

1-1-2021

## Talent Management Practices of Small and Medium-Size Businesses in the Cayman Islands

Annette Murphy  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Annette M. Murphy

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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## Review Committee

Dr. Allen Endres, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Jorge Gaytan, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Franz Gottlieb, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2021

Abstract

Talent Management Practices of Small and Medium-Size Businesses in the Cayman  
Islands

By

Annette M. Murphy

MS, Central Connecticut State University, 2003

BED, University of Technology, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2021

## Abstract

Talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees are essential, as 73% of business leaders in the United States identified that good human resources practices favorably impact the efficiency and effectiveness of business operations. Based on the people capability maturity model and transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that small and medium-size business (SMB) leaders used to acquire, develop, and retain employees in the Cayman Islands. The participants comprised five SMB leaders in the Cayman Islands who successfully used talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees for more than 5 years and four employees who worked with the SMBs for more than 5 years. The selected leaders participated in face-to-face semistructured interviews while the employees participated in a focus group. The data were analyzed using Yin's five-phase analysis cycle. Four themes emerged from the data analysis: conducting management assessments, following recruitment and selection guidelines, empowering and enabling employees, and fostering workplace loyalty. A recommendation is that SMB leaders prepare training manuals from their successful procedures for internal use and benchmarking with other SMBs. The implications for positive social change include the potential for leaders to improve employee development and retention. Further social change potentials include higher revenues to benefit society through employees becoming mentors and volunteers in local communities.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my beloved parents, Titus and Gwendolyn Murphy, who taught me how to be an individual with integrity, and from whom I learned that I was just as good as the next person. I know you are smiling from heaven with pride, Dada! To Lamaro, my nephew with so much promise who departed this life at age 22, tragically taken from us in the final year of his bachelor's degree in business administration, this is for you, Hon!

## Acknowledgments

Thank you, God. He who began a good work will be faithful to complete it!

Thank you to my former chair, Dr. D'Marie Hanson, who guided and encouraged me every step of the way. I am grateful for your unending support and the fact that you were only an email or a phone call away. Your commitment to my success was second to none. To my current chair, Dr. Allen Endres, you came on board at the last minute but proved to me that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord. Your exceptional insight was evident from the first feedback I received from you, and you earned my instant respect; I am forever grateful for your guidance. To my second committee member, Dr. Jorge Gaytan, thank you for going above and beyond to ensure I complied with all requirements and for being a stickler to detail. To my university research reviewer, Dr. Franz Gottlieb, I am grateful that you showed me that no element must be left unturned to achieve the highest standard. I am thankful to the faculty and staff at Walden University, especially to members of the Writing Center who provided assistance in different ways, but special mention is necessary for Dr. Joe Gredler who proved to be the wizard I needed with his form and style editing and tips.

I must express profound gratitude to the five business leaders and the focus group participants who made this research possible. I wish you continued success in all your endeavors. This journey was possible only because of the network of support from wonderful family and friends who were my constant motivators and biggest cheerleaders. I could never conclude without thanking my Team Synergy family!

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

A strategic focus on talent management should be essential for business leaders. Talent management is vital for any organization because leaders can utilize this strategy to affect the firm's performance and reinforce the firm's strategic objectives (Glaister et al., 2017). The purpose of the current study was to explore the strategies that small and medium-size business (SMB) leaders in the Cayman Islands used to implement effective talent management practices to acquire, develop, and retain employees.

### **Background of the Problem**

Conducting a study on talent management practices in SMBs was critical because human resources are essential to any organization, regardless of its size. Acquiring the right talent and engaging efforts to maintain and retain the talent can become problematic for leaders because of the competitiveness of globalization (Claus, 2019). Leaders' talent management strategic actions are essential to support and facilitate success in the organizations (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017).

Existing legislation restricts the period expatriates can work in the Cayman Islands (Immigration Cayman Islands, 2021). Such recruitment restrictions in the Cayman Islands could lead to disruptions in the talent management flow. Obtaining the right talent is essential to fulfilling the goals of organizations (Goswami, 2018). The findings from this study may enable SMB leaders to gain insight into talent management practices used to acquire, develop, and retain employees in the Cayman Islands.

### **Problem Statement**

Business leaders prioritizing talent management strategies have expressed the need to acquire, develop, and retain employees (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017). In the United States, 73% of business leaders agreed that effective talent management strategies used to acquire, develop, and retain employees promote business effectiveness (Masa' deh et al., 2018). The general business problem was that some SMBs continue to underperform because their leaders do not manage talent effectively. The specific business problem was that some SMB leaders in the Cayman Islands lack talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore talent management strategies that SMB leaders in the Cayman Islands used to acquire, develop, and retain employees. The targeted population consisted of five SMB leaders who had successful experiences using talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees. In addition to the SMB leaders, I targeted a five-member focus group with one participant from each of the five SMBs. The implications for positive social change from these strategies include employees receiving better remuneration, greater job security, and improved work–life balance. These benefits could ease their workday stress, thereby offering capacity in their lives to become involved in community projects through civic engagement.

### **Nature of the Study**

The three methods of research are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Yin, 2018). For the purpose of this study, I chose the qualitative research method that would enable me to gain insight into the effective talent management strategies used by SMB leaders to acquire, develop, and retain talent management. Researchers use the qualitative method to conduct exploratory research addressing underlying factors for any given phenomenon (Bryman, 2016). The quantitative and mixed methodologies were not suitable for this study. Researchers use the quantitative method to test hypotheses and measure variables through experiments or survey designs (H. Morgan et al., 2016). The quantitative method was not suitable for this research because testing a hypothesis and measuring variables were not necessary to answer the research question. The mixed method involves combining both quantitative and qualitative methods (Bryman, 2017). The mixed method was not ideal for this research because of the quantitative element, which requires hypothesis testing and variable assessment.

The qualitative designs that I considered for this study were ethnography, phenomenology, and case study. The ethnographic and phenomenological designs were not suitable for this study. Researchers use the ethnographic design to study patterns from groups of people within a population while exploring cultural or historical issues (Dodgson, 2017). I did not explore cultures to determine patterns; hence, the ethnographic design was not suitable for my study. Phenomenology is a philosophical design that allows researchers to explore human consciousness manifestations of

meanings through lived experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). The goal of this study was to explore strategies that could assist SMB leaders in talent management and not the meaning derived from individuals' lived experiences. A case study is an ideal design to use when seeking to reveal participants' perspectives on a widespread and real-world phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) posited that conducting a multiple case study facilitates the observance of the similarities and differences to gather representation from a broader spectrum. The multiple case study design was appropriate for my study, and I collected in-depth information from the participants about their perspectives on effective talent management strategies used by SMB leaders to acquire, develop, and retain employees.

### **Research Question**

What talent management strategies do SMB leaders in the Cayman Islands use to acquire, develop, and retain employees?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies do you use to identify the talent needs of your business?
2. What strategies do you use to recruit candidates for your business?
3. What strategies do you use for your selection process?
4. What strategies do you have in place to develop your employees?
5. What strategies do you use to retain employees?
6. What modifications, if any, did you apply to any strategy to acquire, develop, or retain employees?

7. What were the main barriers to implementing strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees?
8. How did you overcome the key barriers to implementing strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees?
9. What additional information would you like to contribute about talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees in your business?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study on strategies SMB leaders use for talent management comprised two theories: transformational leadership and the people capability maturity model (P-CMM). Burns (1978) introduced the concept of transformational leadership as a synergy that results in employees' performance for a common purpose. Bass (1999) posited that a leader should emphasize the derived value to all stakeholders upon the completion of assignments. The leader takes the follower from self-interest to inspiring and influencing the followers to bring about change for themselves and others who will filter into the organization, the wider community, and society (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders portray idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Hetland et al., 2018). The impact on the followers depends on the extent to which a leader is transformational.

Curtis et al. (2009) developed and produced the P-CMM. Leaders implement the P-CMM to create a system to appeal, develop, classify, motivate, and retain human

resources (Curtis et al., 2009). The model has five levels: initial, managed, defined, predictable, and maturity (Surega, 2019). Chen and Wang (2018) also posited five levels of maturity that embody the P-CMM. Together, 10 principles form the foundation of P-CMM with the underlying themes of capability, personality, motivation, and training (Jing Lee, 2017).

Using Burns's (1978) transformational leadership theory and Curtis et al.'s (2009) P-CMM theory as the conceptual frameworks provided valuable insight for this study on talent management strategies. Specific insight on strategies to acquire, develop, and retain talent within SMB may be beneficial for business leaders. Exploring the work of transformational leaders was complementary in guiding the procedures for the P-CMM in the research process. Burns framed the way SMB leaders and employees can engage in the process of mutually raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation. The P-CMM theory of Curtis et al. (2009), on the other hand, provides an integrated approach through software modeling from which SMB leaders can pattern in the attempt to develop and manage their workforce.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Expatriates:* Expatriates are persons who take up residence in another country (McNulty & Brewster, 2017).

*Medium-size business:* A medium-size business is an entity operating with between 21 and 50 employees and approximately \$1.5 million in annual turnover (Senior, 2012).

*Micro business:* A micro business is an entity operating with a maximum gross profit of \$250,000 and a complement of four or fewer employees (Department of Commerce and Investment, 2019).

*Rollover:* Rollover occurs at the expiration of the term limit of 7 years that can extend to a maximum of 9 years when the expatriate must leave their employment in the Cayman Islands (Immigration Cayman Islands, 2021).

*Rollover returns:* Rollover returns refer to persons who return to the Cayman Islands for employment after a minimum of 1 year after the expiration of the term limit (Immigration Cayman Islands, 2021).

*Small business:* A small business is a business that operates with a maximum of 11 employees, and the gross profit does not exceed \$750,000 (Department of Commerce and Investment, 2019).

*Talent:* Talent relates to employees who have the potential to contribute to the success of the organization (D'Annunzio-Green, 2018).

*Talent management:* Talent management is the process of identifying skills, abilities, and talents and matching these elements to individuals within the organization (Tafti et al., 2017).

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

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are notions that the researcher believes to be accurate but has not verified (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). My first assumption for this study was that the

respondents would respond truthfully to the questions posed. The second assumption was that SMB leaders would readily participate in the study. The third assumption was that the data collected would allow me to answer the research question. The fourth assumption was that SMB leaders and employees would benefit from the findings of my study.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study that are out of the researcher's control (Yin, 2018). One limitation of this study was the small number of participants. Obtaining data from five SMBs may not provide insight into the problems that other SMBs experience and how they manage talent. Another limitation was the lack of peer-reviewed articles on activities within the Cayman Islands, as well as the unavailability of pertinent government data. A third limitation was that I could not access the businesses at the outset because the government had instituted a lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, which delayed the data collection. Finally, one focus group member decided not to participate in the study. I do not know whether the focus group participant who did not join the focus group would have provided information different from what the other participants shared in the focus group discussions.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations represent the boundaries the researcher sets in conducting research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The first delimitation was restricting participation in the study to SMBs in the Cayman Islands. The second delimitation was the sample size. For this

study, only five leaders and four employees participated in the study. The third delimitation was that I selected only SMBs who had been in operation for a minimum of 8 years because such business operators would have had adequate time to establish talent management strategies.

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Contribution to Business Practice**

Different individuals and groups, such as managers, SMB operators, and employees, may find the findings from this study useful to incorporate effective talent management strategies into the workplace. van Zyl et al. (2017) posited that knowledge of effective talent management strategies, including role clarification, could enhance the effectiveness of such strategies. Exploring strategies to effectively acquire, develop, and retain employees is essential (Boon et al., 2017) to respond to the challenges associated with expatriate workers leaving the Cayman Islands. Some SMB leaders cannot quickly replace expatriate workers because many Caymanians are not interested in these jobs and require time to recruit from overseas. SMB leaders in the Cayman Islands could use the findings from this study on talent management strategies to promote better strategic planning, increase employee engagement, increase productivity, and improve business output.

#### **Implications for Social Change**

Effective talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees might provide holistic engagement for the employers and employees that could filter into

the wider community. Leaders may use insight from the effective talent management strategies discussed in this study to create more engaged and productive employees who could receive improved compensation packages, experience decreased stress levels, and benefit from increased leisure activities, resulting in improved living standards for families and communities. Businesses with productive employees report higher revenues, which may prompt them to give back to society and embrace corporate social responsibility (Panwar et al., 2016). Likewise, empowered employees could become mentors and volunteers in communities to generate positive social change (Haugh & O'Carroll, 2019).

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

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore talent management strategies that SMB leaders in the Cayman Islands use to acquire, develop, and retain employees. Scholars conduct literature reviews to integrate ideas from the existing literature, identify any gaps in knowledge areas, and validate the appropriateness of the research question at the center of a study (Hart, 2018). There are different facets to consider when examining effective strategies in talent management that some SMBs adopt. Extensive research is necessary to obtain information about published authors' views about enhancing talents within SMBs. This literature review includes a discussion of the conceptual framework, along with discussions of several rival and similar theories on talent management. The two theories that served as the conceptual framework of this study were the P-CMM model and the transformational leadership theory. Primary

themes from the current literature on talent management included in this review are constructs related to talent management strategies in SMBs. Other aspects of discussion include topics such as SMBs, talent acquisition, talent development, and talent retention. I divided each theme into several subthemes for a more in-depth analysis.

Literature published in scholarly peer-reviewed journals, reports, dissertations, and books formed the focal basis for pertinent literature analysis and synthesis. I used Walden University's library to access several academic databases such as Academic Science Complete, Emerald, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and Science Direct. The search for literature included combinations of keywords and terms such as *compensation*, *developing talent*, *human resources management*, *P-CMM*, *performance appraisals*, *recruiting*, *talent*, *talent management*, and *transformational leadership*. The total number of references I reviewed was 310, including 261 scholarly peer-reviewed articles representing 84% of the total. The total number of references in this study published within the 2017–2021 period was 226, which was 73% of the total number. The literature review contains 201 references, with 160 references published within the 2017–2021 period, representing 80% of all sources, and the scholarly peer-reviewed references used for the literature review were 89%.

### **Conceptual Framework: P-CMM**

Researchers have used the P-CMM as the conceptual framework in exploring talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain talent. Curtis et al. (1995) introduced the P-CMM for Carnegie Mellon University. Leaders have been using the P-

CMM to appeal, develop, classify, motivate, and retain human resources (Curtis et al., 1995). Surega (2019) and Chen and Wang (2018) noted that the five levels of the model are as follows: initial, managed, defined, predictable, and maturity. Leaders applying these five levels could significantly impact talent management within organizations.

The P-CMM originated from another model. The capability maturity model (CMM) is the predecessor of the P-CMM (Proenca & Borbinha, 2016). Capability refers to the ability an individual has to complete activities associated with their level of maturity (Proenca & Borbinha, 2016). CMM is a system of continuous improvement in activities or processes until the realization of optimal performance (Akhlaghpour & Lapointe, 2018). The CMM development originated from a study in computer science to improve software development (Proença & Borbinha, 2016) and provides strategies that leaders can use to enhance quality at all developmental process levels (Paulk et al., 1993). Developing and maintaining software became a priority for the software developers to ensure successful operations from a disciplined approach (Paulk et al., 1993). Developed in 1986, the CMM has become so versatile that its use is evident in various businesses, not only engineering and computer science (Paulk et al., 1993).

The use of CMM is appropriate for assessing a business leader's readiness to initiate, plan, manage, evaluate, and engage employees (Nelson et al., 2015). Following the CMM, one of the strategies is to have performance-based funding for motivating workers' participation and retention (Nelson et al., 2015). CMM was the software maturity model that professionals have used for depicting the stage for further

development (Nelson et al., 2015). Humphrey (1990) postulated a rule basis to make software development predictable, with the development steps identified as initial, repeatable, defined, managed, and optimized. These five levels of maturity allow organizations to assess current performance and determine the scope for necessary improvements (Paulk et al., 1993). Humphrey described the five principles as useful to managers and business leaders in different areas by highlighting the effectiveness of the five levels used as leadership strategies to improve business operations.

P-CMM includes guidelines for talent improvement, depending on the level of maturity. The fundamental themes underlying P-CMM are identifying and improving talents, developing teams to appreciate the organization's culture, motivating and leading employees, and aligning the workforce to meet the organization's goals and objectives (Curtis et al., 1995). The adaptation of these levels of maturity may provide significant benefits for the firm. P-CMM within any organization could influence the development and implementation of policies that result in human capital development in a strategic format (Vakaslahti, 1997). The philosophy behind the P-CMM is that human resources management practices exist in progressive stages when identifying, selecting, developing, and maintaining the workforce to align with the organization's strategic goals for greater efficiency (Rosana, 2019).

Although leaders and professionals use P-CMM to foster continuous improvements for employees' talents, criticisms of the theory exist. Wademan et al. (2008) noted that even though the Software Institute's goal at Carnegie Mellon

University was to develop the P-CMM to bring to people management, the model has drawbacks. One drawback of the model is that the planned activities do not always go according to predetermined goals; however, planning is critical to advance any function (Wademan et al., 2008). An efficient management structure system could signify leaders' proactivity within a competitive environment, resulting in minimized disruptions. The use of the P-CMM could be essential in establishing an employee performance management system for SMBs that utilize the five levels as a major performance management strategy (Surega, 2019). By doing so, businesses would experience continuous improvement in talent pools necessary for innovation and performance (Surega, 2019).

Business leaders strive for improvement in all processes. Malik et al. (2017) studied the significance of innovation adoption for business sustainability from leaders' perspectives in India's information technology industry. A key finding was that people power, as the driving force, was critical for the organization's profitability. Therefore, enshrined in business models should be the effective management of the human resources that could result in benefits that far outweigh the costs (Malik et al., 2017). The guideline of P-CMM seems to indicate a process of enhancing value in services and performance.

Business leaders use different strategies to promote people skills and enhance performance. Jing Lee (2017) underscored the importance of using P-CMM in identifying competencies in a talent pool, thereby finding ways to improve and maximize employee capabilities. Jing Lee suggested that competent employees promote and improve the operations necessary to meet the businesses' goals and objectives. Business leaders

should realize that fulfilling employee competencies is a significant feat in achieving enhanced performance (Shet et al., 2019). From a leadership style perspective, transformational leaders could be essential to promoting and improving the operations to meet the goals and objectives of the SMBs.

### **Conceptual Framework: Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership is a fundamental premise that could form the basis for leadership strategies in SMBs. Burns (1978) introduced the transformational leadership theory and noted that transformational leaders help motivate employees to believe in themselves and, therefore, become more productive. Transformational leaders seek to enhance their followers' values, morals, and inspiration to advance individually, professionally, and socially (Burns, 1978). Bass (1985) was more specific in defining the leader's role in transformational leadership than Burns. Bass argued that the leader should describe the role of value in the task, focusing on the organization and not on the individual. In addition, individuals should seek to satisfy needs at a higher level on the needs-hierarchy pyramid (Bass, 1985).

The type of leadership adopted within an organization is a critical factor to secure success. Transformational leadership is a driving force that motivates subordinates to be the best at what they do and to become inspirational leaders (Ng & Kee, 2018). Transformational leadership emanates influence and success for all stakeholders. Success for all stakeholders might be evident in leaders' behavior and affect all aspects of the organization, whether a product, process, or behavior (Ng & Kee, 2018).

There is a strong emphasis on transformational leadership in both the professional and academic spheres when it comes to organizational performance. Transformational leadership is popular given the evidence in the volume of global articles that range from education to politics (Bush, 2018). Employees' receptiveness to transformational leadership depends on the leaders' traits and attitudes (Aydogmus et al., 2016). Employees become proactive and efficient when they enjoy both the working environment and the assigned tasks. Identifying transformational leaders is one of the significant factors that influence employee satisfaction (Aydogmus et al., 2016). In a study of 166 participants from organizations in different countries, Abelha et al. (2018) found no relationship between employees' level of training or the type of organization and job satisfaction; however, transformational leadership significantly influenced job satisfaction. The results were not the same for participants of both genders. Female employees were more receptive to transformational leadership than their male counterparts (Abelha et al., 2018). Transformational leaders appear to be more influential for people harboring intrinsic motivators, such as job satisfaction, rather than external factors, such as the job itself (Yıldız & Şimşek, 2016). Nevertheless, transformational leaders seem to display characteristics that promote job satisfaction, depending on the leader's leadership style.

