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Strategies to Promote Employee Engagement in the Aerospace Industry

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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2022

Abstract

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by

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MBA, Webster University, 2009

BS, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, 2006

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Disengaged employees harm organizational performance. Lack of employee engagement costs manufacturing leaders in the United States billions of dollars annually in productivity. Guided by the personal engagement theory, the purpose of this single case study was to identify strategies manufacturing leaders use to improve employee engagement. The participants were manufacturing leaders in the aerospace industry in southern California. Data were collected from face-to-face semistructured interviews with three participants and a review of company engagement strategies available on the company website. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis and methodological triangulation. Four themes emerged: (a) leadership competency, (b) intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, (c) effective communication, and (d) personal empowerment. A key recommendation is that aerospace manufacturing leaders implement luncheons and other food events to enhance communication and empowerment strategies. The potential for positive social change includes increasing local community development, volunteerism, and job creation.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral research to my parents, James and Cynthia Cunningham, who provided me with the foundation on which I built my life and to whom I miss dearly but are forever in my heart.

I dedicate this doctoral research to my children who encouraged me and for whom I hope to have set an example of perseverance and commitment. Anything is possible. You just have to want it and put in the work.

Lastly, I want to dedicate this doctoral research to my wife Sherrie. She has supported me and been my rock during this doctoral journey. It is often said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with but a single step. I would have never taken the first step down this journey without her love and support.

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I want to thank the Walden University community for treating me like family and helping to teach me the process and providing guidance along the way. I thank my committee members for helping me stay the course and helping me create a product of which I can be proud. I thank Dr. Ronald Jones for getting me to the 95% solution and never giving up on me. I especially want to thank Dr. Beverly Muhammad for being my chair, mentor, and biggest advocate. To my second committee member, Dr. Warren Lesser, for providing perspective and to my university research reviewer, Dr. Matthew Knight, for getting me across the finish line. None of us is as strong as all of us. I genuinely thank you all.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Innovation and process improvements are essential to minimizing cost and maximizing profits, but business leaders have recognized the synergy that comes from a positively engaged workforce (Jha et al., 2019). To continue generating revenue and maintaining a competitive advantage, business leaders must leverage human capital to the greatest extent possible without creating an environment that disengages their workforce (Aslam et al., 2018). To generate and sustain maximum productivity, business leaders must implement established engagement practices to positively influence employee behavior as well as to adapt to their unique organizational dynamics (Moletsane et al., 2019).

Background of the Problem

Business leaders use technology, innovation, education, and best practices to drive competitive advantage and profitability. Employee engagement and employee effort are core components of organizational productivity (Moletsane et al., 2019). However, disengaged employees constitute over one quarter of all full-time employees globally (Khanna, 2020). Kumar and Pansari (2016) reviewed existing literature and concluded that 84% of highly engaged employees believe they have the capacity to affect the quality of their organization’s productivity in a positive manner in comparison to 31% of disengaged employees. To remain competitive, business leaders must improve this underutilized component of human capital.

Researchers have demonstrated a relationship between improved employee engagement and increases in both productivity and competitive advantage (Shuck &

Reio, 2014). Ibrahim and Falasi (2014) found that effective employee engagement might lead to improved job satisfaction and greater organizational commitment. Continuing the research into employee engagement, Anthony-McMann et al. (2017) noted the need to explore the curvilinear relationship between engagement and organizational commitment. Lesener et al. (2020) suggested further research is necessary to address the spiral effect between work resources and engagement. The findings from this study may provide leaders with strategies to promote employee engagement.

Problem Statement

Disengaged employees cause an adverse effect on organizational performance and negatively affect competitive advantage through the loss of productivity (Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Moletsane et al., 2019). Lack of employee engagement costs industries in the United States between $270 and $343 billion annually in productivity or approximately 2% of the gross domestic product (Moletsane et al., 2019). The general business problem is some business leaders fail to create greater profitability through employee engagement. The specific business problem is that some business leaders in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry lack strategies to promote employee engagement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies used by some business leaders in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry to promote employee engagement. The targeted population consisted of business leaders in a single manufacturing organization within the aerospace industry in southern California who have successfully implemented strategies to promote employee engagement. Engaged employees promote organizational citizenship behaviors that lead to improved community and societal living conditions (M. Kim & Kim, 2021). The potential for positive social change exists through a greater understanding of employee engagement strategies that improve employee professional and personal growth, leading to increased community and social initiatives such as community development, volunteerism, and job creation.

Nature of the Study

Three research methods exist: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Draper et al., 2021; Hlady-Rispal et al., 2021). Qualitative researchers explore what is occurring or has occurred by asking open-ended questions (Draper et al., 2021). I selected the qualitative method to use open-ended questions. Quantitative researchers statistically analyze the potential relationships between variables using numeric data (Yin, 2018). Mixed-method researchers require elements from both qualitative and quantitative research (Frias & Popovich, 2020). I did not test hypotheses or analyze relationships between variables; therefore, the quantitative and mixed methods were not appropriate. Qualitative researchers conduct interviews asking passive respondents questions and eliciting neutral interview statements (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2020). The qualitative method was most appropriate for this proposed study.

I considered four research designs: phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and narrative. Phenomenological researchers collect data from the perceptions and lived experiences of participants (Ghafoury et al., 2020). A phenomenology design was not appropriate because I was not collecting data from the lived experiences of participants. Ethnographers research the cultural experiences or behavioral patterns of participants (Taylor et al., 2021). An ethnography was not appropriate because I was not collecting data regarding the cultural experiences of participants. Narrative researchers use collaborative stories from the participants as data (George & Selimos, 2018). I did not use collaborative stories from participants as data; therefore, the narrative approach was not appropriate. A single case study design was appropriate to explore how or why a condition exists, where a researcher has little or no control over behavioral events (Yin, 2018). I used a single case study design to explore a phenomenon that I have no control over in a single location.

Research Question

The potential of untapped resources available through the increased productivity of effectively engaged employees remains to be realized (Moletsane et al., 2019). Organizational leaders can increase productivity and competitive advantage through employee engagement but may lack the necessary strategies to engage employees. The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies used by business leaders to promote employee engagement. To understand this phenomenon, I answered the following research question:

What strategies do some business leaders in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry use to promote employee engagement?

Interview Questions

1. What do you think causes employees to become disengaged?

2. How do you think reengagement occurs?
3. What physical engagement strategy did you use to promote employee engagement?
4. What intellectual engagement strategy did you use to promote employee engagement?
5. What emotional engagement strategy did you use to promote employee engagement?
6. What strategies did you find most effective to promote employee engagement?
7. What strategies did you find least effective to promote employee engagement?
8. How did you measure the effectiveness of the strategies used to promote employee engagement?
9. What would you like to add about strategies to promote employee engagement that I have not asked?

Conceptual Framework

Kahn's (1990) personal engagement theory served as the conceptual framework for this study. Kahn introduced the term *personal engagement* and developed personal engagement theory as a perspective for measuring engagement or disengagement of employees through commitment. Kahn indicated that individuals have varying levels of commitment based on one of three dimensions. The tenets of the personal engagement theory are (a) physical engagement, (b) intellectual connection, and (c) emotional connection of the employee to task execution or task completion (Kahn, 1990). Building on Kahn's work, Saks and Gruman (2014) argued for a multidimensional perspective on employee engagement. Saks and Gruman suggested that engagement is a unique construct of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components associated with individual role performance. Schneider et al. (2018) offered the concept of engagement as a relationship between people and their work and emphasized the various ways that people engage emotionally, cognitively, and physically. Schneider et al. extended both Kahn's, and Saks and Gruman's concepts of engagement by addressing the individual's component of engagement, both attitudinal and behavioral as well as the organization's desire to go beyond preserving the status quo and instead focus on initiating or fostering change. I expected to find physical engagement of tasks, intellectual connection, and emotional connection to be key components of the strategies used by leaders to promote employee engagement.

Operational Definitions

Affective commitment: The psychological attachment to an organization through feelings of loyalty, affection, and belongingness (Abdelmoula, 2021).

Continuance commitment: An individual's practical attachment to an organization by staking something they value (Abdelmoula, 2021).

Employee engagement: An attitude or behavior that implies being involved in, attracted by, or committed to working for an organization (Obuobisa, 2020).

Normative commitment: The attachment individuals feel through obligation or responsibility to an organization (Abdelmoula, 2021).

Personal disengagement: An individual's uncoupling or disassociation from work roles by withdrawing physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance (Kahn, 1990).

Personal engagement: An individual's varying level of commitment based on a physical, intellectual, or emotional connection to task execution or task completion (Kahn, 1990).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions are conditions or inputs of a study that remain fixed but are acknowledged or known to possibly deviate to a greater or lesser extent in reality (Armstrong & Kepler, 2018). The first assumption was that manufacturing leaders in the aerospace industry in southern California would volunteer to participate and be available for a 30-minute interview. Second, an assumption was that organizational leaders would provide consent for participants to discuss potential proprietary information. Third, I assumed the manufacturing business leaders would answer all questions honestly and accurately. Fourth, an assumption was that the participants would possess the prerequisite knowledge of current organizational engagement strategies to provide useful data for answering the research question. Fifth, an assumption was that I would receive permission to review company engagement survey results and that the documents would be accurate. The final assumption was that sufficient data exists to provide meaningful results.

Erhard et al. (2021) stated that practical research will always have limitations because it is derived from specific research contexts and will never cover all possible translational challenges. A limitation of this study was that the validity of interview data collected relied on the experiences and opinions of leaders in a single aerospace manufacturing organization; therefore, the interview data do not reflect the views of the broader population of all aerospace manufacturing organization leaders. The sample population restricted to southern California represents a limitation. Because transferability of the findings is up to future researchers and because of the limited scope of the study, limited, if any, transferability of the findings exists. A final limitation is that I relied on the honesty of potential participants and the accuracy of supporting documentation to identify leaders in the aerospace industry who have implemented successful strategies to promote employee engagement.

Delimitations are the boundaries, limited breadth, and scope of a study (Yin, 2018). The geographic region of southern California is a delimitation. The sample population limitation of four leaders in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry represents a delimitation. The participant inclusion criteria of leaders who successfully implement strategies to improve engagement limits the scope of this study. Another delimitation was that answering the research question required focusing on strategies leaders use to promote engagement; therefore, I did not address other employee turnover or other human resources issues that might affect leaders in the aerospace industry.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was to provide business leaders with the opportunity for improved engagement strategies in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry. Researchers have indicated that effectively engaged employees positively affect organizational health and productivity (Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Moletsane et al., 2019). The value of this study lies in the contributions to business practices and implications for social change.

Contribution to Business Practice

Engaged employees serve as differentiators who consistently deliver positive service attitudes, making them a source of competitive advantage for firms (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). Knowledge gained through this study can assist leaders in identifying and implementing strategies that will improve engagement and competitive advantage. The findings of the study potentially provide business leaders in the aerospace industry additional strategies to improve employee engagement. Leaders might gain insight and knowledge leading to a more engaged workforce that contributes to gaining and maintaining a competitive advantage. Implementation of effective strategies might enable the full potential of employees and increase productivity. Fully enabled employees might improve organizational health by contributing to a possible decrease in employee turnover.

Implications for Social Change

Implications for social change exist through a greater understanding of employee engagement strategies that improve employee professional and personal growth, leading to increased community and social initiatives such as community development, volunteerism, and job creation (Ge, 2020). Improved employee retention might contribute to lower local unemployment rates and greater local economic stability. Employed individuals potentially benefit the local economy through increased spending, providing increased revenue for local businesses. Increased economic stability has the potential to increase the local standard of living for residents.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies to promote employee engagement in the aerospace industry. An objective of this study was to review existing literature on employee engagement and demonstrate a connection between data elicited from semistructured interviews, secondary data in the form of company archival records, and existing research to answer the research question. Employee engagement is the basis for this study, and as such, the constructs of engagement and disengagement are centric to the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework for this study is Kahn's (1990) engagement theory. Kahn used the term *personal engagement* to encompass three distinct aspects of both engagement and disengagement. Kahn suggested that physical engagement, intellectual connection, and an employee's emotional connection to task execution or task completion are all considered specific individual actions that affect an employee's performance.

