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Integration Strategies for Mergers and Acquisitions in the United Kingdom Housing Sector

Mark Allen Howard
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Mark Allen Howard

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Integration Strategies for Mergers and Acquisitions in the United Kingdom Housing

Sector

by

Mark Allen Howard

MBA, University of South Florida, 2001

BA, University of South Florida, 1996

Consulting Capstone Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

July 2022

Abstract

Many letting and factoring company leaders face challenges in the United Kingdom housing sector, necessitating mergers and acquisitions (M&As) to adopt hybrid growth models. Yet, the company leaders typically lack M&A integration strategies to achieve sustainable growth. Grounded in the theory of the competitive forces, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore M&A integration strategies business leaders used to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. The participants were four executive-level leaders of a for-profit housing and property factoring organization representing 17 of 32 local authority locations throughout Scotland, United Kingdom. Data were gathered using semistructured interviews, personal conversations, content analysis of publicly available documents, and organizational data. Data were analyzed using Yin's 5-step thematic analysis approach, and three themes emerged: (1) cooperative synergies of M&A assets, (2) measured executive communication and direction, and (3) effectively leveraging organizational resources. A key recommendation to the organization's leaders is to expand their cooperative synergy strategy to include complementary hybrid business models to increase market presence within the United Kingdom and drive excitement in the communities where cooperative synergies are applied. The implications for positive social change include the potential to provide property leaders and the communities with improved, sustainable infrastructure, leading to improved basic-needs items, such as safe, affordable housing.

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Dedication

To Linda, for her continuous support, steadfast resolve, and carrying so much on her shoulders, which afforded me the opportunity to succeed in my doctoral endeavor. Our lifelong love and friendship have made me a better person and contributor. Thank you for continually bringing me back to the path of success in my career and doctoral journey. I thank God every day for bringing you back into my life. You are the smartest and hardest working person I know. Your encouragement, support, and dedication to our success make our love stronger and timeless.

To my Walden University professors and doctoral peers, who provided feedback and support during my doctoral journey, your support is so much appreciated.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

As directed by Walden University's consulting capstone (see Walden University, 2020), I served as the researcher and consultant for this study. I used the 2019-2020 Baldrige Performance Excellence Program (BPEP; 2019) as the framework for this study related to growth strategies letting and factoring business leaders use to ensure sustained growth after mergers and acquisitions (M&As). Section 1 establishes the foundation of the study. Section 2 lays out the details of the project, and in Section 3, I evaluate my client organization using the Baldrige criteria and presented my findings.

Background of the Problem

The need for adequate, safe, and affordable housing is a global problem. The social housing sector in the United Kingdom provides below-market rent accommodations to individuals and families where the market does not support their needs (Hickman, 2019; Wright et al., 2019). In the United Kingdom, social housing became a permanent sector as the market failed to recover after WWI (Hickman, 2019; Stephens, 2019) fully. The governmental institutions/council authorities across the United Kingdom became responsible for financing, owning, and managing social housing rental units (Manzi & Richardson, 2017; Stephens, 2019). According to Hickman (2019), the extensive building of social housing units occurred at high-demand points over time (i.e., after WWI and WWII). Over the last 50 years, social housing units available within the United Kingdom decreased primarily due to the Thatcher government's introduction of the right-to-buy policy in 1980 (Rolfe et al., 2020). Higher demand with lower availability and capped midmarket rental income pushed the local authorities and housing

associations past their budgets to manage the units personally (Hansson & Lundgren, 2019; McCall & Mooney, 2018). According to Hansson and Lundgren (2019), local housing authorities opted to outsource their midmarket units to private letting and factoring businesses like Company XYZ to resolve the budgeting issues.

Company XYZ is a prominent letting and factoring company within the United Kingdom with a significant focus on increasing offerings within the social housing sector. Company XYZ employs an M&A process more focused on partnerships rather than assimilation of merged or acquired entities to stay competitive and grow in this highly regulated and volatile sector. The M&A process is complex, requiring detailed planning and strategies to ensure success (Agarwal & Kwan, 2017; Rolfe et al., 2020). Company XYZ sought to develop integration strategies to increase successful property factoring services and market rentals, facilitating sustainable growth in the social housing sector. With the background of the problem stated, the focus then shifted to the problem statement.

Problem Statement

Changes in the United Kingdom social housing sector have forced rental property providers into adopting hybrid business growth models through M&As to diversify into related areas, such as property factoring services and market rentals (Rolfe et al., 2020). M&As are essential tools to facilitate diversified growth; however, 52% of the time, they fail to produce expected results after integration (Sedlacek & Valouch, 2018). The general business problem is some business leaders undertake M&A ventures without sufficient planning for integration. The specific business problem is that some business

leaders lack M&A integration strategies to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. The target population consisted of four executive-level leaders of a United Kingdom for-profit housing and property factoring organization that successfully used M&A integration strategies to achieve sustainable growth. The study findings might affect positive social change by contributing to better and more affordable housing for lower to middle-income people, positioning local communities for sustaining growth, and contributing to the businesses' employees, families, and community prosperity.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are the three types of research methods (Taguchi, 2018; Wild et al., 2017). The differences among these approaches follow the philosophical distinction between the explorative-interpretive and analytic-nomological ways of accessing data (House, 2018). The qualitative researcher employs subjective measures (e.g., interviews, observations) and seeks to understand human behavior (House, 2018; Yin, 2018). The quantitative researcher employs objective measures (e.g., tests, surveys) and uses statistical and other data analysis techniques to examine and characterize behavior (House, 2018; Smith, 2018). Mixed methods researchers integrate qualitative and quantitative research techniques to leverage the attributes of both methods to observe patterns of change over time and, at the same time,

help to reveal individual and contextual factors explaining the observed trends (Rahman, 2017; Taguchi, 2018). Objective or numeric data measurement, analysis, and comparisons were not part of the proposed study; therefore, a quantitative or mixed methods approach was inappropriate for the proposed research. Subsequently, an explorative-interpretive qualitative methodology best fits this study because of the business case and processes associated with qualitative business research for understanding M&A integration in the United Kingdom social housing sector.

In qualitative research studies, the main design choices are (1) ethnography, (2) phenomenology, (3) grounded theory, and (4) case study (Fusch et al., 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Ethnographic researchers focus on identifying and exploring the culture of a group of people. Phenomenology has roots in philosophy and psychology, and phenomenological researchers focus on understanding participants' lived experiences (Fusch et al., 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The grounded theory design stems from sociology and involves developing theories for solving social issues grounded in real-world observations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Martin et al., 2018). Case study researchers add to the sociology field through in-depth analysis of an individual, group, or event to understand phenomena for which there is little control (House, 2018; Yin, 2018). Not selected for this study were ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory designs because I was not researching culture, lived experiences, or a theory explaining real-world experiences. Case study research was a practical means of conducting an in-depth exploration of a real-life phenomenon within its business domain (see Yin, 2018). I selected a qualitative single case study design to understand the strategies business

leaders use to leverage synergy and achieve sustainable growth of merged and consolidated businesses. The target business for the study was a property factoring and management company in the United Kingdom. According to Yin (2018), a single case study rather than a multicase study is appropriate when observing a typical example or situation in a single case or organization.

Research Question

What M&A integration strategies do business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector?

Interview Questions

1. What M&A integration strategies have you used to sustain the growth of your business?
2. What are the key successful strategies you have used to sustain your business before and after M&A integration?
3. What key barriers to strategy implementation have you identified?
4. How did you address each of the identified key barriers?
5. How does your organization assess the effectiveness of your origination's strategies?
6. What else would you like to share about strategies used to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Porter's five competitive forces theory. Business leaders recognize Porter's five competitive forces theory as a business

process model useful for adaptation and growth planning (Oyadomari et al., 2017). Porter (1980) proposed a business analysis archetype using intense competition, market desirability, and profitability to analyze external forces and their effect on competitive organizational environments. Contributing factors include customer bargaining power, supplier bargaining power, market-entry and exit ease, and the potential for a substitute degree of competition between organizations (Porter, 1980). The five competitive forces framework provides leaders with tools to make deliberate and informed decisions based on reviewing the environmental factors that affect their competition (Mahat, 2019). The five competitive forces theory application to the social housing sector within the United Kingdom demonstrated how housing and factoring leaders could use integration strategies to ensure sustained, equitable growth in their industry.

Operational Definitions

The listed concepts and terms require definition to add coherence to this study:

Baldrige Performance Excellence Program (BPEP) Framework: A business excellence model applied by business leaders to improve and sustain quality performance through strategic management practices (BPEP, 2019). Six Baldrige categories help define high performance in an organization (*Leadership; Strategy; Customers; Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management; Workforce; and Operations*). A seventh category (*Results*) documents the outcomes achieved (BPEP, 2019).

European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM): A nonprofit membership foundation and custodian of the EFQM business excellence model founded in 1989 (British Quality Foundation, n.d.). The EFQM framework, like the Baldrige

Criteria for Performance Excellence, is a holistic framework used to assess the current competitive state, recommend improvements, and a suggested path for sustained excellence of an organization (Raharjo & Eriksson, 2017).

Factoring: A Scottish term that describes property management and issues relating to a multi-resident building or tenement common parts or areas. The standard Scottish tenement design dates back to the 16th century. The building tenement design took advantage of Scottish land laws that allowed land sellers to demand an annual fee from the purchaser fixed in perpetuity (Gibb et al., 2016; Rolfe et al., 2020; Sim, 1997).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are approximations, premises, or conditions that researchers accept as accurate without verified evidence (Johnson & Cook, 2019). The assertion of assumptions in a study is essential to frame the study's findings. Four underlying assumptions had the potential to influence this study. First, the Baldrige Excellence Framework was an appropriate tool for evaluating quality performance and developing improvement strategies and courses of action. Second, a qualitative single case study was the most appropriate research design. Third, the participant selection pool contained a proper depth of experience to ensure that all participants understood the essential strategies to generate sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. Finally, the participants within the selection pool provided honest answers based on their knowledge of the question topic.

Limitations

Limitations are uncontrolled aspects of a study that the researcher cannot overcome and may represent potential weaknesses affecting the study outcome (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This study had three limitations. First, according to Sim et al. (2018) and Blaikie (2018), the best estimation of the sample size needed in a qualitative study is to indicate, from previous research evidence, a sample size range necessary to reach the data saturation required. Sample size data from previous qualitative single case research indicates sample sizes from four to 50 (Sim et al., 2018). Researchers determine data saturation when further comments are repetitive and no new data emerges (Saunders et al., 2018). Although the sample size for this study falls in the range of potentially reaching saturation based on previous research, the basis of concluding achievement of saturation falls on the subjective opinion of the researcher based on interview outcomes. Second, this was a single case study of a property factoring business in the United Kingdom. The study findings may not be comparable to other property factoring businesses outside the United Kingdom. Researchers use single case studies to understand phenomena from the participants' perspectives (Yin, 2018). Using a single case study approach helps researchers develop insights and knowledge responsive to the client's business environment (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Finally, there may be unknown conditions or situations in the organization, such as personal relationships between leaders and employees, familial connections, or connections to political groups or parties that could bias participant responses (i.e., holding back information or avoiding

specific topics of conversation; Young et al., 2018). Bias affects the resultant study's validity, reliability, and credibility (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Reid et al., 2018).

Delimitations

Delimitations are the descriptive boundaries of a study that align with the researcher's research question, design, methodology, and conceptual framework (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Delimitation within this qualitative single case study numbered three: experience, geographic location, and population. First, only business leaders who had significant experience developing strategies that explored M&A integration strategies were qualified as candidates for interviews in this study. Second, participants were all employed by a single property factoring business in the United Kingdom and employed all employees involved in the study. Finally, delimitations related to experience and geographic location limited the population, resulting in a sample size of four members of a single property factoring business's senior management team.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The findings from this study could be beneficial to businesses engaged in property asset management and investment in the United Kingdom. Asset managers can identify diversification strategies to improve company cash and asset positions, allowing for more significant investment in high-growth sectors. Merger failures generate negative consequences for managers (Agarwal & Kwan, 2017). Effective strategies for M&A integration enable managers to better adapt during M&A integration, increasing

performance, long-term growth, and sustainability of the United Kingdom property factoring businesses. By expanding property factoring and lease management services, business leaders may realize benefits such as client retention, fee stability, and a more substantial brand reputation. Also, community betterment activities raise awareness of a business's mission and enhance its community profile (Browning et al., 2018). Additionally, business leaders using and adapting the results from this study may contribute to adequate business practice (i.e., improvement of business practice) through synergies realized during integration and incorporation, such as eliminating redundant operations and benefits leveraging economies of scale.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this single case study may contribute to positive social change for individuals, the communities affected, and society overall by giving business leaders the skills to question the status quo and seek more diverse methods for property factoring services and market rentals. Property business leaders could benefit from the findings of this study by adopting improved diversification strategies to secure a prosperous future for themselves, their families, and the communities where they reside. The results could lead to enhanced property services for organizations by providing communities with improved, sustainable infrastructure, leading to improved basic-needs items, such as clean water and safe, affordable housing. Successful property factoring services diversification could provide long-term cash and equity balance to promote employment, sustain positive community impacts, and reduce volatility in housing markets.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Understanding the strategies for equity development through M&As in the United Kingdom social housing sector necessitated a review of the body of existing literature regarding the topic. Researchers survey the professional and academic literature related to their study to demonstrate the breadth and depth of their understanding of the subject (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Onwuegbuzie & Weinbaum, 2017). Researchers perform ordered, methodical reviews of the relevant literature to critically analyze problems and provide an overview, critical assessment, and synthesis of previous research (Hammad & Hallinger, 2017; Rahman, 2017; Snyder, 2019). Additionally, the systematic review process is a tool used to build a strong foundation supporting a study and identify and explain gaps in the literature to clarify and promote understanding for the reader (Hammad & Hallinger, 2017). The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector.

Overview and Organization of the Literature Review

The literature review began with a detailed account of the strategy and processes used in the literature search and resource identification. Next in the literature review is the establishment of the study's conceptual framework. Through the literature review structure, I leveraged the conceptual framework theory as a conduit to analyze the purpose statement and research question. The case study conceptual framework was Porter's five competitive forces theory, developed in 1980 by Michael Porter. Business leaders recognize the five competitive forces theory as a business process model useful

for competitive advantage through growth planning (Mahat, 2019). For this qualitative, single case study, I investigated literature focused on M&A strategies housing and factoring leaders use to ensure sustainable and equitable growth in the United Kingdom and similar markets. I analyzed areas for opportunities before and after M&A activities for sufficient development within the client organization by building on Porter's seminal work. It applied to integration strategies used to develop equitable growth in the social housing sector. Additionally, a review of contrasting theories from relevant literature ensured the appropriateness of using Porter's five competitive forces theory for this study.

Literature Search Strategy

I focused my literature search on M&A strategies, housing, and factoring leaders use to ensure equitable growth in the United Kingdom and similar markets. I identified and accessed Walden University Library databases' journal articles by utilizing the Thoreau Multi-Database Search tool. The academic literature review included research on organizational consolidations, M&As, creating value through synergy, organizational design and development, and executive communication. The databases used were Google Scholar, SAGE, ProQuest ABI/INFORM, and EBSCO Business Source Complete. The source searching included these keywords: *acquisitions, communication, equity, equity development, factoring, integration, mergers, mergers or acquisitions, merger history, merger success, merger integration, merger effects on people, merger and integration, communication and merger, merger, Porter's five competitive forces model, and employee performance.*

An Excel spreadsheet served to track sources included in the study and capture the year of publication, type of publication, peer-review status, and placement of the source in the study or the literature review. When research content did not include a Digital Object Identifier (DOI), I used www.crossref.org to research the possibility of an assigned DOI after publication. Also, I used Ulrich's Periodicals Directory to check all journal articles for peer review. If Ulrich's Periodicals Directory did not include a listing, I focused my search on the journal's website for evidence of any peer-review process.

The Walden University Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program guidelines recommend that 85% of the professional and academic sources within the study come from peer-reviewed sources (Walden University, 2020). Prohibited sources included magazines, trade publications, summary textbooks, blogs, and websites. Furthermore, to ensure the researcher used topical and relevant literature, Walden University administrators encouraged 85% of the sources to have a publishing date within 5 years of the study completion date (Walden University, 2020). Resources for this study number 182 reviewed over 60 months, with 164 (90.11%) peer-reviewed and 154 (84.64%) less than 5 years old. The literature review included 77 sources. Of the 77 sources, 68 (88.31%) peer-reviewed, and 57 (74.03%) less than 5 years old. The data in Table 1 shows a detailed breakout of the source data within the literature review.

Table 1*Literature Review of Source Data*

| Literature review data | Total # | # inside 5-Years (2018-2022) | % inside 5-Years (2018-2022) | % Peer- reviewed |
|------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Peer-reviewed articles | 68 | 57 | 83.82% | 88.31% |
| Non-peer-reviewed sources | 9 | 11 | 64.71% | 00.00% |

Application to the Applied Business Problem

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. The steady easing of currency, country regulatory circumstances, and increased competition tend to foster an environment that necessitates organizational leaders to produce equitable growth or face extinction (Bhagwan et al., 2018). According to Bhagwan et al. (2018), real growth is necessary for companies to maintain dominant positions in their industries, and M&As are interindustry opportunities for organizations to achieve growth. Increasingly, the dissymmetry of information and active, unregulated change negatively affect expected growth through M&A (Hongjiu et al., 2019). The number of M&As that fail to produce the expected outcome of equitable growth and improved financial results is significant (Olcay et al., 2019). Porter's five forces theory can help leaders achieve a successful outcome by applying the five forces framework as a tool to analyze business strategies (Musonera & Weber, 2018). Leaders can view their corporate strategy through the lenses of buyer bargaining power, supplier bargaining

power, new market entrance threats, substitute threats, and the degree of rivalry within the market (Porter, 1980).

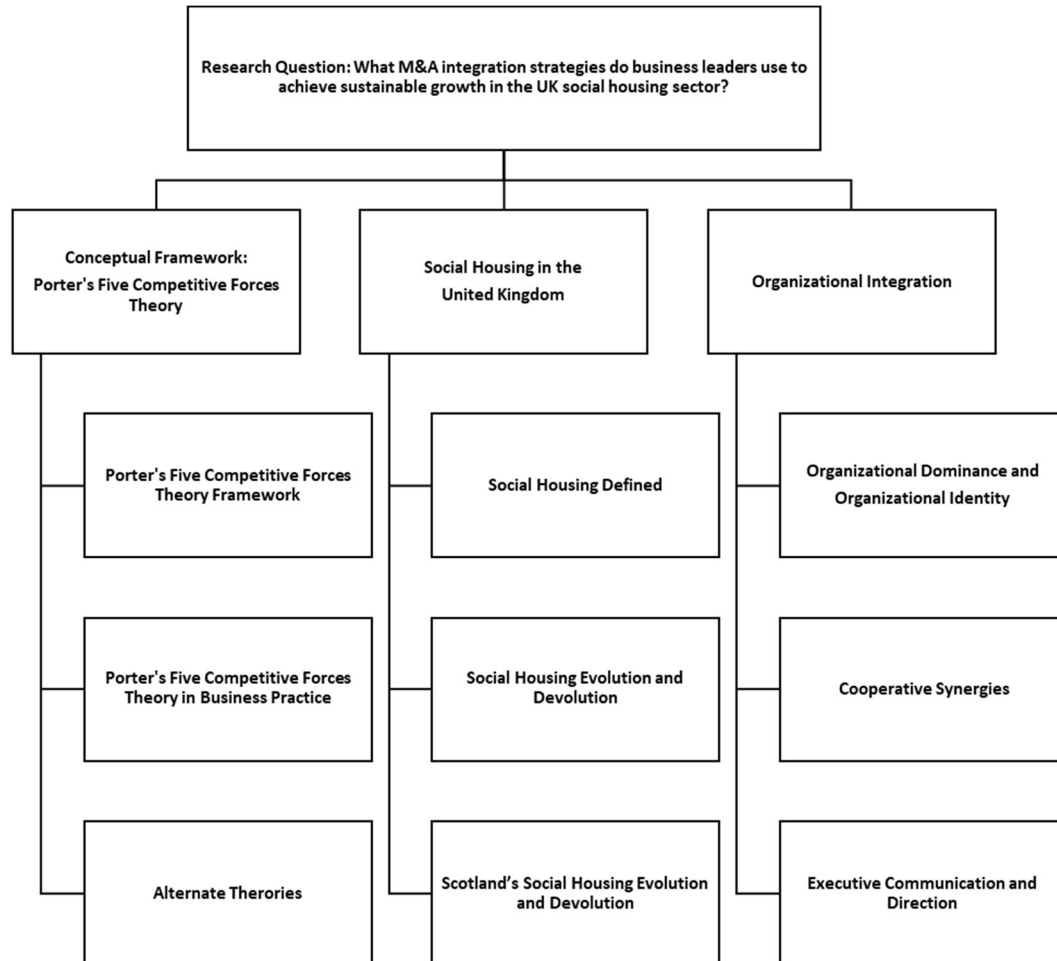
Case study data gathering and analysis used the framework established within the Manual for the DBA Consulting Capstone (see Walden University, 2019) and the DBA Consulting Capstone Rubric (see Walden University, 2020). Additional application of tools within the BPEP (see BPEP, 2019) furthered data analysis to help Company XYZ develop after merger integration strategies to increase synergy growth within the United Kingdom social housing sector.

Structure of the Literature Review

Throughout the literature review, emergent themes included (1) Porter's five competitive forces theory, (2) social housing in the United Kingdom, and (3) organizational integration. Porter's five competitive forces section included the development of Porter's five competitive forces theory framework, external forces effects on the competitive environment in the context of Porter's framework, social housing competitive environment in the context of Porter's framework, application of Porter's five competitive forces theory in business practice, and potential alternate approaches. The social housing within the United Kingdom area included geographical and political influence, social housing growth factors, and factoring (management) services. Organizational integration subthemes included organizational dominance, organizational identity, cooperative synergies, and executive communication and direction. The themes outlined in the conceptual framework created links between the research and the case study participants who had firsthand experience with M&As. For future executives to

understand the barriers, opportunities, and gaps in the M&A process, they must recognize the importance of the adoption of M&A integration strategies.

Themes and subthemes fit within the five competitive forces conceptual framework as follows. Through M&As, organizational integration links to the conceptual framework's competitive forces and market development area, creating value by leveraging the synergies inherent in combining two independent organizations. Organizational dominance and organizational identity link to the conceptual framework through leveraging competitive advantage concepts for gap fill and horizontal diversification and innovation to cultivate market opportunities within the United Kingdom housing market. Executive communication and direction as a theme tie into the conceptual framework as organizational leaders recognize the importance of merger implementation activities that leverage how communication and direction play within their industry's competitive aspects and open the institutional structure to foster transparent and concise internal communication and direction. Figure 1 provides an overview of the literature review section.

Figure 1*Literature Review Structure***Conceptual Framework: Porter's Five Competitive Forces Theory**

The conceptual framework provides a researcher with a lens through which to understand the phenomenon through complete discovery and design of the research question, study design and methods, and identifying any risks associated with the phenomenon under investigation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The conceptual framework for this study was Porter's five competitive forces theory. The five

competitive forces theory application to the social housing sector within the United Kingdom demonstrates how housing and factoring leaders can use integration strategies to ensure sustained, equitable growth in their industry. Porter (1980) suggested for those businesses engaged in more than one industry or marketplace, the five forces concept is appropriate for single industry analysis, meaning committed companies in multiple markets or industries use the five forces analysis singularly and separate from others. According to Porter, a significant change to any of the five forces should serve as an opportunity to pause and consider the external forces affecting the business's strategy within that marketplace. A more in-depth review of Porter's theory supported its application to this study

Five Competitive Forces Theory

One possible objective of a competitive strategy for a business is to pinpoint a defensible competitive position against competitors or where they can positively influence the competitive environment in their favor. Porter (1980) proposed a business analysis archetype using intense competition, market desirability, and profitability to analyze external forces' effect on an organization's competitive environment. Contributing factors, including customer bargaining power, supplier bargaining power, market entry and exit ease, the potential for substitute products or services, and rivalry among competitors, influence the origin, nature, and degree of competition between organizations (Porter, 1980). The five competitive forces framework provides leaders with tools to make deliberate and informed decisions based on reviewing the environmental factors that affect their competition (Levine Daniel & Fyall, 2019; Mahat,

2019). Of the five forces mapped by Porter (1980), Buyer Power outlines the influence buyers, or customers have on markets.

Buyer Power. Customer or buyer bargaining power influences consumers' product selection, price, and service quality (Porter, 1980). Customers use their negotiating power by insisting on lower prices for better, higher-quality products (Musonera & Weber, 2018). Consumers can generate competition within the industry to include housing categories by fulfilling basic needs like housing and personal care (Leroux & Ponthiere, 2020). Customer bargaining power influences businesses through buyer needs. Businesses increase brand loyalty through needs fulfillment and offer loyalty incentives, including lower rental prices, increased or higher-end services, and discounted necessities such as utilities or maintenance services (Ang et al., 2017; Musonera & Weber, 2018). Supplier power, like Buyer Power, is the effect individual businesses have on markets.

Supplier Power. Like customer bargaining power, supplier bargaining power is the influence garnered by service and material suppliers that enables them to control market indices like price, quality, and product availability to acquire more value for themselves (Oyadomari et al., 2017). Suppliers adjust prices according to supply and demand. Suppliers may increase rental prices if housing demand increases, elevating consumers' costs. The same is true for services companies such as lawn maintenance and home maintenance and repair services, where consumers shoulder the higher costs (Ang et al., 2017; Oyadomari et al., 2017). New entry threats focus on effects on competitive advantage and the competitive landscape.

New Entry Threat. New entrants to an industry or market leverage existing capabilities, market needs, and cash flow to influence or shift competitive advantage. The new entrants apply pressure affecting prices by increasing costs and market share (Faulk et al., 2017; Rolfe et al., 2020). Housing providers must find methods to overcome obstacles that impede competitive advantage due to the high competition (Sterzer, 2017). One barrier to removing the threat of new entrants is creating product differentiation through top-tier services and unique or expanded unit designs. Implementing effective operating strategies helps housing providers offer quality products and services protuberant among competitors (Ang et al., 2017; Bolisani & Bratianu, 2018). Substitute threats include many daily commodities, including housing.

Substitute Threat. Substitutes within a market are prevalent as most markets support unlimited replacements, including the United Kingdom housing market. Housing customers can visit alternative shelter types (i.e., apartments, single-family homes, town homes, and even portable structures like yurts; Hansson & Lundgren, 2019). Housing providers must know the regional market trends and unit availability to ensure they provide the best value for their customers (Hansson & Lundgren, 2019). Switching costs play a role in substitutions within a market (Hickman, 2019). According to Hickman (2019), business owners must contend with service costs, product contrast, and switching cost when evaluating products or services. Consumers are typically open to switching costs in moving to other providers in instances of degraded performance, customer service, or low product quality. Nevertheless, there is a limit to how much consumers are willing to accept to regain a favorable position (Hickman, 2019; Manzi & Richardson,

2017). Finally, competitive rivalry fuels market conditions through the application of strategic position.

Competitive Rivalry. Competition management and rivalry are two main strategic planning objectives (Bolisani & Bratianu, 2018). The sources of competition must be known (Salim, 2017). A housing provider must determine where the unit offerings fit within the competitive environment. Porter (1980) narrowed the five forces framework's focus from an industry perspective to an individual business perspective within a particular industry. Strategically positioning a business within a specific sector by developing defenses against competitors is essential for sustainability. Porter's five competitive forces theory applies to this case study research by providing tools for leaders to better understand and evaluate their business environment across many sectors, including the businesses supporting social housing.

Porter's Five Competitive Forces Theory and Business Practice

Porter's five forces fit best of the theories reviewed for the conceptual framework of this study. The five competitive forces model is instrumental in providing a strategic framework through which business leaders gain insight into competitive landscapes and aids in evaluating their position within an industry (Mahat, 2019; Topaloglu et al., 2018). Porter (1980), a business strategy pioneer, studied business dynamics focusing on the dynamic between firm owner success; specifically, why some owners can grow their business while others fail. Porter argued that for businesses to be successful (including housing and factoring businesses), it requires the implementation of one of three

strategies: (1) cost leadership, (2) differentiation, and (3) a combination of the two. In the following sections, I discuss these strategies in greater detail.

Cost Leadership and Differentiation (Hybridity). According to Cavaleri and Shabana (2018), how a business' operating model fits into Porter's strategic model is a competitive advantage. In social housing within the United Kingdom, midmarket caps on rental unit prices were established and monitored by the United Kingdom parliament and local housing authorities (Hickman, 2019). However, significant weight is applied to unit volumes through increased market share, driving revenue in the United Kingdom's high-value areas (Rolfe et al., 2020). The unit volume formula necessitated diversification to drive differentiation into related areas, i.e., property factoring services and market rentals. Choi et al. (2017) discussed the value of brand management and differentiation modeling strategies in the housing market as a competitive advantage. Manzi and Richardson (2017) posited that brand identity becomes an aspect of cost leadership, generating customer interest and brand loyalty through extended services and other valued amenities. Company XYZ's business leaders use cost leadership, customer interest, and brand loyalty to achieve a competitive advantage.

