomenon as recommended by Clark and Veale (2018).

As a financial business leader and change management practitioner, I had a perspective of leading change, as well as strategies for implementation success. To mitigate my personal biases, I continuously reevaluated impressions of respondents and challenged my preexisting assumptions. I also had each participant confirm the accuracy of my interpretations of their responses and documented exactly what was presented. As an added measure, I reviewed my findings with peers to ensure that gaps in my argument were identified and addressed. Berger (2015) described reflexivity as a prime measure

used in qualitative research to secure credibility, trustworthiness, and nonexploitative research by self-scrutinization of the lens through which the researcher views the phenomenon studied. Reflexivity is crucial throughout all phases of the research process, including the formulation of the research question, collection and analysis of data, and conclusions (Berger 2015).

An established interview protocol is the key to obtaining good quality interview data that enhances the reliability of the study. According to Dikko (2014) and Yeong, Ismail, Ismail, and Hamzah (2018), an interview protocol is a procedural guide for collecting consistent data and should cover all research objectives. As the primary instrument of data collection, I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) to ensure that I optimized the limited time available in an interview situation to elucidate the research topic. Using an interview protocol also ensures quality data were collected in an objective and trustworthy manner (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). To improve interview protocol and reliability, I ensured alignment between interview questions and research question, constructed an inquiry-based conversation, received feedback on interview protocols, and conducted a practice run of my interview questions. Yeong et al. (2018) indicated that this process of refinement enables researchers to correct shortcomings in the interview questions, and ensures that the refined questions will elicit the intended answers based on the research objectives.

### **Participants**

One of the most important tasks in qualitative research is choosing appropriate research participants. Saunders and Townsend (2016) indicated that researchers should

choose research participants based on their coverage and the extent to which they can provide quality data with their responses. Eligible participants for this study included middle to upper-level management in Jamaican financial organizations who used workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of their organizational change initiatives. To ensure quality data, I selected participants who were over the age of 18 years based on their knowledge base, experience, willingness to participate, and ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner.

The success of this research project hinged on my ability to obtain and maintain access to participants and research organizations. Arduous negotiations, gaining initial access to research sites and participants, and maintaining access throughout the data collection process are, however, challenges facing researchers (Amundsen, Msoroka, & Findsen, 2017). Vuban and Eta (2019) described the process of gaining access as frustrating, stressful, and one that may even scare away prospective researchers. Cunliffe and Alcadipani (2016) conceptualized access as a fluid, temporal, and political process that requires sensitivity to social issues and potential ethical choices faced by both researchers and organization members. I used a combination of strategies to select and gain access to participants of this study.

As a first step in the process, I reviewed the official webpages of the leading financial organizations in Jamaica to identify possible gatekeepers, after which I sent written letters to each organization seeking approval and authorization before the recruitment of individual participants. My strategy for gaining and maintaining access to

participants included building relationships with gatekeepers and engaging in repeated negotiations to obtain written agreement and consent from each organization. I wrote to each gatekeeper requesting a meeting to discuss the nature and purpose of the study. I worked closely with gatekeepers to identify potential participants for the research. Once identified, I extended an invitation to each participant, inviting their participation in the study. Amundsen et al. (2017) cautioned that gatekeepers may help or hinder a researcher's access to research sites and participants based on their perception of the validity and value of the research. Another strategy involved using members from my network to engage and gain access to gatekeepers at intended study organizations. Vuban and Eta (2019) posited that researchers may gain access through individuals within their network, the use of predetermined participants, and snowballing. Snowballing is considered by researchers to be the most effective method to access hidden or hard to reach participants (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). As an added measure, I also used snowballing as a strategy to gain access to hard to reach research participants.

Before negotiating access, I considered the desired nature of the relationship with research participants, the implications of such a relationship, and whether the relationship would be appropriate for the type of research to be done. According to Cunliffe and Alcadipani (2016), this type of consideration helps with the response to political and ethical dilemmas that may arise when gaining and maintaining access. Furthermore, Amundsen et al. (2017) indicated that access could depend on the power dynamics of a gatekeeper's relationship with the researcher and research participants and their status or influence in a specific context. The relationship between the researcher and research

participant is one that is characteristic of ethical, credible, and agentic interactions underscored by mutual respect (Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016; Lewis, 2015). Researchers are often required to juggle maintaining access and the integrity of the research with the need to cooperate, trade-off, concede, compromise their values, or even exit the organization (Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016). To preserve the righteousness of critique, I preserved a distant academic relationship with participants throughout the research. Cunliffe and Alcadipani also cautioned that if close relationships emerge from deep relational access to sensitive areas, a researcher's ability to critically question, analyze, and theorize may be impaired to the point where the researcher may find herself or himself defending an organization's practices. As an added measure, I ensured that the participant's characteristics aligned with the overarching research question. Throughout the research, I engaged participants by telephone to bring about comfortability and maintained a positive rapport to collect quality data leading to data saturation.

## **Research Method and Design**

### **Research Method**

I chose the qualitative research method because of my objective to gain valuable insights and understanding of the phenomenon under study. Barnham (2015) and Yates and Leggett (2016) recommended that researchers seeking to gather data using a narrative data collection technique, instead of a structured numeric technique use a qualitative method. Unlike the quantitative method, researchers use the qualitative method to see beyond the obvious interpretations, solutions, and superficial readings to gain creative insights into what data are saying (Maher et al., 2018). Qualitative research is naturalistic

as the researcher does not manipulate the phenomenon for evaluation (Dasgupta, 2015). Inductive theorizing, according to Bansal et al. (2018), is a cornerstone of qualitative research to the extent that researchers attempt to make sense of situations without imposing pre-existing expectations on the setting. Using a qualitative method allows for better understanding and description of the actual experiences that influence leadership decisions and the workforce agility strategies to improve change projects' success rates.

Other research methodologies considered for this study were quantitative and mixed methods. When using the quantitative methodology, researchers are required to measure the relationships among variables as well as the testing of associated hypotheses (Claydon, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). To address the research question, there is no need to understand the relationship nor the significance of relationships among variables, or to test hypotheses. If I intended to examine the relationship between workforce agility strategies and the success rate of organizational change initiatives, I would have selected the quantitative methodology. Data collected from participants were not required in a numeric format as I needed to have a deeper understanding of the strategies that financial business leaders used. While researchers can combine the strengths of a quantitative study and a qualitative study in a mixed method study, researchers are required to expend additional time, resources, and funding (McKim, 2017). There was also no intention to compare strategies used by financial business leaders and determine the extent to which these strategies were effective, hence a mixed method study would not have been appropriate for this study. Furthermore, there were no quantitative elements involved in the data collection process which required

investigation. Moreover, considering the complexity and demands on time and resources, the mixed methods approach was not appropriate for this study.

### **Research Design**

The design for this research was a multiple case study. Sampson, Goodacre, and O'Cathain (2019) indicated that multiple case study designs afford researchers the benefit of different perspectives and complementary evidence that could help with understanding the phenomenon under study. The decision to use a multiple case study over the single case study design stemmed from a need to achieve data saturation and research validity. Data saturation is reached when there is no additional information to be obtained or further coding is feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Failure to reach data saturation could negatively impact the quality of research and hampers content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To ensure data saturation, I continued to interview research participants until no new information were presented and analyzed the data until no new themes emerged. After an initial interview with participants, I conducted a follow-up interview to review summary interpretations, make corrections, and to add new information provided by the participants. I used the NVivo software to store and manage data. In multiple case studies, researchers use a replication-and comparison logic to see patterns in a data set (Bansal et al., 2018). Battistella et al. (2017) indicated that the use of a multiple case study design allows researchers to do holistic and contextualized research through cross-case comparisons to recognize emerging patterns of relationships among constructs that can lead to important theoretical insights. Furthermore, multiple cases with similar outcomes strengthen the reliability of the findings of the research (Bansal et al. (2018).

Other designs considered were ethnographical design and phenomenology. Yates and Leggett (2016) indicated that with ethnographic research design, researchers immerse themselves in studying entire cultural groups. The results of the study contain a description and interpretation of the group's shared and learned values, behaviors, beliefs, and languages (Yates & Leggett, 2016). An ethnographical design was not appropriate for this study because there was no intention to study the culture and everyday behavior of research participants. Similarly, phenomenology was not appropriate because there was no intention to explore recollections and interpretations of the participants' lived experiences. According to Yates and Leggett, during a phenomenological study, researchers collect data from participants who had specific experiences and report on the participant's meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences. The case study design was, therefore, the most appropriate design to understand specific workforce agility strategies used by financial business leaders to improve the success rate of change initiatives.

Researchers achieve data saturation when new data repeats what was already collected. Saunders et al. (2018) concluded that attempts at achieving saturation should be guided by the research question, theoretical or conceptual framework of the study. While achieving data saturation enhances the validity of the research finding, Saunders et al. cautioned researchers to remain within the scope of the study to prevent the risk of saturation losing its coherence and potency. In this study, I ensured data saturation primarily through member checking. Following each interview, I scheduled a follow-up member checking interview with each research participant. In the member checking



process, I (a) reviewed my interpretation of interview responses, (b) wrote each interview question followed by a concise synthesis, (c) provided an electronic copy of my interpretation to the participant for review, (d) confirmed with participant whether my interpretation accurately represented the answers provided and whether there was any additional information. I continued the member checking process until there was no new data to collect.

### **Population and Sampling**

Sampling in qualitative research requires rigor as it is fundamental to understanding the validity of qualitative research. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) found an acceptable standard of two or three cases used in multiple case studies. Fugard and Potts (2015) recommended that researchers focus on the resources available and the depth of analysis required for the study, using six to 10 participants for interviews and two to four for focus groups. Boddy (2016) argued that the determination of sample size in qualitative research is contextual and partially dependent upon the scientific paradigm under which investigation occurs. Unlike quantitative research, which requires larger sample sizes, the qualitative sample size can be very small because of heavy dependence on rich and detailed data from research participants (Boddy, 2016). In addition to recommendations contained in the extant literature, my selection of sample size for this study was determined by the information power of participating financial business leaders. I used purposive sampling to select one middle or senior manager from four different financial organizations in Jamaica to explore the workforce agility strategies they used to improve the success rate of change initiatives. Morse (2015)

purported that the choice of sampling technique is crucial to the development of a study and depends on the type, nature, and purpose of the study.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that aligned with my study as it allowed me to deliberately select participants based on specific criteria. The primary criteria for selecting participants for my research was based on the information power of the participants in each case. The primary criteria for selecting research participants were, therefore, their knowledge base, experience, willingness to participate, and ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner. In addition to using gatekeepers, I identified potential participants from the management and executive team listed on the official website of four financial organizations. I contacted potential participants by telephone to confirm whether they met the criteria of being a middle or upper-level manager in their financial organization and who have used workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives. Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) underscored the primary emphasis of purposive sampling methods is to obtain saturation. Purposive sampling conceptually aligned with the purpose of my study and allowed me to determine which participants were best suited for my study thereby providing rich data that lead to data saturation and enhanced validity for my study.

During face-to-face interviews, I created an interview setting that was comfortable and non-threatening to participants. According to Gagnon, Jacob, and McCabe (2015), the location of an interview impacts the perception of interview participants and their willingness to participate in a study. I scheduled interviews at an

amenable time in a comfortable, private meeting room on the premises of the financial organizations to which the participants were employed. Dawson, Hartwig, Brimbal, and Denisenkov (2017) found that interview participants shared information more freely in a spacious room as opposed to when interviewed in a small room. The intention was to create a comfortable environment that was conducive to trust and openness.

Data saturation is an important component of rigor in qualitative research and is primarily facilitated by sampling. Although a small number of interviews can be sufficient to capture a comprehensive range of issues in data, more data are needed to develop a richly textured understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017). Constantinou, Georgiou, and Perdikogianni (2017) indicated that saturation is the evidence that the obtained dataset has enough information for the qualitative researcher to go into the appropriate depth and address the research question adequately. Marshall et al. (2013) asserted that saturation is reached when the researcher gathers data to the point of diminishing returns. Morse (2015) argued that the notion that saturation is achieved when the researcher has heard it all is flawed and may lead to a shallow understanding of the topic being studied. Saunders et al. (2018) concluded that saturation should be approached in a manner consistent with the research question(s), theoretical position, and analytic framework of the research. The extent of saturation should be limited to the scope of the research, to prevent the loss of coherence and potency if saturation is conceptualized and stretched too widely. The sample size selected for this research ensured that I obtained the depth of data that lead to saturation. In addition to sampling, data triangulation was used to ensure data saturation was reached.

Furthermore, researchers may use data triangulation to explore different levels and perspectives of the same phenomenon through multiple sources thereby ensuring the validity of the study results (Fusch & Ness, 2015). In this study, I ensured data saturation primarily through member checking. In the member checking process, I (a) reviewed my interpretation of interview responses, (b) wrote each interview question followed by a concise synthesis, (c) provided a printed copy of my interpretation to the participant for review, (d) confirmed with participant whether my interpretation accurately represented the answers provided and whether there was any additional information. I continued the member checking process until no new data emerged. I achieved data saturation by my third interview, however, I conducted the fourth interview for confirmation.

### **Ethical Research**

Maintaining high ethical standards in research implies both maintaining the integrity of the research as well as the protection of study participants. In qualitative research, informed consent is touted as the most important protection of research participants. The process of informed consent involved both the consent dialogue and the documentation of obtaining informed consent on the IRB approved consent form.

Wallace and Sheldon (2015) found that when making judgments on the ethical dimensions of applications for research, protecting the rights of participants in terms of free and informed consent, confidentiality, no adverse repercussion on their employment or relationship with the researcher and colleagues were the foremost considerations.

Researchers must recognize the significance of obtaining valid and appropriate informed consent as an important protection of the rights and welfare of research participants. The

procedural elements relating to merit and integrity, justice, beneficence, and respect of the informed consent can help research mitigate against risks during the research (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015; Yin, 2018). Respect for individuals demands that informed consent be legally obtained from individuals before they participate in research. As such, I ensured to obtain the approval of the IRB before beginning the data collection process. Once IRB approval was granted (approval number 04-06-20-0756606), I emailed the informed consent form to each participant for review. Participants who agreed with the contents of the informed consent form were required to respond in an email with the words 'I consent'. I also encouraged each participant to retain a copy of the informed consent form for transparency and accountability throughout the research. At the end of the research, I shared a summary of the findings with the study participants while protecting the confidentiality of each participant.