The search for material supporting this study consisted of journals, reports, and seminal scholarly books in the Walden University Library. My search produced 153 peer-reviewed articles and 26 non-peer-reviewed articles, totaling 179 sources. I used Ulrich's Periodicals Directory to validate the peer review integrity of all sources within the study. Search engines I used were Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM Complete, Emerald Management, and Academic Search Complete. A search of existing dissertations internal and external to the Walden University Library provided content and context and was limited to less than 3% of the articles. The primary search terms used for research engagement were *employee engagement, motivation, organizational commitment, organizational culture, leadership, leadership styles, employee well-being*, and *employee retentio*n. The information assembled from the multiple sources demonstrates the correlation between engagement, leadership, organizational culture, and productivity. A complete list of references includes 179 references, of which 153 (85%) were peer reviewed, and 151 (84%) were published from 2018 to 2022.

Organization of Literature Review

In the first segment of the literature review, I introduce Kahn's (1990) engagement theory, the conceptual framework for this study. Kahn explored three psychological conditions—meaningfulness, safety, and availability—in which individuals personally engage or disengage. The first section of the literature review continues with the development of Kahn's engagement theory and illustrates variables that might affect the three psychological conditions. The first segment also contains theories by other researchers that extend and contrast Kahn's seminal work. In the second segment, I cover intrinsic and extrinsic factors that affect employee engagement. In addition, the second segment contains literature on the importance of motivation, organizational commitment, and generational differences on engagement. Within the third segment, I examine antecedents of engagement and focus on personality traits, mentoring, and leadership styles. In the fourth segment, I describe leadership and the effect of different leadership styles on engagement. The segment includes definitions of different types of leadership styles and their respective impact on employee behavior.

Conceptual Framework

Kahn’s (1990) engagement theory is the conceptual framework for this study. The need to leverage human capital to a greater degree compelled researchers to take a more in-depth look at employee engagement (Caniëls et al., 2018). Kleinaltenkamp et al. (2019) stated that the potential value of engagement without focused empirical examination might be lost. Kleinaltenkamp et al. further stated that researchers have an inherent conceptualization of a connection between positive engagement and high-quality job performance. Bakker and Albrecht (2018), in agreement with Kleinaltenkamp et al., suggested employee engagement is an antecedent to employee and organizational goals. Kahn introduced the concept of employee engagement as the moment when an individual connects physically, cognitively, or emotionally to a specific role or task. Kahn regarded the moments of engagement (or disengagement) as responses to both intrinsic and extrinsic variables.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement and disengagement are important concepts for business leaders. Kahn’s (1990) seminal work on personal engagement and disengagement is the basis of this qualitative study on engagement strategies. Kahn chose to explore the specific moments in which a person elects to engage or disengage in a personal task. As a starting point, Kahn selected the prior work of Goffman (1961) who suggested people’s attachment and/or detachment from their tasks varied. Huertas-Valdivia et al. (2018) conducted a study on engagement in the hospitality industry, further validating Kahn’s theory. Huertas-Valdivia et al. defined engagement to be a response to work environments and individual variables. Shrotryia and Dhanda (2020) suggested that engagement is a psychological construct with three conditions: psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Shrotryia and Dhanda's theory differs from Kahn's, as Shrotryia and Dhanda do not specifically address the intellectual component.

To understand the concepts of engagement or disengagement, Kahn conducted two studies. The first study conducted by Kahn (1990) was ethnographic in design and allowed for the exploration of the psychological experiences that initiate attitudes and behaviors. In the study, Kahn acted as both observer and participant and collected data through observation, document analysis, self-reflection, and in-depth interviews. The participant population consisted of 16 counselors during a 6-week summer camp in the West Indies. Kahn spent the first 3 weeks using direct observations to identify examples of engagement or disengagement as well as a means to identify examples of each. Kahn examined various camp documents, including counselor handbooks and assorted camp brochures to get a sense of how the camp operated and the roles of the various participants. During the second 3 weeks, Kahn conducted interviews using a hypothesis developed from direct observations and analysis of camp documentation. Kahn's interviews consisted of 24 open-ended questions designed to explore participants' perceptions of their experiences while at the camp.

Kahn's (1990) second study, conducted at an architecture firm in the northeastern United States, contained data from 16 participants selected based on their diversity. For this study, in-depth interviews comprised the sole data collection method. The interview format for this study replicated the initial theory developed from Kahn's first study.

Unlike the questions in the first study that asked the participants to provide an overall perception of their experiences, the questions in the second study required participants to recall four specific situations when they felt either attached or detached from their task and whether they thought their response to a specific event would be affected by whether they were at work or not. Kahn’s stated purpose for this format revealed that the phenomenological assumption of understanding psychological and emotional experience requires experienced reality.

Analysis of the data from both studies indicated that personal engagement is the employment and expression of a person’s *preferred self* that promotes a connection to an individual’s work and others (Kahn, 1990). Kahn (1990) stated this combination creates a connection between self and role. Kahn further stated that intrinsic motivation drives a person to expend energy on a physical, emotional, and cognitive level. The intrinsic motivation manifests when individuals become physically involved in tasks, cognitively vigilant, and emotionally connected in the service of their tasks and their commitment to others (Kahn, 1990). Ozyilmaz (2020) validated the *preferred self* concept and defined employee engagement as the continuous advancement of behavioral drive that links the employee mentally, physically, and cognitively to a given task.

Analysis of the data indicated that in the absence of motivation, individuals demonstrate a simultaneous withdrawal from a preferred self and exhibit behavior that promotes a lack of connection on the physical, cognitive, and emotional level to their role (Kahn, 1990; Pasion et al., 2021). Kahn (1990) stated that personal disengagement is a means of disassociating self from task. The obverse of engagement, personal disengagement is the physical detachment, cognitive separation, and emotional disconnection from an individual’s role (Kahn, 1990). Personal disengagement is less obvious in that individuals who are disengaged hide what they think and feel and suppress their beliefs, values, and connections to others (Kahn, 1990). In concert with Kahn, Aslam et al. (2018) noted disengaged employees tend to be less satisfied and experience more job insecurity and stress. In addition, Aslam et al. stated disengaged employees tend to be less interested in their jobs and less loyal and effective for their organization. Leaders use engagement theory to combat disengagement by implementing engagement strategies that align personal and professional goals to improve job satisfaction.

Expansion of Engagement Theory

Engagement theory has been a topic of interest for scholarly researchers. Shuck and Reio (2014) offered a varied construct of engagement by exploring the relationship between psychological workplace climate and personal accomplishment, seeking to ascertain whether employee engagement moderates this relationship. Shuck and Reio used a sampling of 179 participants from frontline (nonleadership) positions to gather data on psychological workplace climate as well as overall well-being, emotional exhaustion, and psychological well-being. Shuck and Reio determined that limited evidence existed regarding demographic variables sharing a meaningful relationship with any variable examined. Shuck and Reio found evidence of a relationship between psychological workplace climate and the individual level outcome variables. Additional analysis indicated there is a distinct personal psychological benefit for working fully engaged and a personal, individual psychological cost for disengagement.

Abu-Shamaa et al. (2015) conducted a quantitative study to explore personal accomplishment and work engagement as significant factors in predicting employees' organizational commitment. Abu-Shamaa et al. stated that to improve the sense of personal accomplishment, job satisfaction, and commitment, organizations should consider providing improved work conditions as well as the tools and resources required to complete the assigned job. Shuck and Reio and Abu-Shamaa et al. extended the concept of engagement beyond that of Kahn by exploring the impact of the constructs of communication, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Abu-Shamaa et al. suggested to improve engagement, managers should better communicate organizational values and goals to align personal and organizational objectives.

Effective business leaders recognize the link between employee engagement and organizational fit. Ünal and Turgut (2015) posited that a relationship exists between person–organization value fit and employee engagement. While Shuck and Reio (2014) explored the workplace climate, Ünal and Turgut explored the organizational fit of the employee and the subsequent impact on engagement. To extend the existing body of literature and provide a greater understanding, Ünal and Turgut divided employee engagement into two dimensions: work engagement and organizational engagement. Ünal and Turgut refined the definition of engagement including the theoretical framework of employee engagement developed by Kahn (1990). In addition to employee engagement, Ünal and Turgut defined the term *person–organization fit* and provided their definition as the similarity between culture, climate, values, goals, and norms of organization and personality, values, goals, and attitudes of the individuals. To examine the contribution of person–organization fit to work engagement and organizational engagement, Ünal and Turgut provided 400 surveys to employees from health, education, and banking service sectors in Istanbul, Turkey, which yielded 285 participants for a response rate of 71.1%. Data from descriptive and correlational analysis supported Ünal and Turgot's theory that person–organization value fit has a positive contribution to organizational engagement, as well as work engagement.

In comparison, Anthony-McMann et al. (2017) suggested that the relationship between employee engagement and workplace outcomes might depend on how the construct of employee engagement is measured. Scholarly research on engagement does not include a research standard for measuring engagement. Scholars have used both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore engagement. Anthony-McMann et al. suggested dissimilar conceptualization of engagement measurements may lead to variable outcomes. Anthony-McMann et al.'s suggestion that engagement outcomes may be variable based on measurement techniques is critical to business leaders measuring employee engagement in implementing effective engagement strategies.

Alternative Theories

A significant amount of research exists that aligns with Kahn's (1990) engagement theory; however, not all researchers agreed with Kahn's definitions. For example, Saks and Gruman (2014) suggested that engagement is an argued construct. While no true definition exists, employees are most healthy, satisfied, and engaged when they have a high level of affective organizational commitment. Boyd and Nowell (2020) suggested engagement constructs serve as reasonable measures of employee well-being in relation to others and the organization. Queen and Hess (2018) posited that selective engagement theory offers an alternative view. Queen and Hess suggested that in situations where greater effort is required for task completion, motivation is diminished, leading to a conscious decision to be selective when consciously or unconsciously deciding to engage. Although Saks and Gruman and Boyd and Nowell both argued that different definitions exist for the construct of engagement; the researchers still support the existence of engagement theory.

Alternatives to engagement theory exist. Lianto et al. (2018) offered exchange ideology as an alternative to the recognized engagement theory. Lianto et al. suggested that work effort depends on an employee’s treatment by the organization and can strengthen an individual’s tendency to respond in reciprocity to support. In accord with Lianto et al., W. Choi et al. (2018) suggested the depth of an employee’s work effort is dependent on treatment by the organization. Ahn et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative study to explore the relationship between ethical leadership and employee performance, and an analysis of the data indicated an employees’ exchange ideology moderates the effects of ethical leadership on job performance. In contrast to Lianto et al. and W. Choi et al., Kim et al. (2017) suggested individuals demonstrating exchange ideology might be more calculative and tend to perform voluntary behaviors at only a minimum level and demonstrate a lower level of knowledge sharing compared to those with a weak exchange ideology.

Motivation

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory comprised of a five-tier model of human needs, depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. Beginning at the bottom and moving to the top, the needs are psychological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow initially suggested that psychological needs at the lowest level such as food and warmth must be satisfied before needs at higher levels such as safety and security but later clarified that satisfaction of needs is not an all or nothing phenomenon. Maslow stated the first four levels are considered deficiency needs as they arise from the deprivation and motivate when not met. Conversely, the top need self-actualization is considered growth and continues to grow as individuals strive to fulfill their full potential (Goede & Boshuizen, 2019). Maslow's hierarchy is relevant to engagement because the top tier of the model deals directly with self-actualization. Self-actualization, as defined by Maslow, is the achievement of one's full potential. Winston (2018) furthered Maslow's research on the concept of motivation and self-actualization and suggested that motivation plays a significant role in an individual's conceptualization of a good life. Kumari et al. (2021) further defined motivation as a process of stimulating individuals to take the right actions to reach their goals or targets. Maslow posited that motivation is critical to self-conceptualization. Maslow and Winston both noted the importance of motivation and the role motivation plays in an individual's self-actualization. Winston furthered Maslow's concept to indicate an individual's conceptualization of an individual's self-actualization influences a good life. Kumari et al. suggested that motivation is of significant importance to an organization concerned with developing work environments and to organizational success.