Opposing Positions on the Hybridity Model. According to Dombrowski et al. (2018), the satisfaction of customer requirements within Porter's competitive strategies model follows either cost leadership or differentiation strategies. To establish a clear competitive advantage, businesses must decide on one of the two strategies (Dombrowski et al., 2018). According to Dombrowski et al., businesses may degrade their competitiveness by failing to identify with a specific strategy. However, Porter (1980)

discussed a hybrid competitive strategy that simultaneously blended the cost and differentiation advantages. This hybridity model is evident in the social and private rented sectors within the United Kingdom (Rolfe et al., 2020). Because Company XYZ operates in both sectors, the hybridity model is an appropriate strategy and measure of customer satisfaction with provided services and complements Porter's five competitive forces framework applied to internal and external forces within Company XYZ.

External Forces

The effects of external forces on an organization's competitive environment are Porter's five competitive forces framework's central tenant. Within Porter's framework, a multitude of external forces exists that affect a business's competitive environment, with five forces (competition in a market, the potential for new entrants into a market, supplier influence within a market, customer influence in a market, and the influence substitutes have on a market) having the most significant strategic effect within the framework (Mahat, 2019; Porter, 1980). Porter's framework supports a strategic analysis of the business interactions and the building blocks that support their correlative success and positions within that structure (Mahat, 2019; Zhang et al., 2020).

The concept of correlative attributes between businesses was furthered by Spieth et al. (2021), focusing on business model innovation through strategic alliances and partnerships. Spieth complements Porter's five competitive forces with strategic alliances or coalitions. In the United Kingdom social housing sector, these alliances are apparent in the cooperation business models concerning M&A partnerships employed by social housing providers (Duan & Jin, 2019). Strategic alliances and partnerships are a central

component of Company XYZ's business strategy to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Business leaders use Porter's five competitive forces theory to evaluate an organization's strengths and weaknesses to develop strategies to secure a competitive advantage in their business field (Levine Daniel & Fyall, 2019). Social housing and factoring business leaders must understand the context in which they operate to secure competitive advantage (Mahat, 2019). Business leaders use the five forces model framework to increase the competitive landscape's acumen and measure their standing within an industry (Mahat, 2019). Housing and factoring business leaders use the knowledge to develop strategies that influence performance and increase profitability (Kabue & Kilika, 2016). Using Porter's five competitive forces theory may provide a foundation for property asset managers to explore competitive advantage strategies to improve cash and equity balance and gain the economic leverage necessary for investment in high yield properties within the most desirable markets. The concept of single industry use of Porter's valuable model had the potential for application in other cooperative ways. According to Brown et al. (2017), companies that operate in nonprofit/for-profit structures typically work in an intra-firm co-opetition atmosphere of simultaneous cooperation and competition between business sections. The cooperative synergies section expands on the concept of co-opetition and complementary organizations.

Alternate Theories Considered

Qualitative researchers choose a conceptual framework for a study based on alignment with the research question, research problem, and study objective (Alavi et al., 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Other frameworks exist that may validate M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. Before selecting Porter's five competitive forces theory as the conceptual framework, I evaluated the Ansoff product market grid model (PMGM), transformational leadership theory, and RBV theory to determine the best framework for this study. Elements of these alternative theories showed promise for addressing specific aspects of the study. The Porter five competitive forces theory framework aligned with Company XYZ's business strategies, goals, resources, and capabilities, differentiating it from its competitors when developing competitive advantage and integration strategies in the United Kingdom social housing sector. The subsequent sections of the alternative theories below highlight their main aspects, relevance to the research question, and the rationale for adding or removing them as candidates in the study.

Product Market Grid Model

Alternative theories reviewed for this study included the Ansoff product market grid model (PMGM). The Ansoff PMGM, also named product market expansion grid (PMEG) or growth vector matrix (GVM), is a research method applied in the analysis of products and markets (N. Yin, 2016). Some business leaders acknowledge PMGM as a business process useful for diversification and growth planning (Gurcaylilar-Yenidogan,

& Akosy, 2018; N. Yin, 2016). The two-step qualitative and quantitative approach to PMGM from Ansoff may aid business planning by assessing product and market operational areas. Business leaders obtain data on four growth strategies: market development, market penetration, product development, and product diversification (Ansoff, 1958; N. Yin, 2016). Key elements of the PMGM are creativity, innovation, horizontal diversification, vertical diversification, concentric diversification, and conglomerate diversification (Ansoff, 1958; N. Yin, 2016). The theory elements within PMGM together provide the base structure for the PMG model focused on diversification.

Ansoff described "diversification" as a specific change in a company's product-market makeup (Ansoff, 1958, p. 393). For my study, the product line of a housing and factoring company operates under two sets of statements: (1) the physical characteristics of the individual products (for example, square footage, number of bedrooms, etc.), sufficiently complete to provide shelter to occupants; and (2) the product performance characteristics (for example, occupancy rate, geographic region, etc.), which imbue them with competitive characteristics within the markets they operate. For a definition of the market, Ansoff (1958) borrowed a concept commonly used by the military, a mission's idea. PMGM is a tool used to analyze market expansion opportunities, diversification, and the potential for new market development objectively and accurately (Ansoff, 1958; N. Yin, 2016).

The matrix analysis (Table 2) comprises four research strategies: new product strategy, existing product strategy, new mission strategy, and the current mission

strategy. According to N. Yin (2016), enterprise leaders implementing diversification strategies experience fierce competition in the market and products. The Ansoff matrix is a means to reduce the risks of diversification and product development (Hanif & Fafurida, 2018; Loredana, 2017). Although housing and factoring leaders seek to

Table 2

Ansoff Matrix

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| New products | Market expansion strategy | Diversification strategy |
| Existing products | Market penetration strategy | Product development strategy |
| | Existing mission | New mission |

understand their unique markets when assessing financial stability, there was insufficient evidence that using the PMGM effectively changes potential renters' behavior through community awareness activities. Company XYZ focused on increasing occupancy by engaging with the community to raise social housing limitation awareness; therefore, PMGM was not the most appropriate conceptual lens for this study.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory and its tenants had potential as a conceptual framework for this study. Transformational leaders influence organizations and employees to foster positive and productive change within their spheres of influence (Faupe & Süß, 2019; Jensen et al., 2019). Burns defined transformational leadership in his seminal 1978 work, *Leadership*. Burns (1978) described the occurrence of leadership as a transformational process, where people engage each other and mutually lift each

other to a higher plateau of "motivation and morality" (p. 83). Burns (2003) restated the definition of transformational leadership to introduce ethical behavior as a tenant for improved leader and follower efficiency and self-worth. In the 1980s, transformational leadership began to influence executive and managerial leaders with the introduction of Bernard Bass's transformational leadership theories (Farahnak et al., 2020). The fresh, confident, and engaging leadership style respected followers' ideas and intellectual thought, embraced ethics, and imbued others' inspirational motivation, optimism, and genuine concern for the individual's welfare. Bass (1985) further restructured Burns's (1978) transformational theory by introducing passive management by exception, contingent reward, and active management by expectation (Campbell et al., 2016). Applying transformation theory through business leaders influenced organizations and leaders (Farahnak et al., 2020).

A new generation of leaders used transformational leadership theory as a focusing tool for inspiring followers through a commitment to a shared organizational vision and goals and expecting an output of innovative ideas and development of leadership capacity through coaching, emotional intelligence, and mentoring (Alhamami et al., 2020; Farahnak et al., 2020; Megheirkouni, 2017). Transformational leadership continued to expand through refined interpretation and dedicated application. Leaders looked to use transformational leadership to influence employee retention through improved job satisfaction, corporate responsibility, and sustainability (do Nascimento et al., 2018; Farahnak et al., 2020; Peng et al., 2020). Company XYZ worked to transform its business using a vision of a future market state based on a new vision, mission, and goals for the

company, expanding its scope to integrate and adapt modern property factoring and M&A integration strategies into its business model.

The basis for contemplation of transformational leadership as a potential conceptual framework focused on transformational leadership and its ability to influence individuals to embrace change initiatives optimizing organizational performance. However, transformational leaders focus on modifying employees' behavior in the organization to effect change (Brimhall, 2019; Delegach et al., 2017). Changing employee behavior related to factoring and social housing was not a focus of Company XYZ. Instead, Company XYZ focused on using its business relationships and external supporters to grow its ownership and contract factoring social housing communities' services through partnerships to increase revenue and market share. As such, transformational leadership theory was not an appropriate conceptual framework for this study.

Resource-Based View Theory

The resource-based view (RBV) theory initiated by Edith Penrose in 1959 asserted that efficient use of organizational resources contributes to a firm's growth (Penrose, 2009). Penrose (2009) posited that organizations create growth opportunities through the dynamic use of a business's unique resources. Researchers identified these unique resources by categorizing them as a collection of assets (physical, human, financial, and organizational) used by an organization during daily operation (Burvill et al., 2018; Kay, 2018).

The RBV introduced a framework that researchers could use to understand how to maximize an organization's resources (Kay, 2018). Businesses leverage resources as a catalyst for creating and implementing business strategies (Clarke & MacDonald, 2019; El Ebrashi, 2018). Engaging organizational resources effectively aids in the efficient development of strategies to improve performance and aids in efficient execution (Assensoh-Kodua, 2019; Bacq & Eddleston, 2018; Khan et al., 2018). Although RBV operates within Company XYZ and adds to the internal process and efficiency, expansion and growth are the driving factors in an overall strategic plan for Company XYZ, necessitating a more external business view Porter has as a core business attribute. As such, RBV was not an appropriate framework for this study.

Social Housing in the United Kingdom

Social housing within the United Kingdom is not a new idea but has been a means of housing those without the means to provide shelter for themselves for generations. The United Kingdom has a well-established social rental sector, one of the oldest in Europe (Ravetz, 2001; Smyth, 2019). At its peak in the mid-1970s, the United Kingdom social housing sector represented one-third of United Kingdom households (Gov.UK, 2017). Until 1999, policy relating to housing, including social housing, was managed or factored through a common Great Britain-wide framework (Stephens, 2019). After 1999, after the right-to-buy era ended, policy variation occurred between the component nations of the United Kingdom as assemblies and parliaments regressed, and new governing bodies took hold in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, with England maintaining

governance throughout the United Kingdom ('Westminster') Parliament (Hickman, 2019).

Social Housing Defined

A review of scholarly writings about social housing produced several similar definitions of social housing. According to Hansson and Lundgren (2019), "housing is considered Social Housing if managed as a system providing long-term housing to a group of households specified only by their limited financial resources, using a distribution system and subsidies" (p. 162). Nielsen (2017) cited the Danish social housing and meaning to include public housing and non-profit housing. The term social housing is most prevalent in European countries (Anderson, 2016). For this study, the term *social housing* refers to houses or apartments owned by local Government or private organizations when no profits are derived from the rental of the property and offered below market only to people with low incomes. Understanding the definition of social housing could help researchers understand how social housing operates within the fabric of the United Kingdom communities.

Social Housing Evolution and Devolution

Housing for those without the means to provide shelter for themselves is a long-standing social problem. The social housing sector in the United Kingdom offers suitable rental properties below market rent to households where the market does not support their needs (Hickman, 2019). According to Hickman (2019), social housing within the United Kingdom is provided to communities by two main types of social housing providers: local authorities, with the unit counts of over 1.6 million, making up 6.7% of the housing

available in the United Kingdom; and, housing associations, which own 2.4 million units or 10.2% of the total available social housing units. The social housing sector is diverse, with different categories of landlords, including unit type (single homes vs. apartments), governance arrangements (local Government vs. contracted, privately owned factoring business), and operating models (Manzi & Richardson, 2017).

The United Kingdom has one of the earliest established social housing sectors in Europe, dating back to the 1880s (Stephens, 2019). In the United Kingdom, social housing, initially intended as a temporary state of aid after the first World War, became a permanent sector as the market failed to recover (Hickman, 2019; Stephens, 2019) entirely. The governmental institutions/councils across the United Kingdom became responsible for financing, owning, and managing social housing rental units (Manzi & Richardson, 2017; Stephens, 2019). Substantial social housing building occurred in the 1930s, 1950s, and 1960s (Stephens, 2019). The social housing sector within the United Kingdom, over the last 50 years, experienced significant shrinkage, primarily the result of the right to buy policy introduced by the Thatcher government in 1980 (Rolfe et al., 2020). Table 3 is representative of the social housing sector's rapid decline in available units.

Social Housing Competitive Environment in the Context of Porter's

Using Porter's framework as a guide, homebuyers' and, to an extent, home letters' requirements influence customers to determine the features of accommodation provided by property providers (Ang et al., 2017). A limiting factor within the United Kingdom social housing enterprise is the demographic served within the midmarket and

below customers (Rolfe et al., 2020). Social enterprises use commercial means to make profits in the same way as commercial companies (Kleinhans et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2020). There is no shortage of customers within the target demographic of midmarket renters, as Wilcox et al. (2017) demonstrated later in this literature review. According to Zhang et al. (2020), a balance between social value and business performance is necessary to ensure balanced and diverse offerings. Consequently, business margins are relatively tight within the social housing sector, making cooperation M&A strategies necessary and prominent (Brown et al., 2017).

The tight margins within the United Kingdom social housing sector guide the need for strategic cooperation alliances in this sector, as outlined by Brown et al. (2017). Spieth et al. (2021) complemented Brown et al. touching on industry competitiveness and the need for strategic complementors as part of a larger business model with competitive strategy as a key tenant. As applied to Porter's five competitive forces theory, these social housing sector strategies become practicum in business strategy.

Table 3

Social Housing as a Percentage of Total Housing Units

| Area | 1976 | 1986 | 1997 | 2007 | 2014 |
|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| England | 29.0 | 26.0 | 21.9 | 18.0 | 17.4 |
| Wales | 27.2 | 24.5 | 20.3 | 16.5 | 16.0 |
| Scotland | 54.2 | 49.3 | 34.1 | 24.9 | 23.4 |
| Northern Ireland | 16.2 | 16.2 | 16.2 | 16.2 | 16.2 |

Source: Wilcox et al. (2017)

The right to buy policy gave all council housing tenants the right to purchase their homes significantly below market price (Rolfe et al., 2020). Other contributing factors pressuring tenants who could purchase their homes included rising rent prices (Stephens, 2019). Between 1980 and 1995, the right to buy policy contributed to a decrease of 1.7 million units in the United Kingdom social housing sector as former renters purchased their units, thus, moving the units out of the social housing sector (Stephens, 2019). Tenants with the means to purchase a home living in the more popular residences (houses rather than apartment buildings) were most likely to buy their properties, shaping the remaining social housing sector into the current apartment blocks reminiscent of the tenant flats after WWII (Rolfe et al., 2020; Stephens, 2019). Scotland's social housing sector has seen the most significant decrease in available housing within the United Kingdom (see Table 3). How Scotland's social housing sector evolved/devolved may have a bearing on this statistic.

Scotland's Social Housing Evolution and Devolution

The social housing sector in the United Kingdom has, over time, experienced both growth and decline due to many factors. Records document a clear devolution of the Scottish social housing sector over the last 50 years (Gov.UK, 2017; Soaita et al., 2017). Over the previous 300 years, a pattern added the evolutionary path to current Scottish social housing trends. The Act of Union of 1707 was key to the later establishment of the Scottish Education Department and the Scottish Office in 1872 and 1885, respectively, which solidified Scotland's retention of its own legal and education systems and the

decentralization of administrative functions by the English Government (Gibb et al., 2016; Rolfe et al., 2020; Stephens, 2019).

In the 1900s, decentralization of the English Government's functions saw renewed activity, specifically in Scotland. The May 12, 1999, establishment of the Scottish Parliament following a referendum ensured legislative powers and minimal powers over income tax moved under parliamentary control (Stephens, 2019). According to Stephens (2019), legislative powers extend to all areas unless reserved explicitly for Westminster. Social security and employment law are two of the critical areas reserved. Furthermore, other regulatory powers granted under the legislation that followed the United Kingdom Government's Calman Commission were overshadowed by the independence referendum in 2014. The Smith Commission established in the aftermath of the independence referendum led to the Scotland Act, which devolved higher power and control over income tax and some social security areas amounting to 14% of social security spending in Scotland (Gibb et al., 2016; Stephens, 2019). According to Stephens, the social security powers included the power to vary the housing cost element within Universal Credit (a means-tested benefit that combined six different services, including housing benefits, into a single service; see Spicker, 2015). The timing of the right to buy policy intersects the evolution of the social housing sector and social security control, beginning the devolution of the social housing sector to its current state (Rolfe et al., 2020).

The right to buy policy significantly influenced the United Kingdom housing sector. The right to buy policy possibly created the most extensive divergence in housing

policy across the United Kingdom since 2010 (Rolfe et al., 2020; Stephens, 2019). In Scotland, the sector became more complicated as a desire to introduce a single social tenancy for housing associations and local authority tenants implied giving all involved the same rights of occupancy and ownership, including the right to buy (Stephens, 2019). The idea of equal rights between owners and tenants, including a tenant's right to buy, seemed a positive step toward developing a single social tenancy. However, according to Stephens (2019), since the Coalition election in 2010, the right to buy policy has diverged dramatically. The Scottish Government withdrew the right to buy from new tenants in 2011 and ended it altogether in 2016 (Rolfe et al., 2020; Stephens, 2019). These changes opened the social housing sector to more progressive paths of management. With the social housing sector devolution, a more commercial factoring (rental management) took hold that began a transition from local authority management of properties to private, for-profit businesses managing the factoring and maintenance (Hansson & Lundgren, 2019; McCall & Mooney, 2018).

Company XYZ is one of the top factoring and letting companies in Scotland, with core operations developed to fill the gap created by the devolution of the social housing sector in the United Kingdom. Company XYZ provides the most needed social housing services in the regional sectors where mid to low incomes are more prevalent through partnerships with local authorities. These local partnerships include the integration through the M&A process of local factoring and services providers within the immediate communities with an established history in the community the population is familiar with and trusts.

Organizational Integration

A business must negotiate many operational opportunities within the post-merger process to ensure the best possible integration of the acquired and merged entities (Balmer, 2017; Smeets et al., 2016). According to Smeets et al. (2016), organizational integration is difficult and costly. Merger implementation mitigates the costs. Wei and Clegg (2018) introduced organizational dominance when the victor dominates the new merged entity's culture and identity. Safavi and Omidvar (2016) touched on organizational dominance through insight into the stabilizing power of routine in organizations and how routine controls influence organizational integration. A review of the literature on organizational integration produced links to the subtopics of organizational dominance and cooperative synergies, which are reviewed and analyzed below.

Organizational Dominance and Organizational Identity

Organizational dominance manifests in many ways in post-acquisition organizations (Smeets et al., 2016; Wei & Clegg, 2018). According to Wei and Clegg (2018), the winner determines organizational identity during integration, demonstrating organization dominance through the competition for power after the acquisition. Acquisitions can generate employee stress, dissatisfaction, and resistance exasperated by employee perceptions of inter-group differences and exclusion (Wei & Clegg, 2018). Wei and Clegg postulated the adverse effects of acquisition where organizational dominance rules usually do not produce significant, positive returns. Balmer (2017) held that corporate identity's importance is most evident, and its nature is apparent when

organizations engage in growth strategy excisions, such as M&As. Businesses must maintain an atmosphere of stability and congruency during strategy implementations.

Continuity of identity is one way to promote stability within a company and possibly the community served. One essential congruency critical to a business's ordered operation is an organization's identity (Balmer, 2017). A sense of discontinuity in the pre-acquisition organization's identity may be detrimental to identity post-acquisition (Wei & Clegg, 2018). According to Wei and Clegg (2018), the newly formed organizational identity serves as a guideline for leading managers' actions and decision-making during post-acquisition integration. This freshly created corporate identity can mask the merged organization's identity rather than leveraging the familiarity of its identity as a contributor to the newly formed organization's identity (Balmer, 2017). This loss of identity can produce negative results in an M&A environment. Company XYZ embraces continuity of identity as one aspect of its M&A integration strategy. According to Balmer (2017), maintaining an identity during integration activities as a shared identity can promote stability, both internal to employees and external to the community served. Other integration paths, such as cooperative initiatives, can reduce the potential negative impacts on organization identity (Smeets et al., 2016).

Cooperative Synergies

Cooperative synergies are the third area of organizational integration contributing to this study. Synergies have long been critical drivers of M&As (Duan & Jin, 2019). According to Hamza et al. (2016), synergies arise from many sources: operations areas (i.e., revenue increase, market dominance) and financial synergies (i.e., diversification

and contributing). Lowering financial risks are typical primary motivators of the acquiring firm. Additionally, synergies can improve operating efficiency and reduce management costs (Hamza et al., 2016). According to Rahman and Lambkin (2015), corporate M&As, integrating acquisitions horizontally rather than diversifying, create more operating synergies by leveraging the greater degree of similarity between the respective sectors' merging firms, producing a higher potential for synergy gains. Conversely, Smeets et al. (2016) postulated the potential for integration without large-scale integration of the workforces, leveraging cooperative synergies like reconciling policies (i.e., financial and operational) and coordinating across groups without disrupting day-to-day operations. The area of cooperative synergies is not well documented in current scholarly literature and thus identified as an area of opportunity for further research.

Financial and operational synergies are a prevalent topic in most M&A endeavors (Bach-Mortensen et al., 2018; Duan & Jin, 2019; Hamza et al., 2016). According to Duan and Jin (2019), financial constraints influence companies into seeking increased equity and growth through M&As, and the measure of the synergy gain in these instances is the "cumulative abnormal return of a value-weighted portfolio of the acquirer and the acquisition target" (p. 60). Additionally, Duan and Jin found a positive relationship between synergy gains and financial constraint variation. The simple translation is the positive effect of the financial constraint that is most prevalent at its extremes (i.e., high growth and high constraint). The translation into the United Kingdom social housing sector feeds from areas of high occupancy needs and constrained unit availability

(Hansson & Lundgren, 2019; McCall & Mooney, 2018). The synergy gain in situations is more prevalent now than ever, driven mainly by the right-to-buy removal in 2016 (Finney et al., 2019; Rolfe et al., 2020; Stephens, 2019) and the increasing need for social housing in the United Kingdom continue to advance (Hansson & Lundgren, 2019; McCall & Mooney, 2018). Stephens (2019) posited that synergy internal to a company like Company XYZ is critical during M&As Communication. Essential is the communication from leadership, providing information and direction to employees.

Executive Communication and Direction

Communication is a fundamental aspect of our lives, whether personal or business. In M&A activity, effective organizational communication is critical to success (Angwin et al., 2016; Rebner & Yeganeh, 2019; Zhang et al., 2022). According to Angwin et al. (2016) and Rebner and Yeganeh (2019), effective organizational communication guides the business through the transition, enhances post-M&A commitment to the new entity, helps reduce uncertainty, and increases M&As' success rates. Conversely, ineffective communication contributes to the erosion of trust, increased ambiguity and job insecurity, and negative organizational results (Angwin et al., 2016; Galli, 2018). An example of the criticality of communication in M&As brought forth by Bommaraju et al. (2018), expanding on communication during and post-M&A activity, focuses on communication during M&As and how critical the human interface between leaders and moderators (i.e., salespeople), influences positive outcomes of M&As.

Additionally, Bommaraju et al. (2018) divided the employees or "moderators" into two groups: sense giving and sense-making. "Sense giving" refers to leadership

communication to guide and shape the understanding of a preferred organizational reality (p. 255). Conversely, "sense-making" involves constructing meaning based on the new organization's personal experiences and perceptions (p. 255). Angwin et al. (2016) focused on similar employee reaction areas to different communication types concerning commitment to the M&A and how that commitment influences M&A performance. According to Angwin et al., the process approaches (i.e., communication timing, content, and direction) during pre- and post-M&A activity affect M&A performance.

Experts in the communication process during the M&A process observed several critical effects. Angwin et al. (2016) surmised that generating too little communication leads to employees' higher anxiety and stress levels. Conversely, overloading or overcommunication during M&As may be dysfunctional or seen as making the pertinent topics with an abundance of useless data and adding to the levels of stress employees feel (Angwin et al., 2016; Bommaraju et al., 2018). Overall, the study results focused on communication during M&As demonstrate that communications are most effective when used throughout the entire M&A process. Additionally, the depth and richness of communications help ensure employee commitment to the organization's M&A goals (Angwin et al., 2016; Tarba et al., 2019). As demonstrated in the academic literature, communication is a critical component of the M&A process. It is a theme within the strategies identified as influential in achieving sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector.

Themes Based on Professional and Academic Literature Review

This qualitative single case study and literature review's primary focus was to explore M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. Porter's five competitive forces theory was the conceptual framework. An in-depth review of the professional and academic literature provided a focused platform of scholarly data and information supporting the main tenants of the study and ensuring its reliability and credibility. Research showed several strategies used by businesses engaged in M&A activity. By exploring the operational and logistical challenges posed in the research question, and its application to business practice during M&A activity, a consistent theme regarding sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector became evident. These themes resonate across all aspects of maintained growth through operational and logistical means during M&A activities.

Research findings indicated that businesses engaged in M&A activity that focused on the effects of their organizational dominance, organizational identity, and strategic possibilities and detractors for sustained growth usually fared better than businesses not focused on these strategies (Wei & Clegg, 2018). Additionally, researchers identified the need for measured executive communication and directions to reinforce M&A messaging (Angwin et al., 2016; Balmer, 2017). However, although existing literature addresses the importance of leveraging synergies discovered between merging or acquired firms, it does not adequately address the concept and tenets of cooperative synergies as strategies businesses use to gain a competitive advantage. Applying the five competitive forces

theory lens to the research findings showed that Company XYZ could use organizational identity and measured executive communication and direction as part of its M&A integration strategy. To differentiate itself from the competition, Company XYZ must maximize its internal assets, such as human resources, communications, and operations, to effectively manage integration activities during M&As and create a metered yet meaningful and trusted message to employees' business partners. Therefore, the use of the five competitive forces theory supported the use of M&A integration strategies to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector

Transition

In Section 1, Foundation of the Study, I identified the purpose of this single case qualitative study to explore M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. Porter's five competitive forces theory was the conceptual framework. An in-depth review of the professional and academic literature provided a focused base of scholarly data supporting the main tenants of the study and ensuring its reliability and credibility. Through a process of elimination, I reviewed several theories to serve as a potential conceptual framework, which influenced the selection of the five competitive forces theory. In doing so, I reviewed for applicability alternative theories of transformational leadership theory, Ansoff's product market grid model, and resource-based view theory to determine the best framework for this study. Although scholarly research indicated these alternative theories functioned adequately in similar studies related to M&A integration strategies, they did not fully address my research question. Therefore, they eliminated potential frameworks. A review

of the research and literature associated with M&A integration strategies led to identifying a cooperative integration process unique to Scotland's social housing sector but not well supported or documented in current scholarly literature. Finally, I showed how research evidence supporting successful M&A integration strategies used to develop a cooperative integration model in Scotland's social housing sector applied to my business problem.

Section 2 includes a detailed overview of the process plan, and design, for this qualitative single case study. I identify the researcher's role as the primary data collection instrument, acknowledge the ethical challenges created by researchers and researcher bias errors, and establish mitigation techniques and processes by developing a volume-based population and sampling schema. A full description of the research method and design is presented, accompanied by a justification of the research method and design, including a plan for achieving data saturation. Section 2 concludes by identifying the data collection instruments, organizational techniques, collection and analysis techniques, and a process for maintaining the reliability and validity of the study.

In Section 3, using a comprehensive application of the 2019 BPEP, I present my findings, evaluation, and recommendations for Company XYZ. I evaluated the organization based on company documents and structured meetings and conversations with a member of the senior leadership team using the Baldrige toolset of the leadership triad, the critical factors worksheet, and the results triad documents to mutually build an organizational profile based on the in-depth exploration of the company's processes,

performance metrics, leadership team dynamics, and effectiveness. Finally, I present the data and summarize key themes, research contributions, and recommendations.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. The target population consisted of four executive-level leaders of a United Kingdom for-profit housing and property factoring organization who successfully use M&A integration strategies to achieve sustainable growth. The study findings might affect positive social change by contributing to better and more affordable housing for lower to middle-income people, positioning local communities for sustaining growth, and contributing to the businesses' employees, families, and community prosperity.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher in this qualitative study, my role included study design, participant identification, and selection based on established qualification criteria, data collection, data analysis, and presentation of findings. This research ensured a scholarly approach and allowed personal motivation, interest, curiosity, and commitment to aid data discovery. The researcher fills an integral role in the research process and occupies the primary data collection instrument (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Karagiozis, 2018; Yin, 2018). All data collected for the research went through a structured analysis process for independent interpretation. As the researcher, I focused on developing knowledge and uncovering factual data during the study. I remained conscious of the importance and potential of infusing new M&A strategies and potential competing business models

within the United Kingdom social housing sector to expand the clients' factoring and market rental base.