As a researcher following the protocols of *The Belmont Report*, I ensured that participants had a full understanding of their role in the study. Aguila, Weidmer, Illingworth, and Martinez (2016) indicated that the process of informed consent involves providing complete information to participants about a research project and to protect personal information they may disclose. The informed consent form included information to participants about their rights, the purpose of the study, the procedures to be undergone, and the potential risks and benefits of their participation. The goal of the informed consent process was to provide enough information for participants to decide whether they wanted to enroll in a study or to continue participation. I ensured that the informed consent form was written in a language easily understood by the participants, it

would minimize the possibility of coercion or undue influence, and the participant was given enough time to consider participation. The elements of the informed consent were presented and discussed with prospective participants in a sequential manner using the approved informed consent form as a guide. The discussion with prospective participants was done in a manner that facilitated dialogue with reinforcement and elaboration of important information. I was respectful, considerate of the sensitivity of information shared, and maintained an appropriate level of professionalism. Throughout the process, I constantly evaluated whether the process was achieving the goal, which was obtainment of legally effective informed consent from the participants. Haines (2017) suggested that academic research in business and management is a challenging but rewarding activity. Moreover, of extreme importance was ensuring that the research was conducted properly and acceptably while contributing to the body of knowledge specific to the research topic (Haines, 2017). Due to the sensitive nature of the environment with financial organizations as it related to customer information, obtaining ethical and governance approval proved to be complex and challenging, hence early approval was sought. Haines (2017) suggested demonstrating that any potential risks to participation be minimized and that those remaining were proportionate to the potential benefits of conducting the research study.

Participation in this study was voluntary; hence participants could choose to withdraw at any time. I emailed the informed consent form to individuals who agreed to participate in the study. I discussed the form with participants and requested they indicate their agreement with the terms by responding in an email with the words 'I consent'.

Adopting the recommendation of Aguila et al. (2016), I also ensured participants understood that they could refuse to answer any question, participate in one component of the study but not another, or withdraw from the study at any point without repercussions. Participants choosing to withdraw from the study could contact me by telephone, email, or verbally during an interview to advise of their decision to discontinue the process. The data were not included in the final findings if participants withdraw. There were no plans to issue monetary incentives for participation in this study. I, however, expressed my gratitude to participants with a thank you letter, and a summary of the final research study to each participant.

I ensured that the ethical protection of participants was adequate by using informed consent, ensuring data was secured, protecting participant identification, using codes to protect identification, as well as securely disposing of data. In my final report, codes replaced the names of individuals and organizations to maintain confidentiality. Yin (2018) indicated that the use of a pseudonym code is an effective way to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of research participants. My coding system consisted of the case number, data source type, participant number, and the date data were collected. Therefore, if I interviewed with a participant on May 25, 2020, the code assigned was case1\_interview\_P1\_25052020. Signed copies of the letters of cooperation from gatekeepers, informed consent forms, the audio recording of interviews, collected documentation, and all data involved in the study were safely stored in password-protected files on my personal computer (soft copies) and a fireproof safe (hardcopies) for 5 years to protect the confidentiality of participants. Only after the 5 years have

elapsed will the data gathered, participant information, and audio recording be destroyed by a reputable company and certification of destruction produced to participants if required. Walden University's approval number for this study is 04-06-20-0756606 and it expires on April 5, 2021.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

As the researcher for this multiple case study, I was the primary data collection instrument based on the information presented in this section by Karagiozis (2018), Marshall and Rossman (2016), Sanjari et al. (2014), and Yin (2018). I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A), consisting of 10 open-ended questions, follow-up probing questions, and member checking procedures to guide conversations and elicit information from financial business leaders about workforce agility strategies they used to improve the success rate of change initiatives. Castillo-Montoya (2016) indicated that researchers used an interview protocol to obtain reliable and valid depth of data. I used an interview protocol to improve the credibility of the instruments and follow the same sequencing of interview questions to ensure consistency. Gatekeepers were allowed to provide company documents in the form of (a) annual reports, (b) company policy and procedural documentation, (c) project management plans, (d) change management plans, and (e) organizational strategic plans, as evidence of strategies used in their organizations. During my analysis, I focused on the outcome of agility strategies used by each financial business leader. With the approval of participants, all interviews were recorded for quality assurance purposes. I also used my field journal to record relevant information about each interview, participant, concerns, and early impressions.



Data collection is an important aspect of any type of research study. Inaccurate data collection can impact the results of a study and ultimately lead to invalid results. My choice of data collection instrument needed to capture quality data that addressed the research question and fulfilled the purpose of the study. Paradis, O'Brien, Nimmon, Bandiera, and Martimianakis (2016) indicated that the data collection instrument and the analytical approach of the researcher determine the use and interpretation of data collected. Yin (2018) purported that the use of multiple sources of data increases dependability and credibility in qualitative case study research. According to Paradis et al., interviews are used during one-on-one discussions to gather data and are ideal when used to document participants' accounts, perceptions of, or stories about attitudes toward and responses to certain situations or phenomena. Interview data are often used to generate themes, theories, and models. Face-to-face interviews, according to Heath, Williamson, Williams, and Harcourt (2018), are the gold standard because of flexibility, spontaneous personal and observable interaction, and more control over the interview environment than would be possible during remote methods of interviewing. I collected data using open-ended semistructured interviews and a review of documentary evidence in the form of (a) annual reports, (b) company policy and procedural documentation, (c) project management plans, (d) change management plans, and (e) organizational strategic plans.

I used an expert panel and member checking to enhance the reliability and validity of my data collection instruments. Validity refers to the integrity and application of the methods undertaken and the precision in which the findings accurately reflect the

data, while reliability describes consistency within the employed analytical procedures (Noble & Smith, 2015). Cypress (2017) indicated that reliability and validity are determined by the researcher's creativity, sensitivity, flexibility, and skill in using verification strategies. To enhance the reliability and validity of my data collection instruments, I used my doctoral chair committee as an expert panel prior to IRB approval to evaluate my interview protocol. The ultimate goal was to construct a reliable interview protocol for data collection. According to Dikko (2014), in the conduct of any research, not only is the choice of an appropriate data collection instrument important, even more important is to ensure that the chosen instrument collects the right data. Yeong et al. (2018) indicated that expert panels are very helpful in enhancing the predictability and credibility of an interview protocol. Member checking was used to ensure accurate and reliable data were collected during the interview process. Anney (2014) and Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) identified member checking as a credibility and validation strategy and an indication of rigor in qualitative research. After each interview, I provided each participant with my interpretation of their interview responses. In a follow-up interview, I allowed participants to evaluate my interpretation, identify areas for corrections, suggest changes, and provide additional insights.

### **Data Collection Technique**

My data collection technique involved using a combination of semistructured interviews and a review of documentary evidence to gather rich and thick data. For each participating organization, I reviewed documentary evidence from (a) annual reports, (b) company policy and procedural documentation, (c) project management plans, (d) change

management plans, and (e) organizational strategic plans. Harrison, Birks, Franklin, and Mills (2017) posited that when researchers use multiple data sources in case study research, they benefit from a more synergistic and comprehensive view of the phenomenon under study. According to Yin (2018), in case study interviews, the researcher has two primary roles (a) following the researcher's own line of inquiry, and (b) verbalizing the actual interview questions in an unbiased manner that serves the need of the phenomenon under study. Although interviews may be conducted in person or by telephone, I chose to conduct only face-to-face interviews with participants.

I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) to ensure I collected good quality interview data. Yeong et al. (2018) indicated that with a reliable interview protocol, qualitative researchers can conduct the interview process in a systematic, consistent, and comprehensive manner. To address my research topic, I used the following abridged interview protocol to collect interview data from the participants:

1. Before receiving IRB approval from Walden University, I made contact with my doctoral chair committee to act as an expert panel to review my interview protocol.
2. Phillipi and Lauderdale (2018) indicated that using a field journal to record qualitative field data may be useful in constructing thick, rich descriptions of the study context, encounter, interview, and document's valuable contextual data. Throughout the interview process, I used a field journal to record (a) data about each participant, (b) the date and time of interviews, (c) location of the interview, (d) how interview arrangements were made, (e) reflections on

the details of the interview, and (f) any concerns that may interfere with the quality of the data or my interpretation of the data.

3. At the start of all interviews, I introduced myself and the purpose of the study to establish rapport with the study participants.
4. I discussed the informed consent form with the participant, responded to questions asked, and provided clarification where required. I also confirmed that the participant understood the purpose of the interview and retained a copy of the informed consent form for future reference.
5. Before the start of all interviews, I explained the interview process and informed the participants that the interview would be recorded to ensure that I captured accurate and complete data. I also reminded participants that they may choose to withdraw from the study at any time.
6. Following informed consent, the interview proceeded based on the established interview protocol (see Appendix A) which consisted of scripted, open-ended questions, follow-up questions, and probes.
7. During each interview, I watched for nonverbal cues, took observation notes, paraphrased as needed, and asked follow-up probing questions to ensure clarity and to get more in-depth data.
8. Immediately following each interview, I used oTranscribe, which is a transcription software, to convert interview audio recordings to text versions and stored using appropriate naming conventions.

9. I thereafter prepared my interpretation of the interview responses for the member checking procedure. With each participant, I coordinated a date and time on which to facilitated the member checking discussions.
10. After the member checking discussion with each participant, I uploaded all interview transcriptions into the NVivo software program for storage and data analysis.

The use of semistructured interviews in qualitative research included both advantages and disadvantages. The primary advantage of using semistructured interviews as a data collection technique was the high quality and large quantity of data yielded in the process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). According to Castillo-Montoya (2016), by using semistructured interviews as a data collection technique, researchers benefited from rich and detailed qualitative data for understanding the experience of research participants. McIntosh and Morse (2015) posited that the presence of the interviewer gives structure to the interview situation and communication is optimized because both verbal and non-verbal communication are possible. As the primary instrument of data collection, I was also able to clarify questions if the participants appeared confused and provided prompts for clearer responses.

Conversely, in addition to time and cost, face-to-face interviews could be disadvantageous as during the interview, participants could feel inhibited when asked to respond to sensitive questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Furthermore, Marshall and Rossman (2016) indicated that the large quantity of data generated by using interviews could be a potential disadvantage, as large quantities of

data may be time-consuming to analyze. To minimize the impact of the disadvantages associated with semistructured interviews, I structured the interviews to take no longer than 45 to 60 minutes. Following the approval of the IRB, I followed my prescribed interview protocol (Appendix A) to ensure data were collected effectively and efficiently. To explore strategy, human interaction is essential. Despite the disadvantages, I chose semistructured, face-to-face interviews as the most appropriate technique for exploring strategies used by financial business leaders to improve the success rate of change initiatives.

Researchers encouraged subjecting data collection instruments and techniques to critique or pilot testing to ensure cogency. Pilot studies are useful to assess and prepare data-collection and analysis techniques (Doody & Doody, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Doody and Doody argued that pilot studies were not essential to qualitative research because qualitative research had the flexibility for the researcher to learn and adjust during the research process. Furthermore, pilot studies can be costly and time-consuming (Doody & Doody, 2015).

I used member checking to enhance the accuracy, credibility, and validity of data collected during the interview process. According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking is a validation technique that may be used by researchers to validate, verify, or assess the trustworthiness of qualitative results. Moreover, the purpose of doing member checks was to eliminate researcher bias when analyzing and interpreting results by including the voice of research participants (Anney, 2014). Subsequent to the interviews, I provided participants with my interpretation of their interview. In a follow-up interview, I allowed

participants to evaluate my interpretation, identify areas for corrections, suggest changes, and provide any additional insights they may have.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Obtaining rich and meaningful interaction with data is important to qualitative data analysis. However, the significance of managing and organizing research data cannot be underestimated as organizing and keeping track of data is paramount to the reliability of qualitative research (Theron, 2015; Yin, 2018). Moreover, to be effective, qualitative researchers must organize collected data and field notes using a logical structure. Maher et al. (2018) argued that the organization and management of data are a prerequisite for the write-up and dissemination of research findings. I used a combination of techniques to organize and manage the collected data. I maintained a field journal to record details about the study as it unfolded, relevant details about the participants, concerns that may have future implications, as well as my critical reflections. Phillipi and Lauderdale (2018) encouraged the use of field journals and indicated how exceedingly valuable field notes were to data analysis. When digitized and organized, researchers may search for field notes using keywords and further reorganize by topic, time frame, or participant. Another data organization technique was to create and maintain a case study database. Yin (2018) indicated that a case study database significantly increased the reliability of case studies. I placed the data in NVivo, which is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program. Zamawe (2015) indicated that NVivo is effective for document and database management as it enables the creations of

linkages that simplify the manipulation of data and makes it easier to reshape and reorganize coding and nodes structure.

As data were collected and verified for accuracy, I coded, sorted, and organized the data according to common words, phrases, concepts, and emerging themes. Codes were further organized based on main and supporting themes. Data coding is a method of organizing data so that underlining messages portrayed by data become clearer to the researcher (Theron, 2015). I created a code table in NVivo so that codes were consistent and readily accessible for future use. I also used a labeling system with appropriate file naming conventions as an added measure to maintain confidentiality and anonymity for each research participant. Yin (2018) indicated that the use of a pseudonym code is an effective way to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of research participants. My labeling system consisted of the following schema: case#\_data source type\_participant#\_data collected. For example, an interview conducted with a participant on May 25, 2020, would be represented by the label Case1\_interview\_P1\_25052020. Each label was entered into my field journal at the point of interview or data collection. In addition, this schema was used to label interview transcriptions and related files stored in my case study database stored in the NVivo software program.

Raw data will be stored securely for a period of 5 years after completion of my study. I used password protection on all digital copies of raw data. Physical documentation containing interview data, recordings, field notes, and documentary evidence were securely stored in a fireproof cabinet that was equipped with combination access. After 5 years from the completion of my study, I will destroy raw data collected



during the study and all supporting documentation by physically and digitally shredding. I will use the services of a reputable company to destroy physical copies of signed consent forms, audio recordings of interviews, and documentary evidence received. If required, a certificate of destruction will be provided to participants.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is paramount to the credibility of qualitative research. Chowdhury (2015) and Mayer (2015) indicated that data analysis is central to qualitative research and is greatly dependent on the researcher's reasoning abilities. In qualitative data analysis, there are several techniques that researchers may use. To satisfy the purpose of this multiple case study, I primarily used thematic analysis. Clark and Veale (2018) and Roberts, Dowell, and Nie (2019) described thematic analysis as a process involving the identification of themes with specific relevance to the focus, question, context, and theoretical framework of the research. According to Roberts et al., an inductive approach to thematic analysis may lead to unexpected themes with the potential to provide further useful analysis of the data to develop during the coding process. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) however cautioned researchers to approach thematic analysis with transparency, and pay attention to details to ensure accuracy in the research findings. I was able to build trustworthiness in my research findings by using proper data collections and techniques, and by adhering to accurate data analysis procedures.