To understand motivation, researchers found the need to understand the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Kuvaas et al. (2017) defined intrinsic motivation as the desire to perform an activity for its own sake to achieve satisfaction inherent in the activity. Kruglanski et al. (2018) further defined intrinsic motivation as an activity seen as its own end. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is the desire to perform a particular activity with the intent of receiving a positive outcome (Kuvaas et al., 2017). Kruglanski et al. extended the definition and suggested that extrinsic motivation was not limited to receiving positive outcomes, but also existed as motivation to preclude negative outcomes. In contrast to Kuvaas et al. and Kruglanski et al. that consider intrinsic and extrinsic to be separate phenomenon, Woolley and Fishbach (2018) posited a relationship exists between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation such that intrinsic motivation drives the need for an extrinsic reward.

To engage employees within an organization in a purposeful manner, organizational leaders must properly motivate them. Delaney and Royal (2017) posited the extent to which employees themselves feel motivated to do more than is required is a significant predictor of overall engagement. Delaney and Royal suggested that investments in motivation maximize utility and motivate employees to do more than is required. In mild rebuttal to Delaney and Royal, Woolley and Fishbach (2018) stated that individuals determine their intrinsic motivation based on their current state and further suggested that intrinsic motivation can change in the future based on personal values that change over time. Woolley and Fishbach suggested that a circular connection to extrinsic values existed as intrinsic values are driven by a current state while extrinsic values are driven by an end state.

Woolley and Fishbach (2018) explored the linkage of intrinsic reward and intrinsic motivation with employee motivation. They theorized that a job would enhance employees' motivation to the extent that it embodies certain intrinsic motivators. In agreement with Woolley and Fishbach, Malek et al. (2020) noted that as the end state of a task provided a reward in the form of extrinsic motivation, the current task state evolved which drove an internal update to internal values creating a causal effect on intrinsic motivation. The linkage of motivation to an individual's current state is important because, as individuals grow personally and professionally, their current state may evolve, altering what motivates them both intrinsically and extrinsically.

He et al. (2021) extended the idea that motivation is ephemeral, situational, and subject to contextual factors. He et al. contributed to the circular concept as they stated extrinsic motivation is an instrumental value, such as economic gain or social recognition that might lead to a change of the situation specific to intrinsic motivation assigned to task completion. He et al. stated that this circular pattern contributes to employee creativity, which manifests in organizational commitment. The literature indicated a significant link between employee engagement and employee motivation.

Organizational Commitment

Employee engagement is an important component of organizational commitment. Ibrahim and Falasi (2014) explored the relationship between organizational commitment and employee engagement but extended existing research by further defining organizational commitment into the dimensions of affective commitment and continuance commitment. Abdelmoula (2021) suggested three types of commitment exist: normative, affective, and continuance. La Falce et al.'s (2017) definition of organizational commitment aligns with Abdelmoula as the three dimensions of organizational commitment include an individual's willingness to develop themselves to integrate into a system (normative), their connection between personal and organizational goals (affective), and their commitment to the organization as a whole (continuance).

Ibrahim and Falasi used regression analysis to conclude that affective commitment is more important in predicting employee engagement than continuance commitment. Ghasempour Ganji et al. (2021) furthered the work of Ibrahim and Falasi using a qualitative study to conclude that employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment have a strong positive relationship with perceived organizational outcomes. To extend their research, Ghasempour Ganji et al. examined diversity management's direct and indirect impact on employee engagement and affective commitment.

Scholars and practitioners use employee satisfaction and engagement to determine levels of organizational commitment. Abu-Shamaa et al. (2015) suggested that job satisfaction and work engagement are significant factors in predicting employees' organizational commitment. In accord with Abu-Shamaa et al. (2015), La Falce et al. (2017) noted an employee's perception of positive intrinsic rewards and the opportunity for professional growth leads to higher levels of employee commitment. Abu-Shamaa et al. identified opportunities to improve job satisfaction and commitment by improving work conditions as well as the tools and resources required to complete the assigned job. Abu-Shamaa et al. stated that improved employee engagement occurs through the alignment of organizational and personal goals.

In accord with Abu-Shamaa et al., Ibrahim and Falasi (2014) noted a significant relationship exists between organizational commitment and engagement. La Falce et al. (2017) stated that engagement increases within an organization when employees experience an affective commitment. Ibrahim and Falasi noted that employee age does not have a significant relationship with organizational commitment. The preponderance of evidence in the literature indicated that highly satisfied and engaged employees remain committed to their organizations.

Generational Differences

Generational differences result in different levels and types of employee engagement. Young et al. (2013) investigated the differences in generational attitudes toward job satisfaction. To support their study, Young et al. identified the three current generations in the workplace. Baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, are individuals raised in a strong economy where the opportunity for jobs and education is favorable (Millsap, 2018). Boomers are known to be competitive, loyal, and dedicated employees capable of accepting (del Valle Lago et al., 2021; Young et al., 2013). The next generation, or Generation X, was born between 1965 and 1980 and are also known as the latch key generation because, for many, both of their parents worked outside of the home (Monteiro et al., 2020). Generation Xers are resourceful and independent individuals seeking work-life balance, putting family and friends first and working second. Professionally, they appreciate direct and immediate feedback and seek challenges within the workplace (del Valle Lago et al., 2021; Young et al., 2013). Generation Yers, also known as millennials, born between 1981 and 2000, tend to be the most diverse generation, the most accepting of diversity, as well as the most knowledgeable with electronic devices using them extensively for work and personal communication (Young et al., 2013).

Workers from different generational cohorts experience engagement and motivation in different ways. Through a thorough review of existing literature, Young et al. (2013) discovered that employees from different generations are found to be motivated to a different degree by affiliation, power, and progression and all three generations view job satisfaction differently. Young et al. found that baby boomers displayed more job satisfaction than Generation X and Y but found no discernable difference between the latter two. VanMeter et al. (2013) noted the necessity to understand these implications because as baby boomers retire, Generation Y individuals will inevitably replace them and will constitute the single largest generational segment of the workforce. VanMeter et al. concluded that generational values of Generation Y affect their ethical ideologies and can have a distinct impact on how they conduct themselves in an organizational environment. Additionally, Cucina et al. (2018) suggested no discernable differences existed in work ethic across generations.

Costanza et al. (2012) conducted a quantitative study to explore the relationship of generational differences on work related attitudes. Costanza et al. concluded that no substantive differences exists in work related outcomes across the generations. Costanza et al. suggested that job satisfaction and organizational commitment are conceptually related and therefore, a single marker of job attitudes. Costanza et al. noted that the influence of adolescence might contribute to job dissatisfaction and that could explain why job satisfaction is higher among older generations. Supporting Costanza's theory, VanMeter et al. (2013) suggested ethical ideology refers to a system of ethics used to make moral judgments and those judgments significantly affected during adolescence. Thalgaspitiya (2021) suggested the psychological aspect of different generations directly affects the approach necessary for developing engagement strategies.

Antecedents

Borah and Barua (2018) stated that regardless of ideological differences, personal growth and development remain integral components of engagement across generations. Borah and Barua suggested, in addition to organizational support and role clarity, personal and professional growth and open communication act as antecedents to effective engagement. In agreement with Borah and Barua, Kara et al. (2021) noted organizational identification or the extent to which an individual can identify themselves within the organization is the perception that newcomers possess about organization support. M. Kim and Kim (2021) suggested that potential employees who demonstrate a positive attitude and a fundamental understanding of tasks might possess better engagement. Mousa et al. (2020) identified communication and work life balance policies as antecedents to positive employee engagement. Mousa et al. also noted that while work-life policies exist, employees are reticent to use for fear of losing their jobs. In contrast to

Borah and Barua, Jonas et al. (2018) posited the formation of shared rules, norms, values, and beliefs might be antecedents to engagement. Jonas et al. suggested the antecedents of engagement manifest within the three dimensions of engagement first posited by Kahn (1990).

Leadership

Leadership is the cornerstone of successful engagement strategies as organizational leadership is responsible for developing and implementing engagement strategies. Carasco-Saul et al. (2015) posited a direct correlation between effective leadership and positive employee engagement. Northouse (2019) defined leadership as a process of influence by an individual over another individual or group. Leadership differs from management as management is about planning and processes while leadership is about influence (Muff et al., 2020; Northouse, 2019). Multiple styles exist for effective leaders to use to motivate and promote organizational effectiveness. Carasco-Saul et al. studied leadership styles to examine the psychological mechanisms underlying the leadership–engagement relationship and concluded that the effectiveness of leadership on followers' engagement might be situational and dependent on leadership style. In agreement with Carasco-Saul et al., Muff et al. (2020) noted effective leaders use their leadership skills to establish trust and foster positive cultures that stimulate innovation.

As leadership theory entered the 20th century, definitions of leadership began to change, and while still trait centric, consideration is given to the behavioral aspect of leadership (Northouse, 2019). Researchers focused on leadership as a relationship between the leader, the follower, and their overall effectiveness (Northouse, 2019). Martin (2019) posited a reciprocal process where both leaders and followers benefit when individuals or groups engage with one another and both leader and follower gain from the interaction. Johnson et al. (2017) suggested leaders and followers are interdependent and form reciprocal attachments that connect them to tasks. Zhang et al. (2020) posited the leader-follower dynamic manifests within the transformational leadership approach as the leader must understand the needs of the follower when making the necessary emotional connection to attend to the follower’s needs. Johnson et al. noted that, unlike the transformational leadership approach that has a leader-follower dynamic, trait leadership does not require the leader to consider the needs of the follower. In contrast to Johnson et al. and Zhang et al., Shorey and Chaffin (2018) suggested attachment dynamics normally found in close romantic relationships, are not active in an organizational leader-follower relationship. To understand the impacts of particular leadership styles, researchers explored each style and examined how each style uniquely affects organizational culture.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is broad-based and encompasses many dimensions of the leadership process. The goal of the transformational leader is to empower individuals or groups and raise the collective consciousness of the entire organization (Caniëls et al., 2018). The expectation is that by raising consciousness individually, a synergistic effect on the organization as a whole will exist. The synergistic effect occurs by making a personal connection with followers and understanding what motivates them (Chang et al., 2021; Northouse, 2019). Transformational leaders are effective with organizational culture for several reasons. In accord with Northouse (2019), Van Dijk et al. (2021) posited transformational leaders are advocates for change. Managing change is necessary and, as stated previously, thought to be a part of building competitive organizations (Kanitz & Gonzalez, 2021; Van Dijk et al., 2021).

Because change begins by establishing trust, a strong advocate is more likely to have positive engagement and engender trust. In accord with Van Dijk et al. (2021), Caniëls et al. (2018) posited that transformational leaders motivate followers to look beyond their interests and put the organization's needs first. Through motivation and the establishment of trust comes buy in of the organizational vision and goals. *Buy in* is consistent with the vision aspect of organizational culture where individuals are a part of that shared vision and can see how they contribute to the overall goal and can understand how their part contributes. Prochazka et al. (2018) advanced behavior as a concerning leader-follower interaction, where there is a disposition to see transformational leadership as a personality trait. The assumption of transformational leadership as a trait can lead to circumstances where the traits that make for a good transformational leader are situational. Conversely, Ha-Vikström (2018) posited transformational leadership, regardless of the situation, has the potential for abuse due to the possibility of serving an agenda that does not align with organizational goals.

The findings of several studies indicated that leader gender influences leadership style. Abelha et al. (2018) extended Northouse's (2019) theories on leader-follower interaction and suggested gender is a moderating factor in the leader-follower relationship. Adelha et al. conducted a quantitative study to explore the linkage of gender as a moderating effect and posited that personality traits such as charisma influence an individual's affective state. Adelha et al. concluded that female respondents possess a more volatile reactivity to transformational behaviors if a lack of organizational leadership exists. In accord with Adelha et al., Dhaouadi (2021) posited male transformational leadership is evaluated favorably by employees than female transformational leadership and could lead to high organizational effectiveness. Dhaouadi further suggested women are more likely to show transformational leadership behaviors but remain underrepresented and occupy disadvantageous roles concerning gaining leadership positions. Conversely, Uddin et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study to explore the relationship between gender and transformational leadership. Uddin et al. analyzed data from 160 study participants and concluded that transformational leadership positively relates to job performance but held no significance for gender.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership style aligns with transformational leadership style. Robert Greenleaf (1970) theorized servant theory as transformational in its approach but centered on the fulfillment of the leader by serving the follower. Servant leadership is similar to transformational leadership in so much as the focus is on engagement and the desire to attend to followers needs and develop them personally (Northouse, 2019). The differential is servant leaders are seeking to fulfill an internal personal requirement versus being mutually beneficial to both leader and follower (Karatepe et al., 2019). Northouse (2019) argued that the outcome is identical, but the aspect of the personal need to serve is what separates servant leadership from transformational leadership. Although motivated differently, the outcomes between transformational leadership and servant are the same. The servant leader's goal is to engage, establish trust, and work towards a common goal (Lumpkin & Achen, 2018; Northouse, 2019). In rebuttal, McCune Stein et al. (2020). posited the need for self-fulfillment might not align with organizational goals. McCune Stein et al. further suggested, like transformational leadership, servant leaders might seek to motivate individuals to support their personal goals instead of organizational. Also considered a trait vice a behavior, servant leadership is subject to the same potential situational limitations as transformational leadership.