As the primary research instrument and consultant to my client, I worked closely with my client and the extended leadership team to ensure connectivity to the client's needs, goals, and future state. Consultants provide an essential service based on their experiences and knowledge to help organizations achieve sustainable improvements (Sahir & Brutus, 2018). Relationship building with the client organization leaders and study participants proved integral to study development and execution. My relationship with the research topic regarding a lack of leader equity development strategies through M&As in the United Kingdom housing sector was indirect. In previous professional roles in the domestic property and housing sector, I have direct experience with leaders of companies who neglected to include growth and development strategies as part of their business integration plans. Additionally, I have private sector experience working with large amounts of data and have had oversight and approval authority of third-party property lease contracts.

The interview protocol is vital for mitigating bias and viewing data without introducing personal influence (Yin, 2018). The interview protocol aids in maintaining an observer's perspective during interviews and separation of personal worldviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Pessoa et al., 2019). The interview protocol applied assisted in reducing biases (see Appendix). My interview protocol included questions with procedural guidelines to assist participant interviewing from beginning to end. By following the interview protocol, consistency was achieved across all interviews and

ensured the data collection and analysis remained focused on the research question and purpose. Using research tools such as field notes, triangulation, peer reviews, interview protocol, member checking, and data saturation helped me mitigate bias throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Scholar-practitioners and researchers must adhere to ethical protocol and procedures congruent with the Belmont Report. The Belmont Report identified basic human ethical principles and emphasized the importance of ethical conduct (Adashi et al., 2018; National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research [NCPHSBBR], 1979). Ethical concerns are essential to researchers when considering the target population, including human subjects (Friesen et al., 2017; Ngozwana, 2018). According to Yin (2018), researchers must navigate through many areas of their research where a potential for a breach of ethical standards exists. A signed consent form provided to all participants indicated their voluntary consent to participate in the study. Throughout the data gathering and research process, I adhered to the guiding principles within the Belmont Report, inclusive of beneficence principles and fundamental individual human rights as suggested by the NCPHSBBR (see NCPHSBBR).

According to Yin (2018), strong ethical standards are necessary to avoid bias in research. Mitigating the influence of bias is a critical component of a suitable research protocol. Remaining diligent in the research process and behaving professionally and appropriately is research integrity (Cumyn et al.; Yin, 2018). Although it is essential to recognize the influence of one's identity, personal experience, values, and perspective in

research design, avoiding viewing research data through such a personal lens is necessary to mitigate bias (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Although fully mitigating all bias is difficult, researchers must curtail bias to the best of their ability. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), a way to mitigate bias is using field notes devoted to self-reflection during the research process, including interviewing.

The data gathering process included scheduled meetings with company operations leaders, department managers, area sales managers, a third-party quality training organization, and review and analysis of company business data, housing market data, website data, and findings. Additionally, the study included interviews with stakeholders and leaders who use M&A integration strategies successfully to achieve sustainable growth. Interviews collect firsthand knowledge from multiple potentially relevant sources regarding the case study (Heath et al., 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2018). My role included collecting and reviewing organizational documentation, developing, planning, conducting stakeholder interviews, and conducting weekly meetings with the managing director and her assistant to understand the corporate operational model fully. By focusing on the business problem, I ensured objective data capture and adherence to the research process and ethics and maintained a professional observer's perspective during interviews with participants.

Participants

This qualitative single case study included a purposive sample of four company executives at the parent Company XYZ occupying high-level strategic positions responsible for or substantive input into developing and setting M&A integration

strategies to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. According to Yin (2018), a single case study is appropriate when observing a typical example or situation in an individual case or organization. Furthermore, according to Sim et al. (2018) and Blaikie (2018), estimating the sample size needed in a qualitative study looks to previous research evidence and the qualitative review of themes, coding of data, and a sample size range necessary to reach the data saturation. The ideal participants for this study bring unique characteristics and backgrounds, adding to the greater body of experience across various areas affected by potential changes within the company, ensuring a diverse yet informed body of candidates.

Formulating and planning corporate M&A strategies requires extensive knowledge and experience across several business disciplines. The establishment of participant eligibility to ensure alignment with the overarching research question for this study mandated:

- Participants could speak authoritatively and with depth regarding how M&A integration strategies positively or negatively impacted sustained growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector.
- Participants had the authority to represent and speak on behalf of the company.
- Participants occupied a position in the company responsible for substantive input into developing and implementing M&A integration strategies to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector.

- Participants had served Company XYZ in a leadership capacity for a minimum of 3 years.

A structured questionnaire facilitated validation of each participant's eligibility for this consulting capstone study. The screening document included questions designed to confirm eligible candidates and verified answers through company-supplied organizational charts, job descriptions, and employment longevity data.

The consulting capstone program at Walden University paired student scholar-consultants with client organization leaders and provided a formal introduction to Company XYZ's leaders and participants. As the scholar-consultant, I gained further access to participants by building on the initial relationship through structured events and several communication means, including live Skype sessions, email, and phone calls. Building a positive working relationship between the researcher and participants is critical to the success of a qualitative study (Yin, 2018). Several strategies guided the working relationship developed with the participants. Following all Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements for the project is a primary contributing factor to maintaining good relations with the client organization. A DBA Research Agreement signed by Company XYZ and Walden University, the Walden Ethical Code of Conduct (found in the Student Handbook), a nondisclosure agreement between Company XYZ and the scholar consultant, and the scholar consultant's IRB terms approval facilitated gaining trust.

Additionally, I worked collaboratively with Company XYZ and built consensus regarding a timeline for the project with achievable milestones. A meeting with

participants allowed for balanced commitment between the scholar consultant and participants and rescheduling for unforeseen situations. The joint development of a structured set of deliverables to Company XYZ also helped maintain good relations and fostered a team dynamic.

Research Method and Design

To determine the appropriate research methodology, the researcher must first consider the research question's suitability to produce the anticipated outcome (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative researchers engage in detailed research searching for everyday events, meanings, and how such events influence groups and communities (Taguchi, 2018). In reviewing the research question, the expected results involving understanding the M&A integration strategies leaders of Company XYZ used to sustain business growth remained flexible enough to permit exploration yet focused enough to determine the study limits.

Research Method

There are three research methods: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Researchers leverage the qualitative method to explain what or how a phenomenon exists (Taguchi, 2018; Yin, 2018). The qualitative researcher employs subjective measures (e.g., interviews, observations) and seeks to understand human behavior (House, 2018; Yin, 2018). The quantitative researcher employs objective measures (e.g., surveys, tests) and uses statistical and other data analysis techniques to examine and characterize behavior (House, 2018). Mixed methods researchers integrate qualitative and quantitative research techniques to leverage the attributes of both methods to observe patterns of

change over time and, at the same time, help reveal individual and contextual factors explaining the observed trends (Taguchi, 2018). Objective or numeric data measurement, analysis, and comparisons are not part of the proposed study; therefore, quantitative or mixed methods approaches were not inappropriate for this research. Quantitative and mixed methods are useful for examining behavior using an analytic-nomological process to access data and employ objective statistical data analysis to characterize behavior (House, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In comparison, the qualitative approach was more appropriate for gathering data and understanding participant experiences in their natural setting and the phenomenon of what M&A integration strategies Company XYZ leaders used to achieve sustained growth.

For this study, a qualitative research method to explore the strategies Company XYZ leaders used to sustain their integrated companies' growth best answered the research question. The qualitative research method allowed explorative-interpretive observation and data analysis of lived experiences, life histories, and biographical and autobiographical accounts to answer the research question (see House, 2018; Yin, 2018). The qualitative methodology best fit this study because it was a business case and involved processes associated with qualitative business research for understanding M&A integration in the United Kingdom social housing sector. Additionally, adopting the qualitative research method allowed triangulation, peer reviews, and field notes to gather valuable data to explore in-depth M&A integration strategies that leaders used to sustain integrated companies' growth.

Research Design

Qualitative researchers explore a social phenomenon in natural settings by reviewing multiple data sources to secure a comprehensive view of the phenomenon (Abdalla et al., 2018; Ganz & Ayres, 2018). Qualitative research techniques include focus groups, in-depth interviews, analysis of texts and documents, and observational methods (Yin, 2018). In qualitative research studies, the main design choices are (1) ethnography, (2) phenomenology, (3) grounded theory, and (4) case study (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

Ethnography entails exploring group culture (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). According to Bass and Milosevic (2018), ethnographic design aids in exploring the behavior or culture of a group. With an ethnographic design, researchers rely on data collection over extended observation and comparison of cultural differences to understand the phenomenon dynamics under study (Bass & Milosevic, 2018). Interaction with real-life participants to determine the differences between cultures fell beyond the study scope; therefore, an ethnographic design was not appropriate for this study.

Researchers adopt a phenomenological design to explore the phenomenon, focusing on people's lived experiences (Larkin et al., 2019). The phenomenological design is more appropriate for social interactions and phenomenon studies, focusing on a more detailed body of evidence exceeding the study scope for this DBA.

Phenomenology, rooted in philosophy and psychology, requires understanding the meaning of participants' lived experiences (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The intent of the Researcher in using a phenomenological design is to seek an in-depth understanding of

participants' lived experiences. For this study, an in-depth analysis of participants lived experiences exceeded the study's intent, so I did not select a phenomenological design.

The grounded theory design involves developing theories to solve social issues grounded in real-world observations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Martin et al., 2018). According to Martin (2018), the grounded theory is perhaps the most cited qualitative method in the social sciences and is widespread across many disciplines. Despite the popularity of using grounded theory in qualitative research, proper grounded theory research employs theoretical sampling protocols (Martin, 2018), which exceeded the scope and method of this study. While the grounded theory does involve gathering data and open coding for participants, it does not consider participant experiences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Martin et al., 2018). Therefore, the grounded theory fell beyond the scope of this study.

Case study researchers add to the sociology field through in-depth analysis of an individual, group, or event to understand phenomena for which there is little control (House, 2018; Yin, 2018). Participant experiences within their environmental context are critical factors within the case study research design to understand phenomena (House, 2018; Yin, 2018). The case study approach was ideal for identifying a topic, which lent itself to in-depth analysis to explore additional questions by investigating a topic in detail (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). The case study design best suited this study as it enabled the exploration of M&A integration strategies leaders used to achieve sustained growth of integrated companies.

Although the other designs have a place in qualitative research, none were suitable for this study. Not selected for this study were ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory designs because researching culture, lived experiences, or developing a theory for explaining real-world experiences were not the focuses of this study. Case study research is a practical means of conducting in-depth research of a real-life phenomenon within its business domain (Yin, 2018). The target business for the study was a property factoring and management company in the United Kingdom. According to Yin (2018), a single case study rather than a multi-case study is appropriate when observing a common example or situation in a single case or organization. A single case study design allows researchers to draw relevant conclusions from smaller participant pools because the case study design enables researchers to focus on the substance of participant responses within the context of the research problem rather than the number of participant responses (Yin, 2018). The qualitative single case study design fits best to understand what strategies business leaders use to leverage synergy and achieve sustainable growth of merged and consolidated businesses.

This single case study design relied on personal conversations, semistructured interviews, publicly available documents, and organizational document data provided by the organization. To assist in data management and enable exploration of a complex problem to understand the M&A integration strategies developed and deployed by leaders within real-life conditions. Open-ended questions allow participants an open forum to express themselves. Follow-up questions help participants clarify responses adding value to the interview. Data saturation occurs when the collection and analysis of

new data produce little or no change in the study. There is sufficient data to replicate the study. No further coding is achievable (Kori et al., 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Participant interviews continued until no new data was apparent in their responses to reach data saturation.

Population and Sampling

Researchers using purposeful sampling in qualitative studies help solidify understanding of the alignment between the research purpose and researchers' data. Researchers use case studies to investigate a phenomenon in a real-world context to help differentiate boundaries between two elements (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018). Purposeful sampling allows researchers to pinpoint and select cases relative to the phenomenon and research question (Serra et al., 2018). Securing purposeful samples increases research credibility by identifying individuals knowing about a phenomenon (Sharma, 2017). The sampling involved confirmation that each participant met the structured participant criteria. According to Serra et al. (2018), purposive sampling is suitable when researchers seek participants with specific knowledge concerning the research topic. The purposeful sampling technique's exciton aided in selecting five participants from the population of leaders who undertake M&A ventures without sufficient planning for integration.

The sample size is an integral part of qualitative case study research. According to Sim et al. (2018) and Blaikie (2018), the best estimation of the sample size needed in a qualitative study is gleaned from previous research evidence. A potential sample size range necessary to reach the data saturation from previous qualitative single case research indicates sample sizes from 4 to 50 (Sim et al., 2018). As such, a group of four

participants ensured a potential for data saturation. An indication of data saturation occurs when further coding is no longer practical and the researcher does not obtain additional information (Hennink et al., 2017). Justifying the sample size in qualitative studies shows that the chosen dataset sufficiently addressed the research problem (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This sample size of the study included four leaders and managers from the overall corporate structure. The sample size of four ensured a good potential for data saturation.

Due to the client's proximity, in-person interviews were not an option. According to McGrath et al. (2019), understanding participants' environment and conditions are crucial to ethical research development. In-person phone interviews helped to understand better and monitor participant responses to validate data saturation and ensure an ethical approach to the research. The interviewing technique used in this study and described in McGrath et al. leveraged a semistructured interviewing method to increase qualitative data's reliability and credibility. The technique allowed research subjects to provide comparable and contrasting answers to the same interview questions.

Qualitative researchers justify sample size by selecting participants with a clear rationale for fulfilling the research question and providing quality data (Hennink et al., 2017). For example, most participant interviews represent the data, only stopping information gathering when reaching redundancy or saturation. The researcher may use a quota sample that interviews a certain number of people with positions of interest essential for understanding the concepts (Clark & Vealé, 2018). Researchers use convenience sampling in qualitative research by locating appropriate cases that meet the

criteria and selecting until the sample size is fulfilled (McKim, 2017). According to Clark and Vealé (2018), researchers reach data saturation when (1) data collection yields adequate information to replicate the study, (2) no new data is produced, and (3) when the ability to continue coding ceases. Researchers use well-saturated data to simplify its categorization and concepts (Poth, 2019). When no new data is collected, and no new themes emerge, the researcher has achieved data saturation (Clark & Vealé, 2018).

Exercising data collection methods that aid in producing dense and detailed data aids the researcher with the collection process combined with a complementary study design to answer the research question (McKim, 2017). According to Hennink et al. (2017), transparent yet robust communication between researchers and participants requires fewer participants but sufficient quality information. This data collection technique for this study included conducting interviews until achieving data saturation and sharing data transcripts with participants after interviewing, ensured proper member checking. The interview objective sought to obtain the optimum amount of detailed information from interviewed participants until no new themes or patterns were evident. If I had not achieved data saturation, I would continue interviewing other participants who meet the qualification criteria until no new data emerged.

Ethical Research

As each research study is unique, a singular set of potential ethical issues is associated with a study. Conducting ethical research entails the diligent application of moral and ethical considerations inherent in a researcher's core values and practice (Woodgate et al., 2017). The Belmont Report (NCPHSBBR, 1979), developed by the

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, served as the accepted standard and guide for ethical principles and boundaries in biomedical and behavioral research with human subjects. The Belmont Report noted a critical tenant of ethical research specifies that researchers must ensure the subjects' voluntary and informed consent as part of the design, collection, and reporting of gathered information and data (NCPHSBBR, 1979). To ensure the subjects' voluntary and informed consent, I emailed my client, including the informed consent form. According to Largent and Lynch (2017), compensation or incentives for participation in research studies may increase biased results. No participants in this study received compensation or incentives for participating.

To ensure open and informed communication, participants received advanced notification of interview dates and times, an explanation of the process stressing voluntary participation, and ample instructions, time, and consideration if participants elected to withdraw. No compensation or any other incentives for participation were offered or implied. A digital archive system used to house all gathered notes, electronic voice recordings, and accompanying participant consent documents ensured proper data organization and security. Data is held for no less than 5 years to ensure confidentiality, the security of all data, and participants' anonymity. To ensure complete confidentiality and protect participant data, the company name, the names of all participants, and all sensitive data remained undisclosed. The pseudonym Company XYZ replaced the actual company name to maintain confidentiality. Data security remained a constant concern during the research and data collection process. Additionally, the Walden University IRB process and certification ensured adherence to the highest research protocol and decorum

standards. The Walden University IRB approval number for this research study was 09-13-18-0755448.

Data Collection Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher's role within the process directly affects the data's quality, reliability, and validity. According to Fusch et al. (2018), the primary instrument used to collect and analyze qualitative data is the researcher. In addition to acting in the primary data collection instrument's role, my role included observing and describing the participants' responses to ensure validity and reliability within the study. According to Yin (2018), data intended for use in case studies have six potential sources. Data must be collected from at least 2 of the 6 sources: (1) archival records, (2) direct observations, (3) documentation, (4) interviews, (5) participant-observation (i.e., in-person attendance), and (6) physical artifacts (Yin, 2018). The data collected for this study included recorded and transcribed semistructured interviews and organizational documents retrieved from the company website and provided by participants. Additionally, research data regarding the general topic of social housing in the United Kingdom accessed through the Internet completed the data set.

Using a semistructured interview process, qualitative researchers ask a structured set of crucial questions (Saunders et al., 2019). The semistructured interview process is appropriate for exploring a central research question through focused and precise questions (Yin, 2018). To increase the likelihood of reliable and valid results, a qualitative case study researcher should fully understand the issues, exercise proper listening techniques, ask relevant questions, avoid bias, and stay adaptive (Yin, 2018).

Therefore, adopting a semistructured interview process was an appropriate data collection process for this study.

An interview protocol (see Appendix) included interview questions and outlined instructions for the process to ensure proper collection and review of qualitative data. Application of an approved set of interview questions in a semistructured interview process with each participant ensured concise communication and understanding of the interview process's goals. Using a Sony model ICD-UX560 digital recording device, voice recordings ensured accurate and reliable data capture, collection, and storage. A personal cell phone filled the role of a secondary device to ensure reliable data capture. Castillo-Montoya (2016) noted a best practice to record individual interviews and transcribe the recordings for analysis later due to the possibility of deviation from the interview guide. Open-ended questions facilitated the business leaders sharing experiences on M&A strategies openly. Active listening enhanced the data collection process's reliability and validity and provided an accurate transcription of responses.

Using several data collection methods, triangulation, and member checking techniques for case study research helps avoid bias and validate qualitative results' credibility (McKinlay et al., 2017). During the interview process, follow-up questions facilitated data capture relevant to the business problem and research question. According to Lancaster (2017), follow-up questions increase the response rate and add more detail to the analysis. Structured member checking occurred after the interview process with in-person interviews via telephone to review and discuss responses to reach data saturation with no new information found. Member checking through data validation provides

leaders the opportunity to reflect on their personal experiences and share more information (Lancaster, 2017). Participants also received transcribed data from their interviews, allowing them to review and verify responses. Each participant received 5 days to review the data and provide feedback.

Additionally, exercising other cross-referencing techniques (i.e., methodological triangulation) provided an opportunity to validate data across two or more sources. Data collection sources were the Walden University library databases, Google Scholar, the organization's website, and documentation from the client collected over the 3-year consulting effort. Using digitally captured data, public documents, archival records, and interviews from each business sector within the organization helped identify common themes in the M&A process. Utilizing semistructured interviews, member checking, organization documents, and methodological triangulation helped assure that the participant fully understood and adequately answered the study research question.

In qualitative research, the extent of the researcher's role within the process directly affects the data's quality, reliability, and validity. According to Fusch et al. (2018), the primary instrument used to collect and analyze qualitative data is the researcher. In addition to acting in the primary data collection instrument's role, my role included observing and describing the participants' responses to ensure validity and reliability within the study. According to Yin (2018), data intended for use in case studies have six potential sources. Data must be collected from at least two of the six sources: (1) archival records, (2) direct observations, (3) documentation, (4) interviews, (5) participant-observation (i.e., in-person attendance), and (6) physical artifacts (Yin, 2018).

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organization documents, and methodological triangulation helped assure that the participant fully understood and adequately answered the study research question.

Data Collection Technique

Researchers use the data collection process to systematically congregate data and answer the research question (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Castillo-Montoya, 2016). For this study, the data collection process included semistructured, one-on-one interviews leveraging open-ended questions, audio recordings, and the review of both public and private organizational documentation. Each data collection technique has unique advantages and disadvantages. According to Yin (2018), the advantages of using semistructured, one-on-one interviews include (1) pre-interview question preparation, (2) an intimate situation affording the observation of specific behaviors and emotions, (3) the promotion of effective two-way communication, (4) a forum for participants to express personal views, in a protected environment and, (5) provides reliable and comparable qualitative data. Some disadvantages of using semistructured, one-on-one interviews and the introduction of researcher bias (Yin, 2018). The researcher's background and experience are critical factors when using the semistructured interview technique in case study research (Husband., 2020). According to Husband (2020), the researcher should engage participants in productive and meaningful discussions. An interview protocol includes predetermined, open-ended questions (see Appendix) to prompt participants to explain the strategies related to successful M&A integration. I used fictional names Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and Participant 4 to maintain confidentiality and differentiate between each of the six participants.

Case study researchers use a sequence of questions to secure or explore information regarding a social issue (Yin, 2018). In this study, the generation of participant responses came from an open-ended question format. This method allows participants to respond to questions without obstruction (Husband, 2020). Some advantages of predetermined, open-ended questions include (1) participant-provided opinions on the relevance of questions, (2) providing participants the opportunity to expand on topics, and (3) affording the qualitative researcher a structured discussion process to maintain focus throughout the data collection process. Some disadvantages of predetermined, open-ended questions are: (1) potentially extended interview times due to participants expanded effort to respond to questions, (2) participants have trouble expressing views or maintaining focus during their response, and (3) potential difficulty in data coding.

Access to organizational documents allows for triangulation of the interview participants' data (Saunders et al., 2019). Using company-provided business documents, i.e., EFQM award submission and strategic planning data, allowed for a deeper understanding of the client organization's mission, goals, and business strategy. Although the use and analysis of business documents obtained from participants provide a secondary data source, some researchers may find the time necessary for thorough data review and challenging to identify relevant data within these documents (Yin, 2018). For this study, the benefits of using document analysis surpassed the shortcomings. Marshall and Rossman (2016) posited that researchers could consider companies' websites as data sources. Accordingly, the data included client-owned website data for corroborative

evidence and contextual information as part of this study. After reviewing and organizing each participant's responses and triangulation with the other data collected, participant interview out briefs can occur.

After each interview, a debriefing process took place to explain the next steps in the interview process, communicate expectations, and privacy protocols, and provide instructions required for the member checking process. Debriefing interviews help researchers identify the participants' personal feelings, and perceptions, and present the opportunity to provide additional information about the study (McGrath et al., 2019). After completing all interviews, data transcription occurred for digital voice recordings and notes utilizing NVivo. As opposed to other products, NVivo offered various features, such as voice typing in a document that allows for transcribing audio recordings. The use of the organization software, NVivo, aided in converting interview data from voice to text for accuracy. Upon completion, for reliability, each participant received a copy of the results to ensure the accuracy of the data collected through the member checking process.

Member checking occurred throughout the study process. An open sharing of findings and responses with participants ensured timely data validation, enhancing the study's validity (Wild et al., 2017). Obtaining feedback from each participant helped implement any required improvements, modifications, and adjustments to the data before continuing the interview process with subsequent participants. Member checking improves the credibility, validity, and reliability of qualitative research (Yin, 2018). Member checking helped review and validate feedback from the research participants and respondents.

Data Organization Techniques

Data organization is critical to the protection, accuracy, and integrity of data throughout the data management process (Watkins, 2017). An example of an exemplary data organization technique involves labeling each participant's interview file, both hard copies and recorded files, either digital or captured on media (De Rosa et al., 2019). For this study, each participant file included a listing of acquired organization documents collected during the study, the date, time, location of their interview, the signed informed consent document, and the interview transcription. A careful review of interview transcripts, email correspondence, and facilitator notes conducted during the data organization stage ensured the proper capture of themes. It facilitated the correction of any errors before entering data into the qualitative analysis software.

This study's data organization and management process met the Walden University IRB requirements to protect participant confidentiality. After collecting data, researchers must properly handle participants' files to ensure confidentiality (Surmiak, 2018). To aid in maintaining participant confidentiality and as part of the cataloging and labeling process, fictional names (Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4) were designated for each participant. Paper format data remained locked in a fireproof file cabinet to protect participants' rights and confidentiality. Furthermore, recordings and electronic documents remained stored on a personal password-protected and encrypted removable hard drive kept secured in a safe when not in use. The planned disposal of all paper formatted data using a shredding machine and all electronically stored data's

permanent deletion 5 years after concluding the study met Walden University's IRB requirements.

Data Analysis

Data analysis includes multiple steps and processes. Data analysis is a systematic review process of classification and categorization of all data collected through the actions of interviewing (Assarroudi et al., 2018). Assarroudi et al. (2018) further noted that data are collected by reviewing written, recorded, visual, and notated data. Thematic analysis is a data analysis completion technique that researchers use when reviewing large and small data sets and aids in critical pattern and thematic identification within the data sets (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Swygart-Hobaugh, 2019). This study's data analysis thematic technique occurred using a five-step approach developed by R. K. Yin and NVivo, a thematic analysis software suite used to uncover underlying themes within the data.

According to Yin (2018), data analysis involves discovering meaningful themes and patterns within the data set and developing data descriptions relative to the research question and purpose. Following the data capture, it is essential to conduct an in-depth examination to find similarities, differences, universal themes, and the meaning of information (Belotto, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017). The five-step thematic analysis process suggested by Yin (2018) steps through the data as follows: (1) compile, (2) disassemble, (3) reassemble, (4) interpret, and (5) draw conclusions. Researchers commonly experience challenges with qualitative data analysis. Commercial software suits assist researchers with data analysis (Swygart-Hobaugh, 2019). NVivo is a software suite

developed to recognize recurring words or textual markers, whose identification helps the researcher sort information or code the data concerning its relevance to the research question and purpose (Swygart-Hobaugh, 2019). However, while NVivo is practical for thematic analysis, researchers require additional tools and techniques to ensure diligent data analysis, including triangulation and notetaking.

Methodological triangulation was helpful in the data analysis process of this study. Triangulation is the intersection of data from varied sources, including open-ended interviews, participant observations, direct and indirect, and documents (Renz et al., 2018). According to Taguchi (2018), qualitative researchers validate and support findings through triangulation. Of the four types of triangulations, methodological triangulation best fits the structure of this study. Methodological triangulation involves using different methods to study and support the same phenomenon (Fusch et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). Researchers who apply methodological triangulation as a data analysis process obtain detailed information regarding the phenomenon and find the process beneficial in providing more comprehensive data, an enhanced understanding of the phenomena under study, and increased validity (Abdalla et al., 2018). Abdalla et al. (2018) posited researchers could use a combination of data sources when displaying methodological triangulation to create an accurate description of the phenomenon. The semistructured interviews, organization documents, and publicly available documents aided my research data volumes and added to the validity and reliability of the study (Poth, 2019; Reichow et al., 2018)

Data gathered during this study originated from several sources and data types: semistructured phone interviews with four company leaders, company data available to the public through the company website, the company's 2019 EFQM application, and company data provided by participants. Also, handwritten notes generated during the participant phone interviews completed the data. The interview process included capturing and summarizing the data constituted into the triangulated data included in this study. Other data in the triangulation process originated from the semistructured interviews, oral member checking, observations, and documents constituting the data submitted for analysis. The data analysis process begins with preparing and organizing the raw data (Yin, 2018). The data is then arranged into general thematic groups to help the researcher refamiliarize the gathered data (Nowell et al., 2017). The 2019-2020 Baldrige Performance Excellence Program (2019) constituted the framework for a research study related to M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. Observed relevance to the study between the semistructured phone interviews and the Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework, and the interview questions to the research question added confidence to the study process.

Data analysis proceeded using thematic analysis. The six steps of thematic analysis follow (1) data familiarization, (2) initial code generation, (3) discovering themes, (4) thematic review, (5) theme naming and definition, and (6) reporting out (Nowell et al., 2017). The desired outcome of using thematic analysis for this study was to identify common patterns and associated themes based on my conceptual framework,

the five competitive forces theory by Porter. Additionally, conclusive evidence of achieving data saturation is the desired outcome. Data analysis for this study included gathering and grouping the data, creating themes, and evaluating through the triangulation method. Also, through mind-mapping and concept mapping, researchers can align the study framework with the study purpose and help maintain focus on the study's goals (Azungah, 2018). The application of methodological triangulation, mind-mapping, and concept-mapping facilitated data analysis about the phenomena of M&A integration strategies.

Theme development during data analysis follows two paths: inductive or deductive (Taguchi, 2018). Following an inductive path leads to theme generation, while a deductive path encounters fixed themes for discovery (Azungah, 2018). Data analysis tools are necessary and valuable to researchers for theme discovery and generation when employing inductive or deductive paths. Mind-mapping and concept-mapping are two valuable tools for theme identification and aiding in maintaining focus on the key themes and correlating the critical themes of the study with the literature and conceptual framework of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), mind mapping aids in connecting concepts and coded data during theme generation.