Planning and executing a logical and sequential data analysis process was essential to uncovering patterns and themes in research data. During the data analysis process, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework as a guide to deliberately and rigorously

identifying patterns of themes within my collected data. Braun and Clarke recommended six steps in the thematic analysis process included (a) familiarizing yourself with your data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing the report. During the thematic analysis process:

1. I immersed myself in the data by conducting at least five readings of the interview transcripts, documentary evidence, and field notes to become familiar with the data. During this step, I also made note of any impressions.
2. I then used a combination of the traditional method (working through hard copies of the transcripts with pens and highlighters) and the NVivo software program (organizing and labeling data) to identify and generate initial codes. I organized the data in a meaningful and systematic way, using the literature review and conceptual framework as a guide to generating initial codes. I then expanded the list of initial codes from the literature review and conceptual framework to include common concepts, repetitive statements, and keywords and phrases found throughout the data.
3. I examined initial codes and grouped them into themes according to similarity. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) indicated that a theme is a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and or research question. I further arranged the themes into main and subthemes. At the end of this step, I had codes that were organized into main and subthemes that communicated something specific about the research question.

4. I reviewed, modified, and developed the initial themes that I identified in step three of the process during this step. I ensured to link all data relevant to each theme in the NVivo software program. I also reviewed the themes for accuracy, relevance, and supportive data.
5. I organized the main themes from the broadest topic to the narrowest topic to answer the research question. During this final refinement step, I reviewed the themes to identify the essence of what each theme was about, as well as the relationship between main themes and subthemes.
6. Finally, I used tables and figures to present the results of my data analysis. Tables and figures aided the presentation and write-up of my overall research findings.

To strengthen the data analysis process, I also used data triangulation. Data triangulation is a strategy to enhance research validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Kern, 2018; Renz, Carrington, & Badger, 2018). Data triangulation served to validate data and research by cross verifying information from multiple data sources. To strengthen the validity of my study, I triangulated data collected from interviews, annual reports, company policy and procedural documentation, project management plans, change management plans, organizational strategic plans, and notes from my field journal. According to Jentoft and Olsen (2019), researchers using triangulation benefited from a better and broader understanding of the researcher topic. During the data analysis,

I triangulated data from several sources to understand how financial business leaders develop strategies to enable their workforce to adapt to change.

I used a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to organize and manage the data. Two commonly used CAQDAS are NVivo and ATLAS.ti (Maher et al., 2018; Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2016; Zamawe, 2015). Woods et al. (2016) found that researchers primarily used CAQDAS to (a) organize and manage textual data from interviews, focus groups, field notes, and open-ended survey questions; (b) engage in analytical practices extending beyond the limits of manual/paper-based techniques; and (c) to make their analytical processes more transparent. While CAQDAS software is not capable of producing finalized analysis, researchers may use the software to support and enhance the analysis process (Yin, 2018; Zamawe, 2015). I used NVivo to support and enhance my data analysis process. As an initial step in getting familiar with the research data, I first used oTranscribe, which is a transcription software to convert recorded interviews to text. Once converted, I uploaded the interview data into the NVivo software program. A distinct advantage of using the NVivo software program was the ability to create an indexing system of data categories, also called nodes (Woods et al., 2016). Furthermore, Maher et al. (2018) asserted that when traditional tools (colored pens, paper, and sticky notes) and digital software packages (such as NVivo) are combined in the data analysis process, this offers a valid and tested approach in qualitative research. To strengthen the data analysis process, I combined traditional tools such as colored pens, paper, and sticky notes with the use of the NVivo software program to better manage data and analyze data, as well as to enhance transparency.

The primary objective of the data analysis process was to identify the patterns and themes that addressed my research question. To facilitate clear progression from study objectives to the conclusion, Neale (2016) recommended that researchers begin the coding of data with deductive codes derived from structured or semistructured instruments used for data generation. I started the coding process with keywords from the theoretical and general literature, then embarked on a process of reviewing and evaluating pre-codes for alignment with the general literature and my chosen conceptual framework (DC theory). To remain focused on the key themes, I also used a top ten list as a technique to present the common themes identified in the coded data. Clark and Veale (2018) indicated that a top ten list is created by extracting ten patterns from qualitative data that the researcher considers most representative of the study. Another strategy that could have been used was the trinity strategy. With the trinity strategy, the three main patterns or themes that stood out in the data could be discussed. Both the top ten list and the trinity strategy required that I minimized tendencies to look for, interpret, or recall only information that validated my assumptions and biases regarding the topic (see Clark & Veale, 2018).

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are key concepts that indicate the quality and rigor of qualitative research. Amankwaa (2016) argued that research that lacks rigor is considered worthless. To develop trustworthiness in qualitative research, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability must be present (Cope, 2014; Maher et al., 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative researchers use reliability and validity to

strengthen the accuracy and quality of the research findings (Yin, 2018). Unlike quantitative researchers, who apply statistical methods to establish validity and reliability, qualitative researchers design and incorporate methodological strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of research findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). Moreover, threats to reliability and validity cannot be actively addressed by using standards and criteria applied at the end of the study (Cypress, 2017). To demonstrate rigor, qualitative research must incorporate strategies throughout the study to ensure the reliability and validity of the research finding. As a fundamental principle and using an iterative approach, I ensured that all elements of the study were consistently aligned. Newman and Covrig (2013) indicated that consistency between the components of the research plan, a logical trail of evidence, and transparency in reporting were basic characteristics of quality in research.

### **Reliability**

Reliability is an indication of the procedural consistency of the study. According to Cypress (2017), reliability is inherently integrated and internally needed to attain validity. The quality indicator of reliability is dependability.

**Dependability.** Dependability refers to the stability of the data over time, over the conditions of the study, and the validity and trustworthiness of results (Connelly, 2016). Morse (2015) indicated that dependability is achieved through credibility. Prior to IRB approval, I used my doctoral chair committee to evaluate my data collection instrument to ensure that it was able to reliably collect the data it was intended to collect. Procedures for dependability included maintaining an audit trail of researcher notes and a review of

my data collection instrument by my doctoral committee. My field journal contained notes about all activities that happened throughout the process of the study, decisions taken, and justifications for decisions taken. In my field journal, I captured information about who to interview, why, what, and what to observe. I documented the logical and sequential process for my research procedures in a field journal before, during and after data collection, member checking, and data analysis and the interpretation procedures. To demonstrate rigor and reliability, I also documented the research procedures in my field journal and provide detailed descriptions of my (a) data collection instruments, (b) data organization techniques, and (c) data analysis. Another strategy used to improve the dependability and quality of qualitative research was member checking. According to Anney (2014), member checking involved establishing structural coherence and referential adequacy before the production of the final report. Anney also indicated that member checking was a crucial process that served primarily to eliminate researcher bias during the analysis and interpretation of research results. I used member checking to increase the dependability of my research results. After each interview, I provided participants with my interpretation of their interview responses. In a follow-up interview, I allowed participants to evaluate my interpretation, identify areas for corrections, suggest changes, and provide additional insights.

### **Validity**

Qualitative research is valid when it measures what it was intended to measure and the truthfulness of the research results. Validity, according to Noble and Smith (2015), refers to the integrity and application of the methods undertaken and the precision

with which the findings accurately reflect the data. Rigor in qualitative research is the quality or state of being very exact, thorough, and accurate (Cypress, 2017). Credibility, transferability, and confirmability are quality indicators of validity (Cope, 2014; Maher et al., 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The validity of the study determines the extent to which the results of the study may be transferred to other groups and circumstances.

**Credibility.** Credibility ensures the study measures what was intended and is a true reflection of the social reality of the participants (Maher et al., 2018; Morse, 2015). Connelly (2016) described credibility as confidence in the truth of the study and as the most important criterion of quality. To ensure the credibility of research findings, Morse and Noble and Smith indicated that researchers may use several strategies to enhance the credibility of qualitative research. Of the strategies recommended, I used the following to enhance credibility in my study:

1. Accounted for personal bias
2. Used data triangulation
3. Used member checking
4. Adopted meticulous record-keeping with the use of a field journal
5. Engaged in prolonged engagement with research participants.

As the primary data collection instrument, I provided a detailed account of personal biases and continually reevaluated and challenged preexisting assumptions. I also used *The Belmont Report* as a framework to guide my boundaries, ethical considerations, and risk-benefit assessments. Miracle (2016) indicated that *The Belmont Report* was grounded on the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. To strengthen



and substantiate the results of my research, I analyzed data from multiple sources (data triangulation). Data were obtained through interviews, a review of documentary evidence, and a review of the extant literature on the research topic.

With data triangulation, different information sources and perspectives helped to produce a more comprehensive set of findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). With member checking, I ensured that my interpretation and documentation of data collect reflected the experience of participants. Participants had the opportunity to review and validate my interpretation and analysis. Throughout the research process, I used a field journal to document all research activities including, decisions taken, justification for decisions, personal observations, relevant information about participants, initial interpretations, and documentation of any matter that may have had an impact on the study. I also developed and maintained a professional relationship with each research participants throughout the research process. Prolonged engagement with research participants was necessary for producing rich and thick data. According to (Morse, 2015), spending more time on data collection provided time for trust to be established with participants. With trust, researchers gain better and richer information.

**Transferability.** To improve transferability, I provided detailed descriptions of the research phenomenon, participants, research process, analysis, and results. The detailed information included information that other researchers may transfer to future studies. Transferability relates to the ability of the findings to be transferred to other contexts or settings (Maher et al., 2018). By providing rich details, readers may be able to assess whether the findings of the study are transferable to their specific setting

(Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Morse, 2015). Although the findings of case studies may not be generalizable across other industries or organizations, the results may be beneficial to business leaders in similar situations (Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2017; Morse, 2015). The results of my study may be transferable to business leaders in other organizations or industries who struggle to develop workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of their change initiatives and change programs.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability is comparable to objectivity in quantitative research and refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be confirmed by other researchers. Moreover, confirmability is an indication that the findings and interpretations of qualitative research reflect the views of participants and not unduly swayed by the personal biases of the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Tong & Dew, 2016). I used an audit trail, reflexivity, member checking, and data triangulation as techniques to establish the confirmability of my research finding. Anney (2014) recommended the use of a reflexive journal (also called a field journal) as a way to establish confirmability. I used my field journal to record and maintain an audit trail containing detailed notes of all research activities. I recorded decisions taken, justifications, personal reflections, and analyses as the study progressed. Reflexivity enhances the accuracy and credibility of qualitative research by accounting for researcher values, beliefs, knowledge, and biases (Berger, 2015). Throughout all phases of the research process, I demonstrated reflexivity by using the first-person language in my documentation and by providing a detailed and transparent account of decisions and rationale for my decisions. I disclosed all assumptions, beliefs, and personal biases that

may have a potential impact on the findings of the research. I ensured confirmability by member checking and linking the research findings to raw data by including quotations in the documentation of my research findings. Member checking was a technique used to explore the credibility of results. According to Birt et al. (2016), with member checking, participants are provided with research data or results to check for accuracy and resonance with their experience. Data triangulation involved cross verifying information from multiple data sources (Carter et al., 2014). A major strength of case study data collection is the ability to use multiple sources of data (Turner, Cardinal, & Burton, 2017; Yin, 2018). Furthermore, Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo, and Gonzalez (2018) indicated that triangulation reduced the risk of having the results of a study impaired due to the limitations and shortcomings of a single method or source. I used data triangulation to strengthen the construct validity of my research by reducing inaccuracies and personal biases.

**Data saturation.** Failure to achieve data saturation has a negative effect on the validity of qualitative research. Researchers achieve data saturation when new data leads to little or no discovery of new information about the research topic (Lowe, Norris, Farris, & Babbage, 2018; Tran, Porcher, Falissard, & Ravaud, 2016). Similarly, Saunders, et al., (2018) indicated that data saturation is the extent to which new data repeats what already exists in previous data. While there is no universal approach to achieving data saturation, researchers agree that no new data, no new themes, no new coding, and the ability to replicate the study are common principles of data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Lowe et al., 2018). I used a combination of approaches to ensure

data saturation in my study. I ensured that the design of my study was appropriate to adequately address the research topic. I collected rich (quality) and thick (quantity) data during the data collection process. I ensured that the chosen data collection instrument was used by previous researchers and have a track record of success for delivering intended results. I also correctly documented the data collection and data analysis processes as evidence for reference by future researchers.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 commenced with a restating of the purpose of the study and an explanation of my role as a qualitative researcher. I discussed sample size, sampling technique, and described the interview protocol that guided conversations and elicited information from financial business leaders. I also detailed measures that I took to assure the ethical protection of participants during and after the study.

In addition to identifying the data collection instruments, I described my data collection and data organization techniques. I used member checking to ensure accurate and reliable data were collected during the interview process. I described in detail the logical and sequential data analysis process of the study and the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) that I used to manage data. During the thematic data analysis process, I used a combination of the traditional method and the NVivo software program to identify and generate codes.

Section 3 includes the presentation of my findings and includes the overarching research question, analysis, discussion of my research findings, and discussions on how my research findings confirm, disconfirm or extend knowledge in the discipline. In

Section 3, I also provided a detailed discussion on the applicability of the findings to professional business practice, the implication for social change, the recommendation for future action, as well as future research considerations.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the workforce agility strategies that financial business leaders used to improve the success rate of change initiatives. Of the top 10 reasons for change implementation failure, 70% of change implementation failure is accounted for by workforce shortcomings or incapacity to change (Antony & Gupta, 2019). Researchers further agreed that if business leaders want to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, they should adopt practices to increase the agility of their workforce (Heilmann et al., 2018; Munteanu, Bibu, Nastase, Cristache, & Matis, 2020). It is therefore important for financial business leaders to develop and implement appropriate workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives in their organizations.

Data for this study came from middle to upper-level management at four financial organizations in Jamaica. The findings indicated that financial business leaders seeking to improve the success rate of change initiatives should utilize (a) effective leadership practices; (b) appropriate talent management practices to attract, retain, and develop a knowledge-based workforce; (c) change management best practices; and (d) mechanisms to continuously monitor and measure organizational and individual performance against key performance indicators (KPIs). Section 3 includes a more detailed presentation of my findings, discussion around the application of the study to professional practice, and the implications for social change. In addition to recommendations for action and further research, Section 3 also includes my reflection and conclusion.

### Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was:

RQ: What workforce agility strategies do financial business leaders use to improve the success rate of change initiatives?

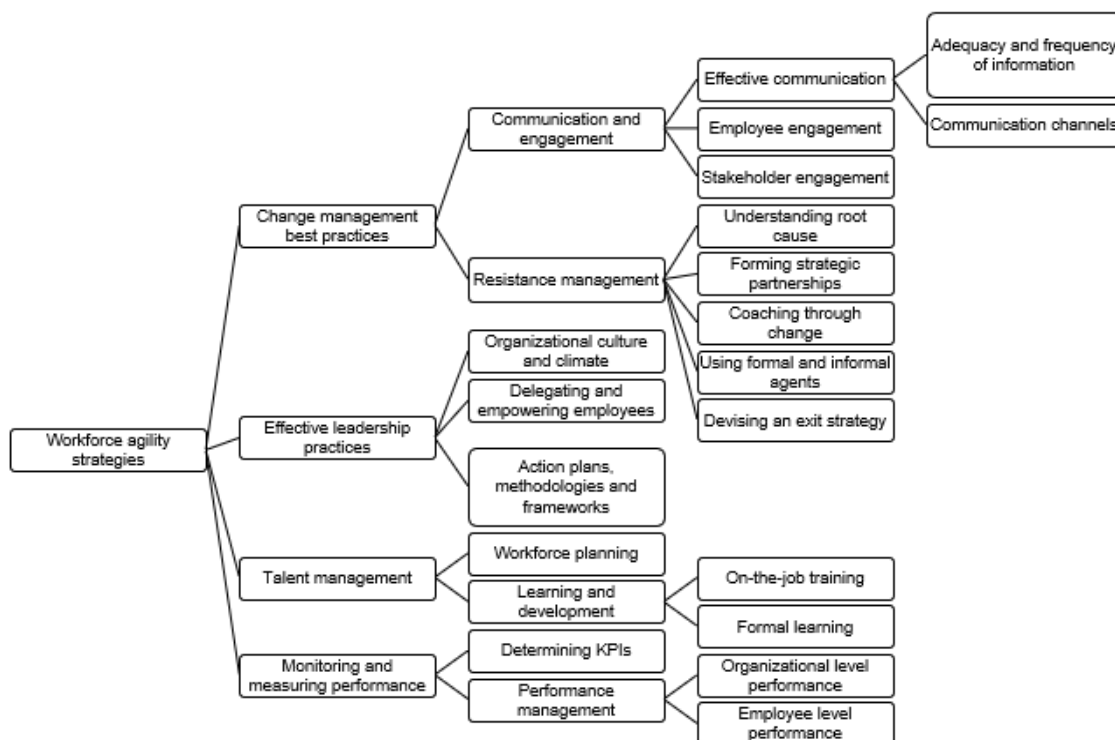
To answer the research question, I conducted semistructured interviews with four financial business leaders (Table 1) and reviewed company documentation in the form of (a) annual reports, (b) company policy and procedural documentation, (c) project management plans, (d) change management plans, and (e) organizational strategic plans.

Table 1

#### *Participant Demographic Information*

Participant number	Participant role	Type of financial organization	Years of experience	Employees in organization
P1	Group executive – finance & planning	Mutual	37	1500 - 2000
P2	Group chief human resource officer	Commercial	25	2500 – 3000
P3	Head of business transformation & change management	Commercial	20	2500 – 3000
P4	Head of business strategy	Credit Union	17	800 – 1000

I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework as a guide to deliberately and rigorously identify patterns of themes in my collected data. I also used NVivo to support the data management and analysis process. Four central themes emerged from the data analysis process, depicted in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Major and minor themes of workforce agility strategies used to improve the success rate of change initiatives.

For financial business leaders to improve the success rate of change initiatives, they should utilize (a) effective leadership practices; (b) appropriate talent management practices to attract, retain, and develop a knowledge-based workforce; (c) change management best practices; and (d) mechanisms to continuously monitor and measure organizational and individual performance against KPIs. In presenting my findings, I used the following naming conventions:

- FO1 for Financial Organization 1, which is a member-owned mutual building society, and P1 for the participant who was interviewed;



- FO2 for Financial Organization 2, which is a commercial bank, and P2 for the participant who was interviewed;
- FO3 for Financial Organization 3, which is a commercial bank, and P3 for the participant who was interviewed;
- FO4 for Financial Organization 4, which is a credit union, and P4 for the participant who was interviewed.

### **Theme 1: Leadership Practices**

Effective leadership practices to enable and empower employees emerged as a major theme during the data analysis of this study. Successful leadership not only develops vision and culture for change, but it also empowers and motivates employees in change engagement (Yue, Men, & Ferguson, 2019). Based on my data analysis, three subthemes emerged regarding leadership practices that enable and empower employees. These included creating an organizational culture and climate indicative of trust, team synergy, and an agile mindset; delegating and empowering employees into action; and using appropriate action plans, methodologies, and frameworks to support execution strategy.

**Organizational culture and climate.** Leaders who create an organizational climate and culture indicative of trust, team synergies, and an agile mindset position their employees and the organization for success. P1 shared that, “Where there are low levels of trust in the environment, it is very difficult to execute as planned. Employee responsiveness is slow.” According to Canning et al. (2020), employees who perceived their leaders to be of a growth (versus fixed) mindset reported that their company’s

culture was characterized by greater collaboration, innovation, and integrity, and they reported higher levels of organizational trust and commitment. Based on their experience leading employees through change, all four participants interviewed indicated a preference for active employee involvement throughout the planning and execution process. For organizational change to be successful, employees must be actively involved in the change process as this usually results in a more positive attitude towards organizational change (Jung, Kang, & Choi, 2020). Employee involvement was evident as a strategy used by the participants interviewed.

Further, P1 and P4 indicated using a consultative and participative approach in which employees are actively involved in the strategic planning and execution process. Conversely, P4 also explained that depending on the nature of a strategic initiative, a top-down approach sometimes is more appropriate. In FO1, FO2, and FO3, leaders place significant importance on creating a culture of accountability in which employees can quickly acknowledge their mistakes and failures and learn from these experiences. P1 shared that each employee is held accountable for the overall performance and financial success of the organization. According to P2, “Employees are encouraged through our culture of accountability to provide honest feedback to all levels of staff across the organization.” P3 explained:

I engage employees at all levels and even though sometimes I am not able to share every bit of detail with employees below the management level, it is important to create the perception, real or imagined, that as leaders, we support and value them, and crave their input and feedback.

Emotional intelligence is a fundamental quality of effective leaders seeking to create and sustain a culture and climate conducive to trust and adaptability. Leaders with emotional intelligence help to create an organizational culture and climate of trust, information sharing, and healthy risk-taking (Maamari & Majdalani, 2017). P4 shared passionately about using emotional intelligence to support a healthy organizational climate and culture of trust:

Emotional intelligence plays a big role in how I get things done through people. All my strategies are implemented through people, and in order to appeal to them, I have to demonstrate I understand their needs and that I care. When I share details about my strategies and objectives with employees, I do so in a compassionate, sincere, and transparent way. I try to speak their language by showing how each objective aligns with the overall success of the organization and the impact or benefits to them as employees of the organization. I find this approach is effective at getting people to become nimble, agile, and adaptive to change and willing to support any initiative in the organization.

Based on P2's experience, one of the most underrated skills of a leader is charisma. Many times when a strategy or change is being introduced, people tend to feel there is no need to take emotional care in how messages are delivered, especially if the audience is at the executive or senior leadership level. Leaders who are compassionate and make themselves available garner greater support for a strategic initiative than those who are perceived to be unavailable, inaccessible, or uncaring. P2 added, "You also have to be

able to take the time to listen to any concerns or suggestions employees may have throughout the process.”

Creativity is paramount to organizations operating in VUCA environments. It is even more important for leaders to create an organizational culture and climate that shapes and supports the creative performance of employees (Alzghoul, Elrehail, Emeagwali, & AlShboul, 2018). P4 indicated that at FO4, the leadership team surrounds itself with young and bright employees. P4 explained, “While these young bright employees may not be the best suited for implementation, they are well suited to develop strategies that are more likely to deliver better implementation results.” Furthermore, employee creativity is crucial to organizational innovation, survival, and competitive advantage and leadership is one of the most important predictors of creativity in an organization (Gupta & Bajaj, 2017). To unleash the creative potential of employees, P1, P2, P3, and P4 agreed on using a combination of approaches.

**Delegating and empowering employees.** Delegation and empowerment are two key leadership skills used to develop employee skills and capabilities. Researchers agree that leaders who empower and enable their employees create an environment of knowledge sharing, innovation, proficiency, creativity, and proactive behavior (Al-Omari, Alomari, & Aljawarneh, 2020; Jung et al., 2020). Furthermore, when leaders delegate their authority, this is seen as one of the most significant elements of employee empowerment (Al-Omari et al., 2020). P1, P2, P3, and P4 all indicated delegating authority at various points could be effective, as well as using several other means to further empower their employees. Leaders delegate authority by assigning employees to

lead on particular projects and initiatives (P1, P2, and P3), identifying and using informal leaders and influential employees to assist with peer coaching (P3 and P4), participating in employee engagement and development programs such as supervisor or manager for the day (P2), or using cross-functional teams and committees to execute on strategies (P1, P2, P3, and P4).

Facilitating a collaborative environment and creating synergies through teams was a common practice of the business leaders interviewed for this study. Compared to employees working individually or in isolation, employees who work in teams or a collaborative environment are more adept at developing new ideas, facilitating out of the box thinking, and increased effectiveness (Bulinska-Stangrecka & Bagienska, 2019). By facilitating teamwork and collaboration P1, P2, P3, and P4 triggered originality and creativity in their organizations. P1 declared being a firm believer in utilizing teams to drive change primarily to “leverage the skillsets of each team member.”

At FO2 and FO4, the use of cross-functional teams and committees are hardwired into daily operations. According to P2, these cross-functional teams involve employees from all levels of the organization and often assist with the development of strategies and the evaluation of the effectiveness of strategy execution. At FO2 and FO4, knowledgeable and experienced employees are often pulled together on projects to brainstorm and develop solutions in the organization. P2 further explained:

On corporate projects and initiatives, employees are also involved as subject matter experts (SMEs) who contribute to the development and testing of new solutions. This approach helps us to develop more user-friendly and practical

solutions. Also, these subject matter experts return to their substantive roles in their departments as super users and change agents.

In addition, during change implementation, P4 shared that representatives from each impacted department or unit are pulled together to form a team of change agents who are later expected to liaise with impacted groups and implementation teams, provide updates during strategy implementation, advocate for change based on feedback from other employees, assist with peer coaching, as well as to assist with managing resistance in their respective department or unit. Teamwork and collaboration are also facilitated in FO1. P1 explained:

When forming each team or committee, I normally stipulate the qualities I seek in team members. In cases where I previously worked with a particular employee and was pleased with that employee's performance, then I would make a special request for that employee to be a part of the team or committee.

Collaborating and forming strategic alliances with key areas of the business has proven to strengthen execution strategies and improve the likelihood of implementation success.

P3 shared, "I adopt a collaborative approach with groups and areas of the business with the requisite knowledge and expertise such as the HR department, union delegates, and our training department to help address human-related issues during implementation."

Andia (2019) indicated that HR can coach managers to craft effective, targeted messages so that the case for change resonates with employees. In the case of P1, forming strategic alliances with the union and gaining its support before a change was implemented

validated the strategic initiative and resulted in greater support from the general staff at FO1.

**Use of action plans, methodologies, and frameworks.** Another leadership practice that emerged as a subtheme during data analysis regarded the use of action plans, methodologies, and established frameworks to support execution strategy. According to Galpin (2018), the full potential value of a strategy is achieved only through effective implementation. Consequently, implementation success hinges on plans and actions to ensure efficiency and effectiveness (Andia, 2019). P3 asserted, “For us to be successful, we must have proper planning and execution.” To minimize the chances of mismanagement, leaders use repeatable processes that provide an integrated and actionable approach to effective strategy execution (Galpin, 2018). All leaders interviewed indicated using a variety of action plans, methodologies, and frameworks as structured and consistent approaches in their organizations.

Several forms of action plans were revealed in data analysis and confirmed through the review of company documentary evidence. Often, these plans related to a consistent approach or methodology being used by the researched organizations. Action plans included plans to lead the change process (communication and engagement plan, coaching plan, training plan, and resistance management plan). Action plans also included employee learning and development such as individual development plans (IDPs), career development plans (CDPs), succession plans, training plans, and performance improvement plans. A review of change management plans provided by P2

and P4 showed evidence of detailed plans to manage the change implementation process through communication, employee training, resistance management and coaching plans.

Participants also mentioned the use of implementation plans and corrective action plans to aid the execution process. P1 indicated developing extensive implementation plans and a culture change plan. A review of documentary evidence provided by P1 confirmed the use of implementation plans which outlined actions taken at various stages of a project, activity owners, and timelines for each activity. However, no documentary evidence was provided in the form of a culture change plan. According to P1, “Everything was planned in a detailed fashion as having a schedule of activities helped to ensure that disruption is minimized and more benefits are realized at implementation.” P2 spoke to how action plans such as IDPs were used in FO2, “Within my plans are action steps to develop employees in their current jobs as well as the next level.”

Action steps based on documentary evidence provided by P2 in the form of an IDP, included planned activities to develop specific employee competencies while leveraging strengths. The IDP provided by P2 as evidence of workforce agility strategies was based on the Lominger Competency Framework. A documented on-the-job learning activity to develop an employee’s innovative and time management competencies was “Cross training in the project management department for the period September to December 2019.” For the same employee, the formal learning approach was also used as evidenced by plans to “Participate in time management workshop within the first quarter of 2020.” Finally, through coaching and mentoring, the plan was for the employee to “participate in monthly coaching sessions with immediate and next level supervisor.”