The leadership style within an organization may influence employees' confidence and output. Job satisfaction is largely dependent on the type of leadership (Yıldız & Şimşek, 2016). Yıldız and Şimşek (2016) further expressed that employees' satisfaction

with their job not only motivates them to become confident in their role but also increases their self-trust as well as mutual trust among leaders and employees. Transformational leaders within the business often influence the business's culture (Ramsey et al., 2017). The culture of respect and confidence resulting from the transformational leadership style could become engraved in the policies of businesses such as SMBs.

Leaders should embrace policies and practices that facilitate organizational development for the benefit of the stakeholders. Leadership style affects employees' remuneration and retention within a business (Shabane et al., 2017). Krishnan and Scullion (2017) supported the views of Shabane et al. (2017) and introduced a system in which leaders would prioritize human resources in their businesses and encourage employees to increase output with commensurate remuneration. Effective leadership might result in efficient resource management with appropriate remuneration consideration to motivate employees to meet business goals and objectives (Shabane et al., 2017). Considering the positive results, the incorporation of talent management policies and practices could become standard practice in different industries.

The positive effect of transformational leadership is not limited to specific industries or individual stakeholders. Jordan et al. (2015) presented a synopsis of the benefits of transformational leadership in health care units where the effects extended to the patients. Jordan et al. found that transformational leaders motivated the employees, resulting in more enthusiastic employees, which brought greater satisfaction to the patients. Gözükara and Şimşek (2015) also emphasized the benefit of having

transformational leaders who do not seek to be autonomous, but enhance worker engagement, thereby transforming their followers. Gözükara and Şimşek noted that the leaders led in such a way that brought about a change in organizational culture, and followers were more committed to the job. The satisfaction that inspired employees enjoy could have a positive effect that could filter to other areas in the business (Gözükara & Şimşek, 2015). Gözükara and Şimşek showed that inspired employees may gain experience and remain committed as they serve in the SMBs.

The composition of the dynamics in SMBs is dependent on several factors. Abdullah et al. (2015) examined the relationship between culture, organizational commitment, and transformational leadership among employees in SMBs. Abdullah et al. concluded that the effect that a transformational leader has on organizational commitment is not associated with the organization's culture. Abdullah et al., however, failed to consider the mediating effect of organizational culture on transformational leadership and commitment. In another study, Mesu et al. (2015) examined the relationship between transformational leadership and employee commitment in service and manufacturing companies. Mesu et al. found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and commitment for service SMBs, but not for manufacturing SMBs. In most organizations, regardless of the size, employees' engagement could be critical to the organizational success made possible by transformational leaders.

The level of employee commitment depends on the use of the transformational leadership style within the organization. There is a significant positive relationship

between transformational leadership and employees' affective commitment (Long et al., 2016). Employees admire and respect leaders influencing, empowering, and enabling employees to be productive individuals (Ribeiro et al., 2018). The transformational leadership theory served as one of the conceptual frameworks for the current study on talent management strategies, even though other theories provided acceptable alternatives.

### **Conceptual Framework: Alternative Theories**

Other theories that were relevant for studies on talent management practices include the resource-based view (RBV) theory, social exchange theory (SET), and knowledge management theory. The RBV theory has been the most frequently used theory for studies on talent management (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2015). Penrose (1959) introduced the RBV theory on the premise that resources are necessary for growth in any entity. Insufficient resources result in no growth (Penrose, 1959). Effective utilization of resources is essential in the quest for competitive advantage (Barney, 1991).

Bafagih (2019) used the RBV theory as the framework to explore the effects of developing talent pipelines in SMBs in Saudi Arabia. Bafagih found that the strategies that business leaders used and identified as successful included hiring the right complement of employees and having a management system for assessing employees based on performance. Robust strategies to enhance and reward performance are also useful strategies for employee retention (Bafagih, 2019). Human resources are essential in any organization; however, the RBV did not serve as the framework in the current

study. Although the RBV would have been a worthwhile theory to explore the strategies that business leaders use to acquire, develop, and retain talent in SMBs, human resources represent one of countless aspects in acquiring, developing, and retaining talent.

Another theory applicable to talent management is the SET. The SET has connoting conditions in which rational beings act in their self-interest to achieve personal goals at minimum cost (Özel & Kozak, 2017). Given the diversity that exists and the impact on businesses, the SET's relevance has decreased (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). Cropanzano et al. (2017) questioned the importance of the SET, noting that empirical evidence is often missing about the use of the SET. Cropanzano et al. further highlighted the need for a more modern representation of relationships between an employer and an employee. Birtch et al. (2016) noted that combining the psychological contract with the SET would enable higher value for both the employees and the employer. Employers use the psychological contract to play a facilitatory role, demonstrating a changing workforce and diversity in the global environment (Birtch et al., 2016). As represented by the psychological contract, employees are more likely to perform at their best when they receive favorable treatment.

Ulfig (2019) used the SET as the framework in a study on leadership strategies to increase employee engagement in the service industry. Ulfig conducted a single case study and interviewed nine business leaders. Ulfig discovered that successful leaders offered attractive benefits, such as flexible work time, team building, and continuous professional development for advancement. The drawbacks of the SET that Birtch et al.

(2016) identified included a lack of diversity in its composition and modern representation. I did not select the SET as the framework of this study. The SET appeared to be a suboptimal option for exploring talent management strategies, an evolving concept in a dynamic competitive environment.

The knowledge management theory is another alternative theory for a study on talent management. Gunjal (2019) defined knowledge management as the entire infrastructure necessary for a process that promotes the acquisition and sharing of knowledge within an organization. In their study, Anbumathi and Sivasubramanian (2016) examined talent management practices by seeking to amalgamate this concept with knowledge management in assessing social capital, worker engagement, and organizational culture. Knowledge management is a multidisciplinary approach with contribution from talent management (Whelan & Carcary, 2011). Whelan and Carcary (2011) studied some of the issues with knowledge management, such as identifying knowledge workers or creating and developing these workers. Knowledge management as a framework in talent management practices dramatically reduces some of the issues associated with the knowledge management theory (Whelan & Carcary, 2011). Leaders are responsible for creating an enabling work environment that ensures knowledge for the employees (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Leaders should identify ways to harness employees' knowledge to create value for both the business and the employees. One criticism of the knowledge management theory is that there is still a misalignment between the intensity of use and the software platforms to accommodate knowledge

management (Centobelli et al., 2018). Such an alignment is necessary to facilitate the smooth management of processes that could be problematic in SMBs because many of these leaders encounter simple structures with inexperience and limited resources (Centobelli et al., 2018). Knowledge management is a comprehensive process that is not limited to the organization's human resources and could prove too costly for some SMBs. The use of the knowledge management theory as the framework in this study was inadequate and seemed to aid the understanding of knowledge and not necessarily talent, which encompasses much more than knowledge.

### **Small and Medium-Size Organizations**

There is no universal definition for SMBs because the characteristics differ depending on various factors. The size and characterization of a business depend on several components, including the number of employees, the revenue generated, and the asset composition (Breckova, 2016). Berisha and Pula (2015) used the number of employees and total assets or total sales to classify the SMBs. In Australia, the characterization for an SMB involves a business with no more than 200 employees (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017). However, most places in Europe have a maximum of 250 employees, while Canada and the United States could have approximately 500 employees, and these businesses still qualify as small (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017). The number of employees is a deciding factor in defining SMBs, and the number varies depending on the country and region (Madani, 2018). The contribution of SMBs to an

economy's growth and development is significant, as leaders strive to play a major role in the SMBs' advancement.

The role of SMBs is vital in any country's development. SMBs have flat organization structures with limited bureaucracy (Resnick et al., 2016). These flat structures have characteristics that provide unique benefits to SMBs that do not apply to large businesses. SMBs are the drivers of economic growth and job creation (Zafar & Mustafa, 2017). The flexibility within SMBs leads to more effective company-consumer channels and better customer relationships (Resnick et al., 2016). Kusi et al. (2015) noted that governments should heighten SMB operators' support because SMBs are critical for job creation and poverty alleviation in developing nations (Kusi et al., 2015). In Ghana, the government does not support SMBs in the private sector, which inhibits the country's quest for growth (Kusi et al., 2015). Although SMBs offer significant contributions across the world, they need support from governing bodies.

Statisticians identified and revealed various global contributions of SMBs to economic growth. In emerging economies, 90% of firms are SMBs, with 63% of the world's workforce being SMBs (Munro, 2013). In the United Kingdom, SMBs account for 99% of the private sector's ownership and employ 59% of the private enterprise workforce (Munro, 2013). Even when SMBs constitute such a large number of businesses in a country, it is difficult for SMBs to compete unless some form of alliance occurs with foreign interests (Berisha & Pula, 2015). Business leaders should capitalize on all

available tools to be competitive in their respective industries. In any case, the size and impact of SMBs might not be the same in all regions.

The composition of SMBs in the Caribbean region is different from SMBs in other regions because of the small size of these nations. The defining criteria for SMBs in the Caribbean are the number of employees, asset valuation, and total sales (Julien & Edwards, 2016). SMBs in the Caribbean countries have a significant impact on gross domestic product and are paramount to economic activity in enhancing employment, especially in the private sector (Singh et al., 2017). In the Caribbean nation of Trinidad, SMBs comprise 85% of the registered businesses (Singh et al., 2017). The maximum number of employees for SMBs in Trinidad is approximately 50 (Singh et al., 2017). Thus, the Caribbean figures reflect the business size and data in the Cayman Islands.

The economy of Jamaica would be more suitable to obtain a better understanding of the Caymanian economy because of their physical proximity and similarity in workforce size. A large percentage of the Jamaican economy (i.e., 98%) consists of registered businesses comprising micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises [MSMEs] (Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture, & Fisheries, 2017). This high percentage is an indicator of significant dependence on MSMEs for the emergence of economic activities and growth. Senior (2012) posited that real GDP is less than 1% per annum, revealing a critical need to advance opportunities for MSMEs in Jamaica. As a result, the government established two bureaus to facilitate a secure transaction framework that would help MSMEs access funds to promote activities and improve profitability (Senior,

2012). The well-being of MSMEs is necessary for places such as Jamaica and the Cayman Islands to enhance their economic structures.

The business categories in the Cayman Islands are micro, small, and large. The Cayman Islands do not have a separate classification for SMBs (Department of Commerce and Investment, 2019). A small business in the Cayman Islands has a maximum number of 12 employees, excluding the owner and not exceeding \$750K in gross profit (Department of Commerce and Investment, 2019). If gross profit exceeds \$750K, then the business is a large operation (Department of Commerce and Investment, 2019). These figures are small compared to most countries, but they are relative to the size of the islands. Regardless of the size of a business, technology will impact most variables in business operations (Peng et al., 2016).

Using technology is an important strategy to advance the cause of any business. Mazzarol (2015) underscored the need for leaders to utilize enhanced technological capabilities to complement internal operations, improve supply chain management, and promote global capabilities. Business leaders now create multiple, accessible platforms that resonate with the flexibility and easy access that customers demand (Franco et al., 2014; Morgan-Thomas, 2016). Franco et al. (2014) posited that despite the evidence that SMB employees embrace technology with significant impact, some researchers indicated that the technological operations of large businesses far outweigh those of SMBs. Hence, SMB leaders may need to aggressively respond to the market demands and advance technology to solicit optimal growth and development.

The SMB leaders could choose to extend their responsibilities beyond making a profit and contribute to society, reaping enormous benefits in the long run. SMB leaders' responses to preserving the environment and embracing corporate social responsibility affect employees' interest and commitment to the business (Dey et al., 2018). Corporate social responsibility is essential to retaining business branding and customer awareness in SMBs (Ben Youssef et al., 2018). Business branding and customer awareness practices might be useful if management combines corporate social responsibility with strategic planning, which could be favorable to the profit margin and the overall business prospects.

### **Talent Management**

Talent management is becoming increasingly popular. The need to plan human resources led to the development of talent management from the 1980s into the 1990s to meet the talent demands that business leaders had and to develop ways of managing those needs, including succession planning (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016). By the late 1990s, the inclusion of the term *talent management* in the development of business strategies within many organizations was a reality (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016). Talent management refers to skills, abilities, and talents and matching these to individuals within the organization (Tafti et al., 2017). Talent management identifies needed talents, acts to fill the positions, maintains and retains talent (Mensah, 2015). van Zyl et al. (2017) held another perspective and outlined the main components of talent management: attracting, recruiting, selecting, deploying, transitioning, developing growth, managing

performance, reviewing, rewarding, engaging, and retaining talent. Ensuring that the ideal individuals are in assigned positions is critical for successful business operations.

Another perspective of talent management involves combining the responsibilities of staffing and recruiting, training and developing, providing recognition and rewards, and retaining employees (Kaliannan et al., 2016). Naim and Lenka (2017) characterized talent management similarly to Kaliannan et al. but included social media to complement the components. The workforce's efficient management may depend on effective talent management strategies, which could be the basis for strategic operations.

Some business leaders are tactical in formulating talent management strategies to maximize operations with efficient human resources. The best strategies for successful talent management are strategic priority, succession planning for defined roles, and annual assessments of talent needs (Spofford, 2017). Aligning talent management practices and the company's strategic planning process with top managers, line managers, and other relevant personnel is a significant practice (Tafti et al., 2017). Some human resources managers might apply these practices and be proactive in planning for talents to meet the organizations' obligations. Noteworthy is the relevance of strategic planning for talent management.

Organizational leaders use talent management strategies and facilitate strategic planning in different capacities. Human resources managers might benefit from implementing a talent management system where they implement the information technology department's process to complement business operations (Creelman, 2015).

Having an adequate budget and a reasonable timeline to employ experienced personnel, being mindful of demographics, suppliers' reputation, and customer service, would be beneficial (Creelman, 2015). Whereas an effective talent management system could link the business needs with formulated strategies and enhance business operations, other technological advancements could be helpful in talent management systems.

Another technological impact of the talent management maturity model is the four levels that aid in strategic practices (Garr, 2016). Garr (2016) suggested that the first level involves talent activities, emphasizing performance assessment with no accompanying talent strategy. The second level relates to talent strategy for employees' growth and improvement (Garr, 2016). The third level is the formulation of strategies for talent relationships, and the fourth level is integrating activities for the strategic outcome in the unit or organization (Garr, 2016). Human resources managers can use these steps to engage and retain employees while seeking to move from Level 1 to Level 4 to maximize performance (Garr, 2016). Thus, technology may have an essential effect on maximizing benefits to the firms, primarily due to globalization and demographic shifts.

Defining roles and functions in talent management is a critical practice. Some managers are delinquent in clarifying roles and responsibilities to help employees fulfill their tasks (van Zyl et al., 2017). In seeking to determine strategies in human resource management, van Zyl et al. (2017) stressed the importance of developing a framework that will clarify roles and responsibilities within the organization. Most employees are proud when they engage in a holistic atmosphere and feel valued (van Zyl et al., 2017).

Because valued employees are likely to be more engaging, they could positively affect their on-the-job performance.

Giving rewards, whether monetary or otherwise, encourages positive results. Managers should realize that there is a relationship between compensation and benefits, as well as trust and the need to value employees (Victor & Hoole, 2017). There is a moderate to a strong positive relationship between the two constructs, and rewards could predict engagement and trust (Victor & Hoole, 2017). In addition, extrinsic and intrinsic rewards are essential to improving talent management strategies (Victor & Hoole, 2017). Thus, leaders should use this knowledge to propel an effective talent management system that caters to the workers' intrinsic and extrinsic needs.

### ***Talent Management and Firm Size***

Talent management might be a strategic function in many organizations, but the focus is typically on larger organizations than SMBs. The importance of talent management is not viewed comparatively by large corporations and SMBs (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017). Krishnan and Scullion (2017) explored the applicability of talent management strategies in different types of organizations while formulating the characteristics for the SMBs and found a more concerted effort in making provisions that will benefit the employees. The size of a business is one factor that impacts talent management practices within any organization (Asadullah et al., 2015). Some SMB leaders might not view enhancing talent as a priority if they can use the funds for more pressing obligations in operations.

Large businesses usually have a more sophisticated talent management framework that often is quite costly for smaller firms (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017). Leaders in large firms adopt an inclusion policy that incorporates all employees for development to advance a competitive advantage (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017). In the words of Asadullah et al. (2015), there are more formalized talent management practices in larger firms with more extensive performance appraisals and remuneration policies. Another factor Asadullah et al. posited, which SMB leaders should consider, is the larger firms' poaching of employees. With the limited funds in many SMBs, these managers may choose to use innovative strategies, even if the strategies are not as sophisticated as those of the larger firms, capitalizing on innovation to recruit, develop, and retain talent to remain competitive.

### ***Talent Management Strategies in SMBs***

SMBs are critical to the success of any society. SMBs are pivotal from a global perspective, facilitating growth and development due to the role business leaders play in providing goods and services and generating jobs (Remi, 2018). The Nigerian government formulates policies to promote strategic alliances and direct investment to further the cause for growth and development (Remi, 2018). However, the employees acknowledged a barrier to successful business operations because of insufficient talent management practices (Remi, 2018). Remi (2018) suggested that employees' dissatisfaction results in decreased productivity and damage to the image of the SMBs. Talent management policies vary for SMB leaders in China's service sector (Cui et al.,

2016). For many Chinese leaders, getting the right talent is the critical step, and most talented individuals in the pool are products of internship programs in China (Cui et al., 2016). The strategic talent management planners should facilitate the appropriate working environment with attractive compensations and offer scope-to-grow programs (Cui et al., 2016). The organizations where the leaders have lucrative plans for the employees may be more attractive and could provide added benefits for increased productivity.

A modern view to drive the attractiveness of businesses is employer branding. SMBs are pivotal to India's progress in providing employment and facilitating growth and development (Kaur et al., 2015). The high level of global competition propelled SMB leaders to take proactive online branding measures to attract, develop, and retain talent (Kaur et al., 2015). Naz et al. (2016) had a similar characterization for SMBs in Pakistan to foster growth and development within the economy. Satisfying human capital needs could be advantageous to SMB leaders and help gain and maintain a competitive advantage (Debanjana, 2018).

In an effort to gain a competitive advantage, business leaders optimize the need to be innovative. Investing in training is essential even though management within SMBs has a much lower budget, and lost output could result in funds diverted to training costs (Antonioli & Della Torre, 2015). Training increases innovation, which is even more critical for SMBs, and there are often missed opportunities by SMB leaders to facilitate training at the workplace (Antonioli & Della Torre, 2015). Leaders can promote human

development and empowerment, which is vital to acquiring a competitive advantage in businesses (Amarakoon et al., 2016). Both innovation and competitive advantage could be essential elements to globalization success.

The effect of talent management strategies is a global issue with profound results on business performance. Singh et al. (2017) conducted a study with 177 study participants on human resources management practices in SMBs in Trinidad, West Indies. Singh et al. found a positive relationship between some talent management practices and business performance, where the most striking relationship was between performance appraisals and compensation. Bishop (2015) also studied the effect of human resources management practices in SMBs and concluded that skills training played a significant role in promoting economic growth, particularly for small businesses. Employees' motivation to work hard and excel in what they do may be a result of transformational leadership behavior and policies within the organization, focusing on empowering the employees and ensuring favorable business results.

### **Talent Acquisition**

Employers should offer packages to employees that provide value to enhance business operations when acquiring employees with appropriate knowledge, skills, and competence. A superior compensation practice that managers could offer to provide flexibility in compensation packages would result in greater attraction and employee retention (Vidal-Salazar et al., 2016). Individuals have different needs, and the potential benefits are just as critical as the wages and salaries to help the recruits decide whether

they want to be employees of the firm (Vidal-Salazar et al., 2016). Vidal-Salazar et al. (2016) noted that managers must be aware of the impact of flexibility on employee recruitment and retention since the recruits are cognizant of the options available from different recruiters. The best recruits might result from managers offering attractive compensation packages that could encourage dedication and drive.