Researchers use qualitative data analysis software to match common themes to the captured data (Davidson et al., 2017). Researchers use qualitative analysis software to examine qualitative data to deliver insightful findings and comprehensive recommendations (Robins & Eisen, 2017). Robins and Eisen (2017) posited that

qualitative analysis software is the recommended software to identify the redundancy and common patterns in data and analyze a significant amount of data in various formats like text, images, literature, video, and social media. Robins and Eisen affirmed that qualitative analysis software is a robust application to analyze semistructured interview transcripts. Qualitative analysis software can help answer complicated questions, enrich the researchers' understanding, and facilitate data management (Robins & Eisen, 2017). Coding capture involved qualitative analysis software and Microsoft Excel as a backup and method for cross-validation of the data. Theme development took place using qualitative analysis software to evaluate the transcribed data and facilitate the study data interpretations. Transcription and coding of the received data occurred using an Excel spreadsheet, and the completed coded data was analyzed using the data analysis software.

Reliability and Validity

In qualitative studies, reliability and validity are descriptive measures of accuracy, trustworthiness, integrity, and repeatability of the study findings (Quintão et al., 2020). Qualitative researchers measure the validity of a study by applying four criteria: confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability (Carcary, 2020; Yin, 2018). The reliability of research findings rests on accuracy, consistency, repeatability, contextuality, and lack of researcher bias (Nowell et al., 2017). Some qualitative research critiques assert that findings rely on personal opinions subject to researcher bias and a lack of rigor in analytical procedures. However, according to Quintão et al. (2020), researchers rely upon the tenets of reliability and validity to address this kind of bias.

Reliability

Reliability is the measure of consistency in the findings and conclusions of a study when approached by various researchers applying the same or similar qualitative research practices (Poth, 2019). According to Quintão et al. (2020), equivalency, homogeneity (consistency), and stability are the reliability attributes. Reliability refers to the consistency of measure and proves that results are dependable through a lack of significant errors and bias (Quintão et al., 2020). Dependability refers to stability and consistency in the researcher's analysis and interpretation of the data (Naidu & Prose, 2018). According to Naidu and Prose (2018), researchers ensure dependable results by verifying the analysis and interpretation process's accuracy through member checking. Researchers can ensure the research findings' dependability by embracing process transparency and accurate description and documentation of all research activities (Yin, 2018). To ensure reliability and dependability in this research study, I developed and documented an audit trail by creating and preserving audio recordings, developing interview transcripts, and utilizing member checks with each interview participant.

Validity

Validity in research involves attaining credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Fitzpatrick, 2019; Poth, 2019; Yin, 2016). According to Yeong et al. (2018), validity confirms the level of rigor and trustworthiness in a qualitative study. Confirming validity in qualitative research is paramount for researchers to demonstrate the research findings' credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Hayashi et al., 2019; Ricci et al., 2018).

Member checking, participant transcript review, and methodological triangulation processes for the study are tools to address credibility. Member checking is an oral interviewing process in research in which participants and researchers review data gathered from interviews and collaborate on information documented from the process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Member checking is a verification and validation process involving participants of a study to ensure the documentation and interpretation of interviews are correct and maintain credibility (Clark & Vealé, 2018; Poth, 2019; Yin, 2018). The member checking process requires the researcher to verify and corroborate what the researcher analyzed and documented in data interpretation and analysis (Yin, 2018). Oral data and transcript review sessions with each participant ensured the member checking process was completed timely and accurately. Member checking allows both the participant and researcher to validate collected interview data for accuracy (Abdalla et al., 2018). As applied by the researcher, the member checking process allows the researcher to make corrections to the data sets and participants the opportunity to edit or add to the information they provided (Yin, 2018). Each participant thoroughly reviewed all data gathered during their interview to ensure the data's accuracy and credibility and allowed the opportunity to edit or add information where appropriate. All participants received a transcribed copy of their interview and all notes for review and confirmation of the transcription accuracy. Participants, through return email, provided any updates and confirmation of the accuracy of the interview transcript.

For this study, methodological triangulation involved reviewing organizational documents and archival data, transcribed semistructured interview data validated through

member checking, and responses to the Malcolm Baldrige Excellence Framework developed with the United Kingdom social housing provider's leaders. The triangulated data examination helped to understand the participant's business codex and as a method to supplement interview data. Review of the data sources and interview data culminated in the input of data to the NVivo qualitative data analysis software. The NVivo software is instrumental in organizing the data, interpreting the data, and recognizing the emergent themes or patterns to develop findings, recommendations, and conclusions.

The participants in this study were leaders of a United Kingdom social housing provider and maintainers (factoring) with experience in the research problem. The results of this study could be useful to other social housing and factoring providers. I ensured the transferability of the study by encouraging the transfer of findings to other organizations through a detailed audit trail that included a journal that tracked the data collection, analysis, reporting process, and found limitations. An excellent qualitative research study includes internal and external validity, objectivity, credibility, transferability, and dependability (Yin, 2018). Transferability is a subjective position; made by those consuming the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I ensured the confirmability and transferability of the study by using an audit trail and journal to record all information during the data collection process. I also shared the journal and audit trail data with participants to avoid bias.

Confirmability of research data occurs outside of the study. The researcher confirms the study data reflects the participants' original views and understands and has confidence in the research findings' interpretations and conclusions (Flick, 2018;

Marshall & Rossman, 2016). According to Yin (2018), qualitative researchers should use protocols that ensure the trustworthiness of data and research findings. Confirmability is the researcher's ability to suppress personal opinions, conduct a study with transparency, and ensure the thorough exploration of data and data saturation (Flick, 2018).

A researcher confirms data saturation when the data becomes redundant and new information is repetitive (Fusch et al., 2018; Yin, 2018). The data collection process for this study continued until discovery was curtailed and no new information surfaced. As a further discriminator, I leveraged the member checking process to obtain data saturation to increase study dependability.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 of this study consisted of the purpose and study methodology dialog, where I established the study methods used. I also discussed my role as the researcher within the data collection process and my relationships with the topic, the participants, and the research area, including ethical research, data collection instruments and techniques, the data analysis process, and the reliability and validity of the study. The participant pool consisted of leaders of critical areas of operations, human resources, finance, and the two companies' general managers. Interviews and member checking continued until the achievement of data saturation.

Section 3 includes an introduction and presentation of research findings and their application to the research topic and implications for professional practice and social change. Also, I present in Section 3 participant-provided data develop into a Baldrige Excellence Framework organizational profile. Additionally, I reviewed the

Recommendations for Action and Areas for Future Research to conclude the section.

Section 3 of this study included an introduction and presentation of the study findings, applying the study to professional practice, the implications of the study for social change, recommendations for action and further research, the researcher's reflections, and a conclusion.

Section 3: Organizational Profile

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. The BPEP (2019) was the framework used to foster an understanding of the organizational operations and opportunities (BPEP, 2019). The framework provided a beginning reference point for identifying knowledge gaps that allowed me to better understand the organizational perspective and performance to develop strategies to complete gap-fill (Mai et al., 2018).

This section includes an evaluation of Company XYZ using the Baldrige standards of Key Factors, Leadership Triad, and Results Triad furthered through a profile development schema of Company XYZ based on detailed research of the organization's leadership strategies and processes and procedure documents and a measure of their organizational effectiveness. The use of the organizational profile supported the context of the study and proved helpful in identifying critical information regarding the organization's strategic domain and challenges (BPEP, 2019). Critical theme and improvement opportunity identification occurred through detailed data collection and analysis, validated through member checking and methodological triangulation, and supported through Porter's five competitive forces theory as the conceptual framework. The results of the research, filtered through the thematic analysis process, gleaned the following themes from being the basis for company XYZ leadership's future strategic planning efforts focused on M&A integration strategies to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector: (1) unique cooperative synergies of M&A

assets, (2) measured executive communication and direction, and (3) effectively leveraging organizational identity.

Key Factors Worksheet

Organizational Description

Company XYZ is part of a for-profit housing letting, factoring, and a management organization with locations throughout Scotland owning or managing many homes and associated customers, many of whom are considered vulnerable or at risk. Company XYZ operates in 17 local authorities out of the 32 in Scotland. Their primary operational areas are (1) Argyll and Bute, (2) Stirling, (3) West Dunbartonshire, (4) East Dunbartonshire, (5) Renfrewshire, (6) Glasgow City, (7) East Renfrewshire, (8) North Lanarkshire, (9) South Lanarkshire, (10) Falkirk, (11) West Lothian, (12) City of Edinburgh, (13) Midlothian, (14) East Lothian, (15) Fife, (16) Inverclyde, and (17) Clackmannanshire. Although affiliated with a more prominent United Kingdom Business, Company XYZ is best defined through its achievements rather than size.

Established in early 2012, company XYZ is the product of two merged businesses considered ethical businesses, differentiated from other commercial competitors by reinvesting 100% of their profit margin into community benefits through their parent organization. Merging the companies to establish Company XYZ created combined property management and private letting company with £135M in assets and £26M in turnover, delivering a charitable contribution of £3M per year. This merger opened new opportunities to redesign company XYZ's services to meet the growing expectations of increased working age and digitally active customer base and to leverage the company's

unique ability to provide the full range of property services, encompassing factoring, property management, and private sector lettings providing a competitive edge through increased favorable outcome for tenancy in Scotland.

Company XYZ is setting the standard for the number of favorable outcomes for tenancy in Scotland. Other organizations recognize them as the standard and train with Company XYZ and adopt their best practices. Additionally, Company XYZ contributes to the Scottish Government's More Homes Scotland commitment to deliver 50,000 affordable homes by 2021. Increasing the supply of new homes to meet their customers' diverse housing needs and economic circumstances is Company XYZ's key strategic commitment. The strategy aligns with the business purpose of this research study focused on M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector.

Organizational Environment

Product Offerings. Company XYZ provides a range of housing and housing services across two key markets: housing letting and factoring/property management, all aimed at improving the quality of life for tenants. Company XYZ has a presence in 17 of the 32 local authorities in Scotland (Table 4). The most significant part of their business is rented housing (letting), with approximately 30,000 homes designated as social housing. Social housing provides high-quality, low-cost accommodation for people who would be unable to afford a home that meets their needs in the private rented sector—the average social housing unit rents for around 50% of open market rents. Company XYZ

competes with other social landlords for government grants that help subsidize building new homes to make affordable rent levels possible.

Property management is the second-largest market in which Company XYZ operates, providing services to over 30,000 homes. Their property management service is designed to assist homeowners in shared or mixed tenure blocks to maintain the building and surrounding environments through sourcing and managing repairs, cleaning, and associated services for those shared common areas. Company XYZ provides property management where there is a mix of owner-occupiers and social housing tenants, working in partnership with the social landlords in the Group to facilitate investment in these mixed blocks for the benefit of both sets of customers and is a crucial part of the Company XYZ's formula for maintaining great places to live and thriving communities.

Table 4

Services Provided by Geographic Location

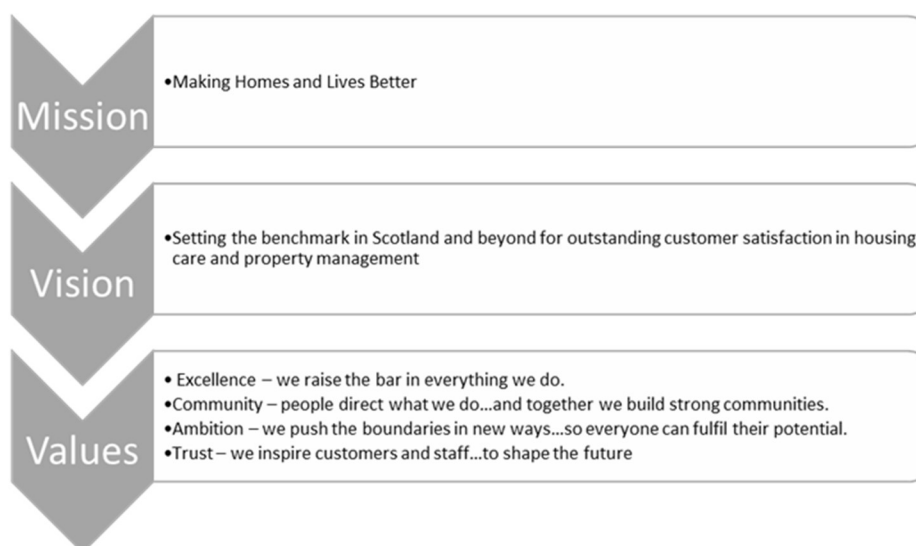
| | Service locations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------|--------------|-------------------|------------|--------------|------|------------|------------------|
| | Argyll and Bute | Stirling | West Dunbartonshire | East Dunbartonshire | Renfrewshire | Glasgow City | East Renfrewshire | North Lanarkshire | South Lanarkshire | Falkirk | West Lothian | City of Edinburgh | Midlothian | East Lothian | Fife | Inverclyde | Clackmannanshire |
| Factoring/property management | * | | * | * | | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| Housing letting | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |

Mission, Vision, and Values. The mission, vision, and values for company XYZ were developed at the Group's formation by leaders in consultation with Boards and staff to develop the 5-year strategy. Company XYZ's mission is to make homes and lives better. The organization's vision statement sets the bar high by setting the benchmark in

Scotland and beyond for outstanding customer satisfaction in housing and property management. Company XYZ has articulated its values in support of its mission and vision of the organization (Figure 2). Company XYZ supports its mission and vision through its values by commitments to excellence, supporting its communities by pushing the boundaries to ambitiously improve the lives of their tenants and build trust within their communities.

Figure 2

Mission, Vision, and Core Values



All staff participates in special leadership forums where leadership and staff actively discuss the mission and vision and how each role influences outcomes and success. Senior leaders translate the overall strategy and the supporting strategies for each segment through a performance framework into outcomes, targets, measures, and projects to be delivered each year. Planning for and progress against these is discussed regularly with staff through a variety of mechanisms:

- (1) Visual Measure Boards (VMB) – daily or weekly sessions for all staff looking at progress, issues, barriers, and solutions to achieve targets and overall objectives for the year.
- (2) My Contribution – all staff one on ones are structured using My Contribution, which is a tool that, at the beginning of the year, is used to distill what the Group and each subsidiary must achieve into objectives and outcomes for individuals, then looks at competencies and training and development needs to deliver those objectives and outcomes.
- (3) Regular team briefings and monthly half-day training sessions – used to reinforce the mission or talk about the emerging vision for the organization. Additionally, group platforms reinforce the mission – a quarterly staff newsletter and a company intranet site.

Workforce Profile. As of November 2019, Company XYZ employed 40 management and support staff to support 17 local authorities across Scotland and supported other subsidiaries within the greater group. Table 5 depicts the key staffing segments as of November 2019. All segments receive paid leave, including sick leave, contributions to an investment portfolio, and medical and dental insurance. There are no specific education requirements for employment at Company XYZ, but a restructuring occurred in 2017, reshaping all roles and implementing a new management structure. The introduction of a comprehensive learning program and professionalization of the workforce occurred where managers, agents, and officers gained essential industry qualifications and membership as associate members of the Institute of Residential

Property Management. Additionally, the Scottish government introduced new registration requirements for letting agents as a precursor to working within the industry (Table 6).

Table 5

Job Categories as of November 2019

| Segment type | Total employees |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Managing director | 1 |
| Senior managers | 4 |
| Business advisors | 4 |
| Letting agents | 17 |
| Business support officers | 10 |
| Administrative support | 4 |
| Total | 40 |

Table 6

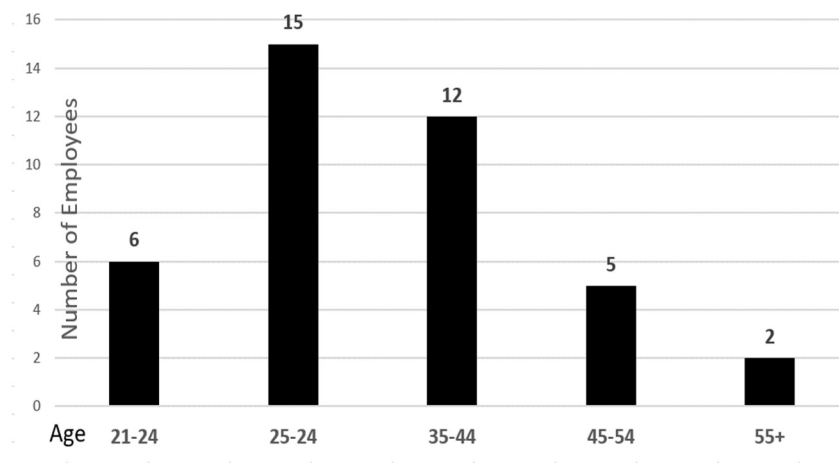
Registration Requirements for Letting Agents 2019

| Registration required | Renewal period (YR) |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Property management | 1 |
| Letting agent | 3 |

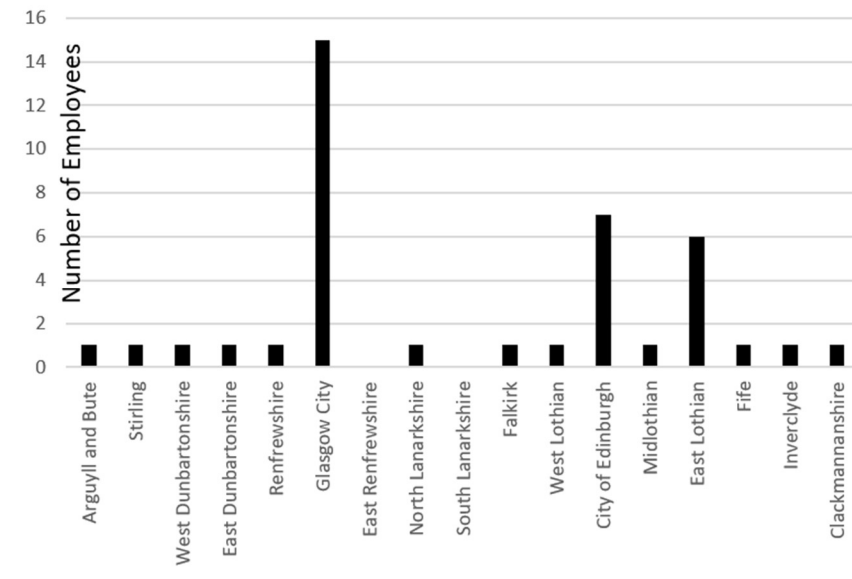
The segments operate as a cohesive team to develop engagement strategies where at-risk tenants and their families are the primary focus. The work of the combined segments aligns with Company XYZ's mission, vision, and value statement (Figure 2) and the critical success factors outlined in its business plan. Workforce demographics are highlighted in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3

Number of Employees by Age Range as of November 2019

**Figure 4**

Number of Employees by Geographic Location as of November 2019



Assets. As of November 2019, Company XYZ maintained a presence in 17 locations throughout Scotland. All of Company XYZ's assets are in the housing stock.

Their owned buildings numbered 1,723, consisting of tenements, houses, and other flats (Table 7). Their asset valuation as of November 2019 summed up to £135M with a turnover of £26M. All units needed to deliver their services (e.g., local housing offices, environmental services, and corporate buildings) are owned by their parent company. Additionally, their parent company provides all other asset categories pension funds, information technology (IT) assets, including hardware and software, enterprise resource planning, human resources, finance, and payroll systems. Finally, productivity tools available to most staff members include email, office applications, internet, connection access, and collaboration tools, all of which are received from the parent company.

Unique to Company XYZ within the larger entity is its ethical business status. Their practice of reinvesting 100% of their profits differentiates them from other commercial competitors and benefits the communities they serve. Company XYZ provided over £3M in profit to the parent company's charitable entity in 2019.

Table 7

Housing Stock by Type as of November 2019

| Property type | House | Tenement | Other flats |
|---------------|-------|----------|-------------|
| Number | 483 | 775 | 465 |
| %Assets | 28% | 45% | 27% |

Regulatory Requirements. Acquired in 2012 by their parent, Company XYZ is incorporated along with their parent company in Scotland under the Companies Act 2006. Company XYZ is a housing association registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator. Company XYZ is regulated under the Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2011,

which sets the code of conduct for property factors, and under the Private Housing (Tenancies; Scotland) Act 2016, which sets the code of conduct for letting agents.

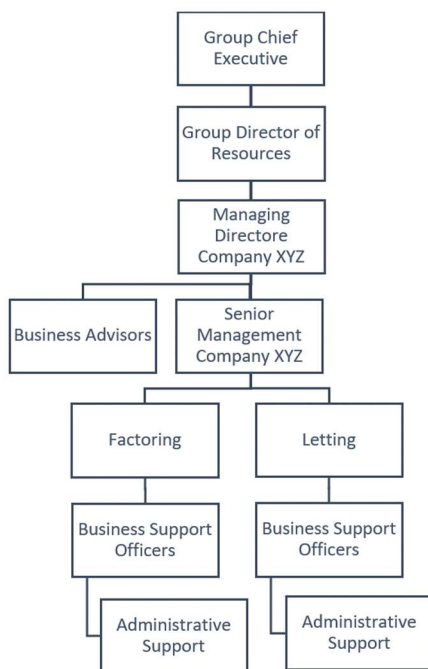
Property factors and letting agents must be registered with the Scottish Ministers to provide property factoring services to the public. There is also required testing for both letting agents and property factors to ensure applicants meet the job's strict personality and performance requirements. Additionally, the company and Scottish Ministers' governance representatives monitor adherence to the code of conduct. Customers who observe a factor or letting agent not following the code of conduct can appeal to the First-Tier Tribunal Housing and Property Chamber. The Tribunal can issue an Enforcement Order to the focus party. Failure to comply with the enforcement order constitutes contempt of court and is a criminal offense. Ministers may also decide to de-regulate a factor if circumstance merits it.

Organizational Relationships

Organizational Structure. Company XYZ is a property factoring and letting organization registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator and operating under the Companies Act of 2006. The overall parent company has sufficient oversight and planning strategies to ensure people and assets are effectively managed. The Group Learning Framework is a comprehensive plan for learning with a focus on (1) induction and onboarding, (2) compliance and safety, (3) core skills, (4) digital and IT skills, (5) online learning, (6) qualifications and modern apprenticeship, (7) leadership and management development, (8) external accreditation support, (9) consulting professional development, (10) organizational development and innovation, and (11) engagement

events. The comprehensive training is part of an engagement strategy to ensure assets and people are well maintained across all disciplines and materialize the inefficiency of day-to-day operations.

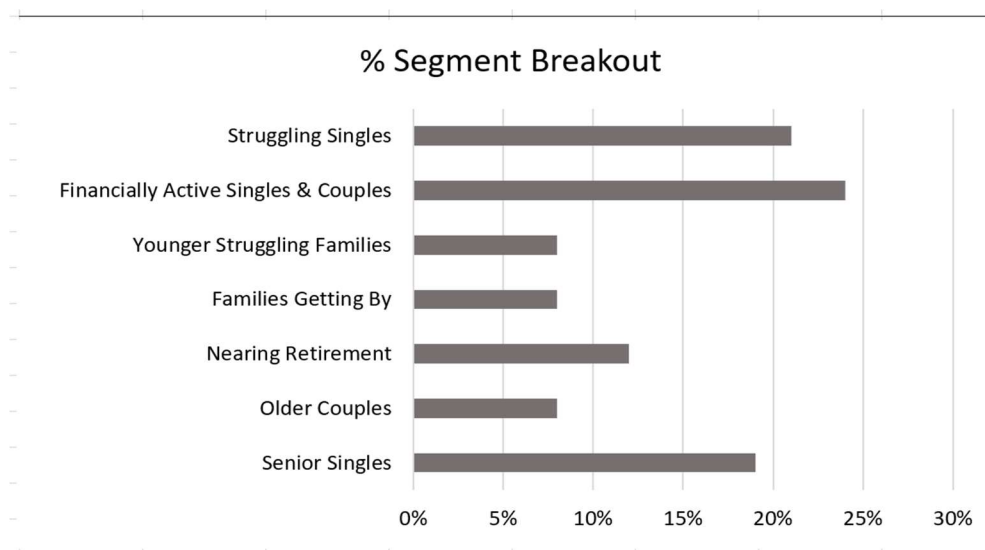
Day-to-day operations are executed by Company XYZ's management team (Figure 5) and overseen by Company XYZ's Managing Director. Yearly sales goals are developed during the Group 5-Year strategy session updates at the end of each fiscal year through the Group Director of Resources, with quarterly and monthly goals established for each team and further monitored monthly by the Managing Director with input from both Business Advisors and Senior Management. Senior Management disseminates goals to Factoring and Letting Agents and Business Support officers. Measures and targets are in place for all critical processes. These are monitored through a Group performance framework with a rolling program of assurance checks reported through a Group audit committee.

Figure 5*High-Level Organizational Chart for Company XYZ*

Customers and Stakeholders. The parent company of Company XYZ operates across three key markets: (1) housing, (2) care, and (3) property management. The most significant part of Company XYZ’s business is rented housing, and almost 30,000 of those homes are social housing. Social housing provides high-quality, low-cost accommodation for people who cannot afford a home in the private rented sector that meets their needs. The average social housing rents are approximately 50% of open market rents. Company XYZ competes with other social landlords for government grants that help subsidize building new homes to make affordable rent levels possible. In return, Company XYZ offers a range of services to financially insecure and vulnerable customers to support them in paying rent and maintaining residence over time. The

shortage of good quality affordable homes across all price points means little competition for customers in the rented housing market. The strong relationships developed with their customers result from their operating model, employees' comprehensive training and development programs, and sophisticated customer insight tools. Some examples of the tools used are their annual customer satisfaction survey, focus groups, customer segmentation model, and management data systems enabling Company XYZ to deliver personalized services tailored to their customers' particular needs and expectations.

To reduce the number of properties that each Business Support Officer manages, Company XYZ practices re-investment of resources, enabling Company XYZ to decrease the Business Support Officer to property ratio. Reducing this ratio is a crucial enhancement factor to trusting relationships with customers. Company XYZ staff can access appropriate wrap-around support for their customers, including training and employment projects, financial advice, health and wellbeing initiatives, and community capacity building. Transactional services, where customers prioritize quick, effortless, and efficient service, are managed and delivered at a group level through a 24/7 Customer Service Center, leveraging economies of scale to create better efficiency. Company XYZ's Customer Service Center introduced webchat and the existing web, phone, and email channels, to further enhance customer contact options. Company XYZ develops its service offerings and marketing strategies with the needs of each customer segment in mind. Additionally, customer expectations are a crucial measure within Company XYZ's Customer Insight Tools. Figure 6 and Table 8 display the customer segmentation and expectations as of November 2019.

Figure 6*Customer Segments***Table 8***Expectations by Segment as of November 2019*

| Segment Group | 24/7 Customer Service | Acceptable Response Times | Reliable, Quality Service | Affordable |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Senior singles | | * | * | * |
| Older couples | * | * | * | * |
| Nearing retirement | | * | * | * |
| Families getting by | * | * | * | * |
| Younger struggling families | * | * | * | * |
| Financially active singles & couples | * | * | * | |
| Struggling singles | | * | * | * |

Company XYZ competes with other housing providers to subsidize their new build program for appropriate land and government grants. One advantage for Company XYZ is its strategic partnerships with key stakeholders in local authorities and the

Scottish Government, which aids in garnering the influence and leverage necessary to compete effectively in times of public spending cuts (Table 9).

Table 9

Expectations by Stakeholder as of November 2019

| Stakeholders | Expectations |
|---------------------|---|
| Staff | * Equal and fair treatment |
| | * A functional work environment |
| | * Leadership trust allows people the ability to act for their customers |
| | * To make a difference in the lives of their customers |
| Services users | * A safe environment to live and raise a family |
| | * Affordable rents |
| | * Trusted service when needed |
| Local authorities | * Mutually beneficial partnerships |
| Scottish government | * Leaders and change agents where people come first |

Reinvesting resources to reduce the number of properties that each Business Officer manages enabled Company XYZ to significantly reduce the business officer to property ratio allowing a more present and personal experience for customers led to enhanced, trusting relationships. Staff can access appropriate wrap-around support for their customers, including training, employment projects, financial advice, health and wellbeing initiatives, and community capacity building. Transactional services, where customers prioritize a quick, effortless, and efficient service, are managed and delivered at a Group level through their 24/7 Customer Service Center, leveraging economies of scale and creating better efficiency. The Customer Service Centre introduced webchat and the existing web, phone, and email channels to enhance customer contact options further.

Suppliers and Partners. As stated previously, Company XYZ competes with other housing providers for land and Government provided grants to subsidize their building program. The relationships built with suppliers and supplier partners provide Company XYZ with a competitive advantage. The strength of the relationships with their customers and communities is one of the significant features that set Company XYZ apart from other organizations and continues to be a critical factor in their success. Company XYZ's key partners help them achieve their mission and strategic commitments enabling situations that foster positive customer outcomes (Table 10). Building trust and confidence with their partners enables Company XYZ to identify synergies and opportunities to achieve shared outcomes, add sustainable mutual value, and do much more collectively than they could individually.