Methodologies and frameworks used included the project management body of knowledge (P1, P2, P3), Prosci change management methodology (P2), and ADKAR model (P2), establishment of an innovation lab to manage innovation at FO2, and the Lominger talent management framework to bolster talent management activities at FO2. P1 supported using a project management approach to his implementations because, “Project management facilitates a coherent systematical way to address problems and therefore increases the likelihood of success.” Company documentation viewed on-site at F01 and F03 confirmed the use of detailed project management plans and corresponding project schedules based on the project management methodology. P2 explained that at FO2, an innovation lab was recently created that allowed employees at all levels to generate and feed innovative ideas through a process. Usually, employees would be rewarded in their ideas were to be implemented.

## **Theme 2: Talent Management**

Another theme that emerged from data analysis was using appropriate talent management practices to attract, retain, and develop an adaptable and resilient workforce. Managing talents to generate knowledge, expertise, and competitive advantage for the organization aligns with the DC theory (Shet, 2020). The 2018 annual report provided by P2 reflected management’s commitment to becoming an employer of choice by “investing in the development of employee skill sets and competencies so that the organization can achieve high levels of employee productivity.” With effective talent management, leaders create an environment in which employees act as self-initiated change agents who conceive and design new business development and internal

improvement initiatives (Jarvi & Khoreva, 2020). P3 reiterated, “Now more than ever employees are expected to be able to multitask, deliver more output with fewer resources, as well as contribute to finding solutions to challenges in the organization.” All four financial organizations and participants used talent management as a workforce agility strategy. P3 stated, “Developing employees is an ongoing exercise.” However, only P2 reported having a specific talent management framework at FO2. According to P2:

The Lominger talent management framework is used to develop employees in the organization. It provides a structured approach to talent management and therefore holds leaders accountable. As part of the talent management process, we examine the talent profile of each employee and evaluate them based on 67 Lominger competencies. From there, we develop IDPs and succession plans. In the process, employees have the opportunity to share their career goals and aspirations, and the timeline for getting there. To align with the IDPs and succession plans, we provide relevant training which includes a mix of experience-based learning, coaching and feedback, and the formal learning approach.

Two subthemes emerged that relate to the use of talent management practices to attract, retain, and develop employees. The first was utilizing workforce planning as a vehicle to assess and address HR gaps. The second subtheme was using appropriate learning and development programs to improve the knowledge, skills, and competencies of employees.

**Workforce planning.** In a rapidly changing business environment, leaders must determine not only current, but the future skills needed by the organization. The onus is therefore on these business leaders to attract or develop employees with the skills and qualities required to deliver against long-term strategy (Whysall, Owtram, & Brittain, 2019). Workforce planning involves examining the gaps between staff availability, staffing requirements over time, and the prescribed course of action to narrow the gaps in the organization (Doumic, Perthame, Ribes, Salort, & Toubiana, 2017). As part of their talent management strategy, P1, P2, P3, and P4 indicated using various aspects of workforce planning to assist with attracting, retaining, and developing employees. P1, P2, and P4 agreed that some organizational changes have a significant impact on employees, and often require specialized knowledge and skillset. The overarching talent management strategy for F04 as documented in its 2018 annual report was to enhance the framework for talent development by “Identifying and building the competencies of all employees.” This initiative included the “Implementation of a continuous recruitment strategy with the development of a talent database of key talent based on the needs of the business.” Responding to this demand, P4 shared, “A part of my strategy is to assess each employee to determine their strengths and weaknesses, and any performance gaps that might exist.” P4 also explained that there may be organizational challenges, “Such as attrition or loss of key staff members that we need to ensure we have the necessary contingency plans in place for continuity.” P2 agreed that:

Very often we lose employees with key expertise and this cripples the process in some of our branches and departments. This affects the execution of our strategies

as processes, products, and service delivery are also affected. In many instances, key employees leave the organization with knowledge and expertise that was only available to them and it made the transfer of knowledge and continuity very difficult. Over the years we have learned from this mistake.

Talent management is a delicate balance between an organization's talent acquisition and talent development strategy (Gusain, 2017). As leaders search for talent, they aim to identify, attract, and select the best available skilled candidates, with the right skills, knowledge, and aptitude to meet the dynamic demands of the business. Effective talent management is pivotal to creating a culture of proactive mentality across the organization. P3 explained:

During interviews, I do not only look at the experience and academic qualifications. I also look at specific traits and personality types that align with the culture and environment we are trying to create. In addition, my interview process is one that seeks the best fit for the role based on the candidate's demonstrated ability to think critically, problem-solve, and think outside the box.

Similarly, P4 stated, "A big part of my strategy is to hire young, bright people who can demonstrate critical thinking abilities, and a fairly agile mindset coming into the organization." Depending on the strategic direction of the organization and the changes required, there is often a need to transform staffing structures.

**Learning and development.** Effective learning and development programs were critical elements of agility strategies to develop and strengthen employee knowledgebase and skillsets. Researchers agreed that where learning and development programs were

lacking or ineffective, business leaders experienced prolonged learning, financial losses, inefficiencies due to lack of proficiency, and reduced possibility of transferring job knowledge and skills (Keshvari, Faraz, Safaie, & Nedjad, 2018). Learning and development programs included all levels of employees. Training plans were developed for all strategic change initiatives to ensure impacted employees gained the knowledge and skills required to function effectively in their roles. P1 ensured that project teams and other core implementation teams had the requisite knowledge and skills to develop practical and applicable solutions. Thereafter impacted employees underwent a series of training sessions to ensure they were able to use technological systems properly, demonstrated an understanding of key concepts and process flows, or acquired soft skills required by their jobs.

IDPs provided roadmaps containing training and developmental opportunities for employees as they developed in their current roles and prepared for higher positions in the organization. P2 and P4 encouraged employee involvement and ownership of IDPs as a gateway to their development. Lejeune, Mercuri, Beausaert, and Raemdonck (2016) urged business leaders to create the right conditions for employee learning and for them to direct their development. IDPs included a mix of on-the-job training, formal learning, and coaching and mentoring. On-the-job training included the use of cross-training, job rotation, job enrichment, and acting assignments. Malik and Garg (2020) found a significant relationship between a learning organization, employee resilience, and work engagement. The formal learning approach included partnering with the learning and development departments in FO1, FO2, FO3, and FO4 to identify targeted training

programs offered by external partners. The formal learning approach also included attending conferences and webinars.

### **Theme 3: Change Management Best Practices**

Considering the high rate of change initiatives that fail, business leaders must employ change management best practices to effectively manage resistance and to create an environment in which employees are supportive and adaptable to change. Whereas data analysis suggested that P1, P2, P3, and P4 engage in a process of change management at FO1, FO2, FO3, and FO4, only P2 indicated using a structured and consistent approach to managing change. At FO2, Prosci's change management methodology and the ADKAR model were used to guide the change management process. Researchers argued that business leaders can learn to handle change better by developing and relying on institutionalized routines for the initiation, management, and implementation of strategic change initiatives (Heckmann, Steger, & Dowling, 2016). Two subthemes emerged from business leaders using change management best practices. These included resistance management and communication and engagement.

**Resistance management.** Resistance to change was a major concern for P1, P2, P3, and P4. At FO1, FO2, FO3, and FO4, employees demonstrated resistance in several ways. Passive resisters demonstrated their resistance by sticking only to the minimum required by the job, refusing to participate, share feedback on issues, or unwillingness to participate in engagement activities. Active resisters were more vocal and spoke out about their concerns. Others report sick more frequently, habitually reported for work late, or were tardy with their reporting obligations. In addition to a dip in performance

and productivity levels, resistance to change adversely affected the implementation of strategic initiatives and benefits realization.

P1, P2, P3, and P4 mitigated resistance by ensuring that employees received the necessary training, information, and support before and during the implementation of strategic initiatives. Thakur and Srivastava (2018) also found that employee readiness for change reduced the impact of resistance on organizational change. A key strategy was also to ensure that middle and senior-level management aligned and bought into strategic initiatives and were prepared to manage resistance at all levels. Of the four participants, only P2 indicated a structured and consistent approach to managing resistance. At FO2, members of the management and supervisory teams used Prosci's 10 steps to managing resistance as a guide. P4 explained that Prosci's resistance management guide not only provided a practical approach but helped supervisors and managers to effectively address the issue of resistance management within their teams.

***Understanding root cause of resistance.*** Resistance to change occurred at all levels at FO1, FO2, FO3, and FO4 including middle and senior levels of management. Addressing employee resistance required understanding the root cause for resistance and putting plans in place to address each root cause. To mitigate or minimize resistance, leaders must understand the factors that influence employee reluctance and hesitation to accept change (Pereira, Maximiano, & Bido, 2019). P4 emphasized that gaining an understanding of the motives or underlining reasons for resistance was always the best place to start. P1, P2, P3, and P4 demonstrated a willingness to listen to feedback and incorporating them into the implementation of strategic initiatives. How P4 managed

resistance depended on the nature of the resistance from the employee. Researchers demonstrated that employee resistance was based on individual perspectives as well as specific conditions at the time (Kouri, Stamatopoulou, Tzavella, & Prezerakos, 2020). Those employees who actively resisted change needed an audience. To appease their discomfort or concerns, P4 provided an avenue for them to vent and get the information they needed to process and accept the change.

In many instances, employees resisted change because of a lack of understanding of what the change involved, why the change was necessary, or how a particular strategic initiative would benefit them on an individual level. To address the lack of understanding, participants shared key information such as what the initiatives involved, who would be impacted, how they would be impacted, as well as the benefits for both employees and the organization. For employees who were resistant because of the uncertainty of job security, they were either reassured or guided into identifying alternatives and opportunities that may exist internal or external to the organization.

Managing resistance also included finding the right balance between competing interests. P1 used the COVID19 global pandemic as an example to explain the nature of the balance between satisfying employee needs with achieving the objectives of the organization:

The government is in a precarious position finding the right balance between restricting movement and supporting economic activities. The longer it restricts movement, the greater the impact on the economy. However, lift the restrictions



on movement and we risk having more citizens contracting the coronavirus, hence putting pressure on the already fragile health industry.

Depending on the nature of the initiative, to mitigate or reduce possible resistance, P1 and P4 revise their implementation strategy to a phased approach rather than a radical or big bang approach. This approach provided participants with a more controlled way of implementing as well as an opportunity to make necessary adjustments before a widescale implementation. Documentary evidence in the form of change management plans provided by P2 and P4 depicted the use of system demos, pilots, and practice environments to familiarize employees with new systems before implementation.

*Forming strategic partnerships.* Another strategy for managing resistance according to P1 and P3 was through strategic partnerships with other departments or employee advocacy groups such as the HR department, learning, and development department, and the union. Depending on the nature of the strategic initiative, HR got involved early in the process to provide support, reinforcement, and expert knowledge, especially from the standpoint of industrial relations. Andia (2019) recommended that leaders involve HR as internal change consultants and performance improvement consultants whenever change initiatives surfaced in their organizations. Collaborating with the learning and development department ensured that a comprehensive plan was in place to close any knowledge and skills gap that may hinder proficiency and continued productivity.

The financial industry in Jamaica is heavily unionized with several bargaining units in each organization. In such an environment, gaining the support of the union was

paramount because (a) the union acted on behalf of employees in the organization and (b) the union could prevent or delay strategic implementation through the route of industrial action. One strategy for gaining employee support during a strategic implementation was to have confidential meetings with the union, making the case for the change and gaining their buy-in before the implementation. According to P1, “Gaining the buy-in of the union boosted my confidence to approach staff because we had the support of the union.”

*Coaching through change.* P1, P2, P3, and P4 shared that coaching was a useful tool for managing resistance. Coaching took the form of one-on-one personalized sessions or group sessions. Coaching served to ensure that employees understood the reason for strategic initiatives, their potential impact on self and organization, as well as to develop and monitor action plans to help employees improve weaknesses while leveraging strengths. Through coaching, employees were “better able to connect the dots” between their roles and how they contributed to the overall success of the organization. Hence coaching was an ongoing process for P1, P2, P3, and P4. In addition, coaching provided an avenue to share concerns, provide feedback, and seek clarification necessary for gaining employee support. While coaching employees, P3 helped employees to identify how their personal and professional goals aligned with the strategic objectives of the organization and how a particular strategic initiative advanced their purpose. Where employees were set in their ways and were not delivering the expected results, P3 assisted these employees to identify other areas of the business where their skills could be better utilized. There were also occasions when coaching lead to exploring alternatives

outside of the organization. This was also a strategy for replacing employees who were unwilling or unable to adapt to change with more adaptable ones.

*Using formal and informal change agents.* Both the formal and informal channels served useful in managing resistance in FO1, FO2, FO3, and FO4. P2 and P4 identified influential employees with their organizations who others emulated or respected and who were willing to form a change agents' network in the organizations. A review of the literature confirmed that change agents had the strongest associations with achieving successful change adaptation in organizations (Lines & Smithwick, 2019). In preparation, change agents underwent a series of sensitization and training on how to support the change management process and how to coach their peers.

Change agents promoted the need for change within their respective units and assisted with managing resistance through peer coaching. Change agents also assisted with sharing and clarifying key information about strategic initiatives to prevent the spread of rumors about an initiative. As a strategy, P3 identified employees who appeared to be most resistant and have those employees research and present the benefits of the strategic initiative to other employees. In so doing, this helps to convert the most resistant employees and others in the process. P1 involved influential employees who were seen as culture agents to boost the likelihood of success for initiatives. The involvement of these employees was also based on their active support of change and other employees would be more inclined to support once these influential employees were involved.

*Devising an exit strategy.* Understanding that not all employees would be supportive of all strategic initiatives was important to P1, P2, P3, and P4, and how they

directed their efforts and resources when managing resistance. The objective was to gain the buy-in from a critical mass that would help to later convert the minority. Prolonged employee resistance to strategic initiatives adversely impacted performance. For P2 and P3, employees who consistently performed below acceptable standards were placed on a performance improvement program (PIP) followed by consequence management. If there was no improvement, the final stage was dismissal. P1 made an example of employees who persisted to resist change and found creative ways of removing them from FO1. P1 explained that employees who were viewed as saboteurs of the change process or who consistently resisted change were usually the first casualties of staff cuts. This approach was consistent with the finding of Lines and Smithwick (2019) who found that leaders often had to separate resistant employees or wait for them to retire before the organizational change could be successfully adopted. For P1, a bad situation like COVID19 could be used as a good reason to restructure the organization and remove non-performers to replace them with better performers. This ultimately results in improvements in productivity levels at both the employee level and the organizational level.

**Communication and engagement.** Ensuring ongoing communication while actively engaging employees was crucial for preparing employees for change and enabling their success. Two subthemes emerged including effective communication and stakeholder engagement as leaders develop workforce agility strategies to improve change implementation success.