Business leaders must engage their employees in making valuable contributions to align with the strategic planning process. Formulating a conceptual framework that focuses on employee engagement might foster valued and motivated employees (Tiwari & Lenka, 2016). Managers who acknowledge the significance of increased employee engagement in organizations could enhance productivity and benefit the relevant stakeholders (Cooke et al., 2016). Using a supply chain model might also lead to increased productivity (Qi et al., 2017).

Using a supply chain management approach with collaborative planning, forecasting, and replenishment (CPFR) model as the conceptual framework, Makarius and Srinivasan (2017) sought to address a mismatch in the labor market for talent management. The researchers' goal was to have a talent supply chain management in which the users would develop and manage the flow of talent (Makarius & Srinivasan, 2017). The framework led to a reduction in employers' burden of accessing desirable talent using the four phases of strategy and planning, managing demand and supply, executing, and conducting analyses (Makarius & Srinivasan, 2017). The use of the CPFR

enables employers to recognize the value that technology provides, which could filter into other areas and supply valuable data for analytics.

### ***Data Analytics***

The big data industry could be new and thriving. Big data analytics offers perspectives in talent management practices where users obtain needed data to enhance business operations (Grover et al., 2018). Because of increased research, numerous resources for human resources personnel are available for use in talent management (Nocker & Sena, 2019). Data analytics could be a significant resource for gathering vital statistics for any business (Nocker & Sena, 2019).

Big data industry generated revenues that increased from \$6.8 billion to \$32 billion between 2016 and 2018 (Grover et al., 2018). The benefit of people analytics is the enablement of the strategic assessment of descriptive, predictive, and prescriptive occurrences in the human resources function within businesses (Isson & Harriott, 2016). The premise is that objective data, measurable with proven statistics, is the best decision-making tool for strategic planning (Zarsky, 2015). Through algorithms, data analytics provide benefits in sorting, selecting, classifying, and appraising optimal performance to manage people and processes (Zarsky, 2015). Research findings suggest that data analytics is popular in some organizations and that using people analytics may be beneficial for talent management (Zarsky, 2015).

The significance of data analytics in human resources practices is still in question. Recruiting the right individuals is the first step in talent management, and using data

analytics improves the business's strategic function (Rao & Priyadarshini, 2017). Data analytics has been quite successful (Zarsky, 2015), even though the success rate is debatable (Grover et al., 2018). Managers can benefit from big data within organizations only when resources and techniques are in place to manipulate the big data (Grover et al., 2018). Grover et al. (2018) surveyed over 400 companies and found that only 4% of the companies successfully utilized big data analytics. Data analytics could provide value for management, but the high cost associated with utilizing data analytics may require that the use extends beyond data acquisition into other human resources functions (Grover et al., 2018). Incorporating data analytics into talent development functions may be ideal for transformational leaders.

## **Talent Development**

### ***Training***

Human resources development is a system that is beneficial to managers in many organizations who adopt the system to facilitate employees' engagement (Kwon & Park, 2019). Researching human resources development provides insight into theory and practice on maximizing employees' performance (Kwon & Park, 2019). Training and development are essential in integrating strategic human resource development to optimize employee performance in any business (Werner et al., 2019). Incorporating effective human resource practices provides value that strategists may include in the strategic planning process to maximize benefits (Werner et al., 2019). Training and

development are likely to foster knowledge and competence that may favor the individual employees as well as other stakeholders.

Leaders and managers do not always have the same perspective on the merits of training employees. Training is the conduit for persons to get equipped for the job and contribute to the organization's development (Barrett, 2015). Employee training is a significant factor in promoting growth and development within the organization (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2016). Traits, personalities, and abilities are innate (Russell & Bennett, 2015). Tilottama and Snigdha (2019), however, contradicted Russell and Bennett's notion that individuals develop skills and abilities at birth. Tilottama and Snigdha reasoned that the need to remain competitive forces leaders to be flexible and provide training for the employees. The benefits of employees' training and development are numerous for stakeholders, especially for the employees who acquire knowledge and skills.

Having knowledgeable workers and developing human resources are essential because knowledgeable workers make decisions, solve problems, develop designs, perform inspections, and facilitate work (Batra, 2017). Leaders can challenge employees' competencies by giving them assignments that enhance their skills and learning and make them partners of the company's growth story (Batra, 2017).

The benefits of employee training to SMBs could be significant. In conducting a meta-analysis, Farn-Shing et al. (2016) explored employee training benefits through a talent quality management system, which reveals how the level of professional expertise,

skills, and knowledge influences the employees' output. The findings revealed that relevant personnel could use the talent quality management system to increase productivity within the SMBs by developing a systematic process to train the employees and enhance employee performance within the businesses so that the benefits outweigh the costs (Farn-Shing et al., 2016). Study findings reveal that investing in employees may increase value for both the employees and the organization.

Training is essential for the improvement of employee efficiency, which benefits the organization. There is a relationship between employee training, satisfaction, worker engagement, and turnover rate (Memon et al., 2016). Data collected from individuals representing 409 oil and gas workers revealed a positive relationship between adequate training and employee engagement (Memon et al., 2016). There was also a negative correlation between employee engagement and the rate of employee turnover (Memon et al., 2016). Employees are likely to be more engaged in the workplace and more loyal to the organization if they receive benefits, such as training. Any element of talent management, including training, might result in spill-off effects to benefit the organization.

Different facets of talent management are associated with human resource practices within the organization. Managers play an important role in modifying training as necessary to ensure alignment with core competencies, fostering engagement, and enhancing job performance (Erb, 2015). Multi-skilled human resources are needed to capture versatility within an organization (Thomas et al., 2016). Study findings suggest

that focusing on developing core competencies and matching the right people to the job promote cross-training, job enrichment, and job enlargement (Erb, 2015). In addition, managers should implement practices to host flexible work arrangements and facilitate employees' work-life balance while maximizing the employees' performance (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016). However, the level of competitiveness in any workforce may dictate the necessity to be creative in technology and how employees fulfill their obligations.

### ***Technology***

There has been a shift in the approach that business leaders use to embrace technology to maximize benefits (Nugent, 2017). Many business operators capitalize on the depth and breadth of technology while seeking to embrace technology's dynamism (Mirchandani et al., 2016). Employees welcome technological advancement as they can now advance their academic pursuits through online portals and cloud learning (Mirchandani et al., 2016). Another area of technological dominance is through social networking and data collection and mining strategies that are replacing the traditional techniques of data gathering (Church & Silzer, 2016). Business leaders recognize that technology is central to managing human resources and providing flexibility in recruiting, selecting, and developing talent in any organization (Alomari, 2019). Business leaders may use technology to ensure diversity through a multichannel focus, which may complement future business advancement.

The use of technology could be a significant catalyst for creativity in a dynamic working environment. A talent-driven appraisal system provides managers with much-needed data to prevent costly mistakes in the talent management process (Russell & Bennett, 2015). Using technology could drive hiring the best talent through data mining by utilizing the talent-driven appraisal system to identify what incentive is desirable for the talent (Russell & Bennett, 2015). Technological development can be disruptive, but the use of a talent-driven appraisal system can complement talent acquisition (Nugent, 2017).

Managers use technology to minimize recruitment difficulties. Recruiters are likely to get the right talent to advance the business (Sołek-Borowska & Wilczewska, 2018). These talent management practices may prove valuable for business operations to conduct activities such as collecting and disseminating data for decision-making and deciding on compensation plans.

### ***Compensation***

A significant factor that business leaders encounter that could affect business activities and all stakeholders is the issue of compensation. Effective compensation management is critical in every business because of the complexity attached to meeting human capital needs (Gupta & Shaw, 2014). Compensation systems affect the physical and psychological state of employees, managers, investors, and other stakeholders (Gupta & Shaw, 2014). In addition, compensation could influence the morale and performance at the workplace, which affects the level of productivity and the returns to the organization

(Gupta & Shaw, 2014; Kaliannan et al., 2016). Research shows that employees seek remuneration and better training opportunities that optimize their full potential in the workplace (Kaliannan et al., 2016). Generation X managers seem to have difficulty controlling the Y generation subordinates due to variances in value and attitude toward work (Kaliannan et al., 2016). Because of the significant effect that compensation plans have on the overall business performance, business leaders should prioritize and include lucrative compensation policies essential to the strategic talent management process (Bolland, 2017).

The increased demand for talent globally leads to competitiveness in acquiring and retaining talent worldwide. Offering attractive compensation packages boosts employee performance with more unique offerings in the private sector than in the public sector (Aldea, 2015). Many consider attractive packages as incentives to identify and retain employees (Vidal-Salazar et al., 2016). Flexible benefit systems are more appealing than fixed benefits systems and promote talent attraction and retention (Vidal-Salazar et al., 2016). Designing attractive compensation packages is achievable through clear policies for attracting and retaining employees that would not limit the talent's quality intake and could be globally competitive (Vidal-Salazar et al., 2016). Attractive compensation can be motivating for employees and might filter into organizational wellness as well.

### *Employee Wellness*

Embedded in talent management is employee wellness, and managers on the global spectrum should recognize the value of keeping employees healthy, both physically and mentally. Many employers offer wellness programs. In selected Australian businesses, workplace health programs are dominant (Taylor et al., 2016). Some of the challenges that leaders in businesses of all sizes acknowledge are insufficient funds and time to adequately address employee wellness initiatives (Taylor et al., 2016). Most of the employees in these SMBs stated that efforts to promote morale and work-life balance were the most critical factors for wellness promotion (Taylor et al., 2016). Taiwanese leaders, in particular, feel that the government should increase workplace health promotions, especially for SMBs (Tung et al., 2018).

To some employees, workplace wellness is essential. Using a healthy lifestyle behavior scale, Ozvurmaz and Mandiracioglu (2017) found that employees over 50 years of age are more concerned about a healthy lifestyle than those younger than 50. There was no difference in employees' views, irrespective of spiritual affiliation, but there was a clear distinction on the healthy lifestyle behavior scale for employees from rural communities compared to the individuals from the urban areas (Ozvurmaz & Mandiracioglu, 2017). The emphasis on employee wellness has been increasing in recent times, with the need for leaders, managers, and the government to address employees' growing concerns concerning wellness (Ozvurmaz & Mandiracioglu, 2017). With

employee wellness gaining importance, some employees may become more concerned about balancing a healthy lifestyle than about workplace responsibilities.

Enhancing employees' health and safety at the workplace is another wellness concern for many businesses. Occupational safety and health (OSH) issues are less frequent in large organizations because budgets in larger businesses are usually more substantial than those in smaller businesses (Walaski, 2017). Even for SMBs where the focus on risk management might be minimal, devising tools such as checklists, cause and effect analysis, and consequences/probability matrix may establish some control measures (Walaski, 2017). The primary cause of OSH accidents and even deaths in SMBs is poor risk management (Kaassis & Badri, 2018). Assessments are critical when leaders use benchmarks to devise mature models in OSH (Kaassis & Badri, 2018). The awareness of OSH issues highlights the necessity to implement and maintain strict workplace policies to address health and safety issues (Kaassis & Badri, 2018). Considering the growing use of wellness models, managers could define policies that eliminate the need for experimenting with wellness programs.

Arguably, wellness experiments could yield positive results in many cases. For instance, an employee assistance program experiment may help reduce alcoholism (Reynolds & Bennett, 2015). In one study, there was a vast difference between outcomes for employees in the controlled and the non-controlled groups (Reynolds & Bennett, 2015). Coworkers' referrals and team exercises are helpful in training and result in the

employees' willingness to request help, which reduces alcohol consumption (Reynolds & Bennett, 2015).

Implementing alcohol and drug policies in businesses can have a positive effect. In Australia, the proposition is to incorporate alcohol and another drug policy in most businesses (Pidd et al., 2016). Researchers conducted a study with 13,590 participants and discovered an inverse relationship between alcohol and another drug policy and substance abuse in the workplace (Pidd et al., 2016). Australian business operators benefit from programs that promote improved employees' lifestyles (Pidd et al., 2016). The researchers concluded that people are receptive to treatment and any attention received forces human beings to want to be better (Pidd et al., 2016). Leaders need to recognize that wellness employee benefits could improve the organizational climate.

There are ways for business leaders to gather data about the effect of organizational culture on business operations. Leaders can use structural equation modeling to determine employees' attraction to businesses with high-performing cultures and a low attrition rate (Kontoghiorghes, 2016). High-performing and low-attrition rate cultures increase employee satisfaction and a renewed commitment to the workplace (Kontoghiorghes, 2016). Reviewing different eras for organizational climate and culture facilitates understanding the processes and outcomes in the modern workplace (Schneider et al., 2017). Combined forces of human relations' activities and organizational culture lead to increased team cooperation and camaraderie (Schneider et al., 2017). Moreover, culture could play a significant role in individual and corporate functions in any entity,

and adherence to such culture could give people a sense of belonging (Schneider et al., 2017). Leaders may seek to promote and facilitate activities that could create a culture that employees are happy to embrace.

The type of leadership depicted in the workplace may be a vital contributor to the overall organizational atmosphere, as well. Feel-good management is a strategic function term to promote employee well-being in engaging a robust culture (Frenking, 2016). Employees today are more concerned about nonmonetary rewards such as recognition and the possibility of feeling valued (Frenking, 2016). The assurance of management's support is a catalyst for creating happy workers and motivating employees to be productive (Frenking, 2016). In addition, managers should recognize that a conducive work atmosphere encourages employee retention.

### **Talent Retention**

Talent retention is one of the critical components of talent management. Successful businesses need knowledgeable, skilled, and competent employees, and retaining such employees is vital (Tlaiss et al., 2017). Some effective strategies to retain talent include giving remuneration packages, motivating employees, and providing a positive work environment for the talent resources (Tlaiss et al., 2017). Managers ought to pay special attention to their employees and allow them to work in roles in which they are competent, making the employees more comfortable (Batra, 2017). Employees could become more comfortable if they know that managers are taking steps in their interest,

which could be beneficial to the organization and help retain the right talent (Pandita & Ray, 2018).

A good recruitment plan could set the stage for employing competent individuals that the management would want to retain. Having efficient methods to hire highly skilled employees and manage talent is also essential (Maamari & Alameh, 2016). After hiring skilled employees, managers need to retain talented professionals and enhance their development, which could materialize by providing an orderly work environment with transparent and equitable human resources policies (Maamari & Alameh, 2016). Talent management efforts play a significant role when hiring highly skilled employees and should become part of business leaders' strategy to retain employees (Maamari & Alameh, 2016).

The cost of not retaining employees at the managerial level could be a critical factor in any organization. Business leaders can inspire and retain talented employees in South Africa's diverse areas from different industries (Davis & Frolova, 2016). The consequences of not retaining talented people in managerial positions are often negative. Some leaders leave the organization voluntarily. Corruption is a common cause for persons leaving their leadership positions, resulting in ineffectiveness and uncompetitiveness in many organizations (Davis & Frolova, 2016). When the employee turnover rate is high, especially for individuals in leadership positions, recruitment costs increase significantly and inhibit growth (Davis & Frolova, 2016). Management should

put succession planning in place to absorb the negative effect of employees' exit from the business.

### ***Succession Planning***

Succession planning is one of the factors that play a critical role in talent management. In 2016, Sabuncu and Karacay sought to explore and understand talent management practices in Turkey's food and hospitality industry. The study findings revealed that the most successful talent management practice was to develop a talent pool after discovering the need to have succession plans for the positions at different levels based on performance by assessing competencies (Sabuncu & Karacay, 2016). The management team's goal was to identify talent, put plans in place for staff development and advancement, and use competencies (Sabuncu & Karacay, 2016). Many researchers use the RBV theory to explore the importance of succession planning in a competitive environment and the effect on hospitals' financial performance (Patidar et al., 2016). The managers revealed that they used the RBV to identify the needed skills to achieve a competitive advantage (Patidar et al., 2016). As a talent management tool, succession planning could influence the productivity climate within organizations.

Succession planning is pivotal to employee retention. Smith (2015) noted several advantages of succession planning, such as identifying pending vacancies and having contingencies in place. Leaders with succession planning in practice allow employees to view what their advancement would entail and become motivated to work towards aspiring positions (Smith, 2015). The process of succession planning involves

considering the employee's background, experience, skills, knowledge, and other abilities necessary for the identified roles within an organization (Smith, 2015). Furthermore, a successful planning strategy is performing appraisals that will communicate employees' potential for advancement (Ramanan, 2017). Ramanan (2017) noted that a business's growth is often dependent on having a formal system in place for succession planning.

Succession planning means having a contingency plan in place. Succession planning is critical because of its possible effect on businesses' future profitability (Tao & Zhao, 2018). A succession planning practice involves having a system of identifying apparent heirs several years before the election process to inhibit adverse effects on business performance (Tao & Zhao, 2018). Drury (2016) suggested that managers identify and communicate the action plan to the positions' potential replacements. Having a formal policy as the succession-planning blueprint is beneficial to organizations (Drury, 2016). Effective succession planning could foster employee engagement and could be a valuable initiative for SMB leaders.

### ***Employee Engagement***

Improving employee engagement is one strategy that leaders can use to retain talent. The retention rate in organizations depends heavily on employee engagement (Jindal et al., 2017). When employees experience greater involvement in the workplace, they are less inclined to resign from the organization, and they become more satisfied and productive (Jindal et al., 2017). Employee engagement that leads to satisfaction is not necessarily the result of monetary incentives (Nugent, 2017). High-performing

employees' engagement often increases when they are promoted within 3 years of employment and have managers that they respect (Nugent, 2017). Seeking ways to engage employees is one of the routes that leaders may seek to manage talent at the workplace.

Although there might be debates about the extent of the relationship between talent management and employee engagement, some outcomes are indisputable. Effective talent management results in greater employee engagement and retention (Pandita & Ray, 2018). Managers play an important role in this process, in any case. Managers need to take responsibility for the subordinates' actions and not blame failures on other people (Kumar et al., 2018). In addition, managers should provide the necessary motivation to facilitate employee engagement (Kumar et al., 2018). Reengineering by business leaders could attract, lead, engage, and transform employees (DeAscentis, 2016). In the words of DeAscentis (2016), effective leadership goes beyond knowing; doing is the ultimate action. If staff turnover is high, the recruitment cost could also be high, making management support to invest in employees significant (DeAscentis, 2016). Performance assessments are useful tools that managers can use to assist in decision-making processes.

### ***Performance Assessment***

Another critical element in talent management is performance assessment. The traditional system of using weighing scales assessment is not helpful to most employees (Schultz, 2015). Schultz (2015) described one such system in which a small percentage of employees gets rewarded, the average performers neglected, and the majority punished or

terminated for low scores on the assessments. The system was unhealthy, fostering competition and not cooperation (Schultz, 2015). A more useful method, suggested by Schultz, is daily feedback, which provides continuous communication and greater value. Designing a system that assesses some interns' experience and performance in an online company was a fusion of talent management with career planning (Waheed & Zaim, 2015). The employees' experiences signified their qualifications, while self and supervisory appraisals were the basis for performance assessment (Waheed & Zaim, 2015). Individuals with high scores became part of the talent pool while other employees made efforts to improve performance (Waheed & Zaim, 2015). Even though there are different views on what constitutes effective performance assessment, managers could find that as a tool, performance assessment is useful in establishing standards that everyone is aware of and can work to achieve.

### **Transition**

Considering the significance of acquiring, developing, and retaining the right talent, I explored talent management strategies critical for SMBs. In Section 1, I presented the research problem, the background to the study, and the research question, along with the interview questions. I further discussed the nature and the significance of the study. Section 1 also contains a list of the operational definitions used in this study, as well as a discussion about this study's assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. In the literature review section, I described the strategy for searching for and reviewing literature on talent management strategies that are essential in SMBs. In the first main

theme, I provided an overview of the P-CMM and the transformational leadership theory, which served as the conceptual framework in this study. In addition, I discussed different concepts, including talent management and firm size, data analytics, training, compensation, employee wellness, succession planning, employee engagement, and performance assessment.