Table 10*Key Operational and Strategic Partners*

| 5 Big Aims | Key operational partners | Key strategic partners |
|------------|---|--|
| Excel | City building Local authorities Keep Scotland beautiful Glasgow life | Police & fire UK government/DWP Glasgow community planning Partnership Housing options hub |
| Care | Alertacall Wise group Volunteer Glasgow The lens | Health & social care partnerships Social bite & housing first Consortium University West of Scotland Triangle consultant |
| Build | New build developers on a framework Private sector home builders | Key local authorities: GCC, WDC, WLC, CEC Scottish government Transforming communities Glasgow |
| Inspire | Royal botanic gardens Edinburgh open university | Skills Development Scotland Scottish social services council (SSSC) Scottish qualifications authority (SQA) Trade unions |
| Invest | Banks re treasury management | Investors/funders procurement |

Organizational Situation

The general business problem focused on by this study is that some business leaders undertake M&A ventures without sufficient planning for integration. The current environment in Scotland requires Letting and Factoring businesses to explore optimization and integration techniques that ensure sustained operations and

uninterrupted customer support during integration. Company XYZ seeks to gain a competitive advantage by leveraging existing partnerships and resources to support integration strategies that maintain continuity while ensuring the engagement of new assets and leveraging all synergy opportunities to the fullest. Business leaders who leverage synergies within their new organization also tend to maximize performance to achieve a sustainable edge over their competition (Giarratana et al., 2021). The business influence for Company XYZ resides within customer support and the organization's sustainability.

Company XYZ is dedicated to enriching the lives of its tenants and customers. The organization provides innovative housing and support services for vulnerable and at-risk children and adults and creates engagement and support plans based on an individual's needs. Sharing knowledge and expertise with its community partners supports the development of skills and strategies needed to provide the best housing experience and support for the vulnerable and at-risk people within the communities supported.

Competitive Environment

Competitive Position. Company XYZ operates in an environment where the differentiators revolve around customer service and desirable location. All United Kingdom property factoring business competitors must be registered with the United Kingdom property factoring register. Company XYZ's competitors fall within two major factoring categories, Local Councils (or Local Authorities), of which there are 17, and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), numbering 129. RSLs factor in mixed tenure

neighborhoods. These are essentially tenement blocks where the tenants purchased their homes from the RSL under the Right to Buy policy (ended in Scotland in 2018), making the RSL a factor as it manages the block's common parts on behalf of the new owners. Most RSLs who sell their assets but continue to manage the common areas are primarily not interested in growth. The RSL's actions are an extension of their social landlord activities and typically do not wish to win new business. RSLs typically will only grow if they build new housing and possibly have some shared ownership units (where tenants buy a percent of the property) or build units for rent and private sale, which is not common in Scotland. Between the councils and RSLs, they factor 118,000 properties. Company XYZ factors 30,000 units, and the 15 councils factor 28,000 collectively, indicating most RSLs are not a sizeable competitive factor for Company XYZ.

Private factors are private companies set up expressly to provide factoring services, often alongside private and commercial letting and estate agency arms to their business. The market these private factors work within wholly private developments and tenement blocks across Scotland's cities. Developers appointed most of the Factors in these developed communities. These Factors compete with Company XYZ to win other businesses of private or wholly-owned blocks. (Note: owners of blocks of flats can also self-factor, providing the factoring services themselves). Additionally, some blocks allow their agreement/contracts with Company XYZ to expire, electing to handle the factoring independently.

Competitiveness Changes. In 2019, Company XYZ won a competitive contract award as the letting agent for a central city council. The award was the company's first

significant award for providing this service at this scale to another organization. There is high potential for further growth as the council develops more MMR homes and other councils look at the success of this model. Additionally, increasing regulation in the letting industry will potentially drive out smaller operations due to expanded costs and risk or drive the amateur landlords (98% of buy to let housing which is the second-largest tenure in Scotland, is owned by people with between 1-5 properties) to secure professional letting services. The mentioned trends spurred Company XYZ to begin working on an Internal Group development strategy that considers potential scenarios for increased unit let rates based on potential changes across the industry in MMR and private sale properties.

The Scottish Government is making factoring compulsory to drive up property maintenance standards. In 2019, a parliamentary working group published interim recommendations to mandate larger blocks of flats, have 5 yearly inspections, and mandate reserves for major repair areas such as roof replacement, painting, parking area resurfacing, and be held in escrow to mitigate cost barriers to property maintenance. If accepted by the government, these recommendations would give Company XYZ new income streams from existing customers.

Finally, internal group changes are likely to create growth opportunities: (1) RSL tenement strategies for buying back homes in blocks so that wholly-owned and working toward getting unfactored blocks under formal arrangements; (2) RSL: units still self-factor looking to move to Company XYZ to create growth; and, (3) RSL development: building for social and mid-market rent, often working with private developers on more

significant mixed tenure sites with units for private sale, creating opportunities for developers to appoint Company XYZ as a factor for landscape maintenance.

Comparative Data. Scottish Housing Regulator ARC returns from RSLs acting as factors show average Management fee/customer satisfaction. However, this is a 3-year return, and it does not compare one to one. The regulator carried out a thematic analysis of the RSL factoring sector in 2017, but this is a standalone exercise and not repeated. Scottish Ministers Property Factors Register only communicates who other factors are and what they factor. These are private companies with little available data on how they operate. There is no summary of information or analysis of the information held. Citylets quarterly analysis of Scottish private rental sector Commissioned market analysis with outputs due to end of Jan.

Strategic Context

In 2014-15 individual Boards invested time and resources into identifying their priorities and shaped the Group's first 5-year strategy to ensure it would help them deliver on those priorities. Company XYZ produced a family of aligned plans under the "Investing in Our Futures" banner that set out a collective vision and reflected the aspirations of their customers, staff, and communities. The five big aims connect all the plans, from community-based locality plans through subsidiaries' strategic plans to the Group Strategy.

Although "Investing in Our Futures" is a 5-year strategy, the management team reviews it annually. The priorities and aspirations of customers and staff feed into the review every year, but the extent of engagement and analysis required differs. Due to the

extensive engagement carried out with customers, staff, and communities in 2015, the approach in 2016 reflected a lighter touch to Refresh the strategies. After 1 year, priorities had not changed significantly. However, by 2017, drivers and priorities had evolved, and the Renew process involved more extensive engagement activity.

Strategy and Risk workshops take place in May each year; designed to provide the time and space for each Board to reflect on their business and the implications of relevant emerging threats and opportunities. The output of the workshops fuels amendments to the strategic priorities for the remainder of the strategy period. Strategy and Risk workshops help to refine the process. The process included holding the workshops annually, even during the lighter touch Refresh year, including more time for discussion and allowing the Chairs of subsidiary boards to present their critical messages during the Board Residential.

The launch program for the strategy included discussions with staff at both subsidiary and team levels focused on what it meant for them. To support these conversations and keep it 'live' for staff, Company XYZ distilled the key strategic ambitions and outcomes of the Group Strategy into memorable summaries of their '5 big aims' for staff and customers. The performance management approach, including Team meetings and MyContribution, is designed. Hence, every team member understands and regularly reflects on their part in delivering their strategic outcomes.

An annual Delivery Planning process and performance framework provide the LTA with a strategy deployment platform, which sets out the critical project improvement activities. The results are required to achieve their mission and enable them

to evaluate progress towards strategic goals. The Executive Team ensures project alignment with the strategy to ensure the appropriate number of resources and critical milestone tracking.

Project monitoring through performance metrics in the IT system provides Company XYZ leaders progress outcomes during the monthly Divisional Management and Executive Team meeting. Therefore, regular discussions about progress and improvement occur across the group, including conversations with individual teams, at the Board level discussions.

In May 2018, during the Boards' strategy Refresh workshops, they explored their ambitions beyond 2020. There is a shared appetite to build on their track record of success to create an exciting future for the Group, communities, and customers. In June 2018, the Group Board Residential began exploring emerging themes and strategic drivers and predicted 2020 to 2025 external environment changes. Company XYZ used lessons learned in the successful approach to developing the 'Investing in Our Futures' family of plans, an inclusive approach to co-create the Group's collective vision and strategic outcomes.

Informed by the themes emerging from the subsidiary discussions about their future ambitions, the Group Board set out the proposed planning framework under 'Inspiring Ambition, Unleashing Potential.' The proposals in the draft enable meaningful engagement and dialogue with Boards, staff, customers, and stakeholders to shape and refine our strategic ambition and develop agreed outcomes for 2025. Subsidiaries are considering how their ambitions are aligned with the envelope of the Group's strategic

outcomes and platforms and starting to develop their Strategic Plans. Their feedback, including any specific needs and requirements (Table 11), will refine and adjust the Group Strategy before approval in August each year.

Table 11*Key Strategic Challenges and Advantages*

| | Challenges | Advantages |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Business | <p>Group models sometimes struggle to leverage the value for customers, i.e., environmental and repair services.</p> <p>The Group focused on its social housing functions. Often commercial activities are an afterthought, so services drawn down from the Group are not designed for the smaller team. The fit can be clunky at times.</p> <p>The move to a digital-based IT platform brings challenges to the remote local authorities.</p> <p>The Group understands a granular level that makes money and adjusts portfolios in both letting and factoring to remove the loss-making parts without full regard to the community's needs.</p> | <p>Strength of Group – buying power</p> <p>Strength of Group – access to in-house advice, expertise, and resources when we need them rather than -buying them.</p> <p>To an extent, the landlord and letting agents control the quality of the product to the customer.</p> |
| Operations | <p>Growth within existing resources</p> <p>Reducing failure demand, channel shift</p> | <p>Strength of the Group – flexibility and resources that can call on, including the customer contact center</p> |
| Societal responsibilities | <p>Affordability – our customer segments include those on low incomes (just not as low as in social housing).</p> | <p>Wheatley Foundation – Group’s charitable arm, which we fund through Gift Aid, but also delivers some activities in our communities that benefit our customers</p> |
| Workforce | <p>Agility, adaptability, and building a commercial mindset are essential in the factoring side of the business.</p> | <p>Skilled staff.</p> |

Performance Improvement System

Company XYZ established a group-wide performance management framework to focus on performance and improvement at all levels. The system ensures transparency of performance data comparison with targets. A key element of Company XYZ's performance management framework is a bottom-up approach to help ensure all employees understand their part in its success. MyContribution is a tool developed to create structured employee/manager discussion facilitation focusing on employee contributions and individual performance. The tool helps facilitate these conversations and encourages employees to take ownership of their own development needs.

The Executive Team (ET) and Divisional Management Teams (DMT) levels conduct performance reviews monthly. Weekly Visual Measure Board (VMB) team meetings are central to involving staff in continuous improvement. Led by front-line staff empowered to influence change and make decisions, VMBs provide a weekly platform for staff to share their experiences, discuss best practices, and seek solutions to barriers that may prevent them from delivering excellent service or improving performance. Those discussions cascade up through the organization to understand the steps needed to improve performance.

In addition, staff representing a group-wide cross-section of roles and subsidiaries come together in their Communities of Excellence, with a critical role in driving continuous improvement in performance by generating and exploring innovative and practical solutions to specific operational issues and sharing tried and tested approaches. The Group Board and the ET and DMT overview business performance to monitor and

direct improvement. Still, each subsidiary is responsible for delivering operational performance improvement and service excellence. The Group and subsidiary Boards reported non-achievement of targets or reduced performance levels and agreed-upon management action to improve performance. Company XYZ's IT solution for performance management (Table 12) ensures that every part of the Group has the timely information to deliver exceptional results. It provides access to regular detailed visual dashboard-style information and alerts on services, people, financial results, and implementation updates on Group-wide initiatives and projects. Systematic internal benchmarking across the Group, sharing best practices, and identifying transferable learning from similar processes, provide impetus and momentum to the excellence journey. An example of the accelerated rate of improvement for our newest Group members, Dunedin, Canmore, and Barony. Another example is the integration of care's outcomes' approaches into customer conversations by housing staff, bringing an increased focus on helping build customer capacity (such as digital skills), resilience, and aspirations when engaging with people living difficult lives. External benchmarking and learning with organizations from various sectors, including Bosch and Siemens, discover exceptional working practices, stimulate innovative solutions, and generate new ideas to ensure Company XYZ retains its position as a leader in Scotland and beyond.

Finally, a critical measurement feature labeled Scrutiny by Customers describes a vital process where Company XYZ provides their customers the power to hold them accountable. The Group's independent Scrutiny Panel reviews performance target setting and identifies priorities for scrutiny. They review and test performance from the customer

perspective and report their findings and recommendations to the Group and subsidiary Boards. In addition, they take the lead in determining the content of the detailed Annual Reports provided to their tenants.

Table 12

Key Aspects of Performance Management

| Stakeholders tools | Use and outcome |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| MyContribution | * Regular discussions about individual performance and development needs |
| Visual measure board | * Weekly deep-dive into metrics |
| Communities of excellence | * Share ideas, drive improvement and innovation |
| Tailored reporting and dashboards | * Boards, executive team, departmental management team |

Leadership Triad: Leadership, Strategy, and Customers

The subcategories that make up the leadership triad are leadership, strategy, and customers. These subcategories highlight the critical role leadership occupies in developing company strategy and strategic direction and an understanding of customer needs, expectations, and requirements. Furthermore, senior leaders establish the foundation of performance excellence of an organization by focusing on customer needs, expectations, and requirements (BPEP, 2019). The categories within the BPEP and Porter's five competitive forces theory align through a shared focus that leverages a solid yet balanced organizational identity, unique cooperative engagement of resources, and an executive presence and communication, all contributing to maximizing performance.

The BPEP uses the term customer and market knowledge to describe strategically important linkages among the criteria for performance excellence that aid a business in understanding its strengths and opportunities as critical aspects of managing and performing as an organization (BPEP, 2019). According to the BPEP (2019), organizational leaders develop customer and market knowledge by building and expanding core values and leveraging external relationships and cooperative partnerships (BPEP, 2019). Similarly, Porter's five competitive forces provide the conceptual framework for selecting strategies that exploit the prevailing market forces' effects on competition intensity, attractiveness, and profitability as a primary source of measuring a business's competitive environment. Business leaders use Porter's five competitive forces to establish processes that leverage competitive forces relative to existing external opportunities (Porter, 1980). Focusing on customers and strategy deployment within the

leadership triad, I explored how Company XYZ emphasizes the importance of leadership to achieve market dominance. Through an approach leveraging the Baldrige scoring system focused on learning and integration elements as components in assessing Company XYZ's organizational approaches' maturity and deployment efficiency.

Leadership

Leadership at Company XYZ is a testament to positive energy and its release to fuel positive results. At Company XYZ, leadership is about passion and building trust and confidence in people. Company XYZ's approach to leadership aids in ensuring their communication messages, both internal and external, are aligned. The flat staffing structure of their divisional management teams creates an authorizing environment that aims to empower teams to make operational decisions at the point of delivery that focuses on doing the right thing for their customers.

Senior Leadership

Company XYZ's senior leadership team (SLT) consists of the managing director and four senior managers. With guidance from the parent company's Board of Directors, these senior managers are key contributors to developing, communicating, and positively reinforcing the organization's mission, vision, and values. The SLT continues to focus on setting the bar for excellence in customer satisfaction in their field and building solid and affordable communities, contributing to making homes and lives better. In their next iteration of the 5-year plan, with Covid 19 exerting significant influence on their plans, the vision expands to provide customers more control over the services they need and a recommitment to ethics and sustainability. The SLT approach and enabler map at

Company XYZ contains clear documentation of how the SLT: (1) determines the approach to reinforcing Company XYZ's values; (2) uses a continuous improvement approach to learning (Table 15); (3) communicates their mission, vision, and values to their workforce, cooperative partners, owners, tenants, and other key stakeholders; and (4) drives the mission, vision, and values framework and passion throughout the company to ensure the approach aligns across all areas and processes in support of their company and group model.

Vision and Values. Company XYZ systemizes its vision and values (Figure 2) in its operating platform model, which aims to share the responsibility of communicating the company vision, and values through a "Shared Leadership Culture" within the group strategy. To codify Company XYZ's values of Excellence, Community, Ambition, and Trust, the SLT uses an enabler mapping template (Table 13) to influence approaches and deployment across the company. All staff participates in special leadership forums where leadership and staff actively discuss the vision and values and how each role influences outcomes and success. Senior leaders translate the overall strategy and the supporting strategies for each segment through a Performance Framework into outcomes, targets, measures, and projects to be delivered each year. Planning for and progress against these is discussed regularly with staff through various mechanisms identified in the enabler template (Table 13).

Table 13*Leadership Enabler Map 1a1*

| Number | Approach title | Approach and deployment | Assessment and refinement | Link to strategy/ results | Evidence and owner |
|--------|--|--|--|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1a1 | Development of Mission, Vision, and Values | The mission, vision, and values were developed at the group's formation by leaders in consultation with Boards and staff to develop the 5-year strategy, 'Investing in Our Futures.' | There was a leaders' residential with the E.T. and extended E.T. in 2018 to review the vision and values, including analyzing values from other leading organizations such as Google. While the values themselves remained relevant, the descriptors of each of the values were refreshed. | Inspire 7a | Leaders' residential |

Additionally, Company XYZ's vision and values are supported by a commitment imbued in the Company XYZ culture and championed by the SLT to foster and maintain a company culture that is supportive and protective of legal and ethical behavior. Company XYZ's SLT demonstrates legal and ethical behavior through its actions and executive communication of expectations to its teams and cooperative partners. The workforce environment at Company XYZ embraces a positive and supportive legal and ethical environment. The alignment of its vision and values to its ethics and responsibilities is a fundamental area of its operations and human resource strategies. Through the establishment and execution of company operations and human resource strategies, leaders can focus on the workforce's engagement and communication of expectations of new hires supporting the company values.

Communication. A successful communication strategy requires the timely and focused engagement of key stakeholders, customers, and team members. Company XYZ includes various engagement paths in its communication plan to ensure reliable connections (Table 14). With a smaller workforce, the SLT encourages two-way communication through weekly in-person or virtual one-on-one sessions with each team member to listen to their cares and needs, communicate the shared vision, act as a conduit for motivation and set the performance standards for both customer service and business focus. The SLT promotes and maintains a communication plan that ensures a clear and consistent message and future communication planning and publication through the Leadership Enabler Map (Table 15), supportive of the vision and values of the organization through consistent messaging to staff, customers, and stakeholders.

Table 14*Communication Engagement Paths*

| Communication group/method | Frequency | Direction of communication |
|---------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Team | | |
| All Hands meeting | Quarterly | 1-way: top-down |
| Senior leadership team meetings | Weekly | 2-way |
| Staff meetings | Weekly | 2-way |
| Cooperative partners | Weekly | 2-way |
| One-on-one meetings | Monthly | 2-way |
| Performance evaluations | Annually | 2-way |
| On-boarding sessions | One time | 1-way: top-down |
| Customers | | |
| Community sessions | Quarterly | 2-way |
| One-on-one meetings | Appointment | 2-way |
| Call Centers | On-demand | 2-way |
| Emails | Weekly | 2-way |
| Newsletter | Monthly | 1-way: top-down |
| Social media sites | Ongoing | 2-way |
| Website | Ongoing | 1-way: top-down |
| Other Stakeholders | | |
| Group executive board | Quarterly | 2-way |
| Leaders' forum | 3x/year | 2-way |
| Visual measures board | Monthly | 2-way |
| Annual reports | Annually | 1-way: top-down |

Table 15*Leadership Enabler Map 1a2:3*

| Number | Approach title | Approach and deployment | Assessment and refinement | Link to strategy/ results | Evidence and owner |
|--------|---|--|---|------------------------------|---|
| 1a2 | Communication of mission, vision, and values by leaders and acting as role models | <p>Leaders communicate the mission, vision, and values via [Company XYZ] sessions with all staff. Values are also integrated into the MyContribution appraisal process and the Excel Awards for staff. These awards recognize staff who live the values, i.e., the Chief Executive's Employee of the Year Award and the Award for Outstanding Commitment to Values.</p> <p>Leaders act as role models and empower all employees to live the values of Trust, Community, Excellence, and Ambition in their daily work. This shared culture permeates all levels of the organization. It is enhancing the reputation of [Company XYZ], both with their customers (proven by the excellent customer results) and with their key stakeholders.</p> | <p>The annual employee survey measures how staff understand and live the organization's mission, vision, and values. The 2018 survey, "Living the organization's values and behaviors," – achieved an average rating of 92%.</p> <p>Given the group's size, scale, and diversity, we have adapted our approach to how leaders communicate with staff, recognizing that it is not always practical to invite all members into our Academy locations. With this in mind, we deliver a balanced mix of events in our Academies and local offices to suit the needs of all staff groups.</p> | Inspire 7a | [Company XYZ Group] Sessions MyContribution W.E. Excel Awards |
| 1a3 | Shared Leadership Culture | <p>As part of the 'Building Shared Capability' section of the Group strategy – 'Investing in Our Futures' - a Group Learning Framework includes a structured program of leadership development, e.g., Leading with Impact and Managing the [Company XYZ] programs. There are also specific leadership programs for critical groups, e.g., the Step into Leadership Program for Care subsidiaries. Leaders are united in adopting and promoting a [Will Do] leadership approach. This Will Do culture is embedded via various mechanisms, including the Leaders' Forum, Directorate Management Team away days, and extended Executive Team meetings.</p> | <p>Leadership behaviors on an individual basis are reviewed and improved via the annual MyContribution appraisal process, which includes a 360° review and subsequent development plan. The outcomes of MyContribution are analyzed and form the Academy Learning Plan, which also feeds into the Leadership programs.</p> <p>The employee survey also asks about the effectiveness of leadership. This category is currently rated 85%. The effectiveness of the leadership development programs permeates the organization. For example, 'Leading with Impact' was developed due to a review of the previous 'Think Yes' for Leaders program, developed with an liP Specialist.</p> | Inspire 7a, 7b | Group Learning Framework Leadership Development Program |

Mission and Organizational Performance. By understanding the critical path for success and Company XYZ's current and future priorities identified in the leadership enabler map 1b (Table 16), the SLT creates a practice that encourages the growth of teammates, customers, cooperative partners, and other stakeholders and supports continuous improvement and sustainability. Company XYZ's processes capture the tenants of practice in their role model practices creating a sustainable future through application and adherence to the practices (Table 17), reinforcing Company XYZ values and guiding the performance decisions processes.

Table 16

Leadership Enabler Map 1b

| Number | Approach title | Approach and deployment | Assessment and refinement | Link to strategy/ results | Evidence and owner |
|--------|--|--|--|-------------------------------|--|
| 1b1 | Leaders drive the performance framework | <p>The executive team proved instrumental in shaping the performance management framework, which details how the group will measure progress towards the strategy. There is a dedicated Performance E.T. session every month, and performance is a standing item on the agenda for the divisional management team meetings and the leaders' forum</p> <p>Leaders drive performance at an operational level via weekly VMBs and performance dashboards.</p> | <p>Through board and E.T. meetings, an annual review of the measured indicators and the performance management framework evaluation by Ernst & Young (EY) shows the company's depth of performance. Following the annual review in 2017, the framework included a separate element for repair services, bringing together financial, customer, staff, and service performance reporting from key repair partners.</p> <p>Also, a peer-review process of the priorities and performance levels provided formalized service level goals.</p> | Excel 6a, 6b, 9a, 9b | Performance management framework |
| 1b2 | Leaders review performance with stakeholders | <p>As part of the performance management framework, leaders review performance with key stakeholders via the Group and subsidiary Boards, Strategic Partnership Boards, and the Scrutiny/Customer Panels. For example, customer representatives sit on the Scrutiny/Customer Panels and meet with leaders regularly to discuss performance and review service developments, e.g., uptake of Web Self Service. Leaders also review performance with partner organizations, for example, with Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, in terms of the impact of the Community Improvement Partnership.</p> <p>Also, reviews of stakeholders on performance to manage their expectations and improve.</p> | <p>In 2017, the Institute of Directors' independent evaluation of governance arrangements found several areas of opportunity and facilitated many improvements. i.e., a refresh of the induction process. Also, a Board effectiveness 360-degree assessment demonstrated Board members' understanding of how well they Board members understand the long-term strategy of the business.</p> <p>Campbell Tickell has also undertaken regular independent evaluations in 2014, 2016, and 2018, who reviewed the approach to governance within the group. Their report led to the implementation of improvements to the Board papers.</p> | WE Excel 6a, 6b, 9a, | Board papers scrutiny/ customer Panel |
| 1b3 | Leaders review the organization's capabilities | <p>E.T. away days focus specifically on strategic planning and review, including analysis of key themes arising from staff, customer and stakeholder engagement, and any other significant issues that may impact strategy moving forward. Leaders then review feedback on the organization's current performance through the E.T. and DMT meetings to inform future direction, e.g., audit reports, assessments, survey results, and accreditation feedback.</p> | <p>As part of the strategy development and review process, the organization monitors its capabilities. An example of the extent of the process is the realization of new partnership opportunities or structural changes that are required. The imminent merger of Company XYZ components demonstrates such an assessment's outcome.</p> | Invest 9a, 9b | Awaydays group assurance approach |

Table 17*Role Model Practices*

| |
|--|
| Role model practice |
| New build program based on an innovative approach to funding |
| Better lives' program |
| Modern apprentices |
| Customer contact & engagement |
| Company XYZ group 360 |
| Homes for the future |
| Creation and evolution of Company XYZ Group |
| Community improvement partnership (CIP) |

Creating an Environment for Success. The leadership of Company XYZ and its parent group are committed to engaging every resource at their disposal to influence outcomes for people living with hardship positively. To build an environment that supports positive outcomes, the SLT focuses on providing housing of the highest possible quality and affordability rather than profitability. Although 100% of Company XYZ's profits transfer to charitable efforts, profit is a significant part of the plan. EFQM is a core enabler of Company XYZ's customer service and quality planning model. Using the EFQM framework as their core management tool, the SLT focus points to an improvement in areas of opportunity and driving hard to leverage strengths and generate action plans to monitor progress and reset points if necessary.

Business growth is an aspect of creating an environment for success where Company XYZ is active. According to its role model practice under Developing

Organizational Capability (Table 17), Company XYZ intends to grow its organizational footprint through planned mergers of cooperative partners. The diversification and expansion of regional services are essential components of the growth of services strategy to ensure success. Engagement with potential cooperative partners plays a crucial role in maintaining a commanding presence in the company's focus markets and the collective strength, knowledge, and expertise of subsidiaries while retaining individual identities.

Creating a Focus on Action. Company XYZ's leaders focus on actions to meet its operational mission objectives using their Enabler Maps for Leadership, Strategy, People, Partnerships and Resources, and Processes, Products, and Services, all within the EFQM framework and fully aligned to the MVV. The SLT communicates these seven mission objectives to the workforce, and the entire collective team recognizes their role in driving company objectives. The SLT regularly monitors performance across the range of enablers and develops action plans where progress against goals misses the targets.

Governance and Societal Responsibilities

Organizational Governance. Company XYZ is a for-profit business registered in Scotland under the Companies Act (SC 402836). It has its registered office at 25 Cochrane Street, Glasgow G1 1HL, and is a registered property factor under the Property Factors (Scotland) Act. Unique about Company XYZ is that it operates as a charity as 100% of the profits flow to its parent group for charitable work across Scotland. The parent group board is responsible for Company XYZ's overall strategy, while the administration and daily operations fall with the local and cooperative partner leadership teams. The Company XYZ parent group, in concert with the Company XYZ leadership

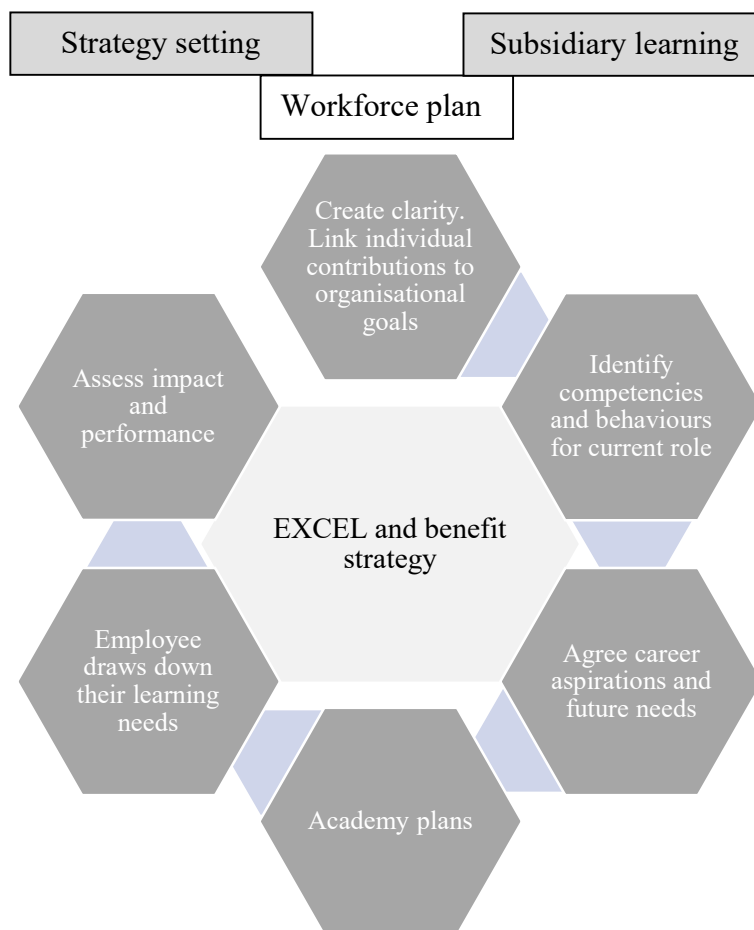
team, jointly shoulder the responsibility for developing a strategic planning process and performance management system. All strategic plans must align with the stated MVV. EFQM makes up the blueprint of the performance measurement, and reporting systems across the entire company referred to as a community of excellence systems (CoE). Each CoE is owned and championed by a senior leader responsible for monitoring progress, collecting and analyzing data, and briefing the group board and other leaders on progress against the blueprint plan and measured against the CoE schedule defined in the group enabler maps. Incorporating the performance data occurs quarterly to ensure this feedback helps drive continuous improvement.