*Effective communication.* Key to successful strategy implementation was effective and ongoing communication with all stakeholders. The success or failure of a change initiative depends to a large extent on how communication is managed in an organization (Angela-Eliza & Valentina, 2018). Communication about organizational activities, particularly strategic initiatives was crucial and had to be carefully managed because of the potential impact on employees. P1 explained that this was important to reduce the instances of a demoralized staff compliment. When communicating about strategic initiatives, participants disclosed both benefits and negative implications to employees and other stakeholders. Yue et al. (2019) cautioned against hiding negative implications of a change from employees as this could breed rumors and misinterpretations, cause misunderstanding and distrust, and heighten employee uncertainty, insecurity, and anxiety. Furthermore, the human mind develops through the process of social communication and significant self-conscious communication, or language (Vodonick, 2018). Employees were kept abreast of strategies, organizational performance in achieving its strategies, and initiatives to improve performance.

Although P1, P2, P3, and P4 did not use the same approach to communicating with employees, they all indicated using a communications plan to guide the content, frequency, and method of their messages. Documentary evidence provided by P1, P2, and P4 confirmed the use of communication plans. I confirmed the use of communications plans during my review of the change management plans provided by P2 and P4 and onsite observation of the communication plan for P1. P4 only spoke to the use of a communication plan but did not provide evidence of its use. P1 shared:

I develop a communication plan in collaboration with the communications department. The communication plan included steps to a process of sensitization from as early as 6, 12, or 18 months before the actual implementation. The key messages included what project was underway, what the project was expected to do, and how it would change current work arrangements.

For P2, the communication plan formed a part of the change management plan for each change initiative and included messages to be sent, the timing of each message, and the target audience for each message. As an added measure and for greater effect, all participants incorporated information about global trends, best practice research, as well as market trends when communicating to employees about strategic change initiatives. P2 also indicated that key messages about organizational strategies were sent by members of the senior leadership team, whereas messages of a sensitive and personal nature were shared by the employee's immediate supervisor. This approach to communication was aligned with Men, Yue, and Liu (2020) as communication from executive leadership had a positive influence on employee trust, openness to change, and improved behavior towards change. P1, P2, P3, and P4 used the most effective approaches to communicate about strategic initiatives in their organizations.

*Adequacy and frequency of information.* Regardless of the approach, communication around strategies and initiatives must be adequate and consistent. All participants agreed that providing adequate information at regular intervals was crucial to the implementation of their initiatives, especially those that had a high degree of impact on employees. P4 shared that, "a big part of my strategy is consistent communication and

employee engagement.” According to P1, “I did not want a situation where employees were shocked out of their wits, or feeling as though I just dropped changes into their laps without adequate information and time to prepare.” Scholars argued that without adequate information from leaders about strategic initiatives, employees seek information from informal sources (Xiang, Du, Zhou, & Cui, 2020). Unfortunately, informal sources such as grapevines or internal advocacy groups may sometimes distort information to suit their respective needs. P2 shared that when employees believe that they are not receiving adequate and timely information, this leads to “reliance on informal sources of information, such as the grapevine.” P3 indicated that providing timely and adequate information helped to create the perception of transparency. Yue et al. (2019) argued that leaders who were transparent in their communication demonstrated that they were frank, open, honest, and willing to take the concerns and feedback of employees into consideration. As a general practice in FO1, FO2, FO3, and FO4, the communication process began as early as the strategies were approved by the executive team. To ensure adequate and frequent communication, P1 started to share strategies “As early as six, twelve, or 18 months before the actual implementation.”

Relevant messages were reinforced based on communication plans.

Communication plans were also tailored to suit the needs of each target group. P3 ensured alignment and consistency among the management team about messages around strategic initiatives and how they aligned to the organization’s strategic direction. Depending on the strategic initiative and the implementation period, communication could start as early as 18 months before the actual implementation. P1, however,

cautioned against starting communication too early but failing to follow through with supporting messages as employees tend to forget. The strategy was to find the right balance between sharing timely information and when a strategy is implemented. According to P4, ongoing communication ensured employees were kept fully aware of the strategic plans and how they aligned to the overall objectives of the organization. Frequent communication served also to remove doubts and misunderstandings about a process as shared by F1, F2, and F3. In the case of P2 and P4, employees were actively involved in the strategic planning process and were also critical to sharing approved strategies. Once the strategies were approved at the executive level, they would be filtered to the entire senior leadership and middle management level. Middle managers were then responsible for engaging their respective teams to discuss the strategies.

*Communication channels.* Communication to employees included a mixture of both formal and informal channels. If the informal channel is properly encouraged it can become a means of internal innovation especially in the context of major changes or crises (Angela-Eliza & Valentina, 2018). P1, P2, P3, and P4 shared their strategies with employees in person (face to face), in the written form, and virtually using technology. Face to face channels included strategic retreats, organization-wide conferences (also referred to as blast-offs by P2, P3, and P4), workshops, staff meetings, team huddles, and listening tours. During the face to face meetings, P1, P2, P3, and P4 used PowerPoint presentations, video, audio, and other graphical displays to ensure they communicated their strategies and plans in a clear, concise, and impactful way to employees. Face-to-face communication also included one-on-one and group discussions during which



employees were able to share concerns, provide feedback, or seek clarification on any aspect of the strategic plan. Change management plans provided by P2 and P4, as well as a communication plan observed at F01 identified and confirmed several channels through which P1, P2, and P4 communicated their strategies to employees. Each communication plan reviewed included the target audience, message to be shared, communication channel, date, and the individual responsible for disseminating each message. P2 indicated that based on feedback from group discussions, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and conversation points were prepared and shared with employees, other leaders, and change agents across the organization.

In cases where employees and leaders were unable to be physically present in one shared space for the sharing of organizational strategies, these were facilitated by virtual meetings via Skype for Business, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or Webex sessions. Written communication was also used as a means of documenting strategies. These included memos, bulletins, emails to employees, strategy maps, roadmaps, and action plans. P2 provided documentary evidence in the form of a strategy map used at F02 and which was also made available in the 2018 annual report for F02. P2's strategy map adopted the balanced scorecard (BSC) approach with the learning and growth perspective as a foundational component. A review of the 2018 annual report for F03 also provided evidence of a strategy map that communicated nine key areas of strategic focus for the organization. Two of the nine areas focused on talent and innovation aimed at "Developing the leadership talent within the group" and "Resourcing and promoting an innovation drive". P2 and P4 indicated that strategies at the organizational level were also

printed and mounted in branches, departments, cafeteria, and other common areas of the business for visibility and reinforcement. A review of documentary evidence in the form of annual reports for FO1, FO2, FO3, and FO4 found the strategic objectives of the organizations and their associated high-level action plans. Documentary evidence in the form of a strategic map outlined a 5-year strategic plan using the BSC at FO2.

The participants, however, disagreed on the most effective form of communication channel. For P1, the written form of communication was most effective because “Employees believe that if it is not written it is not real.” P1 also shared that, “It is with the written form of communication that employees begin to understand the nature of a strategic initiative and the possible impact on them.” For P2, there was no best approach to communicating as each situation was different and often required a combination of approaches. The face-to-face conversation represented the best approach to communication for P3. As P3 explained:

Sending an email with 700 words do not have much use, especially since our culture is not one where employees like to read. Sometimes they do not have time to read long messages during our hectic and demanding operations. Sure, you need to put things in writing, but it has to be short and appealing to the eyes. You engage employees more when they can see and hear the passion in your voice and body language as you share your strategy. It helps to gain their support.

Furthermore, the face to face conversation allows employees to ask questions and seek clarification in realtime.

Strategy is multidimensional in nature, hence facilitating the process through multimedia was important for employees to understand the big picture. Multimedia communication enabled employees to perceive higher levels of integration than using text alone (Angwin, Cummings, & Daellenbach, 2019). For P4, some communication channels were better for reinforcing strategies as opposed to communicating and sensitizing employees. Apart from the intended use of multimedia communication in communication plans for P2, P3, and P4 and reference made during interviews, no evidence was provided of actual samples or demos of PowerPoint presentations, internal video or audio productions.

*Stakeholder engagement.* The general trend in data analysis was that leaders engaged stakeholders at all levels in the organization. Where necessary, external stakeholders were also involved. When leading strategic change, a leader's agenda should prioritize integrating expert knowledge and skills from external sources and internal stakeholders (Giacommarra, Crescimanno, Sakka, & Galati, 2019). Stakeholders included employees directly and indirectly impacted by a strategic initiative, unions, internal and external individuals and departments with expert knowledge and skills, special purpose groups such as change and culture agents, as well as internal committees. P4 indicated that actively engaging and involving employees throughout the strategic planning and execution process created greater employee ownership and support necessary for a smoother implementation. Extant literature suggested that the process of stakeholder engagement helped to create partnerships necessary for implementation remove barriers to engagement, help to diffuse resistance to change, and secured buy-in for strategy implementation (Hickey, et al., 2018). P4 explained that strategies developed and

executed were no longer solely owned by the leaders of the business, but employees felt a sense of joint ownership because they were heavily involved in defining the strategies.

P1, P2, P3, and P4 collaborated and partnered with HR, learning and development, unions, communication departments, program management offices, and change agents' network. P2 and P4 also included engaging representatives from other companies in their group of companies to ensure all viewpoints were carefully considered. Employees were heavily involved in the strategic planning process through brainstorming sessions, root cause analyses, workshops, and seminars aimed at identifying solutions to problems faced in the organization. External consultants often facilitated the workshops, brainstorming sessions, and root cause analyses. Information gathered from these sessions informed strategy formation. Once strategies were defined, employees were again engaged through cross-functional committees, job rotation, job enrichment, or secondment in some cases to ensure dedicated time and focus for the execution of strategic plans. Through active stakeholder engagement, employees were more willing to support and promote strategic initiatives. P1 recalled that where employees felt they were not involved in a process, they were more apprehensive and adopted a standoff, wait and see approach. Where stakeholders were not actively engaged, the ensuing strategic initiatives were viewed as top-down versus inclusive and were bound to fail because of a lack of support.

***Employee engagement.*** Employee engagement was carefully managed to prevent employee frustration, demotivation, disengagement, and flight risks. Employees who were not engaged gave only the bare minimum required by the job. According to P4, this

resulted in a “slack off in performance or a drop in productivity levels”. However, “When employees do what they love or what they believe to be in their best interest, they invest more time and effort.” P2 explained that this commitment lead to greater levels of engagement and productivity. A key strategy was to have employees participate in scheduled and unscheduled coaching sessions with their immediate supervisors and next-level supervisors. Coaching “helped to maintain healthy engagement levels in the organization.” Employee engagement is considered a focal point of talent management and retaining employees (Lee, Idris, & Tuckey, 2019). The most common challenge for P3 came from junior employees who believed they were not important enough and hence did not participate in strategic initiatives as expected. Coaching helped to enlighten these employees and helped to demonstrate how their involvement contributed to the overall performance of the organization.

Employee engagement was also critical to prevent employees who were consistently working long hours during the development and implementation of corporate projects and initiatives. P2, P3, and P4 maintained a healthy work/life balance to reduce the potential of diminishing returns or employee burnout. To address overwork, P4 implemented flexible work arrangements such as flextime, compressed workweeks, and days off. In cases where there were no provisions for overtime payments, special accommodations were made to incentivize employees who worked extended hours during the implementation of strategic initiatives.

#### **Theme 4: Monitoring and Measuring Performance**

Another main theme that emerged from the data analysis was monitoring and measuring individual and organizational performance. P1, P2, P3, and P4 agreed that monitoring and measuring performance were important in evaluating the success of their workforce agility strategies. P3 expounded:

In general, I know my strategies are effective based on the result or outputs of my employees. I look at the time it takes to accomplish tasks. I compare the performance of employees who go off on vacation with those who act in their stead to see whether the results are the same or better.

Trends in the data analysis indicated that monitoring happened at all levels of the organization: strategy owners, implementation teams, at the management level, and even at the board level depending on the strategic initiative. Employee performance was measured against specific objectives set by leaders within a given period (Rizki, Parashakti, & Saragih, 2019). Based on the analysis of the data, performance monitoring was an ongoing process at FO1, FO2, FO3, and FO4. F1, F2, F3, and F4 also monitored and evaluated organizational performance monthly. There was however no standard trend among the four participants regarding how often individual employees were evaluated to determine the effectiveness of workforce agility strategies. In the case of P2, formal employee evaluations were done twice per annum.

Two subthemes emerged regarding the monitoring and measuring of performance. The first was that business leaders determined KPIs and the second was tracking and measuring organizational and individual performance against KPIs.

**Determining KPIs.** P1, P2, P3, and P4 used KPIs to monitor and measure the extent to which strategies were met. Researchers agreed that the use of KPIs allowed business leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies on the overall health of the organization, individual divisions, or specific employees (Haber & Schryver, 2019; Volodymyr, Marina, Gayvoronska, & Denys, 2019). P1 clarified that the selection of the most appropriate performance indicator or metric depended on the strategy and the nature of the initiative being implemented. Researchers also agreed that when developing KPIs, a good starting point is with the stakeholder perspective because each stakeholder group views and analyzes organizational and employee performance from a different perspective (Haber & Schryver, 2019). As a precursor to success, P1 “developed and shared projections to demonstrate what success would look like from the perspective of employees, leaders, and the organizational level”.

P1, P2, P3, and P4 indicated that at the organizational level, KPIs included revenue growth rates, return on equity (ROE), return on asset (ROA), return on investment (ROI), efficiency ratios, productivity per employee, and benefits realization. A review of the 2018 annual reports for F01, F02, F03, and F04 found that organizational performance indicators were listed and reported on as a standard practice. Other performance indicators included total assets under management (AUM), increased new business, client satisfaction scores, employee engagement index, and high potential retention rate. P1 paid keen attention to leading indicators and lagging indicators as an effective measure of strategies and initiatives. Lagging indicators measured outputs while leading indicators were predictive measurements of output (Estrada-Torres et al., 2019).

P1 further explained that where a KPI is revenue growth from sales (lag indicator), a key area to monitor would be the conversion rate from sales referrals (lead indicator) or performance scores of salespersons (lead indicator). Monitoring leading indicators is a proactive approach to ensuring that desired results are being met.