In Section 2, I provide a description of the research project, restate the purpose of the study, and describe my role as the researcher in this study. Section 2 also includes a description of the study participants, the selected research methodology, and the research design. In Section 2, I also describe the population, the sampling technique, the sample size, the data collection instrumentation used, the data collection techniques utilized, and the data analysis process. In addition, I discuss the steps for ensuring ethical research. Finally, in Section 2, I discuss the study's reliability and validity. I present the findings of my study in Section 3. I also discuss the application for professional practice and the implications for social change. Section 3 also includes recommendations for action as well as recommendations for further research. Finally, I incorporate my reflections from this study in addition to the study's conclusion.

## Section 2: The Project

This section comprises a restatement of the purpose statement and discussions on components essential to quality research. These components include the role of the researcher, participants' selection criteria, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical considerations, data collection instrument and techniques, data organization techniques, and data analysis. I also discuss the processes undertaken to ensure the reliability and validity of the study findings.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore talent management strategies that SMB leaders in the Cayman Islands use to acquire, develop, and retain employees. The targeted population consisted of five SMB leaders who had successful experiences in using talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees. In addition to the SMB leaders, I targeted a five-member focus group with one participant from each of the five SMBs. The implications for positive social change arising from these strategies include employees receiving better remuneration, greater job security, and improved work–life balance. These benefits could ease their workday stress, thereby offering capacity in their lives to become involved in community projects through civic engagement.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher of this study, I played a critical role in the research process. The researcher is the one who understands the content and context of the study and the one

who designs instruments to gather the data as well as analyze, verify, and report pertinent information (Thurairajah, 2019). As the primary data collection instrument, I collected data by interviewing the leaders, conducting a focus group with employees, and examining company documents. I have had associations, as an educator, with the Small Business Association and the Ministry of Commerce, Planning, and Infrastructure in the Cayman Islands in a collaborative effort with the public university for the past 12 years. Contacts from these entities refer to SMBs, and I supervise the students who perform consulting services to the SMBs. Having lived in the Cayman Islands for the past 17 years, I am aware of some talent management practices that leaders of SMBs perform.

To frame the ethical principles that guided the involvement of the research participants, I applied the principles outlined in the *Belmont Report* of 1979 for conducting ethical research with human participants. In outlining the principles and guidelines for working with study participants, the *Belmont Report* authors purported three core principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Based on the report, these core principles apply to informed consent, assessment of risks and benefits, and selecting subjects (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Drafters of the 1979 *Belmont Report* highlighted the need to act in human subjects' best interest (Adashi et al., 2018). Råheim et al. (2016) and East and Peters (2019) stipulated that a researcher should always consider ethical issues and take steps to protect the subjects. Therefore, after

receiving the signed informed consent from each participant, I ensured human subjects' protection by keeping confidential the participants' identities and personal information obtained. I used the pseudonyms SMB1–SMB5 for the pertinent SMBs, L1–L5 for the business leaders, and FG1–FG5 for the focus group participants to identify the SMBs and participants respectfully. All associated files were stored in a secure location and accessible only by me. I was objective and treated all participants similarly.

Having preconceived ideas of a research subject matter may preempt the research outcomes (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). To avoid possible conflicts of interest, I did not explore businesses I had associations with for my data collection. Having intimate knowledge of some SMBs in the Cayman Islands could have posed a problem of researching from a personal perspective that could have resulted in a conflict of interest or bias. In describing reflexivity, Reid et al. (2018) emphasized the need to abide by ethical principles to guide interests, motivations, and assumptions in qualitative research. Having consistency in the interview protocol will reduce biases (Yin, 2018). Another way to minimize biases is to record the interpretation of participants' responses and corroborate through member checking (D. R. Thomas, 2017). To ensure consistency in asking all participants the same questions, I used interview and focus group protocols. I conducted member checking by interpreting participants' answers to interview questions and asking them to verify the accuracy of my interpretations.

The use of the interview protocol facilitates a conversation centered on the research question (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Using interview protocols in qualitative

research is important because they provide structure as the researcher elicits high-quality data (Shapka et al., 2016). I employed a structured, consistent approach using the interview and focus group protocols with all participants in the study.

### **Participants**

Having the ideal participants is a critical element in conducting research. One criterion for selecting participants stipulated by Wessels and Visagie (2017) is having pertinent knowledge of the subject under study. Researchers establish participant eligibility criteria to ensure that individuals meet the eligibility criteria (Wessels & Visagie, 2017). All leader participants in the current study were Cayman Islands residents who worked in SMBs in the middle or top leadership positions and were knowledgeable about policies on talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees. The SMBs were operational for a minimum of 8 years. The SMB leaders had a successful record of at least 5 years in talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees. The viewpoints of some employees who had benefited from the attraction, development, and retention strategies that the leaders implemented were critical for a focus group and added value to the data. The employees with more than 5 years of experience in the businesses were qualified to assess the success of the talent management strategies that the leaders had implemented. Flick (2018) and Morse (2015) emphasized the need to include a sample of knowledgeable persons who successfully relate to the research question. The focus group participants were familiar with the recruitment, development, and retention strategies that the leaders in the SMBs adopted.

To recruit participants, I used referrals from personnel at the Small Business Association. Gaining access for verification and confirmation of the prospective participants is essential (Lancaster, 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). After I obtained the agency's personnel referrals, I introduced myself through emails explaining the purpose of the study and the potential benefits from this research. After securing permission from the leaders to conduct the research, I extended invitations to the pertinent persons. I verified the eligibility criteria of all contacted persons. I did follow-up with emails and telephone calls to ensure that the participants understood the informed consent form's substance and their rights as participants.

I conducted the interviews with participants cordially and respectfully, and they were mutually beneficial. Råheim et al. (2016) proposed a relationship with mutual respect and understanding between the researcher and the researched. Feedback from interviewees often proves beneficial to building the organization (Wolgemuth et al., 2014). I shared with the participants the benefits of this study.

Johnston (2017) noted that research can only be successful if the research participants possess the necessary knowledge and skills that align with the research question. Johnston also stipulated that an adequate research design is essential to align with the research question. In the current study, I obtained data from leaders knowledgeable in acquiring, developing, and retaining talents within the SMBs and employees who benefitted from these strategies.

## **Research Method and Design**

### **Research Method**

The methodology used in research depends on the type of research undertaken. Bryman (2017) identified the three research methods as qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. Regardless of the method used, the resultant information from data gathering must be reliable and without bias (Park & Park, 2016).

Researchers use the quantitative method to test hypotheses and analyze variables to determine relationships. Bryman (2017) defined the quantitative method as a process of deducing quantifiable information from tested hypotheses. D. L. Morgan (2016) offered a similar view of using the quantitative method and noted that researchers conduct quantitative studies to examine and confirm relationships among measurable variables. The use of the quantitative method does not allow for in-depth and exploratory insight (Queirós et al., 2017). In addition, quantitative research involves quantifying and analyzing data collected (Bryman, 2016; Houé & Murphy, 2016). The quantitative method was not suitable for the current study because my goal was not to test hypotheses, determine relationships between variables, or quantify data using statistical analyses.

Mixed-methods research involves combining quantitative and qualitative methods (Molina-Azorin, 2016). Maxwell (2015) pointed out that researchers in the natural and social sciences often prefer the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. Given that I did not test hypotheses or measure variables, the mixed-methods approach was not appropriate for this study.

Bansal et al. (2018) posited that conducting qualitative research provides a new perspective to theories. Qualitative researchers focus on induction to gather insight and patterns from data collected (Bansal et al., 2018). Qualitative research results in gaining greater insight into information gathering about participants' feelings and behaviors (Queirós et al., 2017). Qualitative research can be an independent method or a complement to the quantitative approach as a mixed method (Bristowe et al., 2015). Because my goal was to gain insight from an inductive method, the qualitative method was the most suitable approach.

### **Research Design**

Qualitative research comprises many designs, including ethnography, phenomenology, and case study. The research design is dependent on the nature of the study (Kruth, 2015; Morse, 2015). Fusch et al. (2017) posited that the research design is one of the essential elements determining a study's success. The best design is the one that most adequately helps the researcher to answer the research question (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

An ethnographic study involves exploring the cultural practices of a group of people (Kruth, 2015; Spradley, 2016). Through observation and interviews, researchers gain insight into individuals' events and lived experiences (Elkawatneh, 2016). The ethnographic design entails looking at all aspects of the participants' lifestyles and culture (Fusch et al., 2017). Given that the purpose of my study was not to explore cultural

practices through lived experiences of participants, the ethnographic design was not appropriate.

I considered the phenomenological design for my study but did not select this design. Phenomenology is the process of contextualizing data from the meaning participants give to lived experiences (Husserl, 1931). The phenomenological design involves understanding people's perceptions about their experiences of a phenomenon (Alase, 2017; Neubauer et al., 2019). Percy et al. (2015) explained that the phenomenological design requires focusing on the psychological interpretation of experiences of members of the group of the phenomenon, such as feelings, attitudes, and beliefs. The purpose of the current study was not to explore the conscientiousness of participants' lived experiences. Therefore, the phenomenological design was not appropriate.

After careful consideration of these three qualitative designs, I chose the case study design for my study. The case study design involves conducting in-depth research in real-life contexts (Elkatawneh, 2016; Ridder, 2017; Yin, 2018). Ridder (2017) posited that researchers use the case study to explore a phenomenon in real-life contexts by interviewing participants. A case study design is not exhaustive but is relevant to identifying strategies that shape specific functions within a unit (Patton, 2015). I chose a multiple case study design for this study. In a multiple case study, the researcher uses different means to explore the phenomenon among different cases from a contextual perspective (G. Thomas, 2015). The multiple case study is useful when assessing a

phenomenon's similarities and differences in several real-life situations (Yin, 2018). The multiple case study was ideal for the current study because I explored the similarities and differences in talent management strategies that leaders used to acquire, develop, and retain talent in SMBs.

Data saturation is essential for qualitative research to ensure the validity of the study (Yin, 2018). Achieving data saturation enhances research quality (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation becomes evident when there is no new information resulting from data analyses (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders et al., 2017). After five leader interviews and the employees' focus group, I achieved data saturation as the data became repetitive and no new information emerged from the data analysis.

### **Population and Sampling**

This qualitative multiple case study population comprised leaders who successfully practiced talent management strategies in SMBs and some employees in the respective SMBs. The research population refers to a group of persons possessing the relevant criteria for participating in studying a phenomenon (Asiamah et al., 2017). The participants should be willing and able to provide precise information relevant to answering the research question (Kline, 2017). The current study's population comprised leaders who had been successful talent management practitioners who had effectively implemented strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees. Some employees who had benefited from the strategies that the leaders used to attract, develop, and retain talent were also part of the population.

Sampling facilitates the specific case and the required data for case studies (Stake, 1995). Purposeful sampling requires selecting persons equipped with knowledge about the research phenomenon and determining what data are relevant to answering the research question (Etikan et al., 2016; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Purposeful sampling is useful when seeking thorough and detailed information for a study (Patton, 2015).

I used purposeful sampling to guide the selection of five leaders from five SMBs who were knowledgeable about and successful in using talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain talent within the businesses. I also used purposeful sampling to select one member from each of the five SMBs for the focus group. However, one focus group member was not able to attend, and the final focus group had four members for the interview. Etikan et al. (2016) pointed out that purposeful sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique and is ideal for small samples. Purposeful sampling is less time-consuming than other sampling techniques and ideal for small sample sizes (Orcher, 2017). Purposeful sampling allowed me to select participants who met the eligibility criteria to gather data necessary for answering my study's research question.

The determining factor for the appropriate sample size in qualitative research is data saturation, where even one participant can compellingly provide an informed decision for a case study (Boddy, 2016). An adequate sample can be as small as two in qualitative research (Yin, 2018). Data saturation was a crucial element in the current qualitative study. The need for data saturation drives the determination of the sample size in qualitative research (Malterud et al., 2016). Fusch and Ness (2015) defined data

saturation in the qualitative study as exhausting new material findings for the study. Data saturation is having exhausted all aspects of a category with no new themes arising (Bowen, 2008; Nelson, 2016). I gathered data from all participants in the interviews, the focus group, and the company documents until I reached data saturation. A leader participant was a resident in the Cayman Islands who had been working in a managerial role in an SMB for at least 5 years, was in a middle or top leadership position, and was knowledgeable about the SMB's policies on talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees. A focus group participant was working at the specific SMB for at least 5 years in a nonmanagerial role. The interviews were timely and conducted at on-site offices, while the focus group interview took place at a private off-site location. The locations selected were convenient for all parties. Ecker (2017) emphasized the significance of a suitable site with minimal distraction to the interviewing process. I conducted face-to-face interviews with the confidence that there were no distractions. I followed up with emails and telephone calls to secure member checking.

### **Ethical Research**

Conducting this research required careful consideration of ethical issues. Resnik (2020) posited the need for personnel to have established procedures to research human subjects because of the varying perspectives individuals have on a subject matter resulting in research bias. Ethical conduct is necessary to interpret, assess, and apply data gathered in qualitative research (Resnik, 2020). Maintaining quality throughout the research process is vital for research credibility (Resnik, 2020). Researchers seek to

follow the guidelines established through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to protect at-risk and vulnerable individuals (Roulston & Preissle, 2018). I reassured the participants of confidentiality, and they were confident that their participation would not be detrimental to their safety.

The foundation of ethical research is the informed consent process (Kadam, 2017). The consent form should be simple and easy for the participants to comprehend (Walliman, 2017). Participants should be willing volunteers, be competent, and understand the full disclosure regarding the participants' involvement (Kadam, 2017). Mumford and McIntosh (2017) further pointed to the need for the interviewers to go beyond merely getting a participant's signature on the consent form. Informed consent is a process occurring before and during the research when participants become aware of the research implications for themselves and others (Mumford & McIntosh, 2017).

I obtained Walden University's IRB approval, receiving the number 08-21-20-0632785 with my ethical clearance to conduct this research. Participants must be competent and willing to participate in the study (Manti & Licari, 2018). As part of the ethical consideration when conducting research, participants should receive all pertinent information on the study procedures before consenting (Manti & Licari, 2018). I emailed the consent form to all persons who agreed to participate. I required that all willing parties sign and return the consent form electronically. I received the consent form through email from all the participants.

The respondents are free to rescind their agreement to participate in the research at any time (Maragakis & O'Donohue, 2016; Patten & Newhart, 2017). I informed the participants that their participation in the study was voluntary and that there would be no incentive for participating in the study. I also advised the participants that they were free to decline answering any question they felt uncomfortable about and could rescind their agreement to participate at any time before the publication of the study. I requested that the rescission be in writing. There was no compensation involved in conducting this study, but I presented thank you cards to my participants in appreciation for their willingness to assist in the study.

I ensured ethical protection for all my participants in the study. Researchers have a significant responsibility to protect the participants from any emotional or psychological harm while maintaining privacy and confidentiality (Chan et al., 2017). I did not use participants' names or the names of the SMBs represented in the study. One way of protecting the subjects' identity is to use pseudonyms (Lahman et al., 2015). Therefore, I assigned pseudonyms to protect participants' identities in the study and conducted interviews on-site and the focus group off-site at a convenient private location.

Walden's IRB guidelines outline the minimum duration for storing research documentation. In preparation for conducting this doctoral study, I completed a certification awarded by the National Institutes of Health to evidence my knowledge and understanding of expectations regarding adherence to ethical guidelines. To ensure confidentiality, I placed all electronic data on a password-protected memory stick and put

other research paper documentation in a combination safe that is accessible only to me. The storage period for both electronic and hard copy documentation is 5 years. After the period of storage, I will digitally and physically delete and shred all the research data as appropriate. I have ensured that the final document doctoral manuscript lists the agreement documents in the appendices and the table of contents.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

I was the primary data collection instrument for this doctoral study. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument and identifies the participants, collects and analyzes the data, and reports the study findings (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018; Clark & Vealé, 2018; Fusch & Ness, 2015). To gather pertinent data and for the purpose of methodological triangulation, I conducted semistructured interviews, moderated a focus group, and examined companies' documents. I recorded their responses and transcribed them to identify themes for data analysis. The interviews, focus group, and document review allowed me to gather relevant data from participants on talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain talent.

To gather in-depth data, I used open-ended questions in semistructured interviews. An interview is a useful tool for gathering information from one individual at a time using prepared questions on specific areas (Paradis et al., 2016; Rosenthal, 2016). Interviewing is possibly the most popular qualitative technique for gathering data (Mason, 2017). Face-to-face interviews provide interviewers with the benefits of observing the participants' body language and other nonverbal communications (Heath et

al., 2018). I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to guide the interviewing process for consistency in gathering verbal and nonverbal data from each participant.

I used a focus group to present open-ended questions and obtained responses from the participants. Focus groups allow the researcher to encourage the group members to answer the interview questions (Rosenthal, 2016). With focus groups, the participation rates increase, and focus groups are cost-effective in gathering essential qualitative data (Flynn et al., 2018). Focus groups have many benefits, but successful execution requires adequate planning and organization (Nyumba et al., 2018). I used a focus group protocol (see Appendix B) to direct the participants' data gathering process. The focus group participants shared valuable information about the talent management strategies that the leaders used to acquire, develop, and retain talent.

In addition to semistructured interviews and a focus group, I collected information through the analysis of company documents. I perused *employment application forms*, *small works contracts*, *employees' profile forms*, *application form waivers*, *applications for work permits*, *staff evaluation forms*, and *pay advice stubs* that detail employees' earnings and deductions. Document analysis is a useful tool for examining everyday occurrences (Feldman et al., 2016). Documents such as minutes of meetings, progress reports, and job descriptions are essential information sources (Bredillet et al., 2018).

Respondent validation is significant to ensure precision in qualitative research (Tsai et al., 2016). Member checking allows for verifying the participants' responses, facilitating ethical protection (Birt et al., 2016). I conducted member checking to ensure

that the transmission of the interview and focus group proceedings consisted solely of the respondents' answers and intended meanings as the participants reviewed and provided feedback. I used the member checking protocol (see Appendix C) to ensure the accurate transmission of participants' responses and intended meanings. I also asked follow-up questions, as necessary.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The research question for this study was: What strategies do SMB leaders in the Cayman Islands use for talent management to acquire, develop, and retain employees? To gather data to answer the research question, I used semistructured, face-to-face interviews, a focus group, and a review of company documents. The process of collecting data is critical because the analysis and use of the data are dependent on the quality of the data collected (Paradis et al., 2016). The types of data collection methods used in qualitative research have different advantages and disadvantages. Interviews are among the most valuable tools to gather data in qualitative research (Yin, 2018). One advantage of interviews is that they afford opportunities for the most favorable interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Oltmann, 2016). An advantage of semistructured interviews is that the interviewer's probing can enhance the value of data collected from the participants (O'Keeffe et al., 2016). A semistructured interview is an efficient way to explore behaviors and determine the outcomes that are measurable and quantifiable (McIntosh & Morse, 2015; O'Keeffe et al., 2016). There are also drawbacks to semistructured interviews, and McIntosh and Morse (2015) noted that a disadvantage of

interviewing is the inability to generalize the findings and the possibility of researchers' bias. Another potential drawback is that young researchers may find the interviewing technique daunting (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). However, I determined that conducting the interviews facilitated gathering information from my participants that furnished knowledge to answer the research question. I prepared an interview protocol (Appendix A) with a set of open-ended questions. In semistructured interviews, the researcher asks the participants predetermined questions but may ask additional questions to elicit further information (O'Keeffe et al., 2016; Peters & Halcomb, 2015). I had the participants share their experiences on talent management strategies by asking nine open-ended questions. With the participants' permission, I used audio devices to record the proceedings of the interview.