Performance Evaluations. Performance evaluations of senior leaders and the workforce tie directly to Company XYZs oversight and community structure to gauge individual and group contribution. The Company XYZ MyContribution Platform captures feedback from leaders, peers, and customers. It supports structured dialogue between employees and their manager, reinforcing the critical connection between strategic goals and employee personal contribution by focusing on regular 1:1 performance discussions and annual appraisals around desired competencies. The MyContribution platform provides clarity of purpose, ensures ownership and accountability, inspires excellent performance, and involves people in continuously identifying and developing the skills and confidence needed to deliver excellence. Insight from the MyContribution platform feeds into the team and organizational learning plans. It keeps employee skills tracking profiles designed around the specific needs of a contribution area up to date.

The MyContribution platform is crucial for identifying and developing people who have the potential and desire to further their careers into more highly skilled or leadership roles linked to succession planning. The MyContribution platform gets reviewed and refreshed yearly in partnership with leaders and the employee team. The MyContribution platform links to strategy and planning through the workforce plan to ensure learning opportunities are captured and attended to by employees and leaders (Figure 7).

Figure 7

MyContribution Platform Link to Strategy and Planning



Legal and Ethical Behavior. Company XYZ's leadership team reviews procedures, practices, policies, and plans through several Stakeholder Tools, Dashboards, and Community Scrutiny Boards through an independent evaluation team to ensure compliance with all internal and external policies, practices, and laws, regulations for registered businesses and property factoring companies. Together with the managing director and cooperative partners, the parent group board ensures the company's operating structure and function are sound and provide valuable tools for addressing risk. Independent evaluations occur yearly due to the fast-paced and dynamic United Kingdom housing sector generating the need to adjust strategic direction.

During the quarterly board meetings and monthly leadership team meetings, the leadership team monitors and reviews output from DMTs, and VMB meetings. Industry intelligence and organizational performance. The company's internal Performance Management Framework captures results and ensures transparency of performance data compared to targets when communicating outcomes with the parent group and other leaders.

Societal Contributions. The foundation of Company XYZ's mission is to Make Homes and Lives Better. Company XYZ's leaders, staff, cooperative partners, and group leaders all demonstrate their dedication to the company mission through their effort to positively influence the lives of their tenants who live with hardship daily. The leadership team embeds themselves into the communities they serve and actively affects lives to make life better, demonstrating the importance of positive societal change. Company XYZ strives to provide affordable housing and work with the people they serve to build

strong and safe communities that bring opportunities to their residents. An example of community commitment is building projects that engage the community to offer jobs and training opportunities to future residents. During construction, many unskilled workers gain the experience needed to secure apprentices in journey carriers that would not have been available without the social projects. Company XYZ works diligently to combat rising poverty levels, championing public sector spending to focus on helping vulnerable people and communities. Creating programs to educate tenants across many needed areas, including digital inclusion, ensures those unskilled on the internet and other digital platforms can actively participate and function in our digital world. Company XYZ's 2021-2026 5-year strategy carries the plan of Company XYZ's continued assault on poverty and vulnerability, which increases their commitment to building better affordable, and safer communities. Their Home, Community, and Future initiatives look to invest in the future to support those vulnerable and in need.

Strategy

Strategy Development

Company XYZ embraces the strategic planning process identified within the EFQM specified criteria. According to EFQM (2019), organizations striving for excellence in quality management implement strategies that (1) account for the needs of stakeholders as well as customers; (2) synthesize operational performance trends against internal performance and capabilities; (3) develop supporting policies that integrate sustainability; and (4) Share and track the strategies and processes for alignment with

established goals. The SLT uses a 5-year strategic planning process to focus their ideas, develop goals, set objectives, and monitor progress against established targets.

Strategy Planning Process. Company XYZ uses a 5-year strategy planning window. Its annual review ensures the plan remains current. A significant portion of Company XYZ's detailed strategy development process is the publication, distribution, and use of their “Strategy Enabler Map” (Table 18). The current Strategy Enabler Map is focused on 2020 and beyond.

To ensure the strategic development process output maintains an appropriate level of innovation, Company XYZ, in partnership with the parent group, extends the engagement conversation across all team levels, from interns to senior leadership, to include cooperative partners and customers. The process executes through several accessible platforms and forums, both in-person and online (Table 19). The consolidated output from the various engagements feeds the strategic mapping opportunities identification and the intelligent risks and opportunities for consideration as pursuits and potential integration into the 5-year strategy plan.

Table 18*Strategy Enabler Map*

| Number | Approach title | Approach and deployment | Assessment and refinement | Link to strategy/results | Evidence and owner |
|--------|---|--|--|--------------------------|---|
| 2a1 | Analysis of external environment | <p>The research & development Team undertakes a review of the external environment, including national and local policy, legislation, and political changes, to assess the impact on the group, e.g., Brexit. They also subscribe to an online public affairs monitoring report that provides daily updates.</p> <p>Leaders, who are actively involved in their strategy process, use their knowledge and learn from different forums on a national level and from their regular contact with key partners as per their engagement framework.</p> <p>Group I.T. uses Gartner, a global research and advisory firm that provides regular insights and advice.</p> | <p>A refined annual strategy review process focused on each M.D. and board's emerging and potential challenges or opportunities. They review their risk appetite, priorities, and ambitions in light of this.</p> <p>The focus of the Group's Research Program is to engage the appropriate external expertise to explore complex emerging issues to continue success. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress testing for Brexit scenarios. • The University of Edinburgh is undertaking property Tech research to identify property technology trends and innovations globally to help inform Company XYZ's strategy for 2025. | Excel 9a, 9b | Daily Public Affairs Monitoring Report Group Research Program |
| 2a2 | Understanding customer expectations | There are various mechanisms to understand customer expectations, including customer satisfaction surveys, customer segmentation and personas, focus groups, and local engagement events. Furthermore, customers are actively involved in the strategy development through the overall governance structure via their representation on Boards and Scrutiny/Customers Panels and the specific customer consultations as part of the strategy process 2020/2025. | The basis of the Group Engagement Framework is a review of the various customer engagement methods. The Engagement CoE commissioned independent international research by the Democratic Society in 2018 to identify new ways of engaging with customers. Additionally, in 2018, the Group Customer Segmentation model was reviewed and updated. The document Understanding of Community Priorities goes through an annual review to identify needed updates or changes. Company XYZ's customer-facing staff does this as part of Locality Planning, using local engagement events and conversations with local groups and individuals. | Excel 6a, 6b | Customer research program, Locality Planning |
| 2a3 | Engagement of staff in strategy development | Company XYZ Group sessions draw people into a Group-wide conversation to share, learn, inspire, innovate, and influence change. These events celebrate what we have achieved together so far and involve our people in helping shape the future. Staff also can contribute ideas via VMBs and CoEs, which flow to DMTs and the E.T. | During 2018 staff, from apprentices to senior leaders, were involved in creative workshops to imagine what they would like in 2025. The output from these engagements shapes the draft strategic proposals for 2020/2025. A review of the staff engagement approach and an engagement plan includes online forums, CoE discussions, and staff conferences. | Inspire 7a, 7b | Engagement Program for 2020/2025 Strategy |

Table 19*Engagement Program*

| Workstream | Key element |
|------------------------|---|
| Board engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approving strategic documents based on stakeholder feedback. • Ensuring alignment across the group. |
| Partners' consultation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified leads for each strategic partner to document the critical issues for the partner, our "gift," and our "ask." • Partners' event in Q2. |
| Customer consultation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Subsidiary to develop its customer consultation plan. • This will be enhanced by a corporate customer consultation plan for key groups, such as tenant representatives. |
| Political placement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marquee events in spring for elected members from across Company XYZ's geographical footprint. |
| Staff consultation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As well as significant Company style events, a series of visits to local service points, and technology to ensure that we reach all staff, they can join the conversation and have their say. |
| Performance framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with leaders across the company to define the five-year delivery plan and supporting performance framework for 'Inspiring Ambition, Unleashing Potential.' |

Strategic Objectives. The BPEP (2019) defined strategic objectives as organizations' actions to solve significant internal and external focused customer, market, service, or technological risks and opportunities. Company XYZ has a shared appetite to build on a successful track record to innovate and create value for the company, the communities they serve, and the families that are its customers. In partnership with their parent group, Company XYZ's leadership jointly attend the overarching residential board to explore emerging themes across all Scottish housing sectors through 2025.

The cooperative group reviews key strategic drivers and predictive measures influencing the external environment and its operating context. Using an inclusive approach, the group works to previous leverage approaches used in developing past successful strategies creating the group's collective vision and strategic outcomes.

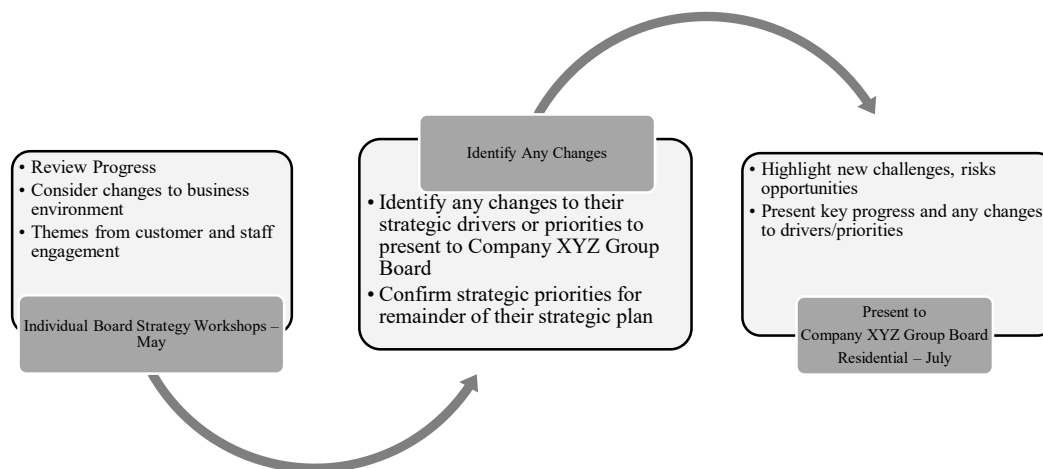
Informed by the themes emerging from the subsidiary discussions focused on future ambitions, the group board released the proposed planning framework with an overarching goal of inspiring ambition to unleash potential across the company.

Strategy Deployment

The proposals deployed from planning sessions enable meaningful engagement and dialogue with other group boards, staff, customers, and stakeholders to shape and refine their strategic ambition and develop agreed outcomes through 2025. Cooperative partners also participate and consider how their ambitions are aligned with the envelope of the group's strategic outcomes and platforms and begin to develop their strategic plans. Feedback from cooperative partners, including any specific needs and requirements, act as refinement and adjust suggestions to the group strategy before approval in Q3 of each year (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Strategy Deployment Process



Customers

The most significant part of Company XYZ's business is rented housing, with almost 50,000 homes designated as social housing. Social housing provides high-quality, low-cost accommodation for people potentially unable to afford a home that meets their needs in the private rented sector. The second most prominent part of Company XYZ's business is property management, servicing over 30,000 homes. Company XYZ's property management service is designed to assist homeowners in shared blocks to maintain the building and surrounding environments through sourcing and managing repairs, cleaning, and associated services for those shared common areas. Company XYZ provides property management for a mix of owner-occupiers and social housing tenants, working in partnership with the social landlords in the group. Company XYZ offers a range of services to financially insecure and vulnerable customers. To understand the needs and expectations of their customers within these two support areas, the senior leaders gather customer feedback through various methods, including customer impact surveys, feedback from the 17 local authorities, social media platforms, and call centers supporting customers 24 hours a day.

Customer Expectations

The measurement and evaluation process conducted through EFQM and BPEP bear significant focus on the importance of customer service results at or exceeding customer expectations for those companies seeking organizational excellence (BPEP, 2019; EFQM, 2019). Company XYZ strives to deliver an exceptional customer experience as part of a five-tier approach to customer service. EFQM uses the terms

Customer Satisfaction and Customer Results, where BPEP uses the term voice of the customer to single out their approaches to how customer-related information is used in a process that strives for continuous improvement of services to address customer needs and expectations (BPEP, 2019; EFQM, 2019). By continually reshaping processes and spurring dialogue between leaders of all areas of the organization, Company XYZ's leadership team fosters an understanding of how their offered services affect customer decisions across all aspects of customer engagement.

Listening. The importance placed on listening to the needs and expectations of customers is a fundamental and prominent driver in Company XYZ's core MVV and acts as a process blueprint and basis for how senior leaders and their teams approach building and acting on strategies and policies that guide their decisions. The company profile (Table 20) reflects that Company XYZ's primary customers are single Scottish individuals living with hardship or senior singles on fixed income streams. By applying and adhering to EFQM quality standards, companies succeed in pursuing excellence by connecting with, showing empathy, and anticipating their customer's needs and expectations (EFQM, 2019). Based on the customer segmentation, the leaders of Company XYZ adjust engagement approaches and develop strategies to address and anticipate their customer's needs and expectations.

The Senior Leaders at Company XYZ hold to a philosophy of listening, process, and acting with yes in mind when addressing the needs and expectations of individuals under their care who live with hardship daily. Eliciting feedback from a regionally diverse customer population who live with hardship daily requires an empathetic

awareness of the customers in each segment. Innovative approaches within Company XYZ's Role Model Practices (Table 17), namely the Better Lives program and Community Improvement Partnership (CIP), focus on those customers living with hardship. The goal is to bring practical solutions and future planning models with proven results with little to no downtime or expense to the customer. Also, the regionally diverse team allows for comfortable conversations with team members who are part of the community from which a customer resides. Company XYZ and their cooperative partners have a presence in 17 local authorities across Scotland and have, in 2021, expanded to 19 local authorities. Lastly, leaders and staff have strong relationships with their customers because of the company operating model. Their act with yes in mind culture and sophisticated customer insight tools enable the company to deliver outstanding personalized services tailored to each customer's needs. The customer insight tools include the annual customer satisfaction survey, focus groups, customer segmentation model, and management data systems, enabling the company to deliver outstanding personalized services tailored to each customer's needs.

Customer Segmentation and Service Offerings. Company XYZ's customer segmentation model combines external industry data with internal data to provide a rich understanding of their customers and the services they need and want. The groupings of customers, or segments, are identified through analytics and based on how they are similar, such as age, life stage, employment, property type, and financial circumstances (Table 20). The two-tier model allows comparison both within a subsidiary cooperative partner and across the group, illustrating the diverse nature of the individual subsidiaries.

Personas aid in summarizing and visualizing each segment's likely characteristics and behaviors, helping to bring them to life for staff and decision-makers. The model yields vital insights into the different issues impacting different customer groups and communities, helping Company XYZ design products and services to reflect customers' current and future needs, priorities, and aspirations through the various stages of their lives. Also, external research affecting segment customers and potential customers makes up a portion of the data content.

Table 20

Customer Segmentation

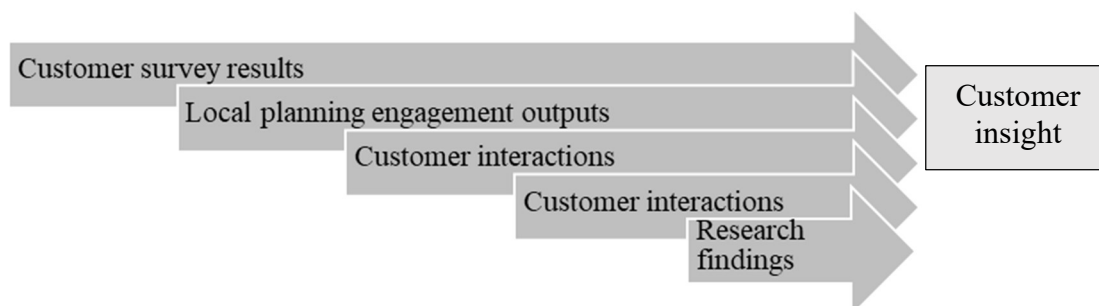
| Segment | Number identified in the segment | Percentage of customers |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Financially active singles and couples | 19,268 | 24% |
| Struggling singles | 16,659 | 21% |
| Senior singles | 15,147 | 19% |
| Nearing retirement | 9,357 | 12% |
| Younger struggling families | 6,616 | 8% |
| Families getting by | 6,071 | 8% |
| Older couples | 5,955 | 8% |

In affiliation with their parent group, Company XYZ systematically assesses the potential impact on their business arising from changes in external environments (such as welfare reform, changing customer profile) or internally driven change, such as channel shift or expansion into new markets. The assessment allows senior leaders to summarize the rationale for how core products and key processes are created, delivered, and have their value captured. The process leverages customer profiles and metrics, including what is essential to customers and the business outcomes, essential resources, and finances.

The process highlights any differentials between customer segments and skill requirements.

Customer Engagement

Engagement activities are how organizations market products and services to customers to build positive relationships. Customer perception of a company's value directly affects customer engagement quality and quantity (Itani et al., 2019). In Company XYZ's 2015-2020 strategic plan, senior leaders outlined the engagement philosophy, forums, and processes (Figures 8, 9) and reflected Company XYZ's commitment to customer engagement and service excellence. The key engagement processes at Company XYZ, which create value for customers, have also been defined. Each Company XYZ customer accesses the combination appropriate to their needs so that each customer has their own individualized experience of the service. Senior leaders assess and refine the products and critical process offerings through community forums (CFs). These forums (Table 21) own the key processes and policies for customer-facing services. Community forums bring together front-line staff and strategic process owners to ensure continuous performance improvement and core services execution. Core services include rent collection, letting homes, repairs, maintaining neighborhoods, sustaining tenancies, customer engagement, and new builds. The CFs are critical drivers of innovation, ensuring engagement and dialogue with staff from across the group in business improvement.

Figure 9*Customer Insight Model***Table 21***Community / Customer Engagement Forums*

| Forum | Purpose | Outcomes |
|--|--|---|
| Registered tenant organizations (RTOs) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers shape local services and investment plans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer insight to inform decisions |
| Tenants panels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve people in decisions that affect them | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence strategy |
| Wider communities (Local Planning) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult on proposed changes to services and investment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve customer satisfaction with our products and services |
| Owners Forums/groups/resident associations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the local context and identify local priorities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shape products and services that meet customer needs and expectations |
| Care, advisory group, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive continuous improvement • Capture customer ideas and creativity to improve customer experience • Build trust and confidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board member succession |

Customer Relationships and Support. Most Company XYZ customers live in deprived or socially disadvantaged communities and rely on state benefits to pay rent. Over half are in a segment characterized by financial difficulties such as low household income, unsecured loans, or poor credit history. To aid in providing support to these customers, Company XYZ endeavors to deliver more seamless, personalized packages across a comprehensive range of services that provide a lifeline by improving the safety, wellbeing, and resilience of individual customers and communities. Company XYZ brings together housing, environmental, and support staff from across the group with police and fire officers to assist with a situation like anti-social behavior, fire safety, fly-tipping (illegal dumping of any waste), graffiti, and food and fuel poverty. Support services address the underlying issues that affect households and ensure that vulnerable tenants receive sustainable solutions that enable them to stay in their homes over the long term. Company XYZ strives to develop regionally unique customer relations with local staff in the communities they serve. Additionally, Company XYZ works directly with customers giving them the power to hold Company XYZ accountable.

Customer Satisfaction and Engagement. Company XYZ's independent scrutiny panel of the residents reviews performance and target setting and identifies priorities for scrutiny. The panel reviews and tests are performed from the customer perspective and provide reports of their findings and recommendations to the company and subsidiary boards. In addition, the panel takes the lead in determining the content of the detailed annual reports provided to tenants. Also, the integration of care outcome approaches into customer conversations by housing staff increases focus on helping build customer

capacity (such as digital skills), resilience, and aspirations when engaging with people living difficult lives. External benchmarking and learning with organizations from various sectors, including Bosch and Siemens, is used to discover exceptional working practices, stimulate innovative solutions, and generate new ideas to ensure Company XYZ maintains a leadership role in Scotland and beyond.

Results Triad: Workforce, Operations, and Results

The Results Triad of the BPEP houses the Workforce, Operations, and Results categories focused on process efficiency and high performance. The output of these components validates the key role leaders have in the engagement and cultivation of the workforce and in generating efficiencies that strengthen the potential for mission success (BPEP, 2019). An assessment of Company XYZ's processes using the four BPEP dimensions, approach, deployment, learning, and integration, anchors the results triad. The trademark of performance excellence is mature, repeatable, and innovative processes built on integrated platforms emphasizing empiric analysis, broadly disseminating data, and aligning an organization's goals and strategic direction (BPEP, 2019).

By applying Porter's five competitive forces framework within a market environment, leaders develop an analytical archetype used to gauge the effects of external forces on an organization's competitive environment. Business leaders use Porter's five competitive forces theory as a business process model useful for adaptation and growth planning (Oyadomari et al., 2017). Utilizing the data generated through the five competitive forces framework provides leaders with an operational roadmap to make the deliberate and informed decisions necessary to take advantage of the business and

environmental factors that affect their competitiveness (Levine Daniel & Fyall, 2019; Mahat, 2019). Adapting organizational resources to take advantage of changing business and environmental factors affecting their competitive situation is vital to success in the housing sector (Manzi & Richardson, 2017). Organizations with flexible operational strategies, i.e., cooperative partnerships and adaptable infrastructure, can adjust their strategic operations, processes, and workforce to counter dynamic challenges in their business environment, potentially outperforming their competition (Manikas et al., 2019). The following subsections track Company XYZ's workforce, focused operational processes, and the resulting performance outcomes based on the BPEP imbued dimensions; approach, deployment, learning, and integration factors (ADLI) and how the dimensions aid in shaping the workforce-focused processes Company XYZ.

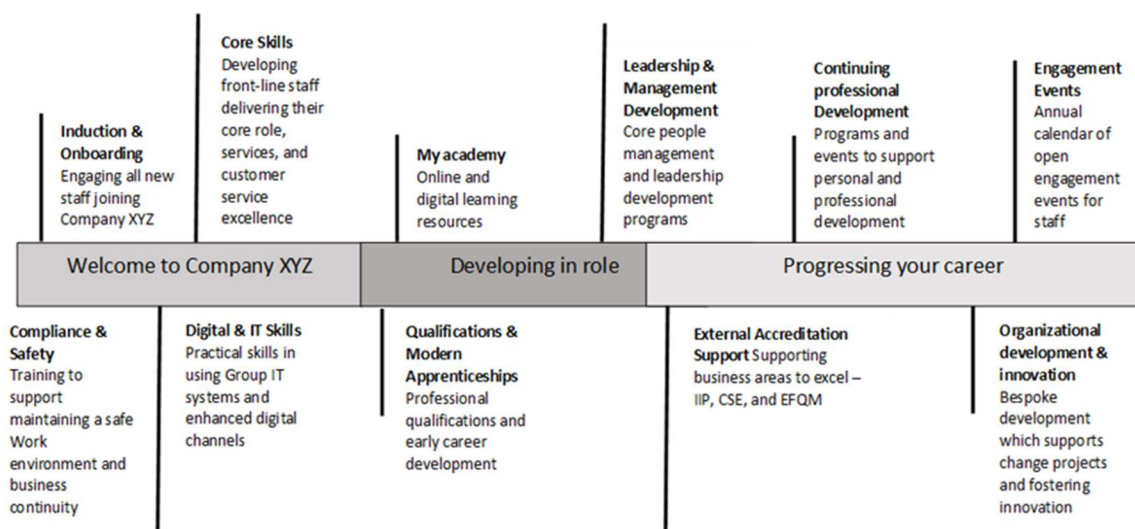
Workforce

At the end of November 2019, Company XYZ's workforce numbered 40 personnel responsible for the daily operations in 17 local authorities throughout Scotland and support group responsibilities. Most personnel resided in three major locations (Figure 4). The job categories included administration, business support functions, letting agents, business advisors, managers, and the managing director (Table 5). All members of Company XYZ's SLT recognize the critical role the workforce plays in achieving the company mission, as evidenced in the company's strategy deployment process through staff engagement activities (Figure 8) and the introduction of a comprehensive group learning framework (Figure 10) and professionalization of the workforce in 2017. Company XYZ sponsored all managers, agents, and officers for essential industry

qualifications and membership as Associate Members of the Institute of Residential Property Management and the registration requirements for Letting Agents introduced by the Scottish Government (Table 6). The managing director is responsible for disseminating the local and Group policies and procedures related to workforce staffing and local workforce matters. Additionally, she is actively and collaboratively working with group boards and HR in recruiting and developing the workforce and managing strategic change while focusing on inclusion, culture, and values. A central tenant of Company XYZ's inclusive culture is creating an organization supportive of inclusion and diversity as presented in their MyContribution platform and demonstrates Company XYZ's commitment to inclusion and equality and embracing diversity within the workforce.

Figure 10

Learning Framework



People are considered valuable to organizational success by Porter's five competitive forces theory and BPEP (BPEP, 2019; Choi et al., 2019; Porter, 1980).

Strategy development focused on highly adaptable market positioning as a factor in successfully advantaging market factors must consider human capital as a significant building block mandating the creation of a workplace environment that effectively supports and prepares the workforce for growth. Leaders who comprehend the connection between workplace environment and workforce engagement develop strategies that provide enabling training platforms for workers to increase opportunities for total growth and inclusion as critical resources (Choi et al., 2019). The BPEP framework covers the processes necessary for business leaders to evaluate workforce alignment with the organization's MVV and strategic market objectives. Utilizing the four BPEP dimensions: approach, deployment, learning, and integration, the following subsections display the mapped evaluation of Company XYZ's workforce environment and engagement.

Workforce Environment

Workforce Capability and Capacity. Organizations display success through the recognition of the value of the workforce. Company XYZ employees develop, engage, and sustain cooperative partnerships with their communities, customers, and service partners. These relationships allow businesses to adapt to continuous change in their business environment (Faupel & Süß, 2019; Wei & Clegg, 2018). Research findings indicated that businesses engaged in M&A activity that focused on the effects of their organizational capabilities to include employee capabilities usually fared better than businesses not focused on these strategies (Wei & Clegg, 2018).

Additionally, researchers identified the importance of an integrated and well-informed workforce during M&As (Angwin et al., 2016; Balmer, 2017). Researchers use

Porter's framework to argue the need for supportive employment practices and employee stimulation to positively affect performance by strengthening valuable employee-based resources (Bommaraju et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2020). Company XYZ's leaders identify cooperative partners and its people as two of their most effective assets. Company XYZ leaders acknowledge having a fully engaged, effective, and efficient workforce is essential to maintaining the highest quality service delivery standards. Tables 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26 display Company XYZ's MyContribution strategy enabler for People detailing the approach, deployment, assessment, and refinement of resources and training focused on recruitment and employment growth within the company and where their people strategy fits within the overall strategy and critical results. Also, Company XYZ introduces its Community of Excellence (CoE) forums in Table 24. The CoE owns the key processes and policies for customer-facing services. Company XYZ's SLT realizes the workforce's skills and understanding of their roles in reacting to market changes is a significant influencing factor in its growth in the United Kingdom housing sector.