At the individual level, performance indicators included performance appraisal scores, employee retention rate, engagement index, audit rating, and other internal quality checks. The annual reports for F01, F02, F03, and F04 published at a high level, engagement scores, and employee retention rates. The individual development plan provided by P2 outlined a 5-point rating scale for employee appraisals and employee training assessment scores. Training plans reviewed for F02, F03, and F04 required minimum individual assessment scores of 85%, 70%, and 80% respectively, as an indication that employees grasped key concepts during training sessions. Apart from references to audit rating and internal quality checks in interviews with participants, no documentary evidence were provided as these were viewed as sensitive and confidential documents to F01, F02, F03, and F04.

**Performance management.** Performance management was vital in determining the effectiveness of workforce agility strategies aimed at improving the success rate of change initiatives. P1, P2, P3, and P4 used performance management as a tool to evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies and the extent to which objectives were being met. In high performing organizations, leaders seek not only to maintain a predefined level of performance but also drive continuously towards enhancing performance levels (Ali & Islam, 2020). In FO1, FO2, FO3, and FO4, performance management was done at both



the individual and organizational levels and depended on the type of strategy. The effectiveness of strategic initiatives was also measured against financial or non-financial KPIs. The primary reason for measuring performance as explained by P2 was to, “Ensure that strategies were effective and that I continuously improved on my approach to creating employee agility that can drive implementation success.”

*Organizational level performance management.* The management of organizational KPIs was critical to the development and implementation of organizational strategy as organizational change is driven by how well KPIs were met. P1 explained that, “When the financial indicators of the organization start to stagnate, or start to reduce, the question is then asked, what are we doing wrong? and what do we need to change?” A common business imperative was, therefore, to restructure strategies and develop new initiatives in response to changes in the environment. Restructuring strategies and developing new initiatives aligned with the findings of scholars who agreed that the implementation of strategic initiatives required timely and dynamic management of performance indicators in line with restructured strategies (Miura, Kobayashi, & Shirasaka, 2020). P4 also indicated using milestones to monitor and evaluate strategic execution.

The BSC approach was identified by P2 and P4 as an effective tool for measuring strategic execution at the organizational level as it provided a balanced approach to monitoring and measuring strategic activities from four key areas of the business. Researchers agreed that the BSC was one of the most well-known tools for evaluating the effectiveness of strategic implementations against the financial health of the organization,

customers, internal processes and learning and growth (Mehralian, Nazari, Nooriparto, & Rasekh, 2017; Quesado, Guzman, & Rodrigues, 2018). In addition, P2 and P4 used the BSC as a structured way of communicating the alignment between strategic initiatives and the mission of the organization.

The responsibility of monitoring and measuring performance did not reside with one specific individual or group but was instead done by cross-functional committees often consist of key stakeholders. At the business strategy level, P4 monitored and evaluated strategic initiatives. Identified challenges or roadblocks were promptly addressed and support structures established to pave the way for success. At FO1, FO2, FO3, and FO4, performance evaluation at an organizational level was conducted monthly and progress shared with stakeholder groups such as the board, management teams, employees, cross-functional committees, and investors, and in some instances, the union.

***Employee level performance management.*** Business leaders organized and allocated resources at the beginning of each year to execute on action plans and achieve strategic goals. Performance management at the employee level ensured that contributions of employees were directed towards growth, productivity, and ultimately profitability for the organization (Ugoani, 2019). Evaluating employee performance was also instructive to determine whether efforts to develop employee capabilities were successful and to what extent. At FO1 and FO3, “Employees were held accountable for the performance of the organization and contributing to the organization’s financial success”. As such in FO1, “Employee performance was driven by clear deliverables

within specific timeframes.” Similarly, “Organizational strategies were filtered down to the level of the employee appraisal” in the case of FO4.

Although performance targets were set at the beginning of a period in FO1, FO2, FO3, and FO4, the achievement of critical objectives depended on robust performance management. Through performance management, research participants quickly identified, assessed, and addressed underlining problems that may derail progress. At frequent intervals, the P1, P2, P3, and P4 checked to ensure that employee progress was following predetermined performance milestones. Monitoring of employee performance also allowed for further clarification of objectives, support where needed, or suggestions that could help achieve performance objectives.

A common tool for measuring the performance of employees at FO1, FO2, FO3, and FO4 was through performance appraisals. Researchers supported the use of performance appraisal as they assisted with identifying, measuring, and developing employee performance to align with the strategic objectives of the organization (Ali, Mahmood, & Mehreen, 2019; Ugoani, 2019). Performance appraisals also provided valuable insights to P1, P2, P3, and P4 into whether employee performance, work attitude, and demonstrated behaviors had improved over time. When measuring performance, P2, and P4 also evaluated whether employees demonstrate specific qualities and behavioral patterns. As an incentive, performance appraisals also fed into the rewards and recognition program at FO2 and FO4. P2 shared that, “Employees who achieve outstanding performance appraisals or who demonstrated exemplary behavior and attitude to work were publicly recognized and rewarded.” Incentives and rewards were a

positive influence on employee performance and encouraged even better future performance (Ahmad, Danish, Ali, Ali, & Humayon, 2019).

The standard practice at FO2 and FO4 was to conduct formal employee assessments twice per year. All participants however shared that during the implementation of a strategic change initiative, evaluations are done on employee readiness for change at various intervals during the implementation process. Depending on the nature of the change and associated timeline for implementation, evaluations may be done monthly or weekly leading up to the implementation. Such evaluations would normally be based on the employee's knowledge and skill levels, training needs, and other work-related conditions that may affect employee performance.

Employees who performed below standard or at an unacceptable level for a protracted period were placed on a performance improvement program (PIP). Lee and Rhee (2020) confirmed that PIPs were the most effective tool for improving performance as it provided employees the necessary assistance to develop knowledge and skills. In addition, as explained by P2, throughout the PIP, "Employee performance was assessed and coached in the right direction." P4 indicated that the duration of the PIP was based on the levels of improvement in the employee's performance.

### **Findings in Relation to the Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was the DC theory developed by Teece et al. in 1997. The DC theory is predicated on three tenets. For successful change adaptation sensing, seizing, and transformation must be present (Day & Schoemaker, 2016; Teece, 2017, 2018b). Workforce agility is a DC in which employees demonstrate

proactivity, adaptability, and resilience in dynamic business environments. The purpose of this study was to explore workforce agility strategies that financial business leaders used to improve the success rate of change initiatives. Based on data analysis, the themes that emerged related to the conceptual framework in several ways as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

*Emerged Themes Compared to Conceptual Framework*

Emerged themes		Tenets of the DC theory		
Main Themes	Subthemes	Sensing	Seizing	Transformation
Leadership practices	Organizational culture and climate	X	X	X
	Delegating and empowering employees		X	X
	Use of Action plans, methodologies, and frameworks		X	
Talent management	Workforce planning	X	X	X
	Learning and development	X	X	
Change management best practices	Communication and engagement	X	X	
	Resistance management		X	X
Monitoring and measuring performance	Determining KPIs	X	X	X
	Performance management	X	X	X

*Note.* X shows where the findings of the study relate to the tenets of the conceptual framework

**Alignment with sensing capability.** The use of effective leadership practices, talent management strategies, and change management best practices aligned with the sensing capability. By creating an organizational culture and climate indicative of trust, team synergy, and an agile mindset, participants, as well as their employees, were able to identify the need for change and create new ideas and solutions in response. Leaders who possess change-oriented behaviors can identify threats and opportunities and can interpret and promote change while fostering alliances in support of implementing change (Ballaro, Mazzi, & Holland, 2020). Through proper workforce planning, participants within this study assessed current and future talent needs to meet the changing demands of the business environment. In addition, participants identified and communicated consistent messages to help employees understand the need for change.

**Alignment with seizing capability.** All four main themes closely aligned with the seizing capability. Matysiak et al. (2018) indicated that the seizing capability involved the creation of competitive advantage by investing in activities that enable the exploitation of opportunities and removal or reduction of threats. The study participants seized opportunities and reduced threats to the success of their strategic initiatives and ultimately the competitive advantage of their organization by using insights gained to invest in relevant learning and development programs to (a) develop employees through talent development, (b) effectively manage resistance to change (c) communicate key messages, while actively engaging employees. Participants were also able to seize opportunities in the environment because they encouraged feedback and recommendations from employees. Furthermore, performance management was critical

to leaders seeking to develop an agile workforce, and measuring employee performance ensured they were on developing according to plan. Appraisal systems represented the backbone of the organization in motivating, retaining, and further developing the key resources that an organization possesses (Ahmad et al., 2019). Moreover, it is through learning and development that employees acquire new capabilities to fully exploit opportunities presented in a dynamic business environment (Cunningham, 2020). In a dynamic business environment, employee lifelong learning and the support provided by business leaders are pivotal.

**Alignment with reconfiguring (or transforming) capability.** All four themes aligned with the reconfiguring (or transforming) capability. More specifically, leadership practice to develop skills and capabilities through delegation and empowerment, workforce planning, resistance management, and performance management closely aligned with the reconfiguring (or transforming) capability of the conceptual framework. Through delegation and empowerment, participants enabled employees to think critically and outside the box. Through performance management, participants monitored and measured the performance levels at both the organizational and employee levels and to inform strategic decisions about the future of the organizations. Performance measurement is a primary tool for communicating and allocating scarce resources and for monitoring organizational performance in the quest for attaining the ultimate objective or organizational profitability (Ugoani, 2019). Through proper workforce planning, P1, P2, P3, and P4 were able to create redeploy resources and create structures in their organizations that supported success.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The demands of both the local and global business environments have increased tremendously. Unless business leaders implement strategies to accommodate the changing environment, the possibility of survival diminishes (Vodonick, 2018). In response to a rapidly changing business environment, leaders continue to implement initiatives to create and sustain competitive advantage for their organizations. However, Meredith and Zwikael (2019) confirmed that when measured against their original goals, 85% of projects failed to meet their objectives. The findings of this study apply to business leaders, especially those operating in volatile markets, who underwent an organizational crisis, or who struggle to position their organizations competitively because of an inability to implement change initiatives successfully.

Workforce agility is paramount to the success rate of organizational change initiatives. The results of this study indicated that to improve workforce agility, business leaders should utilize (a) effective leadership practices; (b) appropriate talent management practices to attract, retain, and develop a knowledge-based workforce; (c) use change management best practices; and (d) devise mechanisms to continuously monitor and measure organizational and individual performance against KPIs. Applying the results of this study could help business leaders reduce the cost of change, improve the ability of the workforce to execute a greater number of changes more effectively, and increase the competitive advantage of the organization. Business leaders may use the results of this study to develop employees who are proactive, adaptable, and resilient in the face of a changing business environment. In addition, with an improvement in the



success rate of change initiatives, business leaders could realize the benefits from change initiatives geared towards improving the quality of service to customers through convenient, relevant, and appropriate service channels.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The implications for positive social change are two folded and include creating and enhancing a sustainable local economy and developing individual resilience and adaptability to changing environments. In the first instance, the results of this study may lead to enhancements and sustainability in the local economy. The results of this study will provide business leaders with workforce agility strategies they can use to improve the success rate of change initiatives. Several of these change initiatives are geared towards improving the quality of service to customers through convenient, relevant, and appropriate service channels. Business leaders would also be able to improve organizational performance for competitive advantage. Improved service quality translates to improved customer satisfaction, and this impacts supply and demand in any economy. By improving the quality of service to meet customer needs, business leaders directly contribute to enhancing a sustainable local economy (Syapsan, 2019). The results of the study could contribute to growth in the local economy.

Secondly, the implication for positive social change includes the development of individual resilience and adaptability to changing organizational and community environments. An increase in change implementation success could result in an improvement in the financial performance of an organization. With improved financial performance, business leaders may be able to invest in more local school and community

programs and improvement projects that drive public education, individual resilience, and adaptability to environmental change and evolving circumstances. Communities are affected by several environmental changes and problems. Interventions aimed at fostering resilience by developing and utilizing existing local strengths can support these communities (Willett & Kvam, 2019). In addition, when business leaders develop employees who are proactive, adaptable, and resilient, this stimulates positive behavior change not only beneficial to the organization but extends to local communities.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Business leaders who struggle to position their organizations competitively because of an inability to implement change initiatives successfully may find value in the results of this study. Business leaders may also gain valuable insights into leadership strategies that can enable employees to respond effectively to environmental changes. To improve the success rate of change initiatives, I recommend that financial business leaders develop workforce agility strategies that include the use of (a) effective leadership practices; (b) appropriate talent management practices to attract, retain and develop a knowledge-based workforce; (c) change management best practices; and finally, (d) measuring and monitoring organizational and individual performance against KPIs.

Based on their practices, financial business leaders could empower and motivate employees in change engagement. These practices include creating an organizational culture and climate of trust, team synergies, and an agile mindset for employees; developing employee skills and competencies through delegation and empowerment; and using action plans, supportive methodologies, and frameworks to support strategy

execution. In addition, business leaders must demonstrate emotional intelligence and the ability to unleash the creative potential of employees as they execute their strategies.

My second recommended action for financial business leaders is to use appropriate talent management practices to attract, retain, and develop a knowledge-based workforce. As part of workforce planning, leaders should appropriate time to examine gaps between employee availability and requirements over time, and develop a course of action to close identified gaps in the organization. A major part of talent management is learning and development. Financial business leaders should, therefore, use a combination of experience-based learning (on-the-job training), formal learning approaches, and mentorship and coaching to develop employee skills and competencies. The use of IDPs provides leaders with a structured and consistent approach to employee learning and development.

Another recommendation involves the use of ongoing communication and active stakeholder and employee engagement as leaders plan and execute. Consistent employee engagement is crucial to buy-in and support at all levels. Leaders should also use the most effective channels when disseminating messages including, face-to-face communication, team huddles, virtual meetings, and written communication. Similarly, when engaging employees and stakeholders, leaders should use a combination of approaches that include focus groups, cross-functional teams and committees, change agents' network, and internal subject matter experts. Depending on the nature of the strategic initiative, leaders may also engage employees through internal competitions, trivia, and other challenges.

When implementing change initiatives, leaders cannot afford to disregard the impact on employees, as the successful implementation of the initiative is directly related to how well the change process is managed. Leaders should, therefore, use change management best practices to ensure employees understand the personal and organizational impact of the change, have the requisite knowledge and skills required by the change, ensure reinforcement mechanisms are in place to support the change, and ensure resistance is proactively managed. Using an established change management methodology or framework provides a consistent and grounded approach to leading employees through change and increases the likelihood of success.