In addition to conducting the interviews, I conducted a focus group to gather pertinent data to enhance the study's validity. A focus group is a useful, exploratory data collection technique that, in conjunction with interviews, allows for methodological triangulation in qualitative studies (Rosenthal, 2016). There have been debates on what constitutes a good sample size for a focus group. A focus group's ideal number is between six and twelve individuals with synergistic benefits (Guest et al., 2017). Krueger and Casey (2015) posited that focus groups allow for collecting diverse data that is not possible from any other single technique. The dominant group dynamics that enrich focus groups also pose problems with information flow (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Thus, planning is vital for the success of focus groups and necessary at every stage of the focus

group process to ensure success (Carey & Asbury, 2016). Carey and Asbury (2016) identified the need for the focus group facilitator to have excellent probing skills. One drawback that Rosenthal (2016) identified was the limited literature that provides guidelines for analyzing data compiled from focus groups. I encouraged the focus group participants to be open with their responses, and the interactions were beneficial. As the facilitator, I had the critical role of ensuring no conflicts arose among participants.

Accessing company documents provided me with added insights. Archival storage systematically secures information and facilitates a more significant organization for easy access and relatively low cost (Das et al., 2018). Reviewing archival and company documents allows researchers to peruse secondary data, providing valuable information necessary for methodological triangulation (Das et al., 2018). The company documents useful to the study depend on the research question (Paradis et al., 2016). There are potential drawbacks to using archival and company documents in data collection. One drawback is that these documents might not be readily available and could be commercially sensitive (Das et al., 2018). Examining company documents enabled me to augment and compare data collected from the interviews and the focus group for my study. The company documents I examined included *employment application forms, small works contracts, employees' profile forms, applications for work permits, and staff evaluation forms* from three of the five SMBs for data analysis.

I conducted face-to-face member checking to clarify the participants' responses from the interviews and the focus group to ensure there was no misunderstanding of the

data collected. Member checking is a tool used to maintain research quality through reviewing and adjusting, where necessary, participants' data (Harvey, 2015; Thomas, 2017). Researchers use member checking to provide study participants with the researcher's interpretation of participants' answers to interview questions and ask participants to verify the accuracy of the interpretations (Yin, 2018). Member checking enables the respondents to validate data collected or analyzed (Birt et al., 2016). I conducted member checking after both the interviews and focus group.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Data organization is essential in qualitative research. Utilizing an efficient data organization system is important for qualitative research when there is a large quantity of data (Annink, 2017). I maintained a research log for data collection from the interviews, the focus group, and member checking. Flick (2018) underscored the importance of note-taking and storage with easy retrieval when collecting research data. No report generated for this study had individual participants' identities, and the address and name of the case businesses are not on record. I also did not use personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. I secured the electronic data on a memory stick, and I stored the hard copy of the data in a password-protected combination safe, available only to me. Yin (2018) recommended theme storage in chronological order. I did theme storage for both electronic and hard copy documentation, which should be for 5 years. After the 5-year period, I will promptly destroy the files by shredding hard copies and deleting electronic files.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis is an essential element in research. Rosenthal (2016) posited that data analysis is one of the most challenging phases of research. Regardless of the type of study or data analysis method, a researcher must gain newer insights and draw valuable conclusions from the research process (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Methodological triangulation is an essential concept in qualitative research designs such as case studies, and involves gathering data from multiple sources to study a phenomenon. Collecting data from multiple sources is beneficial for confirming findings, ensuring comprehensive data, increasing validity, and enhancing understanding of studied phenomena (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Heesen et al., 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Triangulation helps the researcher produce a thorough analysis of the phenomenon, even if the perspective is slightly different for each technique (Drouin et al., 2015). Finally, the capture of relevant information may be possible in research when one uses multiple data collection techniques (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

In the current study, I implemented the *within method* methodological triangulation, where the focus is on using only qualitative data sources (Yin, 2018). For the purpose of methodological triangulation, I gathered data from face-to-face, semistructured interviews with five SMB leaders and a four-member focus group. I also gathered data from company documents.

To analyze the data for this study, I used the thematic analysis approach. The thematic analysis deciphers meanings based on similarities from the data collected in

qualitative research (Buetow, 2010). Buetow (2010) noted that patterns and recurrences were significant in developing the themes. Thematic analysis reveals the depth of information obtained from participants regarding the phenomenon (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The most suitable data analysis approach for this study was the thematic approach guided by Yin's five-phase analysis process. Yin (2018) identified five stages to conduct data analysis: (a) data compilation, (b) data separation into categories, (c) contextualization, (d) drawing interpretation, and (e) conclusion. For my analysis, I compiled the data, separated the data components into categories, identified patterns, and drew conclusions related to the research question. Using thematic analysis, themes emerged into meaningful details and were relevant to answering the research question.

Anthony (2015) highlighted the ongoing debates regarding the significance of using computer-assisted data analysis software in qualitative research. Anthony noted that the use of software was not very productive but that it was more beneficial to generate themes manually. Houghton et al. (2015) disputed the use of manual data analysis, citing voluminous paperwork as the major disadvantage. I used NVivo, qualitative computer software, to organize, display, and analyze the collected data. The use of NVivo software is beneficial in a data analysis process that involves: (a) organizing a dataset; (b) getting acquainted with the dataset; (c) coding, classifying, and interpreting the data; and (d) finalizing the data analysis with the write up of the outcome (Anthony, 2015).

## **Reliability and Validity**

The quality of any presented research depends on several factors. Reliability and validity are two criteria that researchers use to ensure quality within the study (Patten & Newhart, 2017). The researcher is responsible for maintaining quality throughout the research process through reliability and validity (Bengtsson, 2016). Triangulation also plays a critical role in ensuring reliability and validity in qualitative studies (Golafshani, 2003; MacPhail et al., 2016). Dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability are criteria used to evaluate the quality of qualitative research (Healy & Perry, 2000).

### **Reliability**

In qualitative research, reliability means replicability, dependability, and consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; MacPhail et al., 2016). Researchers use various techniques to promote reliability in qualitative research. Reliability facilitates an understanding of a qualitative study (Stenbacka, 2001). Yin (2018) had a similar view and pointed out that researchers sought reliability to ensure consistency in the research process. Given that reliability relates to consistency in the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2015), ensuring consistent application of transcript reviews, the use of interview protocol, and documenting research procedures to permit future researchers to follow, audit, and critique the research process is essential (MacPhail et al., 2016). Qualitative researchers use an interview protocol to enhance dependability and to ensure that the process is the same for all the participants (Silverman, 2017). In this study, I used

predefined protocols with all participants to ensure consistency when conducting individual interviews and the focus group.

### **Validity**

Qualitative researchers ensure validity by establishing credibility, confirmability, and transferability of the study findings (FitzPatrick, 2019). Credibility is the means of truthfulness (Bengtsson (2016). Credibility in qualitative research is evident through member checking by ensuring that the researcher's interpretation of the participants' responses is accurate (MacPhail et al., 2016; Varpio et al., 2017). Through member checking, each participant had the opportunity to review the interpretive reports of the initial interviews to ensure accuracy.

Qualitative data is not generalizable but is transferable from one context to another (Varpio et al., 2017). In qualitative research, transferability refers to the extent to which findings are transferable to different environments or contexts (Yin, 2018). In qualitative studies, the reader and future researchers determine the extent to which the findings are transferable (Varpio et al., 2017). To enable readers and other researchers to determine whether the findings from a study are transferable to other settings, people, and contexts, researchers must provide adequate and detailed descriptions of essential aspects of the study (Patton, 2015). Demonstrating the use of triangulation, member checking, and achieving data saturation are procedures that researchers can use to enable other researchers' determination of transferability (Varpio et al., 2017). Providing a thorough description allows readers and future researchers to decide whether the findings of a

study are transferable to another context (Moon et al., 2016). To enable readers to determine if the findings from the current study are transferable, I provided a detailed description of the study participants, the research context, and the data analysis process. I selected five SMB leaders and four focus group members with successful experience in talent management in the Cayman Islands as participants for the study. I administered semistructured interviews to gather data on the study topic and secured all data collected by using two tape recorders to capture the details from the interviews. I closely followed the interview protocol, conducted member checking, and used triangulation. Upon completing this degree, I will share a summary of the study's findings with the leader participants.

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the study findings are free from bias (Yates & Leggett, 2016). In addition, confirmability addresses the objectivity and accuracy of the data (Patton, 2015). One way to ensure accuracy and objectivity of the findings is through member checking (Yates & Leggett, 2016). I conducted member checking by sharing my interpretations of the responses with the participants, allowing them to validate and confirm my interpretations of the interviews for accuracy or point to any inaccuracy of my interpretations.

Data saturation is critical in qualitative research. Data saturation is one essential way to ensure validity in a qualitative study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Qualitative researchers do not have a fixed formula to determine the required number of participants in a study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Instead, researchers can use data saturation to determine

when they can end the data collection process. Data saturation is the point in the data gathering and analysis process at which no new information is forthcoming (Saunders et al., 2017). The depth and richness of the data, not the length, enable researchers to reach data saturation (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). To ensure data saturation, I continued to interview leaders and focus group participants until there was no new data and information became repetitive.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 contained a restatement of the purpose of the study and a discussion of the research methodology and design. I elaborated on my role as the researcher, the population and sample, the sample size, and the data collection techniques. I also described the data analysis process and explained how I ensured reliability and validity.

Section 3 begins with an introduction to the purpose of the study and a presentation of the summary of my findings. I then present the analysis, findings, and interpretation of the data from the study. I also discuss the application of the study findings to professional practice and the implications for social change. Finally, I offer recommendations for action and future research, describe my reflections, and share the concluding statements.

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

In Section 3, I provide an overview of the study, present the findings, and discuss the potential applications of my research to professional practice. In addition, I include the implications for social change and the recommendations for action and further study. Finally, the conclusion encompasses the closing statements for the study.

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore talent management strategies that SMB leaders in the Cayman Islands used to acquire, develop, and retain employees. I conducted semistructured individual face-to-face interviews with five leaders from five separate entities who had been successful in acquiring, developing, and retaining talent for at least 5 years. I also conducted a focus group interview with four employees who had worked in the participating small businesses for a minimum of 5 years and who had benefited from the strategies used to acquire, develop, and retain the employees. The planned number of participants for the focus group interview was five, but because one focus group member could not attend, the focus group had only four members. The final source of data comprised pertinent company documents from three SMBs. Before the interviews, participants reviewed and signed consent forms. Each interview lasted between 50 and 60 minutes, and all interviews occurred at the business leaders' offices and one private boardroom.

## **Presentation of the Findings**

The research question for this multiple case study was the following: What talent management strategies do SMB leaders in the Cayman Islands use to acquire, develop, and retain employees? To answer the research question, I gathered data from the five leaders and four employees from the case businesses. For triangulation purposes, I reviewed pertinent company documents from the businesses to confirm the data from the interviews. I transcribed the interview data and ensured that the audio recordings and the interview transcripts matched. Following the initial interviews, I used member checking with each participant to ensure that my interpretations of the initial interviews were accurate. From the analysis of the data collected from the interviews and the review of administrative documents, four main themes emerged: (a) conducting management assessments, (b) following recruitment and selection guidelines, (c) empowering and enabling employees, and (d) fostering employee loyalty.

### **Theme 1: Conducting Management Assessments**

The necessity to conduct management assessments was the first theme that emerged from the data analysis. According to the analysis of leaders' interview data and the examination of company documents, conducting management assessments was very important in acquiring qualified employees. Data from the interviews with leaders revealed that two management assessments played an essential role in enabling SMB leaders to acquire employees. The two prominent assessments that leaders used were business growth and job audits. During the interviews, two leader participants shared that

they made hiring decisions after senior management consultations. L1 and L2 revealed that they attended regular senior management meetings, assessed the current operational situation, and determined necessary adjustments. If urgency dictated, these leaders held ad hoc meetings as required. L3, L4, and L5 did not conduct formal management assessments.

### ***Business Growth***

Business growth, assessed in the process of the case organizations' management audits, was a factor that drove the talent acquisition process in the SMBs. All leader participants indicated that business growth was evident from increased customer demand, new clients, and new projects. With the increased demand, business operators encountered difficulty in running their activities efficiently without acquiring more personnel. The acknowledgment of the need to acquire more personnel came from all leader participants. L1, L3, and L4 revealed that business growth was evident through increased demand for their product. L2 stipulated that the increase in projects resulted from business growth, and L5 shared that the increased clientele stemmed from business growth. Cascio and Boudreau (2016) postulated the necessity to conduct management assessments and plan, accordingly, including determining recruitment needs arising from business growth.

L1 noted that the expectation was for SMB1 to have a hiring freeze for the year 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, contrary to this expectation, a delightful surprise occurred when demand for the services increased significantly. L1

exclaimed “right now, to my surprise, we are in the process of recruiting for 5 new people. This is shocking because I thought we would have a hiring freeze this year after COVID. We are actually busier than ever.” As a result of the increased demand, the SMB1 recruiters obtained new workers during the summer following a complete lockdown. L2 and L5 also reported a surge in business capacity even during the pandemic. L2 acknowledged that “for several weeks, employees had to work 7-day week shifts to complete the jobs.” L5 expressed the need to work on weekends to meet clients’ demands. L5 stated that “a lot of times you have to do some work on the weekend in this field because you will have jobs that need to get done.”

A perusal of the company document, *Small Works Contracts*, from SMB5 supported the leader’s interview and revealed that the increase in clientele was evident from business growth. The *Small Works Contracts* highlighted the number of projects for completion and the terms and conditions to get the work done. Leaders of SMB5 used these contracts to conduct business growth assessments, which required the recruitment of additional personnel to meet these demands. These contracts included the magnitude of the work, the consideration for work performed, and the allotted time for completion. Business growth was evident as my review of the contracts revealed that projects for completion increased by approximately 50% over the previous year.

All leader participants’ recruitment strategies were consistent with the views Picken (2017) proposed that qualified employee recruitment is positively related to business growth. All leader participants advised that they acquired the necessary staff and

conducted training as needed to respond to the business growth, which allowed the leaders to retain employees, unlike what was happening in other areas of the world. All leader participants in this study formulated essential strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees even in a pandemic environment.

### ***Job Audits***

Through analysis of the collected data, I found that conducting job audits was an essential part of the management assessment strategy. L1, L2, L4, and L5 declared that performing a job audit was vital to the management's assessment in their organizations. A job audit involves having relevant persons looking at all job requirements, as well as analyzing, designing, and implementing strategies systematically (Persellin et al., 2019). L1 shared that sometimes they make adjustments to the workforce as necessary after performing job audits. L1 further stated that even in a pandemic with increased business activities, reassignments were necessary to meet the clients' needs. In the words of LP1, "the reassignments were mainly due to persons going on rollover or when persons had to leave for health reasons."

All leader participants revealed that the job audit was used not only for workplace planning but also to conduct job and needs assessments. L2 noted that they conducted job assessments to complete the different projects. L2 stated that they recruited based on needs assessment:

Normally, when you start a job, you find out the workforce that you require and based on what you have, if you have your own set of crews or if you have work

permit holders. So, once you know, you do an assessment of how many workers you need to do a certain job when you are starting the building.

L4 stated that the job audit was critical because, in addition to being the business owner, L4 also performs some of the demanding services at SMB4. Because of the personal involvement of L4 in providing some services, L4 knew that there was a need for assistance and additional personnel when the workload became excessive. L4 stated “I can’t do everything, and so that’s the time when it gets to that point that is overwhelming, that’s when I will hire.” LP4’s statements echoed the observation of LP5 in that the overwhelming workload is what is driving the need to hire additional personnel.

Theme 1 characterized management assessments as a means for the participating organizations’ leaders to determine the need to acquire workers; therefore, the focus group participants’ discussion did not contribute to the findings for Theme 1. The principal objective for the focus group was to determine the participants’ recruitment experience as opposed to the leaders examining the recruitment strategies. The focus group participants provided no contributing data to management’s need to conduct assessments.

### ***Correlation to the Literature***

The findings noted in Theme 1 aligned with findings in the existing literature. Remi (2018) proposed that SMB leaders’ role is to manage human resources effectively, as the leaders assess business activities to promote growth and generate jobs. Cascio and Boudreau (2016) highlighted the need for managers to conduct assessments to identify

business growth and coordinate human resources needs. Other researchers proposed that the best strategies for successful talent management strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees involve annual assessments of talent needs (Naim & Lenka, 2017). Management assessment involves continuous research and examining statistics to determine organizations' talent management needs (Nocker & Sena, 2019). Using such statistics enables managers to strategically assess business growth and predict human resources needs within businesses (Isson & Harriott, 2016). Economic growth is a significant contributor to management's drive to conduct assessments in SMBs (Gamidullaeva et al., 2020). Management assessments determine the level of business performance and positive service outcomes that form the basis for acquiring, developing, and retaining quality employees (Keller et al., 2020).

### ***Correlation to the Conceptual Frameworks***

The findings noted in Theme 1 correlated with the results of Curtis et al.'s (1995) P-CMM. The P-CMM is a framework that managers use to appeal, develop, classify, motivate, and retain human resources (Curtis et al., 2009). Experts define leaders' responsibility for conducting assessments and aligning the workforce through five levels: initial, managed, defined, predictable, and maturity (Curtis et al., 2009). Curtis et al. proposed that practitioners find P-CMM useful to provide managers' assessment for determining the required human resources. Scholars envision using P-CMM to advance new approaches in conducting assessments for methodologies and technologies to secure qualified employees (Benešová & Tupa, 2017). Rosana (2019) contended with the

progressive stage of P-CMM, which aligns with the progressive nature of conducting assessments that could make decisions for acquiring, developing, and retaining talent.

The transformational leadership conceptual framework also aligned with the findings in Theme 1. Transformational leaders are responsible for guiding business activities (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders forge assessments necessary to mold competencies and skills to equip employees with the necessary skills and tools (Abd-Karim & Mohd Danuri, 2018). Transformational leaders anticipate organizations' readiness to address future challenges and opportunities and use focused, proactive assessments to identify and plan their human resources needs (Napier et al., 2017). Transformational leaders also conduct job assessments for opportunities to enhance training, career development, and performance to improve business activities (Setiawan & Nawangsari, 2019). Correspondingly, L1 and L4 revealed the benefits of conducting management audits for improving business processes and identifying and remedying workload disparities. L1 described the job audit process at SMB1 as follows:

We identify talent needs from regular meetings with our leadership staff – three people in senior management and five supervisors. We regularly check in with our leadership staff. We kind of have a lot of things going on and a lot of recruitment and identifying how and when we need to recruit, that's really regular meetings with our supervisors and finding out what we need when it comes to finding the talent and finding the right culture fit for our organization and somebody who knows how to do the work, but also has the ability to learn what

they don't know and is the right personality and culture fit for us, that comes down to sort of the Operations Manager and I really, start to get the application process before we include the supervisors.

Correcting workload disparities was particularly relevant for L4 who had worked in the business providing regular services. L4 indicated that "sometimes I get overwhelmed and sometimes I just have to have somebody on hand so that work doesn't pass me and because I am also doing other stuff and I am managing the store."

## **Theme 2: Following Recruitment and Selection Guidelines**

The second theme that emerged from the analyzed data was the need to follow recruitment and selection guidelines. The analysis of data from leader interviews, the focus group interview, and the documents review revealed six areas of recruitment and selection guidelines in the five participating organizations: (a) advertising, (b) referral program, (c) resume review, (d) interviewing candidates, (e) background check, and (f) candidate selection.