Trait Leadership

Founded in the *great man theory* in the mid-19th century (Carlyle, 1849), some leaders believed that they possess an innate trait, such as charisma or integrity, that endears them to their followers and separates them from their peers. Trait leadership style is unique in that the style focuses solely on the leader. The premise is that the leader possesses particular traits necessary to become effective and suggests that the organization will benefit from them (Northouse, 2019; Wyatt & Silvester, 2018). History has been replete with leaders that demonstrated trait leadership solely on charisma alone. Thought to be charismatic leaders, Ronald Reagan, Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as Gandhi all changed cultures.

Trait leadership is conducive to organizational change because of it being a naturally appealing style of leadership. Individuals and groups identify with trait leaders because of alignment with their belief of the gifted nature of the leader, which engenders trust (Northouse, 2019). Trust is an essential component of organizational culture as well as change. Trust is necessary to create a culture beneficial to high-performance organizations and necessary to change existing cultures that are not meeting expectations (Muff et al., 2020). Conversely, Carasco-Saul et al. (2015) posited the trust necessary to create a positive culture might be manipulated where the concern is only with the leader and not the follower. In accord with Carasco-Saul et al., Wyatt and Silvester (2018) noted trait leadership only considers the leader, which might diminish the likelihood of individual empowerment. An additional negative aspect of this form of leadership is that it can be situationally dependent. The particular traits that a leader possesses might not be favorable for all organizations (Muff et al., 2020). The traits necessary to align individuals or groups to the company's expressed culture may not coincide with the current leadership (Prochazka et al., 2018). A particular trait could create an ethical dilemma when faced with the challenge of meeting organizational or personal goals. Leadership may not contain the capacity to evolve into an effective leadership style, and if not changed, organization culture and performance can suffer.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership differs from trait leadership in that transactional leadership does not concern the needs of the leader or the follower (Northouse, 2019). Ma and Jiang (2018) stated transformational leadership is a leader's ability to motivate team members towards a common goal and differs from transactional leadership, which involves the practice of exchanging benefits for performance. Transactional leadership is an exchange of value that rewards followers for their performance (Frangieh & Rusu, 2021). In accord with Frangieh and Rusu, Van Dijk et al. (2021) stated transactional leaders exert influence on followers based on an exchange of benefits for outstanding performance and response to defined goals. Ma and Jiang posited transactional leadership is especially effective in crisis situations, chaotic no-rules environments, or when established procedures are insufficient. Transactional leadership relates to organizational culture if a direct connection to participation in the form of some material value exists (Northouse, 2019).

Transactional leadership can engender trust through positive reward-based initiatives, but this form of reward-based system could provide leaders with a false sense of commitment and, in the absence of any substantial rewards, members could become disengaged (Delaney & Royal, 2017). Conversely, S. Choi et al. (2016) suggested empowerment can still exist but drives personal gain vice organizational success. In accord with S. Choi et al., Li et al. (2018) posited transactional leadership might only drive an employees' extrinsic motivation and overlook an employees' real needs whereas a transformational leadership method will drive an employees' intrinsic motivation and care more about their high-level needs. Puni et al. (2021). posited transactional leadership is less likely to consider situational or environmental changes in an organization because it focuses on leader-follower interactions and not external factors. Ma and Jiang (2018) suggested transactional leadership guides and pushes more efficiently by clarifying role and task requirements and linking these with rewards and punishments.

Adaptive Leadership

Change leaders use an adaptive leadership approach. Adaptive leadership differs from transformational and servant leadership, focusing on how leaders promote change

(Ali et al., 2020; Yeo, 2021). Northouse (2019) cited six primary behaviors of adaptive leadership: get off the balcony, identify adaptive challenges, regulate distress, maintain disciplined attention, give the work back to the people, and protect leadership voices from below. Schroeder (2017) posited that *getting off the balcony,* taking a step back from the problem is critical to the adaptive process. Schroeder suggested the focus should be on mobilizing and organizing the workforce to overcome challenges and, as such, it is necessary to gain perspective to understand challenges versus exploring personal needs. Karia and Abu Hassan Asaari (2019) posited that there is a desire to change personal values and align personal and organizational goals with adaptive leadership. In accord with Karia and Abu Hassan Asaari, Woolard (2018) suggested adaptive leaders not only make changes but also, analyze potential changes in the external environment and consider the best path for organization fit. Yeo further noted that adaptive leadership is process driven and not linked to traits or behaviors. Conversely, Schroeder stated that adaptive leadership, although process driven, is emergent and a mutually beneficial interaction that does not necessarily require assigned formal leadership. Whereas assigned leadership is positional, emergent leadership happens over time through the support of others that align with an individual's behavior. Because adaptive leadership is prescriptive in nature and adaptive; leaders are process driven vice behaviorally driven (Boylan, 2018; Yeo, 2021).

Leaders use adaptive leadership to provide tools for successful teams, but adaptive leadership lacks the engagement and personal connection necessary to motivate. Karia and Abu Hassan Asaari (2019) posited adaptive leadership requires buy-in to organizational culture but does not establish trust or provide for the empowerment necessary to facilitate the alignment of personal and organizational goals. Servant leadership drives the need of the leader to perform similar to adaptive leadership in that followers were encouraged to adapt in the face of challenges (Boylan, 2018; Northouse, 2019). Schroeder (2017) noted leaders communicate adaptation theory to provide the necessary tools to accept and overcome challenges but lack the social interaction common to servant and transformational leadership theory. Muluneh and Gedifew (2018) suggested organizations resist an adaptive leadership approach because adaptive leadership challenges beliefs and values, which might lead individuals to resist the ideas and changes. Conversely, Schroeder noted that with adaptive leadership, there is no direct connection by leadership to facilitate the necessary engagement to promote organizational goals. Evidence in the existing body of literature indicated that effective leaders of change initiatives must remain reflexive and adaptive.

Application to Business Practice

The purpose of this qualitative single case study is to explore strategies that business leaders in the aerospace industry use to engage employees effectively. Business leaders continue to use advances in technology, innovation, education, and the institution of best practices to drive competitive advantage and profitability. Eighty-four percent of highly engaged employees believe they have the capacity to affect the quality of their organization’s productivity in a positive manner (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). Jha et al. (2019) stated an engaged employee understands the role in the business strategy and has a strong emotional connection and commitment to the organization. In accord with Jha et al., Delaney and Royal (2017) suggested employee engagement is a critical component of human capital strategies and must be exploited when developing strategies for organizations to attract and retain their best talent. The preponderance of the evidence in the reviewed literature indicated that business leaders use a variety of leadership styles in alignment with several theories to improve employee engagement.

In 2016, the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation (2018) reported nearly 91,000 aerospace jobs in southern California and another 286,000 that provide either direct or indirect support. It is inevitable, as time passes, the baby boomer generation will continue to retire from the workforce. The passing of the baby boomer generation and the infusion of Generations X and Y into the workforce necessitates understanding existing engagement strategies and modifying them as required to address changing intrinsic and extrinsic motivators as well as ideologies that affect organizational commitment. The generational values of Generations X and Y affect their ethical ideologies and can have a distinct impact on how they conduct themselves in an organizational environment (VanMeter et al., 2013).

The ideological differences of Generation X and Y dictate the need of business leaders to tailor existing engagement strategies to address evolving generational values. Business leaders in the aerospace industry understand the need to leverage existing human capital. The purpose of this study is not to create new strategies, but to identify existing industry specific successful strategies. Business leaders’ understanding of existing engagement strategies may allow for the selection and implementation of successful strategies to promote positive engagement. An engaged workforce directly contributes to improved productivity and competitive advantage (Falola et al., 2018; Moletsane et al., 2019).

Transition

Section 1 encompassed the background of the problem, problem and purpose statements, as well as the nature of the study. In Section 1, I introduced the research question and identify the interview questions included in the interview process. Section 1 contained an explanation of the conceptual framework of engagement and operational definitions that support the study. In Section 1, I discussed the significance of the study, the contribution to business practices, and the implications for social change. Section 1 contained a review of the professional and academic literature and closed with a transition statement and a statement of expectations for Section 2. Section 2 contains the purpose statement of the study and defines both the role of the research and study participants. Section 2 contains an introduction of the research method and design and I discussed data parameters and techniques. Section 3 contains the presentation of the findings, applications for professional practice, and social implications. I conclude Section 3 with recommendations for further research based on the limitations of this study and a strong closing statement.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 contains a reaffirmation of the purpose statement and includes my role as the researcher. In Section 2, I detail the selected method and design of this study as well as the participant selection process. The information contained in Section 2 will consist of data collection instruments and techniques and provide an understanding of the organization of data collected. I address the importance of conducting an ethical study and outline the appropriate method in accordance with *The Belmont Report* to ensure the conduct of this study is above reproach. Section 2 also includes data analysis, definitions, and processes for determining dependability, credibility, and transferability. I close Section 2 with a summary of the section and a transition to Section 3.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies used by some business leaders in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry to promote employee engagement. The targeted population consisted of business leaders in a single manufacturing organization in the aerospace industry in southern California who had successfully implemented strategies to promote employee engagement. Engaged employees promote organizational citizenship behaviors that lead to improved community and societal living conditions (M. Kim & Kim, 2021). The potential for positive social change exists through a greater understanding of employee engagement strategies that improve employee professional and personal growth, leading to increased community and social initiatives such as community development, volunteerism, and job creation.

Role of the Researcher

In a qualitative research study, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Silverman, 2019). The role of the researcher is to introduce the subject to selected participants and maintain an open dialogue (Nogueira de Tommaso et al., 2021). In my role as the researcher, I acted as the primary data collection instrument, asking open-ended questions that allowed participants the opportunity to share their knowledge of engagement strategies within their organization. As the data collection instrument, I recorded all interviews, synthesizing participant responses. Follow-up meetings provided participants with the opportunity to review interview synthesis of conversations to allow for verification through member checking as well as the creation of themes for analysis. Data collection for this study involved participant interviews and the examination of secondary data in the form of company documents relative to past engagement strategies. Interview questions were prepared in advance to ensure consistency and alignment with *The Belmont Report* (Adashi et al., 2018).

The Belmont Report consists of three ethical principles to protect the rights of human subjects in research. The three principles are beneficence, justice, and respect for persons (Adashi et al., 2018). Beneficence incorporates the principle of *first do no harm* and applies to all participants. Justice describes the risks and benefits of any research findings, both bad and good, and the obligation to disseminate regardless of outcomes. Finally, respect for persons ensures the right of all participants to understand the consequences of their decision to participate and protect those who are not legally or mentally capable of making the correct decision as it pertains to them (Adashi et al., 2018). Adhering to *The Belmont Report* will require treating participants with respect and protecting their identity so they are safe from retribution or persecution based on their participation. Regardless of outcomes, honest and truthful reporting of the data aligns with the justice component of *The Belmont Report*. Respect for persons will require full disclosure to all participants, Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, and inclusion regardless of race, creed, or color.

I conducted research for this study at an aerospace manufacturing company in southern California. I reside in southern California and have worked for an aerospace manufacturing company since 2010. In my position as a manager, I am familiar with employee engagement and responsible for implementing organizational engagement strategies. I chose a different company from my employer to conduct the research to eliminate any perception of organizational bias. Researchers mitigate personal bias by avoiding insider research (Romano et al., 2021). Insider research can present conflict by being too close to the data. Insufficient distance can lead to improper assumptions during the interview process that preclude drawing out responses, as would occur when a researcher has external positioning (Romano et al., 2021). I have no known personal or professional relationship with the leaders or employees of the selected company.