Finally, I recommend that financial business leaders devise mechanisms to continuously monitor and measure both organizational and individual performance. In the first instance, this involves identifying and establishing KPIs at both the individual and organizational levels. At the organizational level, leaders should examine and utilize the most effective metrics based on the nature of the business. These should include both lead and lag indicators. In organizations where there is joint accountability for the achievement of organizational objectives, leaders should cascade organizational targets down to the individual level and these should form a part of employee appraisals. At the employee level, leaders should ensure that SMART objectives are established, tracked, and monitored on a predetermined basis. Employees who fail to perform at the required level should be placed on performance improvement plans and coached until their performance levels improve, or managed through a consequence management program if their performance fails to improve.

Results for this study may be accessed via conferences, workshops, journals, magazines, and professional websites, or at meetings of professional associations. I will also share the results of these findings in the form of a presentation with each partner organization. In addition, student researchers and other scholars may access the findings of this research through ProQuest as they develop their research studies.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Financial business leaders struggle to position their organizations competitively due to failure to implement change initiatives with success. The literature indicated that business leaders experience high failure rates for change initiatives because they fail to develop agile workforces. To address this problem, I conducted this multiple case study to determine what workforce agility strategies financial business leaders used to improve the success rate of their change initiatives. The following are recommendations for further research into understanding workforce agility strategies that business leaders may use to improve the success rate of change initiatives.

My decision to use a multiple case study design was a limitation of this study because of the inability to generalize results due to small and specific sample size. Future researchers could use other research designs to gain insights into strategies business leaders used to develop an adaptable and resilient workforce that resulted in improved change implementation success. Future researchers may also conduct a mixed methods study that would leverage the benefits of both a qualitative and quantitative study. A mixed methods approach would provide researchers with the opportunity to explore strategies used, as well as examine the relationship between strategies and their

effectiveness in improving change implementation success. My sample size included four financial business leaders. Future researchers could consider expanding this sample size to gain even greater insights from a wider pool of participants.

To delimit the scope of the study, future researchers exploring workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives should consider replicating the study in other sectors and with different categories of participants. I conducted this study within the financial industry and deliberately chose participants who were at the middle to upper-level management. Future researchers could consider other industries and sectors, as well as include the experiences of participants below the management level. In addition, I chose to conduct this study in Jamaica. Future researchers could explore workforce agility strategies used by business leaders in other geographic regions.

### **Reflections**

I have gained valuable insights, expanded my knowledge base, and improved my critical thinking skills as a result of my doctoral journey with Walden University. My doctoral committee and peers played a pivotal role in my scholarly writing process and served to validate my work, and improve networking possibilities in the research community. An approach I found useful was the emphasis on researching, evaluating, and synthesizing several sources to support my arguments and reinforce my conclusions. The use of annotated bibliographies provided a structured approach that enabled a more efficient and effective literature review for my doctoral study. In addition, the collaborative working environment added value to the learning process and information sharing.

My doctoral research has also deepened my understanding of the concepts of workforce agility and how leaders may create DC within their organizations by integrating, developing, and reconfiguring HR to better adapt to change. As I reflect on my journey, I did not allow my experiences as a change management practitioner to interfere with the data collection and analysis process. Instead, I was lead by the unfolding of the data analysis process. Exploring the workforce agility strategies that some financial business leaders used to improve the success rate of their change initiatives has given me a better appreciation for not only the change management process, but also how employees are developed and prepared for change even before change occurs. In my role as global change agent, business leader, and change practitioner, I am more cognizant of my responsibility in helping create a culture of innovation and one receptive to change. My doctoral study has enabled me to explore (through research) strategies that business leaders can use in dynamic business environments to sense, seize, and reconfigure resources necessary to position their organizations successfully.

### **Conclusion**

Extant literature suggested that financial business leaders struggle to position their organizations competitively because of a high failure rate of change initiatives. Literature also indicated that this high failure rate was directly attributed to a lack of proactivity, adaptability, and resilience in employees. To realize the benefits of successfully implemented change initiatives, financial business leaders must consider and address the HR capabilities in their organizations. Leaders must develop and implement strategies

that enable employees to be more resilient, as well as proactively respond and adapt to change.

The findings indicated that financial business leaders seeking to improve the success rate of change initiative should utilize (a) effective leadership practices; (b) appropriate talent management practices to attract, retain and develop a knowledge-based workforce; (c) use change management best practices; and finally, (d) measuring and monitoring organizational and individual performance against KPIs. To successfully position their organizations at a competitive advantage, financial business leaders should develop and implement workforce agility strategies that enable employees to become more adaptable and resilient to change.



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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Financial Business Leader

<b>Research question:</b> What workforce agility strategies do financial business leaders use to improve the success rate of change initiatives?	
<b>What I will do</b>	<b>What I will say</b>
<p>Email Skype or Zoom link to participant within ½ hour of scheduling interview with each participant.</p> <p>Contact participant by telephone to confirm receipt of the emailed link.</p>	
<p>Join Skype or Zoom meeting at least 15 minutes before the start of the interview.</p> <p>Greet participant once the participant joins the interview.</p>	<p>Good day Mr/Ms. X, thank you for taking the time to have this discussion with me. My name is Marvia Evangelist-Roach a doctoral student with Walden University. As I mentioned in our previous conversations, this interview forms a part of the data collection process for my doctoral study to explore the workforce agility strategies used by financial business leaders to improve the success rate of change initiatives.</p>
<p>Discuss the informed consent form with the participant.</p> <p>Confirm that the participant retained a copy of the consent form for personal records</p>	<p>Thank you for reviewing and completing the informed consent form emailed to your on X date. Do you have any (or additional) questions about the form?</p>
<p>Briefly explain the interview process, sharing with the participant that the entire interview will be recorded and that he/she may choose to withdraw from the study at any time.</p> <p>Respond to any questions the participant may have.</p>	<p>Please be reminded that the interview will be recorded to ensure that I accurately and completely capture your responses.</p> <p>After today’s interview, I will schedule a follow-up virtual interview with you to review my interpretation of your interview responses. This is to ensure that I accurately represent your experiences. During that follow-up interview, you will also be given an opportunity to address</p>

	<p>inaccuracies and include other information you deem necessary.</p> <p>You are free to withdraw your participation from this interview if at any time you wish to do so. It will not be held against you, nor will there be any adverse impact on your job.</p> <p>Before we begin, do you have any concerns about this process?</p>
<b>During the interview:</b>	
<p>Watch for non-verbal cues          Take observation notes          Paraphrase as needed          Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth</p>	<p><b>Demographic Questions:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is your title and what does your primary duties involve?</li> <li>2. How long have you been employed to the organization?</li> <li>3. How long have you been working in the financial industry?</li> <li>4. Prior to this position, what other experience do you have developing workforce agility strategies to improve change implementation success?</li> </ol> <p><b>Interview Question #1:</b>          What workforce agility strategies did you use to improve the success rate of change initiatives?</p> <p><b>Probing Question(s):</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What types of change initiatives do you normally implement?</li> <li>2. What change management strategies do you use to improve change implementation success?</li> <li>3. What talent management strategies do you use to help employees to be more adaptable to change?</li> </ol>

4. How did you determine which strategies to use to improve the responsiveness of your employees to change?
5. What other programs did you use to help employees adapt to change?
6. What are some indications that your strategies are effective and achieving the desired results?

**Interview Question #2:**

What issues determined the need to develop and implement workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives

**Probing Question(s):**

1. What is the leadership style and power distribution of your organization?
2. What is the general organizational culture and responsiveness to change?
3. What is the general perception of past changes within your organization?
4. How responsive or agile are your employees to adapting to change?
5. What is the average implementation period for your change initiatives?

**Interview Question #3:**

How did you decide the appropriate time to develop and implement the workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives?

**Probing Question(s):**

1. How close to actual implementation did you begin to engage employees about impending change initiatives?

2. How did a short strategy implementation window impact the success of your change initiatives?
3. How did a lengthy strategy implementation window impact the success of your change initiatives?
4. What were the factors that affected your ability to implement strategies within ample time?
5. What strategies did you use to ensure that you had ample time to implement your workforce agility strategies?

**Interview Question #4:**

How, if at all, did you involve employees in developing the workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives?

**Probing Question(s):**

1. How involved were your employees in the process to develop workforce agility strategies?
2. How did you determine which employees to involve in the process?
3. What level of employees did you involve in developing workforce agility strategies?
4. How did employee involvement in the process impact change implementation success?
5. How did employee involvement improve the agility of your employees?
6. How did employee involvement improve overall change adaptation?

**Interview Question #5:**

How did you communicate the approved workforce agility strategies to employees to improve the success rate of change initiatives?

**Probing Question(s):**

1. At what point during the change implementation process did you start communicating with employees?
2. What communication channels did you use to communicate your strategies to your employees?
3. What were the most effective channels used to communicate your strategies to employees?
4. How did communicating the strategies help to improve implementation success?

**Interview Question #6:**

How did you manage resistance to the workforce agility strategies from employees in an effort to improve the success rate of the change initiatives?

**Probing Question(s):**

1. How did you know when employees were resisting change?
2. What were the most common reasons for employees to resist change?
3. What strategies did you use to mitigate resistance to change?
4. What strategies did you use to convert resisters into promoters?
5. How did employee resistance impact your change implementation?
6. How did you handle employees who persistently resisted change?
7. How did you incorporate members of the senior management team to help manage resistance?

**Interview Question #7**

How did you measure the efficacy of the workforce agility strategies implemented for the improved success rate of change initiatives?

**Probing Question(s):**

1. Who evaluates the effectiveness of your workforce agility strategies?
2. How did you monitor and track the effectiveness of your workforce agility strategies?
3. What metrics did you use to measure the success of your workforce agility strategies?
4. How often did you evaluate the effectiveness of your workforce agility strategies?

**Interview Question #8**

What were the major challenges, if any, experienced during the implementation of the workforce agility strategies that your organization addressed to assure the success of change initiatives?

**Probing Question(s):**

1. At what point during the implementation of workforce agility strategies did you experience the most challenges?
2. What level employees did you experience the most challenges from?
3. How did the challenges impact the implementation of your workforce agility strategies?

**Interview Question #9**

How did you address any workforce agility implementation challenges to improve the success rate of change initiatives?

**Probing Question(s):**

1. What strategies did you use to address the major challenges experienced during the implementation of your strategies?
2. How did you incorporate members of the senior management team to help manage challenges?
3. How did you handle challenges that needed to be escalated to a more senior level of management?
4. How did you involve employees to assist with finding solutions to challenges experienced?

**Interview Question #10**

How did you ensure buy-in from executives and managers for supporting the workforce agility strategies implemented for the success of change initiatives?

**Probing Question(s):**

1. How often did you provide updates to executives and managers about the implementation of your workforce agility strategies?
2. What strategies did you use to ensure executives and managers bought into your workforce agility strategies?
3. How did you involve executives and managers to implement your workforce agility strategies?
4. How did executives and managers demonstrate their buy-in of your workforce agility strategies?
5. How did involving executives and managers impact the successful

	implementation of your workforce agility strategies?
Ask the participant if there is anything else they would like to add that is important for me to know or understand.  Wrap up interview thanking participant	<i>Question:</i> What additional information do you have to share regarding the workforce agility strategies and the success rate of change initiatives?  <i>Wrap-up:</i> Mr or Ms. X, you have provided valuable information to address the strategies used by financial business leaders to improve the success rate of their change initiatives.
Stop the recording device and thank the participant for the interview and any documentation provided.	Thank you for participating in this research.
Schedule follow-up member checking interview  Verify the phone number the participant would like to be used to contact him/her in future	Are you able to provide me with a date on which we could conduct a follow-up interview to review my interpretation of your responses?  In addition, kindly confirm the best number I may use to contact you and the most convenient time of day.
Email participant the interpretation of his/her interview responses.	<i>Include the following statement in the email:</i>  Good day Mr. X or Ms. X. Once again, thank you for participating in the interview conducted on Xdate. The document attached contains my interpretation of your responses to each question asked during the interview. Please review to ensure that I have accurately interpreted your responses. You may also identify areas for corrections, suggest changes, and provide any additional insights you may have.  Please indicate a date and time on which we can have f a follow-up interview to discuss my



	interpretation of your interview responses, areas for corrections, or any additional insights you may have.
Contact participant at least 24 hours before scheduled follow-up member checking interview to confirm his or her attendance/participation	Good day Mr/Ms. X, this is Marvia Evangelist-Roach. I am calling to confirm our appointment for X Date at X time. I am also confirming that you received the Skype (or Zoom) link emailed on XDate.
On the day of the follow-up interview, join Skype or Zoom meeting at least 15 minutes before the start of the interview.  Greet participants once the participant joins the interview.  Introduce follow-up interview and set the stage	Good day Mr/Ms. X, thank you for taking the time to have this discussion with me.  As I mentioned in our previous conversation, in this follow-up interview, you will have an opportunity to review my interpretation of your interview responses. This is to ensure that I accurately represent your experiences. You will be able to make corrections and to include other information you deem necessary.
Share a copy of the interpretation for each question – one paragraph or as needed.  Bring in probing questions relating to other information that may have found.  Walk through each question, read the interpretation, and ask:  Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What workforce agility strategies did you use to improve the success rate of change initiatives?</li> <li>2. What issues determined the need to develop and implement workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives</li> <li>3. How did you decide the appropriate time to develop and implement the workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives?</li> <li>4. How, if at all, did you involve employees in developing the workforce agility strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives?</li> <li>5. How did you communicate the approved workforce agility strategies to employees</li> </ol>

	<p>to improve the success rate of change initiatives?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. How did you manage resistance to the workforce agility strategies from employees in an effort to improve the success rate of the change initiatives?</li> <li>7. How did you measure the efficacy of the workforce agility strategies implemented for the improved success rate of change initiatives?</li> <li>8. What were the major challenges, if any, experienced during the implementation of the workforce agility strategies that your organization addressed to assure the success of change initiatives?</li> <li>9. How did you address any workforce agility implementation challenges to improve the success rate of change initiatives?</li> <li>10. How did you ensure buy-in from executives and managers for supporting the workforce agility strategies implemented for the success of change initiatives?</li> <li>11. What additional information do you have to share regarding the workforce agility strategies and the success rate of change initiatives?</li> </ol>
<p>Wrap up member-checking interview thanking participant and outlining next steps</p>	<p>Mr/Ms. X, it was indeed a pleasure sharing with you.</p> <p>I will keep you up to date on the progress of my research. As an indication of my gratitude, you will receive a copy of my summary findings upon completion of my study.</p>