Table 22*People Recruitment and Onboarding*

| Number | Approach title | Approach and deployment | Assessment and refinement | Link to strategy/ results | Evidence and owner |
|--------|--|---|--|---------------------------|--|
| 3a.1 | Building shared capability - people plan | <p>The building shared capability section within the company's Investing in Employee Futures strategy outlines the overall people plan. The plan defines the people resources required to deliver on the strategic outcomes.</p> <p>A realignment of the organizational structure to meet current and future strategic objectives, e.g., reduction in patch size and delayering of management levels.</p> | <p>Company XYZ independently assesses employees annually by Remarkable (Investors in People), who provide verbal and written feedback. The feedback provided by the Academy and discussed at the Leaders Forum provides data for the development of Action Plans for all subsidiaries. A Group-wide refinement to their People approach is the greater use of online learning to enable employees to access learning at a time and place that suits their circumstances.</p> | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | Investing in our futures – revised June 2017 |
| 3a.2 | Recruitment and career development | <p>The company learning framework is structured to allow people to progress their careers and move into leadership roles. Targets are in place to encourage recruitment from within the Group and the customer base.</p> <p>An innovative modern apprenticeship (MA) program with staff acting as mentors for each apprentice as part of their ongoing development. The main objective of the MA program is to provide opportunities for 'hard to-reach' customers, not only enabling us to find the right people for the organizations but</p> | <p>Company XYZ measures internal appointments to understand the effectiveness of its approach. Also, there is an annual independent audit of the Modern Apprenticeship program by Skills Development Scotland (SDS). In 2018, SDS commented that Company XYZ established a focus group of MA's and ex-MA's to give feedback on the program and suggest improvements. Skills Development Scotland's first recommendation was a change to the induction, scheduled for implementation in the 2020 start. The process is an example of best practice as it gives a much better quality and quantity of feedback than traditional methods such as surveys.</p> | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | Group learning framework |
| 3a.3 | Employee surveys | <p>There is an annual employee survey using the IIP Q40 questions.</p> <p>Following each survey, leaders review the results at the Leaders' Forum. In addition, results feed to staff via VMBs and WE Connect, and they also co-create the improvement actions with their teams. The output of the VMBs feeds the Company-wide improvement actions to address critical themes.</p> | <p>Company XYZ adapted its approach to people surveys, e.g., an independent research company, XXX Ltd, undertook the employee surveys until 2016, but this did not provide sufficient analysis. So, IIP surveys and the Times Top 100 became the principal methods of employee surveys.</p> | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | Employee surveys |

Table 23*People Learning Framework*

| Number | Approach title | Approach and deployment | Assessment and refinement | Link to strategy/ results | Evidence and owner |
|--------|---|--|---|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3b.1 | Group learning framework | To ensure adequate and necessary skills and competencies to achieve strategic goals, Company XYZ developed the Company Learning Framework, which coordinates all learning opportunities. This framework put the employee in control of their learning and widened the range of learning environments. | Re: markable (Investors in People) is an independent assessment of the learning framework every year. Feedback from liP constantly allows for refinements in the contents of the framework. For example, an expanded range of partners, e.g., the Open University, creates more flexible access to learning. | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | Group Learning Framework |
| 3b.2 | MyContribution - employee appraisal process | MyContribution is the employee appraisal process undertaken, and MyAcademy is the online learning portal where employees can access information on learning and development opportunities. Each subsidiary develops a high-level learning plan, informed by MyContribution, that incorporates feedback from external assessments, e.g., liP, EFQM, and CSE, and the challenges set out in their delivery plan. | The MyContribution process (Reviewed in 2017) involves staff from across the company. The review saw several improvements, including recording regular 1:1 supervision conversations and annual appraisal and providing much greater use within the Care sector where staff development and leader/staff conversations are monitored for legislative requirements. | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | MyContribution |
| 3b.3 | Group academy | The Group Academy includes agile learning spaces in all strategic locations. The process allows staff to have the space to learn and develop within creative environments. There is a program of learning & development opportunities throughout the year, including Group-wide programs and local events. In addition, bursaries are available for staff to progress in external learning, and professional fees/training are paid for employees, e.g., for the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). | MyContribution and MyAcademy portals allow learning tracking, and an evaluation is undertaken 90 days after training. After a review of the staffing structure of the Group Academy, external subject matter experts bring fresh thinking to the learning environments, e.g., the new Director of Learning & Innovation developed new Executive level training in conjunction with Harvard University. | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | Group academy |

Table 24*People Empowerment*

| | Approach title | Approach and deployment | Assessment and refinement | Link to strategy/ results | Evidence and owner |
|------|---|---|---|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3c.1 | Culture of empowerment | The Company XYZ operating model uses a basic concept of giving power to the front line and enabling the staff to make the best decisions for customers and communities. The Think Yes culture, smaller patch sizes, and equipping them with the right tools to do their job, e.g., GoMobile supports the operating model. In addition, staff at all levels have the opportunity to join a CoE to contribute to the improvement of critical processes. | An independent staff empowerment assessment occurs as part of the IiP, EFQM, and CSE assessments. A partner program, The Lens, which received positive reviews by EFQM R4E feedback, became the base assessment program at Company XYZ. The program enables staff to bid for funding to implement their creative ideas for improvements. | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | Think Yes culture |
| 3c.2 | Involving staff | Staff is involved in all aspects of the business, from day-to-day operations to service improvements and strategy development. For example, Staff participated in the design of the new GoMobile service. Also, the Staff participates in weekly VMBs and CoEs. | The Communities of Excellence are inclusive of people across the Group, and these teams are constantly refining the way the company delivers services. They also involve learning journeys to external organizations to gather best practices. Furthermore, VMBs, led by staff, is vital for these meetings to identify how to remove barriers and do things better. | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | CoE action plans VMBs |
| 3c.3 | Company XYZ staff are great ambassadors | Company XYZ staff are proud to work for the Group and take great pride in supporting their customers and going the extra mile. For example, one of their environmental teams has recycled discarded household items to raise money for local charities and community groups. The staff also supports causes on a group-wide basis, and there is a charity of the year to focus their fundraising efforts. Not only do they provide donations, but they also volunteer, and Company XYZ supports this by giving three days of paid leave to volunteer. | In the most recent employee survey, 92% of staff said they live the organization's values and behaviors. The Company's 'Think Yes' culture extends beyond operational duties. Staff is increasingly confident in representing the Group, e.g., by presenting the Group journey at external events and hosting learning journeys from other organizations who wish to visit the Group. | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | Communications Plan |

Table 25*People Communication*

| Number | Approach title | Approach and deployment | Assessment and refinement | Link to strategy/ Results | Evidence and owner |
|--------|--|---|--|---------------------------|--|
| 3d.1 | Communication channels | A wide range of communication methods is in place to ensure engagement with staff in ways that are appropriate for them. The communication system consists of personal, face-to-face meetings and modern communications technologies; for example, team meetings, staff conferences, team talks, DMTs, CoEs, a Company-wide intranet system (W.E. Connect), vlogs, digital screens, email, and newsletters. | Company XYZ staff commented the previous intranet (Holmes) was geared towards passing information, and they wanted a more engaging tool that allowed for better sharing of information. The new platform led to the creation of W.E. Connect and the usage of this platform. Also, a Community of Excellence Engagement developed a better communication platform after feedback from company staff. | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | Communications plan |
| 3d.2 | Communications plan for strategic projects | As strategic projects develop, the Communications Team forms part of the Group to ensure a communication and engagement plan that considers everyone involved. Recent examples included preparing customers for the roll-out of universal credit, GoMobile, and MyHousing. | The Communications Team reviews their input to such projects and gathers feedback from colleagues to identify improvements. For example, greater use of videos and blogs to communicate across the Group. | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | Communications plans for projects |
| 3d.3 | Sharing information and knowledge | Each CoE identifies opportunities to learn from other organizations that may be setting the trend in their particular field. An example of this is learning from other organizations thinking differently about their approach to helping customers prepare for universal credit. The W.E. Excel awards have introduced another opportunity for sharing across the Group. | A review of the approach to communities of excellence occurs regularly as CoE leads share best practices. In addition, the annual CoE conference provides an opportunity to learn from each other. | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | CoE conference W.E. Excel events and annual awards |

Table 26*People Recognition, Equality, and Diversity*

| Number | Approach title | Approach and deployment | Assessment and refinement | Link to strategy/ results | Evidence and owner |
|--------|------------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------|--|
| 3e.1 | Terms & conditions / W.E. benefits | To ensure attraction and retention of the very best employees, the Group offers terms and conditions of employment beyond sector norms, e.g., attractive pay and pensions. In addition, the W.E. benefits package provides a holistic suite of benefits for employees, such as a health and wellbeing plan, flexible working arrangements including term-time working, and an employee assistance program. | A dedicated team reviews the suite of benefits available to staff. The reviews introduced new benefits and enhanced aspects that are particularly important to people, e.g., support for childcare costs. | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | Terms & conditions W.E. benefits package |
| 3e.2 | Staff recognition | A range of mechanisms exists to recognize the contributions of company staff, including local team-based events, Group-wide W.E. Excel awards, and nominations for external and national awards. Many of the staff also value the informal note of thanks from their line manager, and this is encouraged. | Through feedback from Investors in People, Company XYZ refined its approach towards Reward and Recognition and Developed (RRD) the W.E. Excel awards. Now recognizes both improvements and innovation that happen locally and how this can impact the wider Group. | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | W.E. Excel awards |
| 3e.3 | Equality and diversity | The Employee Wellbeing Team introduced 'W.E. are support groups that help people, including a Careers group, mental health awareness group, and ones to support ethnic minorities and LGBT communities. Leaders across the organization support these. | An annual review of the effectiveness of the 'W.E. fed to support groups and established the need for new groups. A recent development recognized that staff also have 'caring responsibilities' for relatives, inspiring the Careers group establishment. | W.E. Inspire 7a, 7b | W.E. are support groups |

The quality process within Company XYZ is a crucial enabler in creating cross-company collaborative teams that drive improvement and innovation in critical processes and directly impact the quality and performance of their services. To ensure quality processes are robust and include the rigor necessary to maintain a world-class quality system, Company XYZ partners with Quality Scotland, a national partner for EFQM in Scotland. Company XYZ integrates the EFQM aspects of quality, results, and continuous improvement into its business practices. Tables 23 and 24 reflect the integration of

feedback from EFQM and other organizations into knowledge management, learning and development, and systems for continuous improvement. Company XYZ follows an EFQM practice template for plan delivery and developing its cooperative engagement strategy for partners across the 17 local authorities (Table 27).

Additionally, the SLT is committed to the growth and development of all team members. Company XYZ offers a wide-ranging and structured learning and development plan through their Building Shared Capability initiatives (Table 22) and opportunities such as their innovative Modern Apprenticeship (MA) program to enable learning and continuous professional development (Table 23). The local and Group human resources team integrated well into the Building Shared Capability initiatives. All approaches mapped within the overall strategy are part of their hiring and onboarding process. For example, job descriptions exist for all positions and apprenticeships. The HR team regularly reviews and updates the professional development processes and practices to ensure accurate documentation and reporting for new hires and incorporate training and development profiles for all employees (Table 23).

Table 27

EFQM Perspective

EFQM perspective

Delivery plans draw on good practice from the EFQM model

- Strategy aligned to performance targets and transformation initiatives
- Governance and performance management system aligned to the strategy
- Governance review schedule that monitors progress with strategy
- Performance and transformation management and measurement built into way of working
- Communication of purpose, vision, and strategy to key stakeholders

Recruitment and Onboarding. Company XYZ's recruitment and career development processes map to several approach areas across their People plan and are linked to both the overarching strategy and key results outcomes and have specific leaders assigned as owners of the process areas (Tables 22-26). Concerning recruitment and onboarding, the Group Learning Framework focuses on career development and advancement into leadership roles. A target system encourages recruitment within the company and its cooperative customer base. The Modern Apprenticeship (MA) program focused on recruitment from the housing customer base. It provides opportunities for their hard-to-reach customers, enabling the group to find the right people for the organizations and supporting the Better Lives ambition in their mission. Company XYZ measures internal appointments to understand the effectiveness of its approach. Also, there is an annual independent audit of the Modern Apprenticeship program by an independent organization Skills Development Scotland.

Diversity and Inclusion. The SLT demonstrates its commitment to fostering a work environment inclusive of all people, groups, religions, and values diversity. Company XYZ's sponsored Employee Wellbeing Team introduced W.E., Company XYZ's support groups that aid their employees, further sponsors careers groups, mental health awareness groups, and groups supporting minorities and the LGBTQ+ communities (see Table 26). All groups have assigned leadership sponsor support across the organization.

The SLT demonstrates its commitment to diversity and inclusion (D&I) through policies and practices delineating the process and responsibilities of employees and

leadership, the creation and support of focused, relevant training and guidance through the W.E. Inspire strategic framework mindful of the day-to-day working practices affecting and supporting the groups. All new and transferring staff receive digital copies of Company XYZ's policies as part of the onboarding process. An innovative fundamental process decoder matrix makes the connections of day-to-day practice to relevant policy easy to accomplish. The first day for each new employee starts with granting direct digital access to the Group Learning Framework. This Framework aids in the coordination of all learning opportunities. It puts the employee in control of their development, starting with an introduction to policy and practice at Company XYZ and access to the full range of learning environments available to employees. During the first 6 months of service, new employees receive an introduction to the established performance targets and objectives that align with those imbued in the organization's learning roadmap during the first 6-months of employment. The organization is committed to valuing diversity, inclusion, and equality through Company XYZ's Equality and Diversity enabler approach (Table 26).

Workforce Climate. Organizational leaders maintain a work climate supportive of and actively working toward each worker's growth, and well-being is a crucial process and metric of organizational health. Researchers found key attributes and detractors to employee well-being revolve around the psychosocial work environment and influences of social class norms, positive or negative performance recognition, and overall work climate (Nielsen et al., 2017). Researchers use Porter's framework to argue the need for supportive employment practices and employee stimulation to positively affect

performance by strengthening valuable employee-based resources (Bommaraju et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2020). Workplace climate is a descriptive representation and measure of an organization's culture and its ability to support employee well-being.

Environmental, Health, and Safety (EH&S). At Company XYZ, EH&S is a competitive environmental advantage. A unique partnership arrangement with Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service created the basis of Company XYZ's Community Improvement Partnership operating model. Company XYZ and its partners share intelligence and collaboratively work to identify and tackle crime, fire safety, and anti-social behavior within the communities they serve. The same care imbued in their community oversight extends to their workplace environment. The Managing Director at Company XYZ chairs the EH&S workplace committee. Each employee has a responsibility to ensure they are practicing safe behaviors and are aware of the safety of all employees. Company XYZ's SLT understands its ethical responsibility under Scotland's health and safety laws to protect its staff and customers from work-related safety risks, both environmental and psychological. All workforce members maintain access to occupational health and safety information and training, no-cost employee counseling, and health and safety training programs.

According to the Health and Safety at Work Act of 1974, employers residing in the United Kingdom must provide for all staff members' health, safety, and welfare, provide and distribute safety policy, and maintain an ongoing review of their safety policy (Health and Safety Executive, 2020). In 2017, Company XYZ instituted a revised health and safety policy, and a review in 2020 validated alignment with the company

vision and values. A key enabler within the Group Learning Framework occupying a seminal position is Compliance and Safety under the Welcome to Company XYZ core area (Figure 10) highlights training to maintain a safe work environment and business continuity. The comprehensive training modules include Scotland's Mental Health First Aid training.

Compensation and Benefits. Staff compensation (terms and conditions of employment) and benefits are crucial components to ensure that Company XYZ attracts and retains the best employees. Company XYZ offers terms and conditions of employment that exceed typical sector norms within the United Kingdom housing sector. Areas of excess are much more attractive levels of pay and company-paid pensions, mostly nonexistent within the industry today. In addition, the Company XYZ benefits package provides a holistic suite of benefits for employees, such as a health and wellbeing plan, flexible working arrangements including term-time working, and an employee assistance program.

The SLT realizes the influence of staff compensation and benefits on the organization's ability to attract and retain the best workforce. The compensation and benefits package promotes health and well-being, encourages a good work-life balance, and helps staff save money and plan for their future. In addition to a competitive pension scheme and flexible working, the benefits package includes access to occupational health, physiotherapy, financial help towards child-care, further education, gym membership, dental treatments, glasses, and even driving lessons, IT equipment, bicycles, as well as an employee rewards scheme.

Company XYZ uses a compensation schema following an incremental salary baseline with a grading system and awards based on merit increases recognizing staff through an annual performance review process. Although the compensation and benefits package offered to staff is in line with other sector employers, the SLT is committed to protecting the learning investment in current staff and attracting new talent through the provision of flexible employment arrangements, and ensuring all staff feels their contributions are valued and reflected through the compensation they receive.

Additionally, Company XYZ has a dedicated team reviewing the suite of benefits offered to staff. The review recently introduced new benefits and enhanced aspects of the compensation plan essential to many staff, including support towards childcare costs. Also, the compensation model aligns with Company XYZ's mission of making homes and lives better. Lastly, annual employee satisfaction surveys conducted by third-party providers include questions focused on employee satisfaction with compensation.

Company XYZ uses reports and measures processes to monitor usage rates. The SLT works to correlate the rates to staff advancement and turnover to measure a thriving compensation schema. Company XYZ also offers bursaries for staff to progress in external learning. Professional fees/training are paid for employees, e.g., for the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). The MyContribution and MyAcademy portals provide a platform for tracking learning progress. Employee progress and the value of the plan receive an evaluation 90 days after training.

Workforce Engagement

Assessment of Engagement. Employee engagement refers to the commitment exhibited by a staff member imbued with an emotional and intellectual need to accomplish work that upholds the company's mission, vision, and values (BPEP, 2019). Leaders of high-performing organizations focused on excellence develop strategies that foster innovation and embrace inclusion and creativity while maintaining alignment with company strategic objectives (EFQM, 2019). Company XYZ's SLT considers employees a critical asset within its strategic plan, as displayed in its MyContribution platform (Figure 7). The MyContribution platform facilitates capturing feedback from leaders, employees, and customers. It supports structured engagement between employees and their managers, reinforcing the golden thread between the company's strategic goals and its personnel's contribution.

Additionally, through the MyContributions platform, a strategy review process involved each cooperative partner in considering the potential key strategic drivers and challenges for the future. Surveys using a closed-ended question format conducted throughout the employee, partner, and customer engagements added to the rigorous review process. An employee survey conducted yearly inquiries on employee engagement's overall satisfaction, management relations and effectiveness, development opportunities, learning opportunities, and diversity and inclusion. In addition to the yearly employee survey, additional surveys focused on a strategic element or process to ensure survey questions and audiences focused on the topic clearly (Table 28). The process predicted significant changes to the external environment and company operating context

through 2025. The strategy review process also identified future ambitions and proposed a framework for meaningful engagement and dialogue with staff, customers, and stakeholders. Company XYZ's 2020 to 2025 strategy introduced the Inspiring Ambition, Unleashing Potential staff engagement module to employees in October 2021. Each partner and their employees had input into refining the strategy through engagement sessions comprised of small groups of no more than 20 people with fluid discussion during the sessions rather than just a presentation. These sessions spread across multiple days of 1 to 2 sessions per day with a strong focus on reconnecting people. These sessions marked the first time many staff had the opportunity to return to Company XYZ's offices and mix with colleagues and customers due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Table 28

Customer and Employee Surveys 2017-2019

| Survey name | 2017 response avg. | 2018 response avg. | 2019 response avg. |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Customer satisfaction | 90% | 90% | 90% |
| Yearly employee satisfaction | 87% | 88% | 92% |

The output of the Inspiring Ambition, Unleashing Potential sessions melds into an extensive program engaged with key external providers to reestablish relationships and communicate expectations in supporting the delivery of services to meet objectives. The strategy development design helps to ensure the new family of aligned plans provides a seamless transition from the previous 5-year strategy of Investing in Our Futures' to the 2020 to 2025 plan of Inspiring Ambition, Unleashing Potential'. Additionally, the Delivery Plan reporting will complement KPI reporting already in place via Pentana.

Pentana refers to the Company XYZ IT solution for performance management. The system ensures every part of the company has the timely information needed to deliver exceptional results. The system provides a visual dashboard (VD) style information platform. The system reports services, people, financial results, and implementation updates on company-wide initiatives and projects. The system ensures leaders and employees have access to job satisfaction metrics, training, career development tools, opportunities, and overall connection to Company XYZ's strategic goals to maintain the connection to the company's MVV.

Organizational Culture. Company XYZ's SLT acts as an enabler for its staff. Through the Think Yes culture and operating model, they actively empower the staff to make the best decisions for customers. Communication between leaders and staff occurs at all levels of the organization (Table 13). Having staff dispersed across 17 of the 32 Local Authorities (Figure 4) necessitated the SLT to develop specialized methods of engaging with the workforce. When engagement with individual staff is possible, one-on-one meetings to directly engage with individual staff to facilitate training, conduct quarterly and yearly 360 performance evaluations and development plans, and listen to staff regarding any personal issues or concerns. Also, the SLT communicates electronically with staff through Teams meetings, company volunteer activities, social media, and other working and nonworking groups. Company XYZ uses electronic communication and in-person communication to support consistent employee engagement. The intent is to foster an environment to empower staff to live the values of

Trust, Community, Excellence, and Ambition in their daily work culminating in a shared culture reflective of Company XYZ's MVV.

The annual MyContribution and Excel awards assess the effectiveness of staff empowerment. In addition, the annual employee survey measures the extent to which staff feels empowered. A vital part of the Leadership Programs is to emphasize the role of leaders in Company XYZ, which has evolved in the development of new programs, e.g., Leading with Impact. First, the formation of Communities of Excellence (CoE) encouraged engagement and empowerment within Company XYZ. Second, leaders from across the business lead the CoEs and involve staff at all levels. Through the CoE approach, leaders value the experience and enthusiasm of their staff in developing and actioning creative ways of improving work processes and connection to the community.

Performance Management and Development. Performance management defines performance management by setting expectations within a system based on an organization's policies and practices, monitoring results, and translating success into future strategy. Company XYZ's performance management and development approach within the Leadership Enabler Map details Company XYZ's approach to performance development and management (Table 13). Within Company XYZ, performance management begins with the individual staff member and their empowerment to live the values of trust, community, excellence, and ambition in their daily lives. Company XYZ leaders act as role models in establishing a shared culture that extends to all levels of the organization. According to BPEP (2019), an essential component to managing staff performance follows a process of defined goals and consistent measurement against those

goals. It includes a complete system of incentives, recognition, and rewards supporting high performance. EFQM (2019) defined an excellent organization as one where leaders develop and execute their development through policies and practices to manage onboarding, career development, 360 degree fair and equal opportunities to advance, and robust succession plans for the future growth of new leaders.

Performance Management. At Company XYZ, the annual employee survey measures the extent to which staff understand and live the MVV of the organization. Employee surveys conducted in 2017, 2018, and 2019 fed the MyContribution appraisal process. Leaders communicate the mission, vision, and values via Company XYZ sessions with all staff. Values are also integrated into the MyContribution appraisal process and the Excel Awards for staff. The Excel Awards recognize staff who live the values of Company XYZ. Recent examples include the General Manager's Employee of the Year Award and the Award for Outstanding Commitment to Values. Leadership behaviors on an individual basis are reviewed and improved via the annual MyContribution appraisal process, which includes a 360-degree review and subsequent development plan. The outcomes of MyContribution are analyzed and form the Individual Learning Plan, which also feeds into the Leadership programs. The goal is to ensure all learning and measures align with the overall organizational strategy.

As part of the performance management framework, leaders review performance with key stakeholders via the Company XYZ and Subsidiary Boards, Strategic Partnership Boards, and the Scrutiny/Customer Panels (Table 16). For example, customers sit on the Scrutiny/Customer Panels who meet with leaders regularly to discuss

performance and review service and new or optimized services. Leaders also review performance with partner organizations, for example, with Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, in terms of the impact of the Community Improvement Partnership.

Staff Development and Succession Planning. The passion, skills, and enthusiasm of Company XYZ's staff, melded with a willingness to embrace new ways of working, are the foundations of Company XYZ's success. Company XYZ's unique Think Yes culture is one of the foundational strengths, inspiring staff to develop innovative solutions and build insightful, trusting relationships with customers and communities. It shapes the way services are delivered. Staff is empowered to design individual service outcomes at the point of contact to meet customers' needs. It is a mindset that empowers people to use their professional judgment and understanding of the customer to take a holistic approach, tailoring services appropriately and responsively to meet that customer's needs best. Working with the customer to identify the best solution ensures high levels of customer satisfaction and reduces re-work and downstream demands on services. Company XYZ leaders fully understand and embrace their core purpose of removing blockages and enabling staff to do what is right for their customers. A Company XYZ priority focuses on the Investing in People initiative to ensure employees have the opportunity to learn the exceptional skills, attitude, and strategic ambition necessary to lead with impact. Learning development, reward recognition, and wellbeing approaches help to ensure staff can continually develop while maintaining a focus on the retention of outstanding staff.

Leaders use the MyContribution platform as an aid in capturing feedback from leaders, peers, and customers. It supports structured dialogue between employees and their manager, reinforcing the golden thread between strategic goals and the personal contribution of staff by focusing on regular one-on-one performance discussions and annual appraisals around desired competencies. It provides clarity of purpose, ensures ownership and accountability, inspires excellent performance, and involves people in continuously identifying and developing the skills and confidence needed to deliver excellence into the future. Insight from the MyContribution platform flows to the team and organizational learning plans. It keeps each employee's skills directories designed around the specific needs of *job families* and up to date. MyContribution also acts as a crucial vehicle for identifying and developing people who have the potential and desire to progress their careers into more highly skilled or leadership roles and is linked to succession planning. The MyContribution platform was reviewed and refreshed in partnership with staff in 2019.

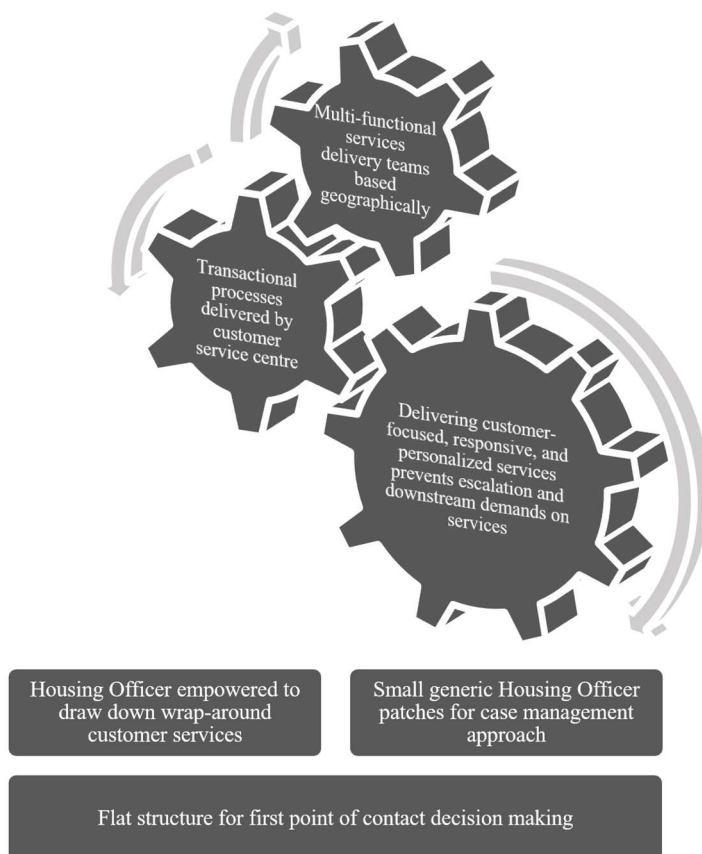
Operations

Improved effectiveness in operations leading to successful organizations is the product of sound organizational implementation strategies focused on delivering value to customers and innovation within critical product lines or services (BPEP 2019). Within Porter's framework for market dominance, a critical differentiating resource resides in sound organizational processes and how they distance organizations from their competitors (Zhang et al., 2020). The soundness of operational procedures rests on their measure of reliability, efficiency, and frugality surrounding network reliability, network

security, and cost controls (EFQM, 2019). Company XYZ's SLT focuses on increasing the organization's efficiency by developing strategies that establish work processes to increase capability and resource availability. The following subsections demonstrate how Company XYZ approaches the development, dissemination, and refinement of strategies and implementation plans to lead to market dominance.

Work Processes

Service and Process Design. All processes, products, and services within Company XYZ go through a design and development process with the customer in mind to create the best possible outcome for customers. Company XYZ created CoEs with the relevant leaders taking ownership of the critical processes that deliver vital services. Company XYZ's operating model (Figure 11) is a diverse business model with a shared process discipline of core products and key processes. It provides a shared understanding and common language within the communities they serve. The CoEs conduct systematic assessments of the potential business impacts from changes in external environments such as welfare reform, changing customer profiles, or internally driven change, such as channel shift or expansion into new markets. Their process design allows summarization of the rationale for how they create, deliver, and capture value for each of the company's core products and key processes. Also, the process helps define and archive customer profiles and their key care abouts, together with the business outcomes, essential resources, and finances. The process highlights any differentials between customer segments and knowledge and skill requirements.

Figure 11*Company XYZ Operating Model*

Additionally, the key processes which create value for their customers define the process path for each customer. Each customer accesses the combination of services and supports appropriate to their needs, creating an individualized service experience for each customer. Company XYZ assesses its products and key processes through its CoE forums. The CoEs own the key processes and policies for customer-facing services. The CoEs bring together front-line staff and strategic process owners to ensure continuous improvement in performance and deployment of core services; rent collection, letting

homes, repairs, maintaining neighborhoods, sustaining tenancies, customer engagement, and new construction. The CoEs are a crucial driver of innovation in business improvement, ensuring engagement and dialogue with staff from across the company.