Mitigating bias during data collection in this single case study will eliminate any preconceived thoughts of employee engagement and profitability. Yin (2018) stated that preconception might lead to swaying toward supporting evidence and away from evidence contrary to the study’s purpose. To maintain objectivity and mitigate the perception of bias, I avoided interpreting the data through a personal worldview and accepted all data of the study, supported or not. The use of data collection techniques from previous case studies on employee engagement further reduces the risk of researcher bias (Romano et al., 2021). To reduce personal bias, I selected study participants I have no current or previous personal or professional relationship with.

To promote continuity and further reduce researcher bias, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A). Interview protocols are tools that allow a researcher to process each participant with the same questions and guidelines (Silverman, 2019). An interview protocol may include information such as interview procedures, a script of the introduction and the conclusion, and prompts for extending the conversation (Merlo et al., 2020). Yin (2018) stated that an interview protocol establishes a researcher's method of investigation and provides continuity during the interview process for all participants. Researchers use an interview protocol as a procedural guide (Merlo et al., 2020).

Participants

Before data collection, I identified participants who could provide responses suitable for analysis. The participant is a subject of study and provides critical information or interpretation about the case (Yin, 2018). In qualitative research, a critical component is to capture the perspectives of the participants and represent their experiences in as true a form as possible (Langley & Klag, 2019). As outlined in *The Belmont Report*, beneficence involves vigorous protection of participants' confidentiality by using pseudonyms and disguise (Barton et al., 2018). The eligibility criteria for participants were (a) a business leader in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry, (b) located in southern California, and (c) who has implemented strategies to promote employee engagement. I selected a particular organization for its capacity to provide participants with knowledge of engagement strategies. I selected participants based on their ability to discuss what strategies business leaders in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry use to promote employee engagement and to discuss intimate knowledge of corporate policies and procedures, organizational profitability, and the authority to implement engagement strategies.

Initial participant contact occurred through letters, e-mails, or phone calls followed by one-on-one discussions to explain the purpose of the study and their capacity to contribute rich data. Access to potential study participants occurred through proper coordination with organization leadership and included a signed letter of cooperation (see Appendix B). A purposeful sampling of eligible participants ensured alignment with the overarching research question (Ababneh, 2021). Purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Erhard et al., 2021; Fernandes et al., 2021). Participants completed an informed consent form following established ethical research practices.

Langley and Klag (2019) stated that establishing a working relationship with study participants is crucial in qualitative research. To establish working relationships with participants, researchers must establish trust through open and honest communication about the study's intent (Vaswani, 2018; Yin, 2018). To build a working relationship, I introduced my topic to company leadership and explained participant requirements as well as potential benefits to the company. The selection process after leadership approval consisted of identifying potential candidates; establishing contact through the most effective means, letters, e-mails, or phone calls; and meeting the candidates in person. Notification of participant eligibility occurred after personal contact and the selection process. Post participant selection, one-on-one interviews were conducted to elicit data sufficient for analysis. Interviews proceeded until data saturation when no new ideas or themes occurred (Sim et al., 2018). Data saturation ensures the reliability and validity of a study (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Pratama et al., 2021). Interviewing business leaders knowledgeable about employee engagement strategies in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry to promote employee engagement perpetuated adequate data saturation. To have the greatest effect, interviewees must be able to discuss intimate knowledge of corporate policies and procedures and organizational profitability and have the authority to implement engagement strategies.

Research Method and Design

Three research methods exist: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Draper et al., 2021; Hlady-Rispal et al., 2021). I used a qualitative method to explore successful engagement strategies that manufacturing leaders in the aerospace industry in southern California use to promote engagement. Positive employee engagement leads to improved profitability (Saks & Gruman, 2014) and the goal of this qualitative case study was to explore engagement strategies that promote engagement and improve profitability.

Research Method

The method for this research study is a consequence of the business problem under study and the research question. I used the qualitative research method to explore the engagement strategies of study participants to generate the rich data necessary for analysis. Qualitative researchers seek to understand and explain phenomena through methods of inquiry that elicit qualitative, nonnumerical data (Draper et al., 2021; Lanka et al., 2021). I selected a qualitative research method to generate in-depth information that would be otherwise difficult to quantify. In a qualitative method, researchers seek to identify themes, understandings, and experiences of study participants (Roulston & Halpin, 2021). Researchers validate the use of qualitative methods to explore engagement through a review of existing research literature. Saad et al. (2018) explored engagement and profitability through a qualitative study, and Kumar and Pansari (2016) explored competitive advantage through a qualitative study. The use of the qualitative method by these researchers lends credibility to its use for this study because I was studying engagement and its contribution to profitability.

I did not use a quantitative method. Researchers conducting a quantitative study collect numerical data for analysis, which would not have been useful for exploring the engagement strategies of the participants (Zyphur & Pierides, 2020a). Researchers use quantitative methods to test hypotheses, which are not a component of qualitative research (Zyphur & Pierides, 2020b). The reductionist approach of quantitative research seeks to identify, isolate, and assess causal relationships between variables (Gaied & Zouaoui, 2020; Zyphur & Pierides, 2020a). Quantitative studies used to explore engagement exist, such as the study conducted by Ababneh (2021), but the study is related to the personality traits of engagement, not the consequences. Because of the nature of this study, a quantitative method was not appropriate.

I did not use a mixed-method approach for this study. Researchers conducting a mixed-method study combine a qualitative component and quantitative component to benefit from both an inductive and deductive worldview of the phenomenon under study (Stoecker & Avila, 2021). Researchers use the quantitative component to explore the relationship between variables; therefore, this method was not applicable to a qualitative study (Gilad, 2021). Because I am not exploring the relationship between variables, I will not conduct a mixed-method study.

Research Design

I considered four research designs: (a) phenomenology, (b) ethnography, (c) case study, and (d) narrative. I selected a single case study design to explore how or why a condition exists when a researcher has little or no control over behavioral events. Case study research consists of exploring complex issues to understand the content within a limited set of conditions (Leão & Santos, 2021; Mishra & Dey, 2021; Yin, 2018). This case study is more than just observing a phenomenon. The goal was to identify effective engagement strategies that lead to increased profitability. The purpose of this research was to study a particular phenomenon to understand the unique nuances and to understand intrinsic and extrinsic forces that hinder effective application.

Phenomenological researchers explore the lived experiences of participants (Ghafoury et al., 2020). McGaha and D’Urso (2019) stated that phenomenology allows a researcher to build analysis from the personal worldview and lived experiences of participants. A phenomenology approach to this study was not appropriate because I was not collecting data from the lived experiences of participants.

Ethnography is used by sociocultural anthropologists to observe, describe, and focus on the cultural picturing of being someone else (Murphy et al., 2021; Woermann, 2018; Yin, 2018). Researchers conducting ethnography studies collect data regarding the cultural experiences of participants (Yin, 2018). An ethnography was not appropriate because I was not conducting a comprehensive study of a particular group or culture.

Researchers use a narrative design to elicit collaborative stories from participants as data (George & Selimos, 2018). While the use of narrative design would reveal sequences and storylines to the phenomenon under study, a narrative design would not have provided the rich data necessary to explore the specific strategies that affect engagement and profitability (Moletsane et al., 2019). Therefore, a narrative approach was not appropriate for this study.

The sample size should be such that the data represent the population of those experiencing the phenomenon under study (Crick, 2021; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Fusch and Ness (2015) stated that the number of interviews necessary to reach saturation is difficult to quantify. Sim et al. (2018) suggested that, unlike a grounded theory study that may require 20-30 interviews to reach saturation, a case study might only require three-six interviews using open-ended questions. Achieving data saturation occurs when no new data, themes, or coding exist and in the ability to replicate the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). A sampling of five participants within the representative population provided the rich and thick data for this study.

Population and Sampling

The targeted population consisted of business leaders in a single manufacturing organization within the aerospace industry in southern California because they had successfully implemented strategies to promote employee engagement. Purposeful sampling requires access to key participants within the field of study that will provide data relevant to the study (Ababneh, 2021). A purposeful nonprobabilistic sampling (nonrandom sampling) of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest provided data sufficient for analysis (Ababneh, 2021; Fernandes et al., 2021). Researchers determine sample size by research design by selecting a number that will provide rich and thick enough data to understand the phenomenon under study (Ababneh, 2021; Crick, 2021). Simmons (2018) conducted a qualitative case study using three participants from a single organization to explore engagement strategies. Moss (2021) required three participants to reach saturation in a single case study exploring strategies to increase employee engagement. Reed (2019) reached data saturation in a single case study with three participants from a single organization. Because my study is similar to the research conducted by Simmons, Moss, and Reed, three participants were an appropriate sample size.

The manufacturing leaders selected for the study were administered open-ended questions with the purpose of eliciting responses that provided rich data sufficient for analysis (Sim et al., 2018). The interviews took place in an off-site dining facility convenient to the participants, and that had a separate area suitable for conducting private interviews.

Data saturation occurs when no new themes manifest with the introduction of additional participants or supporting data (Houghton et al., 2013). Researchers attain data saturation through collecting rich (quality) and thick (quantity) data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Sample size to reach saturation is dependent upon the research design. Fusch and Ness stated that because there is no universal design for research studies, there is no *one-size-fits-all* sample size for the qualitative method. A key component of the sample is ensuring the participants possess the necessary knowledge to provide rich and thick data of the phenomenon under study (Sim et al., 2018).

Ethical Research

The use of informed consent provided study participants protection from exposure to unethical research practices (Nairn et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). Informed consent is the process through which a researcher will provide participants the necessary information to ensure that participants have a full understanding of the intent of the study and to ensure participants take part in the study voluntarily (Nairn et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). Participants provided informed consent prior to participating in the study. I e-mailed participants a copy of the informed consent form 5 days before the scheduled interviews. The participants provided informed consent by replying *I consent* to the e-mail, signing, scanning, returning the informed consent form, or signed the informed consent form in person just before the start of the interview.

The formatted informed consent form includes a definition of the nature and purpose of the study. Participants did not receive compensation for participation in the study. Study participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time, before, during, or after interviews without fear of reprisal or compromise of confidentiality. Participants had the option withdraw from the study, regardless of the reason, and were not required to explain. In-person notification was the preferred method for withdrawal and I annotated the preferred method on informed consent form. Other acceptable means of notification were via telephone, e-mail, or letter. All withdrawals are annotated on the individual informed consent, indicated method. Participant involvement in the study was strictly voluntary and confidential. There were no participant withdrawals from the study.

I conducted the research ethically by respecting the guiding principles of *The Belmont Report* beneficence, justice, and respect for persons. *The Belmont Report* has its genesis from the atrocities conducted in World War II and unethical research conducted in the Tuskegee Study (Adashi et al., 2018). I obtained approval from Walden University IRB before beginning my study. The Walden University IRB approval number for this study is 06-20-19-0381203. To assist me in conducting an ethical study, I completed the National Institute of Health's web-based training course on protecting human participants. I protected research data through existing best practices suggested by Moss (2021). Best practices consisted of obtaining informed consent, collecting only information needed for the study; using the data only for its intended purposes, retaining the information for the minimum amount of time necessary by law, and keeping the information secure. I keep electronic information on a separate password-protected flash drive. Data is kept secure in a fireproof safe located in my home for the required 5 years and destroyed as soon as deemed appropriate. To ensure participant confidentiality, I coded each participant with a unique identifier (e.g., P1, P2, P3, etc.). Coding allows for participant confidentiality precluding the use of names, organizations or other identifiers to protect the participant's identity (Audette et al., 2020). An important distinction between confidentiality and anonymity is that confidentiality may preclude the use of information disclosed during interviews whereas confidentiality allows for full disclosure while still protecting the participants from identification (Audette et al., 2020).

Data Collection Instruments

As the researcher, I am the primary data collection instrument. I used open-ended interview questions to elicit sufficient data for analysis. Researchers use responses to interview questions to capture participants' perception of their worldview of the phenomenon under study (Kyzym & Doronina, 2019; Yin, 2018). I used open-source data from the company website consisting of past company engagement strategies and data from interview questions to engage in methodological triangulation. Secondary data such as archival records and focus groups are used by researchers in qualitative studies to enhance validity and corroborate data from other sources (Abdalla et al., 2018; Bolander et al., 2021; Yin, 2018). I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) for each interview to ensure consistency during the interview process.