### ***Advertising***

All participants adopted advertising as a strategy. The requirement to advertise jobs is an embedded condition in the Cayman Islands' Immigration Regulations. Unless receiving exemptions from the relevant authorities, businesses must advertise vacant job positions in JobsCayman, an electronic job portal, for at least 2 consecutive weeks (Immigration Work Permit Regulations, 2020). In fulfilling this regulation, all leader participants stated that they advertised vacant positions in JobsCayman. Exemptions to

the advertising regulation are possible, but none of the case SMBs qualified for such exemption. The Immigration Work Permit Regulations (2020) include the following text:

The Work Permit Board, the Business Staffing Plan Board, the Cayman Brac and Little Cayman Immigration Board and the Director of WORC or a delegate of the Director of WORC may, on the application of an employer or a prospective employer, each in its, his or her discretion, waive any provision relating to advertising or registration of a job but the employer or prospective employer must have applied for and received the waiver prior to the submission of the application for the work permit in respect of which the waiver was sought. (s. 4.5)

In addition to advertising in JobsCayman, L1 noted that they placed job advertisements through other media, even though such advertising was no longer a requirement. L1 stated “we post on the company’s website under the career’s section, and still post (even though no longer required) in both the Cayman Compass and Cayman Times; just to ensure we cover all our bases.” SMB1 is the only business case with a functional website. L1 stated that human resources personnel place job advertisements on the website’s career section. L1 also noted that all candidates apply for a job at SMB1 through the organization’s human resources information system, banner HR; hence, basic computer literacy was essential for these applicants.

Considering advertising, only L1 acknowledged that they advertise overseas in addition to the local advertisements when they cannot find local talent. L1 noted the following:

The only recruiting we do off-island is typically for mechanics because it is very difficult to find a mechanic on island that specializes in heavy equipment. The other persons that are on work permits have been recruited from the island.

All participants have recruited persons from overseas and have work-permit holders on their staff. Even though L3 and L4 only advertised locally, approximately 50% of their staff are work-permit holders. L3 stated

We have local workers for sales that do not need big experience, just customer service to go to the stores. The office people are local too, but we need people from overseas who know about the technical machines in the factory. We have a half local people and a half overseas people.

L4 acknowledged that they did not recruit local applicants for specific skill areas. L4 proposed that the locals are otherwise employed, not interested, or not qualified for these jobs. L4 asserted

Half the time we can't find locals to fill the posts, more than half the time. We advertised in the local paper and people read that all over the world, and they send resumes, they call in, send emails, and apply for the jobs.

According to L5

I have been advertising in the Job Cayman website, and I have not had anybody who apply for the job, and yet still they are saying we have so many Caymanians that are unemployed, but in this field, there are not many locals who are interested to work in this area.

L4 and L5 reiterated that locals lacked interest in specific jobs, especially when they involved manual labor.

An issue that L4 and L5 were concerned about was the work permits' high costs. Both participants stated that the annual renewal fees were very high. "My biggest challenge now, in terms of recruiting, is that you cannot find locals that have the required talent" expressed L4, who added

Over the last 5 years, every person that has filled the different positions has been someone that I have had to bring in from overseas. And I have to take the challenge of doing the permit, so yeah, and as a small business, a lot of cost goes into that, traveling, and all that stuff, so yeah.

L5 said that the government representatives need to look after the "small man." L5 further declared that the cost of starting all over with new employees after the work permit expires is "too much" and not just in a monetary sense. The costs include repeatedly getting acquainted with recruits and the time taken for these individuals to get familiar with the organization's culture.

All leader participants declared that they have no option but to recruit work permit holders to fulfill many roles in their SMBs. L1 stated that 35% of the staff at SMB1 are work-permit holders, and this figure is up from 16% in previous years. L1 shared that work-permit holders are those needed to operate the specialized machines because people with such skills are not readily available on the island. L3 expressed similar sentiments regarding the overseas recruitment for machine operators in technical

areas. For three of the leader participants (L2, L4, and L5), the demand for overseas workers was to operate specialized machines and to perform specialized manual labor skills. L2 emphasized that the need for experienced machine operators was the primary factor for recruiting from overseas.

My examination of the supporting document, *Employees Profile*, from SMB5 revealed that the employees originated from five countries in addition to the Cayman Islands. I found in this document that 83.3% of the employees were work-permit holders. In addition to Caymanians, the countries represented at SMB5 are Jamaica, Colombia, Honduras, India, and Sri Lanka. The 16.7% of employees representing the Cayman Islands reinforced that the Caymanian economy depends heavily on imported talent to meet the labor force requirements.

Based on the focus group interview, none of these participants obtained employment with the SMBs by responding to advertisements. In the ensuing discussion from the focus group interview, FG1 revealed that they came to the island on vacation and scouted for job opportunities. FG1 said

I was fortunate enough to get a job when I came to the island with another company and then the opportunity came along for me to work with this company, and I have been with them for more than 20 years.

FG1 also noted that they saw no job advertisement but were offered a permanent position at the newly established SMB1.

The company documents, *Employment Application Forms*, received from SMB1, SMB4, and SMB5 personnel, were standard and comparable to application forms used in larger organizations. However, I discovered that the recruiters in these businesses required substantial work experience for some positions, such as a minimum of 10 years. The years of experience were a specification in the jobs' advertisements for these three SMBs. Unconventional advertisements were evident from reviewed documents from SMB4. The following is an excerpt from a job advertisement from SMB4: "Excitement recruitment opportunities at SMB4; SMB4 has an exciting and promising opportunity for a highly talented and motivated individual . . . Life is too short for the wrong job." The perusal of the job applications for SMB4 revealed that recruiters from SMB4 specified a minimum of 5 years on the job advertisements, unlike the recruiters at SMB1, who allowed recruits to indicate years of experience.

### ***Referral Program***

The use of referrals was another method of recruiting talent at the participating organizations. Three leader participants (L2, L3, and L5) stated that the use of referrals is their primary recruitment source. L2 and L3 identified their sources as employees and business associates, while L5 identified the same sources in addition to family and friends. L2 declared "I will ask my workers or other contractors if they know anybody who is a good worker and a good person, and they will bring them to me."

L3 shared that their employees are like family and stay in touch even after leaving the organization. L3 identified their current and former employees as the informal

recruitment agency because they refer persons for work when they need to recruit. L5 stipulated “I always go to referrals because it is good to know someone because you get a better reference than just taking someone who you know nothing about.” L5 further stated that they have always benefited from these referrals.

Focus group participants shared that they used referrals to gain employment. In the focus group interview, FG4 and FG5 noted that they were referred to their employers by family members. FG4 declared

I heard about the job through, actually, my sister. She was friends with one of the owners, and they called me in for an interview and asked me if I would be interested in joining their team, and I said, of course. So, I was hired.

In the discussion, FG5 said he had a similar experience:

An uncle of mine knew my boss and told him about me, and my uncle sent me an invitation to come to Cayman. He gave me the number, and I called, and he sent me the necessary documents to complete. I came and met him for the first time and received a warm welcome from him, and from there, we worked up the ladder.

FG3 indicated “A friend of mine told me that there was a job at his workplace, so I got my documents together and sent them via DHL. I interviewed on the phone, and I got the job.” The focus group members noted that there are undeniable benefits to knowing persons in Cayman, especially on such a tiny island. Of all the focus group participants,

only one was Caymanian when recruited for employment with that SMB. Another focus group member stated that they have since obtained Caymanian citizenship status.

### ***Resume Review***

Overall, the leader participants found the resume review useful in guiding the recruitment process. Four of the leader participants (L1, L3, L4, and L5) discussed the significance of reviewing resumes. L1, L3, L4, and L5 specified that persons were short-listed based on their resumes' quality. L1 shared "we have an HRIS called Banner HR, where we encourage everyone to upload their resumes so that we can start the process online." L1 stated that the uploading of the resumes on the HRIS that SMB1's recruiters use, was the recruits' first point of contact with this business. L3 declared "we scout the resumes to find persons with experience to operate the technical machines." L4 emphasized

People send in their resumes, so once we have gotten through all the resumes, I would start recruiting. Once I have gone through the resume, we get to the point where we do an actual practical. This helps me to make that final decision that this is the person for the job.

L4 reiterated that employee selection for the job depended on more than a good resume.

L4 further pointed out that practical tests were critical to making the final selection.

### ***Interviewing Candidates***

One strategy that all the SMB leaders identified in the recruitment guidelines was conducting interviews with job candidates. L1 advised that all candidates went through at

least two interviews, and each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. L1 noted “it is a good sign if persons make it to the second round. For many persons, we just have to say thanks, but no thanks at round one.” In trying to ensure that persons know all expectations, L1 stated

I have actually printed out for every interview, the full job description explaining the working conditions, especially if it’s in the yard, it’s outside, and it’s hot. I don’t want anyone to start and then say it’s not what they thought it was.

The interviewers at SMB1 conducted interviews in person, virtually, or by telephone, depending on whether the interviewees were local or overseas.

The other leader participants (L2, L3, L4, and L5) voiced that they all conducted interviews but only one per interviewee. L2 stated that after getting the referrals, if persons are needed urgently, they would be invited to the site, interviewed, and, if qualified, hired immediately. L3, L4, and L5, mainly doing overseas hiring, conducted their interviews based on the recruits’ location. L3, L4, and L5 mainly used the telephone to conduct interviews.

All focus group participants shared that their recruiters interviewed them before they hired them. Three focus group participants (FG1, FG4, and FG5) did in-person interviews, while FG3 completed their interview via telephone. FG4 noted that their interview was probably not as formal as most interviews because of an association between their family members and employer. Documents perused revealed that SMB1 leaders used an interview confidentiality agreement between the interviewers and the

interviewees of the business. The document includes guidelines about information considered confidential at SMB1, such as all data, business plan, marketing plan, computer programs, product specifications, and financial information. The recruiters communicated the need for confidentiality at the interviews, and all parties attached signatures.

### ***Background Check***

All leader participants except L3 identified the importance of conducting background checks to validate the authenticity of the recruits' information. L1 and L5 expressed the necessity to check the references, work history, and other pertinent information before making the final decision. L1 stated "our recruitment process can take up to 5 weeks, maybe even 6 weeks, from when you first send in your resume because of the process to review – we check references, previous work history, and all of that." L5 remarked "I look at their resume, I contact their character reference, I will check on their experience. If they have a driver's license, I look at that, as that would also give an extra boost."

L2 identified the significance of background checks in determining the necessary experience for positions. L2 mentioned an obligation to know where the recruits worked before, what jobs they did, and for whom. In seeking the ideal persons for positions, L2 said the following:

Well, normally you find out where they have worked before they came to the job site – what are the jobs that they have done and based on the jobs that they have

done and the recommendation of the people, you will see the right people to take for the job.

The examination of an *Application Form Waiver* from SMB1 revealed the authorization that the recruits granted to the employer to investigate all information provided to the recruiters. The information on the form indicated that employee misrepresentation of any information provided could result in instant dismissal. The document also revealed that the employers are not subject to any liability that could arise from these investigations.

### ***Candidate Selection***

All leader participants shared their strategies for selecting their candidates. L1 stated that the interviewing process at SMB1 is vigorous:

After gathering all the applications, we start the interview process. Before anyone gets hired, they go through a minimum of two rounds of interviews. The first interview is with me, HR, and the supervisor for the position we are hiring for. The second round will be with the Operations Manager and the co-supervisor, as each department has 2 supervisors running each side of it. It is a good sign if persons make it to the second round. For many persons, we just have to say thanks, but no thanks, at round one.

Hence, after two rounds, the successful candidates received contracts that started the onboarding process of selecting health insurance and other company requirements. The references' recommendation and the candidates' experience were the major factors for L2

in the job selections made at SMB2. L2 said “I select workers based on the job they have done and what people have to say about them.”

A significant element for all the SMBs was the need to obtain temporary work permits for new employees. All participants agreed that they obtained temporary (3 months) work permits for the selected overseas workers. All leader participants shared that they place employees on probation and do performance assessments at the end of the 3 months to determine permit renewals. Obtaining a work permit did not guarantee prolonged employment. L3 stated

After we find the people, we contact them by phone, we interview over the phone, and then we allow them to come here and test them and see how they are. We then put in a temporary work permit and see how they work. After this, we see if they are the people that we need - the qualified people for the business and they continue with us after the test we made to them.

L3 and L5 declared that in terms of granted work permits, they had to discontinue work permits after 3 months because some workers failed to maintain the minimum standard.

L5 voiced

Sometimes you may select the candidate and 3 months down the road it does not work out because, maybe attitude issue, or they can't work on weekends if required to work on weekends, and that is one of the things a lot of times that you have to do some work on the weekend in this field.

L2, L3, and L5 said they had situations where some of the workers misrepresented their experience and were not as competent as expected.

My review of the company document, *Application Form Waiver*, allowed me to better understand the recruitment practices at SMB1. The application form waiver revealed that even if a candidate is selected for the job and given a work permit, the business can discontinue the person's employment for several reasons, such as misrepresenting information presented. The application form contained a waiver that indicated to the selected employees that they had entered an employment-at-will contract. With their signatures, the employees attest that they acknowledge that employee handbooks or manuals, policy agreements, or benefit plans do not supersede the employee-at-will status at any time. The waiver also signifies that this employment-at-will relationship can only be changed in writing by a company officer. The document specified that the company management has the right to change the terms of the contractual agreement.

My review of the document, *Application for Work Permit*, revealed the requirements that employers must comply with to acquire overseas employees. At the outset, the leaders apply for a temporary work permit and, after that, for a more prolonged permit of varying timeframes. Subsequent permits depend on the employees' performance evaluations and the manager's decision.

### *Correlation to the Literature*

The findings noted in Theme 2 aligned with findings in the existing literature. Tafti et al. (2017) described talent management as recognizing needed skills and abilities and finding the persons to meet the organization's needs. Employees' roles and responsibilities in the recruitment and selection process need clear definitions (van Zyl et al., 2017). Managers must adopt effective methods to attract highly skilled employees and retain such talent (Maamari & Alameh, 2016). Candidates are more knowledgeable about job opportunities, which provides greater flexibility in recruitment strategies (Vidal-Salazar et al., 2016).

The Cayman Islands' law dictates that Caymanians get first preference for jobs, and all the leader participants reiterated this element. If there is a qualified Caymanian for an open position, employers should not employ work permit holders (Immigration Work Permit Regulations, 2020). There is a similar stipulation for all business operators in Bermuda to advertise all jobs on the government job board before applying for work permits. Recruiters can only apply for work permits after the relevant personnel inform Bermudians, spouses of Bermudians, and permanent residency certificate holders of their lack of success in obtaining the jobs (Government of Bermuda, 2021). Using technologies and online forums has significantly impacted SMBs' advertising methods with the significant benefit of reduced time for the entire process (Ayshath Zaheera et al., 2018). Advertising is very useful in getting a high response rate and matching the right

people to the job process (Ayshath Zaheera et al., 2018), as all the current study's leader respondents noted in their interviews.

The use of referral programs to assist with recruitment is popular in Russia and Western countries (Tikhonov, 2019). The SMB leaders interviewed did not seek referrals from their employees. However, Tikhonov (2019) pointed out that the main focus of leaders in Russia and Western countries were referrals from employees to motivate employees to obtain other specialist workers for the organizations.

All but one (L2) of the SMB leaders have embedded resume review in the recruitment process of the businesses. Resume review is a necessary part of the recruitment and selection procedure for hospitality workers (Meagher, 2017). The key areas for assessing the hospitality workers were background and experience and the time spent in given positions (Meagher, 2017). Examining resumes to determine the prospective employees' suitability for further screening is a critical process (Mwaro et al., 2020). Human resources professionals continue to face the arduous task of scouting through resumes, but technological evolution has introduced automated systems in many organizations that track and sort resumes, plan interviews, do follow-up letters, and update as needed (Leong, 2018). The business leaders in this study might not need the automated systems currently, but as a business grows and employee complement increases, such systems could become necessary.

Conducting interviews is embedded in the theme to strategize recruitment and selection guidelines. Online recruitment, including conducting interviews, is becoming

more prevalent (Brandão et al., 2019). Recruiters in the hospitality industry transitioned from traditional, face-to-face interviews to real-time, internet-based interviewing platforms and are now doing asynchronous video interviews (Torres & Mejia, 2017). The interviewees received the questions beforehand and returned a video-recorded response to the recruiters (Torres & Mejia, 2017). As posited by the Victoria State Government (2020), the asynchronous interviews' format allowed the recruiters to clearly describe the position's complexity and conduct structured and unstructured candidate evaluations.

Conducting background checks is related to the theme of recruitment and selection guidelines. Background checks include reference checks, and as Torres and Mejia (2017) emphasized, conducting reference checks is significant in the latter stage of the short-listed recruitment process. Furthermore, as recommended by Torres and Mejia, the recruiters informed the candidates of the possibility of making contact with the referees beforehand. Social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and Google, are modern-day media for conducting background checks for human resources professionals (Hosain et al., 2020).

Theme 2 highlights the significance of following guidelines to select employees. The focus of candidate selection should be the knowledge, skills, and personal abilities necessary for job placements (Victoria State Government, 2020). An effective selection should focus on finding persons meeting the standards and objectives and whose values align with the purpose of the organization (Parvathi & Venkadesh, 2020; Vasile & Zhan, 2020).

### *Correlation to the Conceptual Framework*

Theme 2's strategy of following recruitment and selection guidelines, aligned with the P-CMM and transformational leadership conceptual frameworks. Curtis et al. (1995) proposed having a system within the organization that appeals to employees' professional and personal needs. The P-CMM addresses five talent management maturity levels: initial, managed, defined, predictable, and maturity (Chen & Wang, 2018; Surega, 2019). The initial stage is where the recruitment and selection of employees would be evident, and the employer begins to address the employees' needs (Chen & Wang, 2018). The recruitment guidelines channel the P-CMM process, as stipulated by Rosana (2019), in formulating the human resources management functions of identifying, recruiting, and selecting the right employees.

Transformational leaders depict vision and motivation for the organization, which was evident in the activities in this study's SMBs, such as encouraging open communication (SMB1, SMB4, and SMB5) and employee development (SMB1, SMB2, SMB4, and SMB5). Transformational leaders formulate goals and objectives to achieve a strategic plan, which facilitates recruiting and selecting personnel in a global and diverse environment (Jia et al., 2018). Much of the attraction for candidates to an organization could depend on transformational leaders' attitudes and traits (Aydogmus et al., 2016). Recruited candidates adopt the organizational culture, primarily set by the policies, principles, and behaviors of transformational leaders (Ramsey et al., 2017).

### **Theme 3: Empowering and Enabling Employees**

The third theme that emerged from the data analysis was employee empowerment and enablement. Fostering employees' empowerment and enablement within the SMBs was an effective strategy that the leader participants used to support talent management strategies. The information gathered from the study's leader and employee participants and company documents revealed employee empowerment and enablement, effectively guiding the procedures to develop and retain employees. All leader participants noted that they facilitated employee empowerment and enablement within their SMBs. L1, L2, L4, and L5 acknowledged that employee empowerment and enablement benefits far outweigh the costs because providing opportunities for their employees to find empowerment and enablement proved to be a motivating factor for all parties. The techniques through which leader participants empowered employees were training, promotion, and open communication.

#### ***Training***

Four of the leader participants (L1, L2, L4, and L5) used training as an employee empowerment and enablement strategy. L1 stated, "so, we have training programs based on what they are being hired for." According to L4

We don't want to be slacking up with yesterday's technology or yesterday's style when there's futuristic stuff that's out there. So, I always have to make sure that they are up to date with whatever's out there by going online and applying for all the online resources to make sure they are up to speed.

L1, L2, L4, and L5 implemented accessing online, on-the-job, and Chamber of Commerce training in pertinent areas. On-the-job training was the preferred mode for SMB1, SMB2, SMB4, and SMB5. L4 noted that they used online forums for training employees. L1 and L4 identified the Cayman Islands Chamber of Commerce as a primary training source for their employees. L5 pointed out that

There is nothing in Cayman that you can do, so I try to work with them, and my supervisor tries to do the same role to show them how to do things properly. So basically, we do a lot of on-the-job training.

One leader participant (L1) shared that they used different training programs based on the employees' job positions. L1 stated that they used the COVID-19 lockdown period to maximize training while everyone was getting paid, and most were not working. L1 also noted that they are still working on training programs, and in some departments, they hold weekly training. L1 also stated that there are other positions where they have to be careful because they are not very involved and ignore the need for training.

A significant factor for L2 was the opportunity to improve young Caymanians. L2 said that "initially, the plan is to train some young Caymanians who can come on the job site, and I will train them and that would help to mold them." L2 further stated that they conducted only on-the-job training at different job sites where the employees could learn a new skill. One of the highlights for L2 was facilitating cross-training, enriching versatility, and enhancing employee empowerment and enablement.

One of the leader participants (L3) stated that they had no training programs because the workers had the required experience. L3 voiced that there were no mandates from the government to further train employees who have the necessary experience. L3 and L4 had a similar observation as L5 about the lack of available training on the island for their specialized services. L3 shared that they would willingly allow employees at the leader participant organization to participate in further training, should this training become available. L5 stated that their employees keep abreast of futuristic developments from online training to ensure “they are not stuck in yesterday’s style.”

Overall, the focus group participants shared that training was essential and contributed to employee engagement. FG1, FG4, and FG5 noted that training was ongoing at their workplace. These participants shared that the leaders took a personal interest in the employees acquiring more knowledge and developing skills to make them more proficient. FG1 noted “we are given the opportunity to pursue any training that will benefit the organization. If you find something that you want to do, you just let management know and they are in full support.” Elaborating on the role of training as an element of employee empowerment and enablement, FG4 noted “when I first started here with this company, I’m going to be honest with you, I knew how to use the computer but wasn’t that advanced, and the owner actually sent me to classes.” FG5 said that “at first, when I came, there was a guy working with the company who was knowledgeable and so he was the one who showed me things, apart from the boss, who showed me things also.”

FG5 laughingly said “I was a fast learner.” FG5 further stated “I have gained a lot of experience that I could pass on to others who came later on, especially as a supervisor.”

There were mixed feelings about the training issue for two focus group participants (FG3 and FG4). FG4 felt that they would appreciate more diversified training at SMB4. FG4 remarked “I would have loved to go to the overseas seminars too but because my boss depends on me so much, I have to be here when he is off.” On the other hand, FG3 shared that having the required knowledge was a prerequisite for the job. FG3 stated “I do not need training because I come with the required knowledge to operate the machines.”

A review of a document from SMB1 shed some insight into management’s training expectations for the employees. The *Staff Evaluation Form* includes a section for training objectives, which reveals a requirement for the employees to provide details of what knowledge and skills they will require and how they plan to acquire the knowledge and skills. Relying on the staff evaluation form’s information, the leaders at SMB1 worked with the employees to achieve their training objectives.

### ***Promotion***

For three of the leader participants (L1, L2, and L5), promotion was essential to employee empowerment and enablement within their SMBs. L1 shared that persons will receive the reward of promotion when they dedicate themselves to the business and work hard to advance business operations. L2 noted that they recognized ability in the workers at their business and promoted them. In addition, L5 shared the business’ personal

approach to promotion and stated “I watch them and see how they perform and then go from there with helping them to develop any skill that I see they can develop to advance themselves.”

Among the focus group participants, there was an agreement that promotion was a business leaders’ strategy that could encourage employee empowerment and enablement. However, for FG3 and FG4, promotion appeared not to be top priority because they did not have much scope for advancement based on the businesses’ size. Only FG1 felt promotion was a real motivating factor for employee engagement at his organization. FG1 said “I have worked here for over 20 years and have moved up the ranks. No one works at a place for 20 years if it is not worth the while.”

Reviewing a document, *Staff Evaluation Performance Form*, from SMB1 revealed the employee empowerment and enablement scope through employees’ promotion based on the established objectives and accomplishments over the review period. The document includes the information pertinent to the employees’ evaluation, such as vacation requests, sick days, punctuality, completion of duties, task reliability, quality of work, attitudes and behaviors, self-initiation, customer service, relationships with peers and superiors, and ability to communicate. The additional areas considered in employee evaluation in managerial and supervisory positions were leadership skills, and planning, organizing, and decision-making skills.

### *Open Communication*

All leader participants declared that good communication was vital for employee empowerment and enablement within the participating SMBs. The open-door policy was an important strategy that leader participants devised to empower employees. L1 and L5 insisted that communication analysis is essential in their SMBs. L1 lauded the efforts at SMB1 to facilitate open communication skills, where communication specialists conducted personality tests and analyzed communication styles. Leader participant L1 advised

A lot of our meetings tend to be around just communication and how different communication styles work with different people depending on your relationship with them and that sort of thing. We try to resolve personal conflicts by understanding styles of communication through a styles' analysis when necessary.

L1 felt that they used these activities and provided workers with the confidence to be more vocal employees and better communicators. L5 reiterated that their employees' confidence improved communication between fellow employees and the supervisor and boss when they participated in communication skills workshops. L1 and L5 noted that the strategies to improve workplace communication were necessary because they witnessed employees' constant disregard for authority and ongoing conflicts among employees. Both leaders advised that intervention was essential in increasing workplace morale and employee empowerment and enablement.

A focal concern for L4 was the need for L4's employees to value themselves and adopt the concept of being internal customers. L4 noted "I always let them know that the same way we try to take care of our customers and give the best service, we are also customers. I try to ensure they see this firsthand." L4 shared that this care empowered and enabled the employees to be significant contributors to business operations.

All the focus group participants agreed that open communication with their leaders and fellow employees was paramount, with three participants (FG1, FG3, and FG5) being very pleased with the level of communication at their SMBs. FG1 noted "we have a good atmosphere here and we openly share our ideas. The bosses are always open to our ideas." FG3 expressed pleasure at working at SMB3 with freedom of expression on all matters because the leader listens to the employees. FG3 said that "the boss is a good boss. Sometimes we might have financial problems and we talk to him about it and he will help if you ask." FG5 added to this point and indicated that "the boss does not hold back anything from you because he wants you to succeed. He tries to push you and motivate you to go forward."

### ***Correlation to the Literature***

The findings noted in Theme 3 aligned with findings in the existing literature. There is strong support from Werner et al. (2019), who identified the significance of incorporating employee training and development in the strategic process to achieve employee empowerment and enablement. Kiwon and Park (2019) identified training as an essential element of empowerment and enablement within the workplace. Employees

with diversified talents provide versatility within the workplace (Thomas et al., 2016). L1, L2, L4, and L5's decisions to focus on training have been pivotal in fostering employee empowerment and enablement. F1, F4, and F5 also reiterated the value received from training activities. Training is fundamental to promoting growth and employee development within an organization (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2016). Antonioli and Della Torre (2015) stated that SMB leaders should facilitate training for their employees even with a limited budget. Promoting human development and empowerment is a strategic function that could facilitate businesses' competitive advantage (Amarakoon et al., 2016). Employers who are flexible and accommodate employees' training needs facilitate employee empowerment (Vidal-Salazar et al., 2016). Providing training for employees allows for greater knowledge and proficiency in the tasks performed, resulting in job satisfaction and employee empowerment and enablement (Saengchai et al., 2019). Employees with diversified talents provide versatility within the workplace (Thomas et al., 2016).

Promotion is another aspect of employee empowerment and enablement that SMB1, SMB4, SMB5 used. Employee empowerment and enablement arise when employees feel motivated by several factors, including promotion, awards, and a favorable working environment (Saengchai et al., 2019). Job satisfaction and employee empowerment and enablement result from benefits, such as promotion within a business entity (Al-Ababneh et al., 2017). There is a correlation between the literature and the current study's findings of employee empowerment strategy because FG1, FG4, and FG5

agreed that upward mobility in the SMBs would encourage empowerment. However, only FG5 acknowledged receiving a promotion.

Open communication as a conduit for employee empowerment and enablement was a study theme that aligned with the literature. Business leaders strive to achieve strategic success by creating a work environment that supports employee empowerment and enablement through open communication (Abuzaid, 2018). Factors that lead to open communication include employees being motivated and satisfied in the job (Madan, 2017). Encouraging open communication across hierarchical levels through face-to-face interactions and communal activities is essential for employee empowerment and enablement (Baird et al., 2018).

### ***Correlation to the Conceptual Framework***

The findings in Theme 3 aligned with the P-CMM and transformational leadership theory. As reflected by Jing Lee (2017), one aspect of employee empowerment and enablement through training is underlying principles that foster employee performance at the maturity stage of P-CMM. As evident in P-CMM, managers strive for continuous improvement to acquire employees' optimal performance (Akhlaghpour & Lapointe, 2018). Leaders can empower employees through training, thereby enabling competence (Amarakoon et al., 2016). Highlighted in the P-CMM concept is the need to embrace a culture that motivates and leads employees to empowerment and enablement (Curtis et al., 1995).

Burns (1978) noted the vital need for employees to believe in their leaders and in themselves to become motivated to advance to their full capacity. Encouraging subordinates to be the best they can be is essential in facilitating employee empowerment and enablement (Ng & Kee, 2018). A source of employee empowerment and enablement is the behavior of transformational leaders influencing employee satisfaction (Aydogmus et al., 2016; Gözükara & Şimşek, 2015). Furthermore, improving employees' competencies, which is an outcome of a transformational leadership style, can result in enhanced performance (Shet et al., 2019). Employees are productive when they have transformational leaders igniting employee empowerment and enablement (Ribeiro et al., 2018).

Through P-CMM, leaders seek to obtain optimal performance in the workplace; hence, accommodating effective communication through teamwork (Salman et al., 2017). Leaders use the P-CMM to create an environment with open communication through information sharing and cooperation to achieve the organization's goals (Chen & Wang, 2018). Transformational leaders prioritize effective communication by coaching employees in open interactions and engagement (Baird et al., 2018). In addition, transformational leaders empower employees to participate in open communication confidently (Yue et al., 2019). There was consensus among all leader and employee participants that employee empowerment and enablement were critical for motivation and development within the organization.

**Theme 4: Fostering Employee Loyalty**

The final theme that emerged from the data analysis was the necessity to foster employee loyalty. The analyzed data from leader participants' interviews, focus group interview, and document review revealed that several elements are crucial to promoting employee loyalty, including (a) cordial workplace atmosphere, (b) mutual respect, (c) compensation, (d) social events, and (e) rollover returns.

***Cordial Workplace Atmosphere***

All leader participants recognized the significance of a cordial workplace atmosphere on employee loyalty. L1 identified the essential task to recruit individuals that represented "the right culture fit" for SMB1. L1 also identified an ideal scenario where the recruit is knowledgeable about the employee's task and has the added value of a personality that can embrace the workplace's existing culture. In the words of L1 "the most important aspect of hiring to us is, does this candidate fit into the culture we have created?" The culture was critical to L1 because they described SMB1 as "a family with strict rules and regulations." L2, L3, L4, and L5 reiterated the importance of having a cordial atmosphere where employees were comfortable.

All focus group participants agreed that a cordial atmosphere at the workplace was important in fostering workplace loyalty. FG1 and FG5 shared that there were cordial relationships with their fellow employees and managers in what they described as a family-like atmosphere at their respective SMBs. FG3 expressed an appreciation for the amiable atmosphere at SMB3. FG3 further emphasized that the participant's boss "is a

good man who provides a happy place to work and takes care of the workers.” FG4 described a cordial relationship with the workers and the clients. FG4 declared “I love my job. I enjoy traveling the world through my customers’ eyes to go places where I’ve never been and probably never will ever reach.” Finally, FG5 remarked on the effect cordial workplace asthenosphere can have on employees. FG5 expressed that “other persons wanted me to work for them, but I don’t think that I should walk away from him and just go elsewhere considering what he has taught me, and I really appreciate it.” FG5’s choice has been to stay and work in SMB5’s cordial atmosphere.

### ***Mutual Respect***

All study leader and employee participants articulated the significance of mutual respect at the workplace. Embedded in SMB1’s culture is the need for communication and respect, which L1 said began at the top of the organizational structure. According to L1 “the main thing is that they know that we communicate, and we respect, and that starts from the top, and it’s our expectation for everyone.” L1 went on to say “you have to respect each other. You don’t have to like each other, but you have to come from a place of respect.” L2 voiced the need for all workers to be respectful, especially to the supervisor in charge when the leader is not around. L2 expressed

When persons come from the same country and if you move somebody from that rank and make him the leader, I notice that people don’t always respect them. It is like 80% of the people will respect him for who he is, for the knowledge he has, but there will be quite a few disgruntled people who don’t want to listen to him,

or they would always say, oh, the boss has not told me this even after team meetings and you tell them that he is the man in charge while I am not there.

L5 stated that they built a good rapport with their employees on mutual respect and ensured that each employee was treated fairly on and off the job. According to L5

I try to treat them the best way I know that is humanly possible. A lot of the times they say that I am miserable, but that goes with typically any boss. But I try to treat them the best way humanly possible. I don't disrespect them.

The need for mutual respect was critical to all the participants in the focus group, as well.

FG5, working at SMB5 for more than 13 years since the business leader started operation, expressed commitment to an organization where FG5 received respect. FG5 stated that "this organization is one that sees to the welfare of its employees. There is mutual understanding between the employer and employees. You learn a lot from him."

In addition, FG5 said that employees could vouch that their boss was a great leader because they showed the workers respect and, in return, earned the workers' respect, even when they had disagreements. The other focus group participants reiterated that having their managers' respect was one reason they enjoyed working and remained loyal employees.

### ***Compensation***

All participants acknowledged that compensation played a significant role in fostering employee loyalty. In their study, Akhigbe and Ifeyinwa (2017) discovered that regular compensation affected employees' cognitive loyalty while incremental salary

ensured active loyalty. L1, L2, and L5 stated that their employees received full pay during the weeks of the COVID-19 lockdown. According to L1

While we were on shutdown, we paid everyone full pay. I think in the final week, we said we have now been shut down for 6 weeks, so we will make one of those weeks, vacation. We had already missed a whole quarter so let's just call one week vacation awash because everybody had more than they need for vacation, and everyone still needed to take time off. So, they got paid full, right through.

Full pay makes happy employees.

L1 advised that they host an employee savings program in which the employees receive 2.5% per quarter or 10% per year interest on their savings with the organization. L1 also shared that over 50% of the staff has been with the company for more than 10 years.

The responses from L2, L3, L4, and L5 revealed that paying on time for some of their employees was necessary, while for others, offering good pay or pay per the law and providing insurance and benefits were also significant. L2 revealed that the employees at their business were happy because they felt that the leader was a good paymaster. L2 declared "I always pay my workers on time . . . and none of my work permit holders has ever left my organization to work with someone else on the island." L3 indicated that their employees were loyal because they paid them as dictated by the law, and these employees obtained severance pay at the end of their work permits. L4 and L5 stated that compensation was good with adequate insurance and other benefits. L4 said "I think

insurance, everything, is adequate. I think if those things weren't in place, she might have gone long ago."

Focus group participants also shared their views on the importance of compensation. FG3 expressed gratitude for having an understanding boss who paid well and who even provided salary advances on a few occasions when FG3 needed assistance. "The job is hard, but as long as you get the good pay, it is worth it," stated FG3. Another focus group participant (FG1) noted "believe me, I would not be here for over 20 years if the benefits were not adequate."

I perused the *Payroll Advice* document from SMB5 and found reasonable compensation for the employees, corroborating information from the job advertisements. Two job advertisements that I reviewed revealed the available positions and the hourly pay rate. All employees received above-minimum wage compensation. The compensation received included health insurance and pension, along with the applicable holiday, vacation, and sick pay.

### ***Social Events***

L1, L2, L3, and L5 identified company-organized social events as an avenue of fostering loyalty at the workplace. These leaders shared that they facilitated staff meeting refreshments, birthday parties, Christmas parties, Friday evenings' happy hours, and other events. L2 indicated that at his company, they did the following:

Once in a while, we will organize something for them, like on a Friday, we will get them some beers and some chicken wings, and something like that, just to get

them to keep going. You know, every time you pour concrete slab, we will set up drinks for them, and in the evening when the job is finished, we will get them some beers and some fried chicken and whatever.

L5 acknowledged that milestone achievements, such as decadal birthdays, are always significant with much celebration and special gifts as seen in the following:

They get pay at the end, we provide refreshment when staff meetings are held and sit and talk after these meetings conclude. If anyone reaches 40, 50, or 60, they get a watch or some other gift because it is a special time in their life. Milestone achievements.

One of the highlights of employee loyalty at some SMBs was that employees serve the business for a nominal term of 7 years, and, with special permission, the term could go to 9 years. These employees leave the island and the job on the rollover policy, and then return after a 1-year break stipulated by the Cayman Islands immigration law. All leader participants, except L4, lost employees who had worked for the full term allotted by the immigration law but who subsequently returned to them after the year's break. Some employees secured persons to work in their absence, which secured their return to these businesses.

Having social events was an occurrence for all focus group participants, but for some, the social events occurred more regularly than for others. FG3 noted that "before the pandemic, every birthday he treats us, and we go out for a meal." FG5 had similar

sentiments to FG3 and expressed, “the boss always has get-togethers and invites us, especially during Christmas time and public holidays.”

### ***Rollover Returns***

All leader participants noted that the Cayman Islands government’s rollover policy affected their business operations. Immigration law indicates that if the workers are key employees, they can remain in the Cayman Islands for up to 9 years (Immigration Work Permit Regulations, 2020). The workers leaving on the rollover policy can return for employment after 1 year (Immigration Work Permit Regulations, 2020). Rollover returns can have varying effects on people, but in general, the rollover policy associates with employee loyalty. L1 shared that “the other persons that are on work permits have been recruited from the island. There was one who returned from rollover but into a different position.” L2 had a recent encounter with an employee who went on rollover and wished to return:

They come back because they like the company. For example, one employee left 2 months ago, but months before he leaves, he is asking me before he goes, to please reconsider bringing him back after the 1-year rollover. I say, I mean, he was a good employee. I say, of course he can come and continue with us.

L5 encouraged their employees to save money, buy property, and get established in the Cayman Islands to be able to apply for permanent residency status.

FG1 and FG5 noted that they worked for the term limit prescribed by the Cayman Islands Immigration Law, went on rollover, and returned to work at SMB1 and SMB5,

respectively. FG5 shared that L5 asked him to return after the rollover period, and the focus group participant was happy to comply. According to FG5 “when it was time for the rollover, he asked me to come back. Most likely he saw something in me why he asked me to come back, and I agreed. Coming back, he made me the supervisor.” FG3 expressed excitement at the prospect of returning to this job after the rollover period, which is fast approaching since FG3 is now in the 7th year on the island. FG3 declared

I am happy to be working in the Cayman Islands. I never knew about Cayman before this job. People from my country do not know it exists. It is a beautiful island. Very happy I am here and cannot wait to return after my rollover.

#### ***Correlation to the Literature***

The findings in Theme 4 aligned with findings in the existing literature about fostering workplace loyalty. A cordial organizational culture is an essential element that promotes employee loyalty (Saha & Kumar, 2018). A cordial culture in the workplace reduces the attrition rate (Kontoghiorghes, 2016), which may increase employee loyalty. Promoting a positive workplace culture is essential and creates a sense of belonging (Schneider et al., 2017).

The participants’ views are also in alignment with selected literature findings and recommendations on mutual respect and workplace loyalty. Mutual respect at the workplace leads to employee satisfaction and loyalty (Sharma et al., 2018). In an environment harboring four generations of professionals, André (2018) experienced

mutual respect derived from a conflict process model that earned loyalty and was associated with a high retention rate.

Kaliannan et al. (2016) highlighted the significance of compensation on employees' commitment to business operations and productivity. Compensation is one essential element in achieving employee loyalty (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017; Shabane et al., 2017; Singh et al., 2017). Remuneration packages affect employees' commitment to the organization (Kaliannan et al., 2016; Vidal-Salazar et al., 2016). An ideal work environment is one with attractive compensations that provides scope for advancement (Cui et al., 2016). Leaders use attractive remuneration packages and provide a positive work environment to retain employees (Pandita & Ray, 2018; Tlaiss et al., 2017).