Execution of the interview process began with the selection of study participants. I initially solicited participants from the organization's leaders and subsequently used snowball sampling to obtain additional participants for this study. I obtained informed consent from the participants prior to beginning the interviews. During the process, I reminded study participants of the intent of the study. I offered the opportunity to ask questions about the process and any questions they may have had concerning the consent form and confidentiality. Interviews commenced once the participants provided informed consent and I had adequately addressed all questions.

The use of an interview protocol ensures dependability and credibility through the consistency and repeatability of the questions presented to the participants (Merlo et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). I conducted member checking to ensure I had correctly captured the participants' insight and knowledge of the phenomenon under study. The purpose of member checking within a qualitative study is to ensure reliability and validity (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). The fundamental difference between member checking and transcript review is that in transcript review, the researcher provides a verbatim transcription of the interview for the interviewee to verify that the researcher accurately transcribed the audio recording of the interview (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). In the case of member checking, the interviewer creates a synthesis of the concepts discussed and provides a copy to the interviewee to ensure that the researcher has captured the interviewee's concepts and intent (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Member checking enhances credibility by demonstrating that the researcher is addressing the findings from the perspective of the participants (Yin, 2018). I used member checking to allow the participants the opportunity to validate my interpretation of their responses to the interview questions. Detailed notes taken during all interviews captured nonverbal clues, communication, and aided in the synthesis of responses. I attached notes segregated by participant to each transcription. I maintained documentation in a binder and stored in a fireproof safe located in my home office with access restricted to only myself. I used an iPhone 7 as the primary recording device to record digital audio during interviews to capture participant responses and ensure the accuracy of notes taken during the interview. A secondary iPhone was the backup recording device in case the primary recording device failed to operate.

Data Collection Technique

In qualitative research, the design determines the data collection technique that will most likely generate the data necessary to answer the research question (Crick, 2021; Yin, 2018). I conducted face-to-face interviews using open-ended questions supported by an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to collect data for analysis. I took copious amounts of notes during each interview to identify key themes and concepts as well as cataloging personal observations of each participant to capture nonverbal clues of the participant's responses. I reviewed open-source engagement information from the company's website as secondary data to corroborate data received from study participants. To facilitate a successful interaction with the company I have selected, I met with company leadership to obtain permission to interview their employees. After gaining access to potential participants, I contacted each participant to verify suitability for the study, set up an interview defining location and duration, and obtained informed consent. Before beginning each interview, I ensured that I had a copy of the interview protocol and reviewed the questions to ensure everything was in order. I verified that both primary and secondary recording devices were fully charged and functioning correctly prior to conducting each interview.

I did not conduct a pilot study for this single case study. Researchers use pilot studies to evaluate data analysis for possible problems and to determine what resources will be needed (Bansal et al., 2020; Frączek et al., 2021). Conducting a pilot study provides the opportunity to train the researcher prior to the initiation of a larger study as well as obtain preliminary psychometric data about a newly developed instrument (Spodarczyk, 2019). The size and scope of this geographically limited study precluded the need for a pilot study.

The advantage of using semistructured interviews in a single case study is to provide the researcher with the opportunity to exploit the participant’s worldview of the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2018). The use of interviews allows researchers to follow a line of open-ended questions to gain information about a topic and further explore responses or findings (Benoot et al., 2016; Crick, 2021; Simmons, 2018). Researchers use face-to-face interviews to observe important nonverbal cues otherwise missed if conducted by survey or over other devices such as a telephone. Posture and gestures convey additional clues of the participant’s worldview (Wang & Ruiz, 2021). A disadvantage of using interviews is that they are susceptible to bias because of the interviewer’s subconscious desire to obtain favorable outcomes (Cairns-Lee et al., 2021). An additional disadvantage is the acquiescence effect which suggests respondents tend to agree with questions posed. (Cairns-Lee et al., 2021). The time-consuming disadvantage can be mitigated using transcription software such as Otter.ai transcription software. I used Otter.ai transcription for my study.

I used member checking to ensure I had accurately captured the participants’ intent in response to the open-ended interview questions. Naidu and Prose (2018) stated that the member checking process consists of conducting interviews and subsequently verifying with study participants that the interviewer's synthesis aligns with the interviewee's intent. Cope (2014) noted that during transcript review, the participant validates that the researcher accurately transcribed the interview. I preferred to use member checking instead of transcript review because I was interested to know if I accurately interpreted participants' responses as opposed to knowing if I accurately transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews.

Data Organization

To ensure participant confidentiality, I coded each participant with a unique identifier (e.g., P1, P2, P3, etc.). Coding allows for participant confidentiality precluding the use of names, organizations, or other identifiers to protect the participant's identity (Audette et al., 2020). The use of computer computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software for coding purposes can increase the rigor, transparency, and validity of qualitative research (Bergeron & Gaboury, 2020). I transcribed each interview into a Microsoft Word document maintained on a password protected flash drive. I used dedicated research logs for each participant to preclude cross contaminating data from each participant. I used a research log to segregate into sections identifying personal reflection of the interview, emerging themes, as well as corrections and additional information garnered through member checking. I transferred audio files from primary and secondary audio recording devices and maintained on a separate password protected flash drive. I maintained all documents and data created during interviews, including personal notes and interview transcriptions, in a fireproof safe in my home office, where I alone have access. I will destroy all paper copies and audio files 5 years after the study's completion.

Data Analysis

The use of interview data and secondary archival company documentation supported the use of methodological triangulation to install academic rigor and ensure trustworthiness and credibility for this research study. Researchers use methodological triangulation to enhance confirmability and strengthen the outcome of the study by comparing more than one source of data (Abdalla et al., 2018). I used methodological triangulation to compare face-to-face interviews and data retrieved from the company website. I used thematic analysis to examine and pinpoint recorded themes within the data sets. Qualitative researchers use thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Ben-Hador et al., 2020; Lehmann et al., 2019). Researchers code, label, and manipulate words in qualitative studies as data (Locke et al., 2020). To analyze the data for this study, I used Yin's (2018) five-step approach. Yin's analysis process consists of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpretation of meaning, and concluding the data. Following the compilation, I imported all data into NVivo 12 to be disassembled, reassembled, and interpreted. I based my conclusion on correlating data interpreted with NVivo 12, existing literature, and Kahn's (1990) personal engagement theory, the conceptual framework for this study.

Compiling Data

Compiling data consists of gathering data from all study sources into a central database for processing (Leitão, 2021; Yin, 2018). I executed the first step by collecting and organizing data from semistructured interviews and relevant archival company documents into a database. I transcribed participant interviews using Otter.ai transcription software. I organized data from the transcripts and archival company records into a database. A comparison of interview data and data from the company website allowed me to identify common themes and identify implemented engagement strategies.

Disassembling Data

The second step of Yin's (2018) five-step approach is the disassembly of data. Disassembly involves dividing the compiled data into fragments and labels (Leitão, 2021; Yin, 2018). Yin stated that researchers assign labels to meaningful units of a transcript and apply or assign these labels to all transcripts. I disassembled data from both transcripts and the company website into fragments and labels according to each participant in preparation for reassembly and analysis. I used NVivo 12 to aid in the coding and labeling of data.

Reassembling Data

Reassembly of data involves grouping the fragments and labels previously disassembled into groups for comparison across participants (Leitão, 2021; Yin, 2018). Prabowo (2020) stated that CAQDAS could aid in the reassembly of data for interpretation. To reassemble the data, I used NVivo 12 to group labels and fragments and further identified themes in preparation for interpretation.

Interpreting Data

Boldosova and Luoto (2020) stated interpretation of data is essential for data-driven decision making. Baghestani Tajali et al. (2021) stated that mind mapping techniques help the user specify the complexities of an issue and draw connections between concepts and themes. Reichertz (2021) suggested interpretation is not just the recognition of a social meaning but a communicative construction, which relates to the examined individuals. To interpret the data, I used concept and mind mapping. I sorted all concepts and themes on separate pieces of paper for a physical representation of the data. This allowed me to visualize the data and see connections between concepts and themes. I supported this process using the NVivo 12 software.

Software Plan

Researchers use CAQDAS to code, map, and identify themes in qualitative studies (O'Kane et al., 2021). Dalkin et al. (2021) stated that most qualitative studies do not contain a definition as to why the researcher chose a particular CAQDAS and that most go only as far as to mention the what and not the why. Wilk et al. (2019) conducted a comparative analysis of Leximancer and NVivo and concluded that the only difference is interface and nomenclature neither of which would be the basis for selection. I used NVivo 12 to manipulate the data by developing nodes and codes and identifying reoccurring themes. Researchers use NVivo software for the proven validity and the necessary coding of data. The included function of organizing audio files was beneficial to my study, as I recorded all participant interviews. The inclusion of audio files into NVivo allowed for the transcription of the audio files into text files. This aided with the member checking process of the data collection. Accurate transcription provided for greater fidelity and minimal corrections with respect to the credibility of the member checking.

Key Themes

Kahn's (1990) personal engagement theory in the conceptual framework for this study. Through the lens of engagement theory, I researched, developed key themes, and demonstrated how this study's themes relate to recent studies on engagement. Researchers create themes by grouping labels together (Porte et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). Recognizing word frequency from participant responses aided in identifying themes. Fusch and Ness (2015) stated that one generally accepted principle of qualitative research is that achieving data saturation occurs when no new themes exist. I used NVivo 12 software to aid in the identification and creation of themes. A comparison of themes generated by this study may confirm the findings of previous engagement studies.

Reliability and Validity

In qualitative research, I sought the characteristics of dependability, credibility, and confirmability. In qualitative research, reliability refers to how the researcher will ensure dependability (Cope, 2014). Dependability denotes the consistency of data over a similar set of conditions (Cope, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013). In a qualitative study, researchers seek confirmability and transferability by demonstrating adherence to established research methods and designs (Langtree et al., 2019).

Dependability

Houghton et al. (2013) stated that dependability compares to the concept of reliability in quantitative research and refers to the stability of the data. Cope (2014) suggested that a study is dependable if the findings replicate findings with similar participants in similar conditions. Researchers determine dependability by examining the decisions made throughout the research process and examine the end product of the study (Houghton et al., 2013). Qualitative researchers enhance study dependability using member checking and transcript review for interview data and use interview protocols to ensure the repeatability of data (Langtree et al., 2019). To demonstrate dependability, I used an interview protocol to ensure repeatability of the data, and I used member checking to capture the participant’s concepts and intents. In the cases where participants were not available for follow up member checking, I used transcript review to ensure I captured the participant’s interview verbatim. McGinley et al. (2021) stated the goal of dependability is to safeguard the accuracy and interpretations of the data. I elected to adhere to their suggestion.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research refers to the integrity of the data from all sources and the researcher’s truthful representation of the same (Langtree et al., 2019). The study must have value and be believable to have credibility (Houghton et al., 2013). Houghton et al. (2013) suggested that prolonged engagement and persistent observation could enhance credibility when researchers spend sufficient time within case-study sites to gain a full understanding of the investigated phenomena. Cope (2014) stated that researchers improve credibility by describing their research experiences and verifying the research findings with the participants. Member checking is the concept of comparing the researcher’s synthesis of the data with the participant’s intent (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Member checking enhances credibility by validating what the researcher captured (Naidu & Prose, 2018). To enhance credibility, researchers use methodological triangulation to strengthen the outcome of the study by comparing more than one source of data (Abdalla et al., 2018). To enhance the credibility of this study, I used an interview protocol for the repeatability of data supported by member checking to ensure that I captured the participants' intent. I used secondary data from the company's website and data from interview questions to use methodological triangulation.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the researcher's data represents the participant's responses (Cope, 2014). Researchers demonstrate confirmability by describing how conclusions and interpretations were established and illustrating that the findings were resultant directly from the data (Houghton et al., 2013). Similar to dependability, member checking and methodological triangulation enhance confirmability by demonstrating how conclusions and interpretations are established (Langtree et al., 2019). I enhanced the confirmability of this study by using methodological triangulation and member checking to demonstrate that the findings came directly from the data.

Transferability

The transferability of a study is determined not by the author but by those seeking to benefit or learn from the study or make application of the findings in other contexts or settings (Langtree et al., 2019; McGinley et al., 2021). Researchers improve the transferability of a study by providing thick descriptions, which include accounts of the context and examples of raw data so that readers can consider their interpretations (Houghton et al., 2013). I aided in the transferability of this study by meticulously adhering to establish data collection and analysis techniques for qualitative research and design, reaching data saturation through the proper use of an interview protocol, and adequately describing the original context of the researcher.

Data Saturation

To reach data saturation in a qualitative single case study, the sample size should be such that it represents the population of those experiencing the phenomenon under study (Blaikie, 2018; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Researchers determine sample size by research design by selecting a number that will provide rich and thick enough data to understand the phenomenon under study (Benoot et al., 2016; Crick, 2021). Achieving data saturation occurs when no new data, themes, or coding exists and the ability to replicate the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To reach data saturation, I conducted interviews until no new data, themes, or coding existed. I used an interview protocol to ensure consistency and member checking to capture the participant's intent.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 began with a restatement of the purpose of the study and identified my role as the researcher. In Section 2, I addressed ethical study execution as well as mitigating researcher bias. I also identified the research method, design, and participant selection criteria. Additionally, I identified population and sampling, data collection instruments, techniques, analysis, and reliability and validity. In Section 3, I discuss the presentation of the findings, application for professional practice, and implications for social change. Further, I provided a summation of the purpose of the study and listed a presentation of the findings. I also identify applications for professional practice and provide recommendations for future research. I culminate Section 3 with the identification of limitations to this study and provide personal reflections and the study conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies used by some business leaders in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry to promote employee engagement. The targeted population consisted of manufacturing leaders in a single aerospace company who have successfully implemented engagement strategies. I collected data from four manufacturing leaders located in southern California by conducting semistructured, face-to-face interviews supported by an interview protocol. I conducted methodological triangulation using company engagement information available on the company's public website and data from participant interviews. I explored employee engagement through the lens of Kahn's (1990) personal engagement theory. Manufacturing leaders' responses aligned with Kahn's discussion of moments of engagement (or disengagement) as responses to intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Participants used both internal and external motivation as strategies to promote engagement and facilitate increased productivity.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question that guided this qualitative single case study was: What strategies do some business leaders in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry use to promote employee engagement? To answer this question, I sought participation from manufacturing leaders from a single company in the aerospace industry in southern California . I conducted semistructured interviews with three individuals who consented to be interviewed and had their interviews recorded. Solicitation of participation was challenging due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Potential participants expressed reluctance to participate even when presented with the option of conducting interviews over the phone. I accomplished data saturation with three participants. All three participants provided similar responses to the interview questions. The participants responded to nine interview questions as well as probing questions used to expand on their initial answers. I used an interview protocol to ensure continuity of the questions asked of all participants. Each interview was recorded and downloaded onto a secure media device. Once downloaded, I transcribed all interviews. Each participant was contacted to validate my interpretation of their responses during member checking. I used member checking for two of the three participant responses to ensure the validity of their content. One participant declined to participate in the member-checking component of the data collection. I used transcript review in place of member checking for P1. P1 reviewed the transcription of the interview and stated it accurately captured the interview.

My solicitation of company documents relevant to employee engagement strategies was denied. To complete methodological triangulation, I used open-source information collected from the company’s public website. Information garnered from the company website included foundational concepts for company engagement and explanations of strategies fostered through company global diversity and inclusion. I reached data saturation as no new themes, patterns, or information was elicited after a thorough review of company engagement strategies and the completion of three participant interviews. Once data saturation was achieved, following the compilation, I imported all data into NVivo 12 to be disassembled, reassembled, and interpreted.

To analyze the data, I used Yin’s (2018) five-step approach: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting the meaning of data, and (e) concluding the data analysis. Post reassembly of the data, I identified four key themes common among all the participants. Code names of P1, P2, and P3 were applied to study participants to protect their identity. The quantity of responses were grouped by themes and are reflected in Table 1. The themes were (a) leadership competency, (b) intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, (c) effective communication, and (d) personal empowerment. Effective communication reflected the highest number of responses and motivation had the lowest number responses. Some interview questions elicited responses captured within multiple themes.

Table 1

Themes: Employee Engagement Improvement Strategies

Strategy	Number of participant responses
Leadership competency	10
Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation	5
Effective communication	12
Personal empowerment	6

Theme 1: Leadership Competency

Northouse (2019) defined leadership as a process of influence by an individual over another individual or group. Rabiul and Yean (2021) further defined leadership as a process of influencing and facilitating followers toward a common goal. All participants communicated in some form that leadership or lack of leadership competency were fundamental to their engagement successes and failures. Interview Question 1 explored the cause of employee disengagement. Muddle (2020) stated that regardless of leadership style, a positive relationship exists between leadership and engagement. P1 stated, “Trust in leadership is essential to keeping a workforce engaged.” When there is a lack of trust, employees tend to disengage and distance themselves from leadership.” P2 stated,

> A lack of leadership is one of the causes of disengagement. If you do not have a good relationship with your employees and you don’t really listen to them, it’ll definitely make them become disengaged. They will feel like that you don’t really care or want to help them and help them advance in their career.

P1 stated, “Leadership didn’t take the time to learn their employee skill sets. So those employees felt that they were being underutilized.” Ancarani et al. (2021) determined that support from leadership through understanding workers’ problems and needs, providing feedback, and recognition of job accomplishments are significant antecedents of work engagement. Participants were asked what strategy they found most effective in promoting employee engagement. P3 stated, “You need to not treat everybody else how you want to be treated; you got to treat them how they want to be treated.”

In varying responses, participants suggested that the intellectual component of engagement, as Kahn (1990) discussed, was integral to promoting positive engagement outcomes. P3 stated,

> I want to just test them to see if they’re, you know, on the exact right path than I am to see if they’re aligning their lenses with mine, and I guess intellectually just

> making sure yeah, I guess kind of putting them in a power position to see if we're on the same page.

Monje Amor et al. (2020) suggested intellectual stimulation and individual consideration may stimulate high levels of work engagement and enhance internal motivation. P1 stated,

> Intellectual conversations help people come to terms with certain things, which at the end of the day, drive some of the other things and makes them feel like they're part of something bigger than just what they have going on.

P2 cited feedback as an intellectual component of positive engagement. P2 stated, "You want to give away the positive feedback. And then at the same time, I give them negative feedback, but I also give them ways to do that better." Participants' responses aligned with engagement policies promoted on the company website that stated they "listen to our employees, watch market trends and provide ample training opportunities to prepare our workforce for success."

Theme 2: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

The second theme generated from data analysis was intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Riyanto et al. (2021) stated motivation is an impulse that manifests consciously or unconsciously to demand action toward a specific goal. Motivation can be either intrinsic or extrinsic. Participants stated in varying verbiage that luncheons and other food events are used as forms of physical extrinsic motivation. Additionally, each participant stated that extrinsic motivation was an antecedent to improved individual performance. Monetary rewards such as raises or bonuses incentivize individuals toward greater individual and organizational commitment (Kuvaas et al., 2017). P1 stated,

> The only way that they feel like they're being appreciated is if there's something monetary, whether it be food, whether it be raises, whether it be gift cards. Doughnuts, breakfast, getting them lunch, bringing in pizzas, say 'hey, you guys did a great job this week'—those sorts of things really drive engagement.

P3 stated, "So like, free food is a big one. I usually buy a pizza, you know, and stuff like that. I'll buy doughnuts. If we have a flight in the morning." P2 stated they use a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. P2 stated,

> I've thrown large barbecues to congratulate everybody on doing our job well done or it might be one or two guys that do a really good job with the whole team gets rewarded for it. And then we go put those two guys on a pedestal, with everybody letting them know what they did, how they beat it, and all this, and then everybody gets the reward for it.

P1 stated, "I've worked with the test pilot's organization to get them up in chasing aircraft with some of the test pilots during operations, which has seemed to really drive home the importance of what we do." Similarly, Bibi and Afsar (2018) stated that leaders who provide employees with more significant work-related information consistently reciprocate through higher engagement. P1's statement aligns with Kahn's (1990) seminal work that when individuals become physically involved in tasks, they become emotionally connected in the service of their tasks.

Delaney and Royal (2017) suggested that investments in motivation maximize utility and motivate employees to do more than is required. However, workers from different generational cohorts experience engagement and motivation differently (del Valle Lago et al., 2021). Thalgaspitiya (2021) noted it is necessary to understand that generational cohorts have created their own distinctive values, characteristics, and skills and to understand the motivational differences between generations as one generation retires and another becomes the dominant generation within the workforce. A review of the company website revealed literature that aligns with the need to understand changes in societal needs and adjust company policy to maximize investments in diversity and inclusion of generational idiosyncrasies.

Theme 3: Effective Communication

The third theme generated from data analysis was effective communication. Eldridge (2020) stated that to communicate effectively, leaders must guide communication by considering an individual's perception of the world. Each participant stated that communication was critical to engagement strategies. P1 stated, "Being able to connect with them on an intellectual level, it could just be casual conversation, it could be a technical conversation, really helps when they may be in a conundrum with a task that they're doing." P1 also stated,

> Some of those intellectual conversations help people come to terms with certain things, which at the end of the day, drive some of the other things and makes them feel like they're part of something bigger than just what they have going on. Like it's not just about us down here you know, it's about the company actually.

P3 stated that it is important to make an intellectual connection to promote engagement by explaining how the individual's goal relates to the organization's success. P3 also stated,

> Moving the product down the production line and getting it out to the customer is important, and then once you revisit that with the techs, it's not just about us down here; it's the bigger picture I think that then it helps them relate to how they contribute to the overall goal.

Galanaki et al. (2020) stated communicating the pride of the group or collective over the individual leads to greater organizational commitment and greater employee engagement and is to be encouraged among the members of the collective.

In response to asking what emotional strategy participants use to promote employee engagement, all three participants responded using similar words that emphasized the need to make an emotional connection to their employees to promote positive engagement outcomes. P2 stated,

> You definitely want to have a one on one with everybody. When you every morning, you obviously have your crew meeting, you talk to everybody at that same time, though, it's good to go around the work before and talk to everybody one on one. I try to do it every day.

P1 stated that it is important to make a personal connection for positive engagement. P1 further stated,

> Engagement is also kind of coupled, as well with their personal lives. The more you as a leader get to know them, and the names of their kids and their wife and

> the things that they're into outside of work, it really helps you connect to where, you know, it can be just as simple as in passing, hey, how's the wife and kids doing?

P3 stated,

> It is sometimes necessary to understand the underlying issue with the employee and a lot of times when you separate them from the actual issue, and you just start asking them what's going on in their day, you kind of find out that they got something going on.

Abu-Shamaa et al. (2015) stated that greater emotional connection by leaders to their employees leads to greater intrinsic motivation and improved organizational commitment. The company website supports the philosophy of improved organizational commitment through diversity and inclusion initiatives.

In response to what causes employees to become disengaged, P2 stated, "Some employees get really disengaged if you have, say, a leadership guy walk through and never says nothing to nobody … they kind of frown on that." P2 further stated, "Employees that, you know, they just want to be heard and want the right tools to do their jobs." P1 stated, "A failure of managers to know their employees has a direct impact on engagement and a lack of purpose causes employees to become disengaged." P3 furthered P1's observation by stating:

> If we have those periods of sitting around for weeks at a time, I would say employees get a little complacent. And then sometimes they just get used to not

> doing too much. That way, when we get work again, then … it takes them a while to get going, you know, to get the wheels turning again.

When asked why employees become reengaged, participants provided varying responses but stated communicating existing strategies and setting expectations had the greatest impact on employee reengagement. In response to what strategies they find least effective to promote employee engagement, none of the participants identified any particular strategy as the least effective.

Theme 4: Personal Empowerment

The final theme generated from data analysis was personal empowerment. Zheng and Tian (2019) stated that giving decision-making power to those who usually do not have it empowers employees to make decisions that contribute significantly to employee engagement and organizational performance. Sandhya and Sulphey (2021) posited that empowerment facilitates employees to accomplish individual and company objectives. P1 and P3 identified empowerment as significant for employee engagement. Both participants made multiple references to empowerment which drove empowerment's inclusion as a theme. In response to Interview Question 1 about causes of employees becoming disengaged, P1 stated, "A lack of empowerment tends to disengage employees and they and distance themselves from leadership." P3 suggested that allowing employees to provide solutions to manufacturing problems stimulates innovation and personal ownership:

> I'll ask their feedback on you know what, ways about going about it because a lot of times it's not just you know step one, step two, step three; we have multiple different routes where we can work certain items.