The relationship between social events and employer loyalty is evident in several articles. A study on 902 youths conducted by Tews et al. (2020) in several countries revealed that these young people's loyalty to their workplaces depended heavily on fun activities and socializing outside their regular work hours. When employees are allowed to socialize with each other, their job performance increases, and they develop loyalty to the organization (Tang et al., 2017). Unlike the other concepts examined in the current study, there was no peer-reviewed literature on rollover returns, as articulated by the leader participants as a cause for employee loyalty at the SMBs.

### ***Correlation to the Conceptual Framework***

Some of the findings in Theme 4 on fostering employee loyalty relate to Curtis et al.'s (2009) P-CMM. Akhlaghpour and Lapointe (2018) referred to leaders using P-CMM

to achieve optimal performance, which led to employee loyalty. The P-CMM includes a framework highlighting the way leaders use benchmarking to develop and establish workplace cultures, emphasizing employees' involvement (Curtis et al., 2009). At each stage of the P-CMM, leaders capitalize on opportunities to develop the organizational culture to retain employees (Dangmei, 2017). All leader participants in the current study specified the importance of having a cordial atmosphere at the workplace. L1 stated that "we try to have social events and stuff to keep everyone in tuned." All focus group participants agreed that the cordial atmosphere inspired their commitment to their jobs. FG4 voiced "we are a family and depend on each other." The writers of the P-CMM framework offer a general knowledge of organizational culture but no specific reference to cordial workplace culture.

Concerning mutual respect, which was a critical element for both leader and focus group participants, there is no specific correlation with P-CMM. In addition, there is no direct correlation between achieving workplace loyalty through social events or rollover returns findings and P-CMM. Compensation is essential in the P-CMM process, as highlighted at the managed level, emphasizing the need to reward employees for their qualifications, skills, and performance (Chen & Wang, 2018).

In the current study, the participants relayed that the cordial workplace atmosphere, mutual respect, compensation, social events, and rollover returns were essential in fostering workplace loyalty. Most of the findings relate to Burns's (1978) transformational leadership. Transformational leaders facilitate mutual trust, loyalty, and

job satisfaction (Farrukh et al., 2019). Transformational leadership is pivotal to a healthy cordial environment where leaders encourage employees to listen to each other, share constructive feedback, and be cooperative team players (Ali et al., 2019). Kohan et al. (2018) observed that transformational leaders are pivotal to a friendly work environment and set the stage for mutual respect. Transformational leaders empower themselves and respect and fulfill others' needs, thereby generating a climate for mutual respect (Andriani et al., 2018).

Transformational leadership is fundamental in determining employee compensation and workplace loyalty (Shabane et al., 2017). Prioritizing compensation should increase work output (Krishnan & Scullion, 2017). A transformational leader provides a solid work culture with priority on offering attractive compensation for the employees, facilitating loyalty, and retaining qualified employees (Riyanto & Hapsari, 2020). Notably, transformational leaders significantly influence their followers and willingly incorporate social events for the workers (Jehan et al., 2019). Leaders having informal socialization outside the workplace can positively affect employees' work morale, making them more loyal (Steen & Schott, 2019). Social media interactions have allowed transformational leaders to keep in regular contact with subordinates, and they use these media to socialize outside the workplace (Song et al., 2019). No peer-reviewed or credible literature was evident to correlate the findings on rollover returns to the transformational leadership conceptual framework. However, given the Cayman Islands context with the vast percentage of expatriate workers, transformational leadership must

be evident across industries, as was evident from all focus group participants' respect for their leaders.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

I conducted this qualitative multiple case study to explore talent management strategies that SMB leaders in the Cayman Islands use to acquire, develop, and retain employees. The data gathered from my interviews with business leaders and focus group participants, as well as reviews of company documents, provided information about the successful strategies that some leaders in the Cayman Islands used to acquire, develop, and retain employees. Through analyses of data collected, I found the following four major strategies that played an essential role in acquiring, developing, and retaining employees: conducting management assessments, following recruitment and selection guidelines, empowering and enabling employees, and fostering workplace loyalty.

The study's participants revealed that ongoing management assessments are necessary to measure business growth from increased customer demands or projects. The leaders underscored the importance of job audits and workload assessment as strategic tools to determine the need for acquiring employees. SMBs' strategic development involves formulating effective strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees (Bouchard & Wassell, 2020). The participants in the study noted that following recruitment and selection guidelines is essential, and setting standards is critical to accomplishing the strategy to acquire talent. Leaders who need to hire employees must follow the immigration law and advertise available jobs locally (Immigration Work

Permit Regulations, 2020). However, recruiters are free to advertise overseas, if they wish, as long as the local advertisement precedes. The recruiters of an organization who wish to fill a vacant position with an expatriate must seek the following:

To ascertain the availability of any one or more of the following in the order in which they are listed - (i) a Caymanian; (ii) the spouse of a Caymanian; (iii) the holder of a Residency and Employment Rights Certificate; and (iv) a person legally and ordinarily resident in the Islands who is qualified and willing to fill the position; and in the case of an application in respect of a professional, managerial or skilled occupation, the Board or the Director of WORC, as the case may be, is satisfied as to the extent to which the prospective employer has established adequate training or scholarship programmes [sic] for Caymanians. (The Immigration (Transition) Regulations, 2018, s.58.2).

Having met the immigration law stipulations, the recruiters must apply for work permits before the expatriates can begin working.

The findings in this study may provide business professionals with information about strategies through which to develop employees, such as knowledge, competency, and promotion; critical factors that achieve employee empowerment and enablement. Talent management practices to develop employees directly affect satisfaction, creativity, motivation, and competency (Kaleem, 2019). Leaders should ensure that they provide flexible developmental opportunities to meet employees' varying schedules. The incorporation of strategies to enhance employees' growth and promotion within

organizations results in employer satisfaction and greater employee engagement and enablement (Sopiah et al., 2020). The focus group participants identified significant value from training received at these SMBs, whether on-the-job, online, or in a physical platform. The focus group participants also noted that a vital contributor to their development was the confidence received from the open communication policy that their leaders facilitated.

The findings in the current study may also provide business professionals with an approach to retain employees. In particular, participants agreed that fostering workplace loyalty was paramount to employee retention. The study participants revealed that the essential areas that secured commitment were cordial culture, mutual respect, social events, compensation, and rollover returns. A friendly environment in which mutual respect and ongoing social events exist reassures employees of their value to the organization. A working environment with team spirit, attractive compensation and benefits, and a good working relationship with managers are critical to achieving employee loyalty (Khuong et al., 2020). Business leaders can use or adapt these strategies to heighten their awareness of effective measures for employee retention. Investing in employee development and using measures to retain the employees may increase employee engagement, secure employee loyalty, and increase productivity.

### **Implication for Social Change**

The strategies identified in the current study have been successful for leaders in the Cayman Islands to acquire, develop, and retain employees. Tangible improvements

for individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, or societies are possible as referenced from the identified themes. Knowledge of effective strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees could guide business leaders in planning and making sound managerial decisions. Sponsored organizational training is one aspect of employee empowerment and enablement that could exude into the wider community and society. More skilled and educated staff may result in increased employee earnings and enhanced benefits for individuals and society. Specifically, the mentorship program used at one of the SMBs could serve as an example to other entities' leaders. Leaders use mentorship programs developed for children and youths to provide personal and social nurturing and life skills that strengthen the ability to succeed in career choices and recruitment in the job market (Cunningham et al., 2020). Many communities could benefit from similar programs.

Social impact on organizations and communities could arise from increased employee empowerment and enablement and loyalty. Receiving attractive remuneration and other benefits could result in a cordial culture with mutual respect, which should increase employee performance. Empowered and enabled employees are more assertive, as they take charge and provide feedback while building social networks (Yin et al., 2017). These employees build networks internally and externally for benefitting their organizations and the communities.

Strategies for employee development and retention produce more loyal employees, resulting in increased productivity (Sopiah et al., 2020). When there is a low

turnover rate, employees tend to have greater job security and be loyal. This security is likely to improve employees' work-life balance and provide civic engagement opportunities.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Research on human capital within any form of organization is essential in guiding business practices. The acknowledgment of human resources as the most crucial asset in business operations can be motivating and increase morale (Bayraktar & Şencan, 2017). Current and future leaders can benefit from strategies such as conducting management assessments, following recruitment and selection guidelines, empowering and enabling employees, and fostering workplace loyalty. My first recommendation is that leaders of SMBs utilize a documentation system to conduct management assessments of their businesses' talent needs. The SMB leaders that used management assessments had documentation that reduced their workload, as they had to conduct job audits and assess business growth. My second recommendation is for leaders of SMBs to form an association where they meet occasionally and share procedures on recruitment and selection guidelines and practices that could benefit all members of the association.

The third recommendation is that SMB leaders prepare a training manual from their established successful procedures. Organizational leaders should have differentiated programs to encourage training and development within the organization, as all accomplishments depend on the workforce's expertise (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017). These actions could help secure employee empowerment and enablement and workplace

loyalty that may be pivotal for business success and sustainability. I will share a summary of the current study's results with the participating leaders, and I intend to publish my research findings in the International Journal of Applied Management and Technology and the Small Business Economics Journal.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Leaders of SMBs should use strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees. One limitation of this qualitative multiple case study was the use of a small sample size. The use of only nine participants from five SMBs limited the number of participants. A small sample size may not represent the larger SMB population; hence, the inability to generalize is present. Future researchers should conduct a quantitative methodology study to obtain data from a much larger sample. Another recommendation is for future researchers to conduct a comparative analysis on the effects of strategies to acquire, develop, and retain talent in SMBs versus large organizations. SMB operators are not likely to benefit from economies of scale, particularly lowered operating costs, as larger firms could.

### **Reflections**

This DBA journey has taken me through every possible emotion. I laughed, cried, grew desperate, despaired, rejoiced, among many other feelings. The experience proved to be the most gruesome yet rewarding time for me. At the beginning of 2020, I was energized and ready to wrap up this DBA journey promptly, only to be thrown into an abyss at the tragic death of my nephew. I almost lost myself, too; I could not go home to

bid my final goodbye, and the grief was brutal. The COVID -19 pandemic magnified the chaos, and the world was on lockdown. There was much trepidation. Was the world (as we knew it) coming to an end? I pulled through with the help of my faith in God, and a most caring constant reminder, my former chair, Dr. D – She told me to do it for my nephew, and that was the motivation I needed.

I was delighted to receive proposal approval in May but had challenges securing participants as the country was still on lockdown and only essential services were in operation. I received IRB approval in June; however, this was the worst possible time to connect with participants. I finally got the slow data collection process started in August.

I am grateful for the opportunity I received to share with the exceptional research participants. Noteworthy was my preconceived idea of the effect of the rollover policy on business efficiency and performance. I thought that the rollover period severely affected business operations and talent management practices, especially for the smaller entities. I have realized that these business leaders are more versatile than I anticipated, and they are proactive in putting strategies in place to deal with the rollover policy. I discovered that the leaders are concerned not just about business operations but also about the employees' well-being.

### **Conclusion**

Talent management strategies are essential to acquire, develop, and retain employees. Such practices used in entities to attract, retain, and develop workers are essential to prepare outstanding employees and boost business performance (Chung &

D'Annunzio-Green, 2018). As a result, SMB leaders realize the value of utilizing effective strategies to mobilize the workforce to achieve the most significant returns (Manzoor et al., 2019). Through analyses of data collected, I found that SMB leaders use successful strategies, such as conducting management assessments, following recruitment and selection guidelines, empowering and enabling employees, and fostering workplace loyalty. These strategies would be helpful not just to the SMB leadership but to policymakers and employees.

The findings of this study may be essential to business operators in charge of implementing the strategies and to government officials empowered to enact laws that could be more favorable to SMB operators. The rollover policy seems to be burdensome to business operators. Any allowance that the government can give to business operators could reduce both direct and indirect costs. About 43% of the estimated 66,000 labor force comprises expatriates (The Economics and Statistics Office, 2020); hence, the government earns a hefty sum from work permit fees. However, the costs of having to recruit new employees every 7 years can be grueling for business leaders, which could hinder business performance and inhibit growth and development.

The talent management strategies discussed in this study could guide industry standards and become the benchmark for recruiting, developing, and maintaining employees. Every organization has the opportunity to make a social impact on individuals, communities, and societies. Policies that empower employees drive

productivity and allow them to participate in social projects, thereby enriching a work-life balance.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

What will you do?	What will you say? —script
<p data-bbox="289 394 630 468">Introduce the interview and set the stage</p> <ul data-bbox="345 468 630 741" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="345 468 630 583">• Ensure participant is comfortable</li> <li data-bbox="345 583 630 741">• Inform participant that I will be recording the interview</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="646 394 1578 793">I am Annette Murphy, a student with Walden University completing my doctorate in Business Administration. I am grateful for your consent to do this interview and for returning the signed consent form to me. The purpose of my research is to explore the Talent Management strategies in small and medium-sized businesses to acquire, develop, and retain employees. I am confident that your contribution to this interview will provide insight that could assist other small and medium-sized business leaders in their talent management policies. This interview will take approximately one hour. I will transcribe your responses from this interview as well as use a tape recorder. Do you have any questions about the interview process?</p>
<p data-bbox="289 793 630 867">Assign participant a pseudonym</p>	<p data-bbox="646 793 1578 867">From here on, I will refer to you as _____.</p>
<p data-bbox="289 867 630 940">Commence the interview</p>	<p data-bbox="646 867 1578 982">Now that you are comfortable, I will begin the recordings as I ask you nine predetermined questions.</p> <ol data-bbox="646 1014 1578 1707" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="646 1014 1578 1087">1. How do you identify the talent needs of your business?</li> <li data-bbox="646 1087 1578 1161">2. What procedure do you use to recruit candidates for your business?</li> <li data-bbox="646 1161 1578 1234">3. How do you conduct your selection process?</li> <li data-bbox="646 1234 1578 1308">4. What strategies do you have in place to develop your talented employees?</li> <li data-bbox="646 1308 1578 1381">5. What practices do you use to retain employees?</li> <li data-bbox="646 1381 1578 1455">6. What modifications did you apply to any strategy to acquire, develop, or retain employees?</li> <li data-bbox="646 1455 1578 1528">7. What were the main barriers to implementing strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees?</li> <li data-bbox="646 1528 1578 1602">8. How did you overcome the key barriers to implementing strategies to acquire, develop, and retain employees?</li> <li data-bbox="646 1602 1578 1707">9. What additional information would you like to contribute about talent management practices in your business?</li> </ol>
<p data-bbox="289 1707 630 1787">End the recording Wrap up interview thanking participant</p>	<p data-bbox="646 1707 1578 1787">I appreciate you taking the time to accommodate me in your hectic schedule. Your voluntary contribution is invaluable. I will need to meet</p>

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with you again to verify my understanding of your answers to the questions. We are at the end of the interview.

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Schedule follow-up  
member checking  
interview

When would be a good time next week to do the member checking interview?

Date\_\_\_\_\_ Time\_\_\_\_\_ Place\_\_\_\_\_

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

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Interview Protocol Ends

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## Appendix B: Focus Group Protocol

What will you do?	What will you say? —script
<p data-bbox="289 380 743 447">Introduce the focus group and set the stage</p> <ul data-bbox="347 457 743 653" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="347 457 743 525">• Ensure that participants are comfortable</li> <li data-bbox="347 535 743 653">• Inform participants that I will be recording the focus group</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="764 380 1549 898">I am Annette Murphy, a student with Walden University completing my doctorate in Business Administration. Please accept my gratitude for agreeing to be a participant in this focus group. The purpose of my research is to explore the Talent Management strategies in small and medium-sized businesses to acquire, develop, and retain employees. I am confident that your contribution to this focus group will provide insight that could assist small and medium-sized business leaders in their talent management policies that will be in the best interest of the employees. This focus group will take approximately one hour. I will transcribe your responses from this focus group and will also use a tape recorder. Is the room temperature comfortable? Do you have any questions about the focus group process?</p>
<p data-bbox="289 905 743 940">Commence the focus group</p>	<p data-bbox="764 905 1549 1045">Now that you are comfortable, I will begin the recording as I ask you four predetermined questions. I will probe for clarity only, as the need to do so arises.</p> <ol data-bbox="813 1052 1549 1318" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="813 1052 1549 1119">1. How was your recruitment experience with this organization?</li> <li data-bbox="813 1129 1549 1165">2. How was your skill developed to fill your role?</li> <li data-bbox="813 1176 1549 1243">3. What has your employer done to make you want to remain at this organization?</li> <li data-bbox="813 1253 1549 1318">4. What other information would you want to share on this topic?</li> </ol>
<p data-bbox="289 1415 743 1451">End the recording</p> <p data-bbox="289 1461 743 1535">Wrap up focus group thanking the participant</p>	<p data-bbox="764 1461 1549 1663">We have come to the end of this focus group. Thank you for taking the time to participate willingly in this study. I will need to meet with you again to verify my understanding of your answers to the questions. We have come to the end of the focus group.</p>

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Schedule follow-up member  
checking focus group

When would be a good time next week to do the member  
checking focus group?

Date\_\_\_\_\_ Time\_\_\_\_\_ Place\_\_\_\_\_

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

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Focus Group Protocol Ends

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## Appendix C: Follow-Up Member Checking Protocol

What will you do?	What will you say? —script
<p data-bbox="289 380 743 449">Introduce the member checking procedure and set the stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="347 455 743 525">• Ensure that the participant is comfortable</li> <li data-bbox="347 531 743 688">• Inform participant that I will be recording the member checking procedure</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="764 380 1546 898">As I informed you before, I am Annette Murphy, a student with Walden University completing my doctorate in Business Administration. Please accept my gratitude for your participation in this study as I seek to explore the Talent Management strategies in small and medium-sized businesses to acquire, develop, and retain employees. I am confident that your contribution to this member checking procedure will provide further insight and aid in depth analysis. I want to ensure that I captured all the detail from our previous meeting, so this procedure should take approximately 30 minutes. I will use a tape recorder to record your responses. Is the room temperature comfortable? Do you have any questions about the member checking process?</p>
<p data-bbox="289 905 743 974">Commence the member checking procedure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="347 1010 743 1079">1. Question followed by concise interpretation</li> <li data-bbox="347 1085 743 1155">2. Question followed by concise interpretation</li> <li data-bbox="347 1161 743 1230">3. Question followed by concise interpretation</li> <li data-bbox="347 1236 743 1306">4. Question followed by concise interpretation</li> <li data-bbox="347 1312 743 1381">5. Question followed by concise interpretation</li> </ol> <p data-bbox="289 1388 743 1444">End the recording</p>	<p data-bbox="764 905 1546 1045">Now that you are comfortable, here is a synthesized copy of my transcription of your responses in the interview/focus group. Please read through this copy and indicate when you are ready to respond so I can begin recording.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="764 1079 1546 1148">1. Does the information correctly reflect your responses from this interview/focus group question?</li> <li data-bbox="764 1155 1546 1224">2. Does this cover the essence of your responses?</li> <li data-bbox="764 1230 1546 1299">3. Would you care to add any detail to this interpretation?</li> </ol>
<p data-bbox="289 1451 743 1549">Wrap up focus group thanking the participant</p>	<p data-bbox="764 1451 1546 1696">Here ends the member checking session. Again, thank you for the time you spend with me in providing information. You have provided valuable detail that will add value and depth to my doctoral study. We have come to the end of the focus group, and I wish you all the best in your continued endeavors.</p>
<p data-bbox="711 1724 1133 1759">Member Checking Protocol Ends</p>	

## Appendix D: Sample Cooperation Letter

George Town  
Grand Cayman

August 24, 2020

Cooperation Letter

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Exploring Talent Management Practices in Small and Medium-sized businesses in the Cayman Islands at ABC Ltd. As part of this study, I authorize you to conduct interviews, include an employee in a focus group, review relevant archival documents, collect data, and member check.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: Participating in the interview and member checking, giving permission for an employee to participate in the focus group, and giving access to archival documents. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in Proquest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.