Golubickis et al. (2018) stated that a substantial body of evidence exists that suggests that task ownership exerts influence on judgment and decision making. P1 and P3 suggested that improved productivity and increased personal ownership of task both demonstrate improved engagement, which aligns with Golubickis et al. P2 suggested that in addition to improved performance, positive or negative feedback from employees is a direct indication of whether implemented engagement strategies are effective. In response to the interview question regarding what participants would like to add about strategies to promote employee engagement that I had not asked, none of the participants provided any additional content.

Applications to Professional Practice

Leaders use multiple strategies to improve employee engagement. In this study, I explored strategies used by manufacturing leaders in the aerospace industry in southern California to improve employee engagement. This qualitative single case study results may provide an increased understanding of manufacturing leaders' effective strategies to improve employee engagement and productivity. The results and recommendations could provide opportunities to improve employee engagement, thereby improving productivity and competitive advantage. This study's engagement strategies discussed by manufacturing leaders provide proven strategies for improved communication, motivation, empowerment, and overall employee engagement. Employee disengagement has negative impacts on employee morale and can be detrimental to organizational performance (McCrae, 2020). To improve employee engagement, manufacturing leaders must consider what motivates each individually and apply strategies accordingly.

Results of this study indicate it is necessary to consider both individual and organizational strategies when implementing engagement methods. Participants noted the importance of empowerment and its relationship to individual motivation and recognized the importance of communication from leaders at all levels. Participants also discussed the role their leadership strategies play into understanding the individuals' specific needs and the significance of communicating empathy to the individual. Their responses aligned with Bergstedt (2020) who found leaders must be visible and accessible to properly communicate and motivate their employees.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change are an improved sense of personal well-being and pride towards the completion of task. Maslow (1943) stated self-actualization, or the achievement of one's full potential, is vital to an individual's well-being. Winston (2018) suggested that motivation plays a significant role in an individual's conceptualization of a good life. A greater sense of personal well-being and the prospects of what an individual perceives as a good life can directly improve employee professional and personal growth, leading to increased community and social initiatives such as community development, volunteerism, and job creation (Ge, 2020).

In summary, successful engagement strategies could lead to improved organizational productivity providing greater prosperity and opportunities for expansion and growth. Expansion and growth opportunities could directly lead to hiring from the local communities increasing local revenue, which could be used for social programs that give back to the community. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the mental health of individuals is more important than ever and should be considered by manufacturing leaders when implementing engagement strategies. Kotera et al. (2020) stated that a relationship exists between positive employee engagement and positive mental health. The synergy of positive engagement strategies can manifest itself in improved professional and personal relationships leading to overall improved mental health.

Recommendations for Action

The results of this study should be considered when exploring strategies to engage employees in the aerospace industry manufacturing environment. Caniëls et al. (2018) noted a distinct link between positive employee engagement and increased productivity. The four themes derived from this study provide opportunities for improved employee engagement. The first recommendation is that leaders be visible and accessible. Leaders must act with integrity and establish trust with their employees. Employees who do not trust their leaders will lack organizational commitment, manifesting as disengagement (Cai et al., 2018). The second recommendation is that leaders create personal relationships to understand better what motivates their employees. Not all employees are motivated for the same reason. Generational differences also contribute to different motivational factors toward job satisfaction. Delaney and Royal (2017) noted that investments in motivation inspire employees to do more than is required. The third recommendation is for leaders to openly communicate with their employees. Open communication helps the employees understand how their contribution relates to the overall organization's success. Open communication helps diminish uncertainty and perpetuates trust. Swaab et al. (2021) posited open communication engenders trust so that individuals are more likely to engage in strategies that benefit the organization over self. The fourth recommendation is to empower employees to be part of the day-to-day decision-making when appropriate. Allowing employees to participate in the decision-making process empowers them to have greater control and perpetuates greater organizational commitment (Ramdas & Patrick, 2018).

The four recommendations align with the four themes: leadership, motivation, communication, and empowerment identified in this study. Manufacturing leaders are the critical link to implementing engagement strategies that lead to positive engagement outcomes. Improved employee engagement manifests as greater productivity and competitive advantage and improves organizational commitment and personal growth. I will present the findings of this study to the manufacturing organization that provided the participants for the study and other aerospace manufacturing organizations within the geographic location selected for the study. The information contained within this study may be used by the participants to supplement current strategies and create synergy towards improved employee engagement.

Recommendations for Further Research

The results of this study align with studies conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic. The manifestation of the COVID-19 pandemic created unexpected and unforeseen consequences for the collection of data. Potential study participants were reticent to participate due to concerns about personal safety and well-being. The ability to conduct telephone interviews provided the opportunity to conduct interviews safely in lieu of in-person interviews. However, I was able to find participants that were willing to conduct in-person interviews. I recommend future studies be conducted to address the potential loss of nonverbal communication once the ability to conduct face-to-face interviews is fully restored. I further recommend future researchers explore the impact of COVID-19 on the motivation of employees in the aerospace industry and what new strategies manufacturing leaders found necessary to overcome the social and economic ambiguities.

I recommend that future researchers consider the inclusion of the aerospace industry workforce to determine if the strategies employed by manufacturing leaders align with that which the workforce would consider to be effective engagement strategies. Future researchers should consider a geographic region other than southern California to determine if a different demographic base will alter the study's outcome. Future researchers could use a quantitative research study to examine the relationships between employee engagement, individual employee performance, and organizational commitment.

Reflections

My initial goal for completing my doctorate was to fulfill a dream that belonged to my parents. My mother had always dreamed of being able to one day say, "my son the doctor." I have a bachelor's degree in aeronautics as well as a master's degree in business. Walden University presented me with an opportunity to obtain a doctorate in business and fulfill my parents' dream. I stand here today at the precipice of one goal but unable to fulfill the other. This journey has been filled with much joy as well as infinite sorrow. The journey has been highly challenging and very rewarding. Along the way, I had tremendous support from the faculty and staff at Walden University. My parents, as well as my wife and children, had been constant advocates of my success. Unfortunately, my parents both passed away before I had the opportunity to complete my degree.

I began this journey with no concept of what it would take to complete. The journey has changed me in ways I did not expect. I would never have considered myself an analytical person, but this doctoral journey has changed how I view the world. I would even go so far as to say it has affected the way I view intellectual content and emotional content. I became a more critical thinker, constantly questioning the data behind the content. My skills as a writer and a researcher improved exponentially. I became more focused and a better scholar. My academic journey allowed me to realize and understand some of the biases I would have otherwise been unaware. Because of my journey at Walden, I became a better manager and, more importantly, I believe a better leader.

Conclusion

The findings from this study add to the existing body of literature on employee engagement. All participants used similar strategies to pursue improved engagement based on the study's findings. Four themes emerged from the data elicited from the participants. The key themes included leadership competency, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, effective communication, and personal empowerment. Leadership competency is a standalone strategy available to leaders for implementation to improve employee engagement. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, effective communication, and personal empowerment strategies require competent leaders for effective implementation. Using the data collected, I found that leaders use communication to motivate and communicate with the employees to generate positive outcomes. The extent to which leadership is used is causal to making it a standalone theme. To create a synergy of positive engagement outcomes, consideration should be taken for using leadership concurrently with the other themes.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Questions

The interview protocol establishes the researcher's method of investigation and provides continuity during the interview process for all participants.

Protocol

1. Introduction and opening statement.

2. Semi structured open-ended interview questioning.

3. Probing questions.

4. Verification and correction by Participant of themes noted during the interview.

5. Recording of notations written during interview.

6. Follow up member checking interview.

Questions

1. What do you think causes employees to become disengaged?
2. How do you think reengagement occurs?
3. What physical engagement strategy did you use to promote employee engagement?
4. What intellectual engagement strategy did you use to promote employee engagement?
5. What emotional engagement strategy did you use to promote employee engagement?

6. What strategies did you find most effective to promote employee engagement?
7. What strategies did you find least effective to promote employee engagement?
8. How did you measure the effectiveness of the strategies used to promote employee engagement?
9. What would you like to add about strategies to promote employee engagement that I have not asked?

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation

Date:

Name of Company:

Name:

Address:

E-mail:

Telephone:

Dear XXXXXXX

I am David Cunningham, a doctoral student at Walden University conducting a research study entitled Strategies to Promote Employee Engagement in the Aerospace Industry. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore strategies used by some business leaders in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry to promote employee engagement.

I identified your company through my business association from _______________.

I am seeking to recruit participants who meet the following eligibility criteria to conduct 30-45 minute face-to-face interviews and 30 minute follow up meetings:

- Business leader in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry
- Located in Southern California
- Responsible for implementing strategies to promote employee engagement

In addition to conducting face-to-face interviews, I am requesting permission to review archival company documents such as engagement surveys and policies relative to employee engagement.

To protect the confidentiality of your name and the name of your company, I will not be disclosing any company, leader, owner, or participants' names in the published study or in any other subsequent publications using information from the final study. I will code participants' names as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to allow recruiting of participants to take place within your company or provide access to relevant company documents and policies. You may withdraw your company from participation at any time. Business leaders in your company meeting the stated eligibility criteria for participation in interviews may choose not to participate or may withdraw from participation at any time for any reason or for no reason.

I am requesting that you provide access to leaders within your company who meet the stated eligibility criteria by providing their name and contact information. You will not be asked to provide any supervision during the interviews.

I am requesting that you provide access to leaders within_______________ who meet the stated eligibility criteria by providing their name and contact information. You will not be asked to provide any supervision during the interviews.

I am requesting that you provide access to archival company documents relevant to employee engagement including past engagement surveys, survey results, and policies created from the results of engagement survey results.

All interviews will be conducted at an off-site location t further protect the identity of study participants.

Participants will be e-mailed an informed consent form to review prior to the interviews. Providing informed consent occurs through replying to the e-mail with “I consent” or by signing the informed consent form just prior to start of the interview.

As you are the official authority from your company to grant permission to release company documents, I am requesting release of documents subject to the following conditions:

1. I will use all company documents released to me exclusively for my research and not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.

2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter, or destroy any confidential information, except as authorized by you as the official company representative.

3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation.

4. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant’s name is not used.

5. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modifications, or purging of confidential information.

6. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue in perpetuity after the completion of this study.

7. I understand that any violation of this agreement may have legal implications.
8. I will only access documents I am officially authorized to access and I will not disclose any trade secrets, proprietary information, or any other protected intellectual property to any unauthorized individuals or entities.

If the terms and conditions within this letter of cooperation and confidentiality agreement are acceptable, please print and sign your name, provide your title and the date your signature below.

Printed name: ____________________________________

Signature: _______________________________________

Title: ____

Date: ____

By signing this document, I as the authorized representative for the company, acknowledge that I have read the agreement and that I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above. I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in Proquest database or any other subsequent publications. 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 Institutional Review Board.

If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me by telephone at [redacted] or by e-mail at david.cunningham@waldenu.edu.

Sincerely,

David R. Cunningham

Doctoral Candidate
Doctor of Business Administration Program
Walden University

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate E-mail or Telephone Script

Hello, my name is David R. Cunningham. I am a doctoral student at Walden University conducting a study on Strategies to Promote Employee Engagement in the Aerospace Industry. I identified you as a potential participant in my study through your company's leadership. I would like you to consider being a participant in my study, agree to participate in a 45-60 minute face-to-face interview, and agree to a 30-minute follow-up meeting so that you could review my interpretation of your interview responses. This study could potentially benefit the aerospace industry by providing effective strategies to improve employee engagement. The eligibility criteria for participation are, you must be a business leader in the manufacturing sector of the aerospace industry who has implemented strategies to promote employee engagement and your work must be located within the Southern California locale. If you meet the eligibility criteria, would you be willing to participate? Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. You can provide your agreement to participate by providing informed consent If you would like additional information or have questions before agreeing to participate, please contact me using the information below. If you agree to participate, I have attached a copy of the informed consent form to this invite email that will formally convey your rights as a participant. You can provide informed consent by replying *I consent* to the e-mail.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

David R. Cunningham

E-mail address: David.cunningham@waldenu.edu

Telephone: [redacted]