The strength of Company XYZ's relationships with customers and communities is one of the significant features that set them apart from its competitors. The purposefully designed company operating model leverages community resources and passion. Re-investing resources to reduce the number of properties each housing officer manages to 200 per patch enabled Company XYZ to deliver the lowest Housing Officer to property ratio in the United Kingdom. Reducing patch sizes proved key to enhancing trusting relationships with customers. Company XYZ staff can access appropriate wrap-around support for their customers, including training and employment projects, financial advice, health and wellbeing initiatives, and community capacity building. Transactional services, whose priority for customers is quick, effortless, and efficient service, are managed and delivered through their 24/7 Customer Service Centre. The Customer Service Centre introduced digital services to include Webchat, a custom application for quickly communicating online, and other expanded web, phone, and email channels, to enhance customer contact options.

Process Management and Improvement. Company XYZ managed the performance of processes via their performance management system and monitored daily and weekly, i.e., via VMBs, team meetings, and DMT/ET sessions. New cooperative partners join the company as integrated partners consistent with Company XYZ processes, leading to efficiencies across the organization and procurement processes. The

CoE regularly leads to discuss their approach to managing their CoE and learn from each other, developing shared terms of reference to ensure consistency.

Company XYZ manages the processes that extend beyond the company's boundaries by engaging partners. For example, the creation of the Joint Venture enables the company to manage the entire process of repairs better. In addition, staff works closely with colleagues in the Police and Fire services to deliver process improvement to 360 services. Key partners participate in relevant CoEs; for example, there is a City Building representative on the Engagement CoE. These CoEs have led the enhancement of processes, products, and services. One process development from the allocation CoEs produced the development of MyHousing, a portfolio of processes designed to provide a better service experience to customers looking for a new home. The design process used Customer Journey Mapping (CJM) to capture and define the customer's experiences and expectations at every stage, including those with special needs such as refugees, the homeless, and disabled customers.

Process ownership aligns with the CoE leads, who then engage staff across all company teams to contribute to the management and improvement of key processes. A vital element of the CoEs' is a commitment to deliver improvements by reviewing processes, undertaking learning journeys to identify best practices, and developing refinements to the process. The approach to CoEs has been reviewed and improved via the annual CoE conference, and regular best practice sharing by the CoE leads to include using the CJMs to map and test processes from the customers' perspective.

Operational Effectiveness

Company XYZ leaders demonstrate their commitment to maintaining operational effectiveness by continued membership and mentoring through the EFQM quality organization. The SLT understands the impact continued service efficiency and effectiveness have on maintaining market dominance in the United Kingdom housing sector. The level of vigilance necessary for maintaining the highest levels of occupancy and lowest level of turnover equates to company success. How Company XYZ develops and maintains key partnerships makes up the base of operational effectiveness. Company XYZ maintains operations in 17 of the 32 local authorities throughout Scotland and maintains physical assets in all 17 locations. According to Jensen et al. (2019, physical assets provide the foundational platform from which leaders build strategies to exploit marketplace opportunities. Company XYZ leverages its physical assets juxtaposed with its relationships with key partners as a foundational strategy to service its customers and prevent defects, service errors, rework, and minimize other costs. Key partners help the company achieve its mission and strategic commitments. Building trust and confidence with partners enables Company XYZ to identify synergies and opportunities to achieve shared outcomes and add sustainable, mutual value, doing much more collectively than individually. The Engagement Community of Excellence developed the Cooperative Engagement Framework, which provides the Key Partners Register (KPR) strategic and operational levels. In addition, each cooperative partner has its annual engagement plan, which includes a review of the key partners that help them deliver their services. Company XYZ developed straightforward ways of working with operational and

strategic partners (Table 27) to ensure maximum mutual benefit and the best service for customers.

Table 29

Key Strategic & Operational Partners

| 5 Big aims | Key operational partners | Key strategic partners |
|--------------|---|--|
| W.E. Excel | City building Local authorities Keep Scotland beautiful Glasgow life | Police & fire UK Government/DWP Glasgow community planning partnership Housing options hub |
| W.E. Care | Alertacall Wise group Volunteer Glasgow The lens | Health & social care partnerships Social bite & housing first consortium University west of Scotland Triangle consultants |
| W.E. Build | New build developers on framework Private sector home builders | Key Local Authorities: GCC, WDC, WLC, CEC Scottish Government Transforming communities Glasgow |
| W.E. Inspire | Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh Open university | Skills development Scotland Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Trade unions |
| W.E. Invest | Banks / treasury management | Investors/funders procurement |

Physical and Electronic Security. Company XYZ's SLT fully comprehends the importance of managing physical and electronic data and the necessary protections in place of critical operational systems as prescribed in their operational policies and regulatory responsibility. Company XYZ uses an Industrial Control System (ICS) cyber security-based practice to manage information as part of the staff's day-to-day operational norms. All staff understands their data security responsibilities during crucial moments of the onboarding process, training sessions, leadership presentations, manager one-on-ones, policy update announcements, and other electronic reminders. The regulatory environment that Company XYZ operates within mandates data security

policies and practices dissemination and enforcement to ensure adequate data security, including The Freedom of Information Scotland Act, the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004, and the housing industry best practices.

The SLT uses a data protection framework of policies, practices, and critical agreements with key partners, i.e., Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, to secure Company XYZ's physical and digital information. Security is everyone's responsibility encompassing physical security, human resource, identity security, IT operational security, records and information security, and regulatory requirements. Figure 23 displays the policy area, the SLT owner responsible, and the action and intent. The company's IT security section, sponsored by the site General Manager, oversees the policy and ensures communication of new or revised policy and practices and information regarding training to managers and staff.

Table 30

Physical and Electronic Security Practice Register

| Policy area | Deterrent | Owner |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Physical security | CCTV, coded access cards | General Manager |
| | Physical locks | |
| | Solid core doors | |
| Staff and partner security | CCTV, picture ID badges | General Manager |
| | Coded access | |
| | Two factor authentication | |
| Information security | Picture ID badges | General Manager |
| | Coded access | |
| | Two factor authentication | |

Safety and Emergency Preparedness. The physical safety of Company XYZ's staff, customers, information, and assets are foremost in the SLT's decision-making

process. Company XYZ demonstrated its commitment to physical security by establishing the Community Improvement Partnership (CIP) in collaboration with the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service and Police Scotland to address fire safety and security issues within their communities. Additionally, the General Manager chairs the health and safety practice committee and partners with the CIP and KPR to ensure safety and emergency preparedness remain a top priority to the SLT. A comprehensive risk management process is in place, including risk registers and business continuity plans. Each ET paper includes a section titled 'risk appetite and assessment' to document risks associated with the paper topic and considered in decisions at the ET level. An annual assurance plan also details the audit and assurance work undertaken. In 2016, Company XYZ hired a third party to review the Company's approach to risk management and facilitated a risk workshop with Company XYZ and Collaborative Partners. The review findings found an effective risk management process exists across the company highlighting strong governance, oversight, and accountability. There are opportunities for improvement in risk appetite, governance, behaviors and culture, and processes. As a result, risk appetite statements were developed with every Company XYZ team and adopted as standard processes for the company.

Following the tragic 2017 Grenfell Tower fire (in London), Company XYZ immediately reviewed its fire mitigation strategy for high-rise buildings. The SLT led by example and adopted an integrated approach to make their homes exceptionally safe and secure to maintain customer confidence with excellent accomplishments in 2019 (Figure 24). The integrated approach included establishing the first Fire Safety Charter with the

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. At the same time, the Scottish Government had undertaken a fire safety review. Company XYZ received an invitation to join the Scottish Government's Advisory Group for Building and Fire Safety to recognize Company XYZ's proactive response and exemplary safety record. New legislation concerning fire safety was introduced in 2019, requiring interconnected heat and smoke detectors to be installed in every home in Scotland within two years. However, these legal changes will cost around £300 per home, with no Scottish government funding, given the Company XYZ's refined budgets to deliver this for their customers.

Table 31

Fire Safety Highlights

| |
|--|
| 2019 fire safety highlights |
| 602 Home fire safety visits |
| Stay safe campaign |
| 2100 Common area fire doors replaced |
| 25% Reduction in fires and false alarms |
| Fire safety prevention and mitigation strategy implemented |
| Fire prevention products package |
| Home safety team |
| Inspection regime |
| Critical fire safety repairs category |
| 2 Fire safety officers recruited |
| Central recording on PIMSS asset |
| Management system |

Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

The measurement, analysis, and knowledge management section carry four action areas of performance: (1) measurement, (2) analysis, (3) management, and (d) improvement. The action areas come together to describe the approach leaders use to

measure, analyze, manage, and improve company data, information, and knowledge, to achieve, maintain, and grow performance excellence (BPEP, 2019). The categories within the BPEP and Porters' five forces focus on achieving market dominance through data management and analysis to identify ways to expand company performance. When companies, pressed to respond to changing business conditions, must act, the data collection, analysis, and application to the business problem must transpire rapidly, and implementation of improvements occurs seamlessly without significant impact on day-to-day operations (BPEP, 2019). Some leaders using Porter's five competitive forces framework focus the business analysis archetype on growth planning (Oyadomari et al., 2017). Performance improvement development strategies typically use business information resources to affect the overall efficiency and growth (Khan et al., 2018). Figure 25 displays Company XYZ's businesses and resources deployed across three markets (1) housing, (2) care, and (3) property management. Company XYZ's CoE oversees the key processes across the three markets. The CoE is drawn from all cooperative partnerships and includes a mix of leaders, customer-facing, and strategic staff. They provide a systematic mechanism for collaborating across markets and products, nurturing innovation, and bringing great ideas to life. Each CoE, led by a member of the Extended Leadership Team, manages its action plan of focused continuous improvement. Their remit encompasses the deployment and refinement of policy and practice linked to their key process. They seek best practices and innovative approaches to explore through learning journeys within the housing sector and beyond.

Table 32*Company XYZ Markets, Products, and Key Processes*

| Housing | Care | Property management | Markets |
|--|---|--|-----------|
| Social rented housing | W.E. Care Tenancy support services Livingwell | Mid market rental housing Market rental housing | Products |
| Housing advice Allocations Rent collection Repairs Voids | Tenancy support services Personal care Outcome star | Housing advice allocations Income collection Repairs Maintenance Voids | Processes |

Within the measurement, analysis, and knowledge management section, I demonstrate how Company XYZ's SLT applies the action areas of performance to the collected qualitative and quantitative data and their emphasis on the importance of data management and application to improve market position. The evaluation of action elements maintained a focus based on the approach, deployment, learning, and integration factors Company XYZ's data analysis exhibited for the criteria.

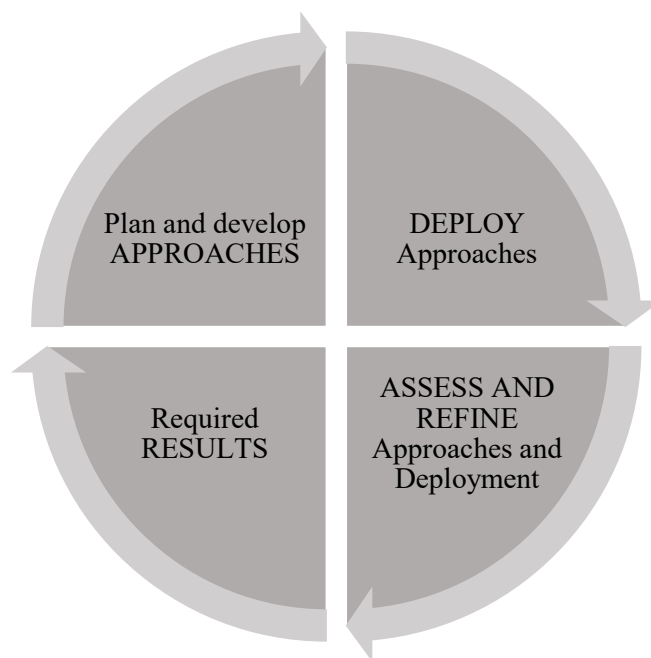
Measurement, Analysis, and Improvement of Organizational Performance

Performance Measurement, Quality Management. Quality permeates the culture of Company XYZ. Improving the quality of customers' lives makes up a substantial part of Company XYZ's MVV. According to EFQM (2019), by applying and adhering to quality standards, the pursuit of excellence by companies is achieved by connecting with, showing empathy toward, and anticipating their customer's needs. Company XYZ's SLT partnered with EFQM to pursue excellence and continuous improvement. The SLT embraced the teachings of EFQM and included EFQM's

RADAR logic model concepts into Company XYZ's performance management approach to help define cause and effect relationships defined by leadership actions and outcomes. The RADAR logic model uses four weighted sections; results, approaches, deployment, and assessment & refinement (Figure 12). It is a vital component of the EFQM quality approach (EFQM, 2019). The EFQM framework facilitates Company XYZ's approach to their measurement, analysis, knowledge management practices, and improvement and learning.

Figure 12

EFQM RADAR Model



Performance Measurement, Data, and Agility (Customer Results). An independent organization undertakes the annual customer surveys for Company XYZ's RSLs incorporating many questions, including those specified by the Scottish Housing Regulator. The independent organization also undertakes the surveys for Company

XYZ's care services. Additionally, the satisfaction survey's customer satisfaction of repair services falls to the Company XYZ Customer Service Centre, where data analysis occurs monthly. Baseline quality targets set during the 5-year strategy development culminating in 2020 acted as the performance goals measured quarterly and used for necessary market course corrections influenced by certain environmental circumstances, such as the introduction of Universal Credit. Company XYZ's housing-related perception measures and benchmarked performance indicators against other RSLs. The latter are in the top quartile for the Scottish Housing Regulator's Annual Return on the Charter measures. For care services, target benchmarks measurement and tracking compared to the national average of all United Kingdom care providers through data gathered and provided by the Care Inspectorate of Scotland.

Performance Measurement, Data, and Agility (People Results). Since 2016, Company XYZ has used the Investors in People (IiP) Q40 employee survey to gather their employees' perceptions. The category includes 40 questions around nine indicators aligned to the Investors in People framework. Previously the employee survey was undertaken by a third party. Also, Company XYZ participated in the Sunday Times' Top 100 Not for Profit Companies Survey and has been featured on the list three times. Since using the IiP Q40 survey, benchmarking organizational results within and outside the housing sector grew Company XYZ's comparable data adding to the cumulative historical used for improvement courses of action and training of future leaders. As part of Company XYZ's commitment to achieving IiP recognition, they have set an overall target to maintain employee perceptions at the IiP Gold level. They have put in place

several mechanisms to maintain employee perceptions at a high level, including tailored wellbeing programs for environmental operatives. Company XYZ also used pulse surveys to gather real-time feedback from employees.

Performance Measurement, Data, and Agility (Society Results). Company XYZ's commitment to Making Lives Better carries into many service areas. They provide several complimentary wrap-around services to customers. Company XYZ leadership thought it essential to measure the company's impact on their customers and society at a national level. A 2019 publication of the Fraser of Allander Institute report, a leading independent economic research institute, highlighted Company XYZ's contribution exceeding £2billion to Scotland's Gross Domestic Product in the last 15 years.

Performance Measurement, Data, and Agility (Business Results). Company XYZ measures a range of financial and non-financial indicators to assess performance measured according to statutory requirements defined by regulators. Targets set in line with Company XYZ's Investing in our Futures 5-year strategy ensure the validity of results. Comparisons to other RSLs residing in the top quartile and other care providers complete the performance measurement process.

Performance Analysis and Review. Company XYZ's SLT uses a multi-platform analysis and review process to assess all areas of the organization and includes financial health and overall performance against the strategic objectives identified in the 2020–2025 Strategic Plan. Every year Company XYZ brings all CoEs together to compare collaborative data, identify synergies, and drive improvement and innovation. CoE

members collaborate, analyze, and review data to identify and highlight what worked well and solicit ideas for increasing the effectiveness of the current Company XYZ approach. The performance analysis and review process led to changes in how Company XYZ engages communities. In partner, services delivered with community partners, such as City Building (Glasgow) for Repairs and Police Scotland for Protecting Communities. Company XYZ includes them as Community of Excellence members, helping customers and communities be heard and ensuring seamless end-to-end processes. Notably, the end-to-end processes harness collaborative action to achieve a more significant collective impact on improving the well-being of communities. Additionally, Company XYZ employs measures and targets for all key processes. These metrics are captured and monitored through their performance framework with rolling assurance checks reported through an audit committee.

Performance Improvement. Company XYZ's CoEs bring together front-line staff and strategic process owners to ensure continuous performance improvement and deploy the core services; rent collection, letting homes, repairs, maintaining neighborhoods, sustaining tenancies, customer engagement, and new builds. CoEs are a crucial driver of innovation and business improvement, ensuring engagement and dialogue with staff from across the company. Company XYZ uses a host of mechanisms to gather customer feedback, including Voice of the Customer, customer surveys, webchat, social media, mystery shoppers, and Customer Inspectors. Company XYZ also has a structured complaints process to gather customer feedback. Company XYZ consults with customers on the best methods of gathering their feedback and making

improvements. For example, Company XYZ conducts scheduled performance improvement events within local communities to ensure customer input on what needs to be improved is part of the solution. In addition, Company XYZ analyzes complaints across communities to identify economies of scale regarding service improvements needed across all locations.

Information and Knowledge Management

Information and knowledge are valuable resources for organizations. Knowledge resides in the skills the workforce contributes to the organization. The organization uses these skills to develop and disseminate information (Stamoulis et al., 2020). Company XYZ's SLT understands the strategic importance of having a trained and knowledgeable workforce to ensure a strong market presence. By adapting customer-generated feedback and information into the organizational knowledge base and integrating that new knowledge and perspective into Company XYZ's integrated approach to the adaptation, use, and transfer of organizational knowledge, the SLT aims to improve Company XYZ's market presence and effectiveness within the United Kingdom Housing sector, ultimately to maintain their leadership position within the sector.

Information systems storing critical market data are internal organizational resources that aid in a company's ability to influence its market presence in support of M&As (Hongjiu et al., 2019). More and More, information drives the accuracy of forecasts and contingency planning. The SLT worked to identify potential risks and opportunities concerning infrastructure and equipment critical to accurate data interpretation. Policies, practices, and work procedures must contain relevant, current,

and accurate information to ensure employees, cooperative partners, and other teams execute the organization's strategy to perfection. Yet, simultaneously delivering flawless collaborative communication to a geographically dispersed workforce.

Collection, Analysis, and Preparation of Results

Thematic Findings

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. Using Porter's five competitive forces as the conceptual framework, I addressed the following research question: What M&A integration strategies do business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector? Organizations with an established and robust understanding of their mission within their markets can influence and even steer those markets, potentially leading to market dominance (Porter, 1980). The focus of this study was on Company XYZ, a prominent letting and factoring company within the United Kingdom focused on increasing its market position within the social housing sector. The tenants of Porter's five competitive forces theory in conjunction with the Baldrige Excellence Framework comprised the study framework. I used data from multiple sources, including information retrieved from the company website, internal company and external government documents, other publicly available information, and semistructured interviews with four members of the SLT to identify strategic areas of strong advantage and opportunities for improvement. Strategy development related to thematic analysis of each element followed an evaluation baseline focused on the results approach of levels (actuals),

trends, comparisons (benchmarks), and integration (LeTCI) with derivatives necessary for the generation of M&A integration strategies leaders use to achieve sustainable growth. The results of the thematic analysis identified three prominent themes as follows: (1) unique cooperative synergies of M&A assets, (2) measured executive communication and direction, and (3) effectively leveraging organizational resources.

Presentation of Thematic Findings

Understanding all aspects of Company XYZ's organization and its operations is necessary to evaluate its organizational strengths and opportunities. To accomplish this, Company XYZ provided its internal organizational documentation, i.e., EFQM submissions, leadership process reports, training data, employment data, financial records, demographics, business plans, and strategic planning data. Included in the necessary group data were consistent communication between the researcher and client representatives over 3 years, mainly with the general manager, and data gathered from the SLT and select business managers. Additionally, publicly available information having Company XYZ as the main topic derived from publicly available information on Company XYZ's website rounded out the direct data sources. Competitive data and information delivered by Company XYZ proved valuable in determining competitors. Also, to facilitate the assembly and complete understanding of Company XYZ operations, semistructured interviews with four senior leaders initiated over telephone conversations allowed the capture and complete understanding of the organization and its processes. Porter's five competitive forces theory became the conceptual framework through which Company XYZ's strategies support their internal resources and

competencies relative to integration strategies used to support M&A operations in the United Kingdom housing sector. The presentation of the thematic findings provides Company XYZ's SLT with factual and trend data that may improve the organization's operational excellence.

Theme 1: Unique Cooperative Synergies of M&A Assets

Partnerships and people are valuable resources for organization leaders looking to dominate a sector or market (BPEP, 2019; Collins, 2020; Porter, 1980). Balance is needed between social value and business performance (Zhang et al., 2020). Business margins are relatively tight within the social housing sector, making cooperation M&A strategies necessary (Brown et al., 2017).

When discussing Company XYZ's efforts to leverage acquired assets gained through the M&A process, all participants related opinions on the benefits of leveraging assets. According to Participant 1, assets and resources gained through an acquisition bring to bear two fundamental strategic resources (1) equity and (2) new market entry access. Participant 1 noted:

One of our key strategies is growth through new partners. These are businesses we have acquired with existing assets in strategic growth areas that we think of as partnerships bringing existing unencumbered assets [to Company XYZ] that can be leveraged to fund new builds as well as giving us access to new sites and geography to leverage new products and markets they give access.

Real growth is a necessary outcome required for companies to maintain a dominant position in their industry, substantiated by Bhagwan et al. (2018). The strategic action of

adoption rather than assimilation of acquired assets during the M&A process is confirmed as a viable integration strategy in Smeets et al. (2016) and recognized in Wei and Clegg (2018). Although there is sufficient evidence in the scholarly literature to support cooperative synergies, this area is an opportunity for future research.

Participants noted the need for a balance of assets to fund new market entry while discussing barriers to the successful implementation of key growth strategies. According to Participant 1, there are more opportunities than funding allows, so striking a balance between critical strategic partners with the value of their unencumbered assets and the right market entry point with the highest growth potential. According to Duan and Jin (2019), financial synergies are a prevalent motivation in most M&A pursuits. One unique attribute regarding the acquisition of strategic assets by Company XYZ is the emphasis on partners and not the assimilation of assets. Acquired companies usually retain their identity and market presence, which according to Participant 1, allows the new partner to retain its market presence and customer loyalties while bringing increased letting stock into Company XYZ's portfolio, as displayed through the over 17 service locations across Scotland (Table 4) with supporting staff targeted to each geographic location (Figure 4). The focus and practice of Company XYZ's integration strategies of M&A resources tie directly to the conceptual framework through asset management and deployment within the bargaining power concepts within Porter's five competitive forces theory. According to Levine Daniel and Fyall (2019), and Mahat (2019), securing competitive advantage through market knowledge and local market resources is a key factor in maintaining a solid market presence. Company XYZ's continued regional expansion of services and

integration of learning and training for employees and customers displays a unique understanding of cooperative synergies that separate Company XYZ from its competitors. The effect of communication across these new synergistic relationships is another critical factor in market presence and dominance for Company XYZ.

Theme 2: Measured Executive Communication and Direction

Communication represents a base aspect of human existence, whether personal or business. In M&A activity, effective organizational communication aids in success (Angwin et al., 2016; Bommaraju et al., 2018). According to Angwin et al. (2016), effective organizational communication helps provide a structured path businesses adopt through the transition, enhances post-M&A commitment to the new entity, helps reduce uncertainty, and increases M&As' success rates. Supporting Company XYZ's focus on communication effectiveness to include executive communications is evident within the Communication Engagement Paths (Table 13).

When discussing measured executive communication, all participants agreed clear communication is essential for good organizational performance. Participant 3 focused on how IT platforms of merged entities can both enhance communication and curtail communication depending on IT synergy strategies developed before M&A activities. Participant 3 noted that they do not focus enough on the communication platforms embedded in our IT solutions which curtails the ability of Senior Leaders to communicate effectively and timely with acquired partners. According to Bommaraju et al. (2018), leadership communication focuses on guiding and shaping the preferred organizational realization. Company XYZ sees its customers as an extension of its business and seeks to

measure its communication effectiveness with tenants displayed in the data gathered on tenant satisfaction with landlord communication (Figure 32). Measured communication, whether internal or external, is a crucial enabler of the M&A process.

Further discussion on measured communication by the SLT during M&A activity yielded points on the importance of the timely release of information with a focus on information overload. Staff can get confused about Company XYZ's acquisition timing and potential loss of competitive advantage if too much information is released to the public too soon. Company XYZ's communication tenants are displayed in their People Communication enabler map (Table 25). The conceptual framework implications revolve around market entry and exit ease, where poor metering of communication causes a loss of competitive advantage, providing competitors with the ability to potentially affect market penetration and even entrance. According to Bommaraju et al. (2018), there is a critical need for communication moderators during and after M&As to ensure the right organizational reality is released at the proper time and intensity to ensure the lowest anxiety and highest positive reinforcement of the new entity.

Theme 3: Effectively Leveraging Organizational Resources

High-functioning organizations leverage a vast spectrum of capabilities and resources, including capital assets, people assets, process assets, partnerships, and market and business information leaders can leverage to take the market position (Assensoh-Kodua, 2019; Kay, 2018; Porter, 1980). Maximizing performance by leveraging internal resources and processes creates opportunities to use valuable and rare strategic resources (Burvill et al., 2018). In terms of integration strategies business leaders use to achieve

sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector, developing strategies that support a balance between intangible resources and capabilities to maximize competitive advantage, and market penetration are essential (see Khan et al., 2018). Company XYZ's leaders recognize the connection between strategic growth forecasting. The retention of the cooperative partner branding to achieve market penetration requires market expertise, synergistic opportunities, and business acumen within the workforce that can lead to market entry opportunities. Figure 26 codifies Company XYZ's view of the interconnectedness between markets, products, key processes for continuous improvement, and the development of a cooperation brand that leverages regionality across all functions in the organization.

When discussing Company XYZ's internal resources to maximize integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector, all participants cited the benefits. According to Participant 4, resources from the group marketing team and group finance team support the property and acquisitions efforts in developing brand identity strategies focused on a marketing message to highlight the regionality and familiarity of a trusted brand. While discussing potential barriers to the successful implementation of brand identity strategies, Participant 2 noted:

We need to have a Group push to think strategically regarding cooperative engagement strategies focused on regional growth opportunities and not just asset availability. There are many growth opportunities but finding the right mix of assets and brand recognition is essential.

The importance of a Group focusing on utilizing all available resources, both internal and across the partners' continuum, is graphically represented in the Key Operational and Strategic Partners (Table 10). Company XYZ's SLT and its extensive network of strategic partners enable Company XYZ a level of embedded community connectivity that ensures a significant level of market dominance by placing themselves in positions of providing critical infrastructure to their communities such as call centers, community boards, and Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

Further data focused on using organizational resources across regional and ethnic boundaries to increase the effectiveness of the cooperation partner strategy. According to Tarba et al. (2019), the resilience of an organization's resources, including human resources, is critical to organizational success. When describing barriers to strategy implementation considered by the SLT, Participant 2 noted that they need to focus on the economy of scale in our acquisition strategy of [cooperational partners]. Still, the process of developing funding profiles and other acquisition process steps take time, which might mean we cannot fit into the window of opportunity to acquire multiple assets simultaneously.

Product and Process Results

Property Management (Factoring)

Factoring is a Scottish term used to describe the processes of property management and the issues relating to the common parts or common areas of a multi-resident building or tenement. Efficient and effective property factoring supports Company XYZ's ability to provide quality services to its customers. Company XYZ

records indicate factoring services extend to over 30,000 customers, many of whom are considered vulnerable or at risk. Company XYZ's cooperative operating model established its factoring services across Scotland (see Table 4). Through the review of Participant interview data and Company XYZ documents, the SLT adheres to all policies and procedures regarding the factoring processes for all buildings and equipment under their purview, with all factoring agents providing services being required to register with the Scottish Ministers and conduct all factoring in an efficient and compliant manner.

Additionally, records indicate the SLT works with the Scottish Ministers' governance representatives to monitor adherence to the code of conduct and offer customers escalation to the First-Tier Tribunal Housing and Property Chamber. They enforce the codes for any issues not resolved at the customer level. Additionally, Company XYZ operates a property letting business within its overall organization with a history of supporting the fabric of communities, as demonstrated through the many awards presented by the Scottish Government and oversight organizations such as EFQM.

Property Rentals (Letting)

According to publicly available information, Company XYZ's property letting organization is registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator and operates under the Companies Act of 2006. Verified through company records and review of Participant interviews, the overall parent company has sufficient oversight and planning strategies to ensure people and assets are effectively managed. Vital operational data tracked average days to let a home, rent loss due to empty properties, and targets and benchmarks of other

leading letting companies to measure performance and goals (Figures 13-14). A vital part of the engagement strategy is learning through comprehensive training to ensure assets and people are well maintained across all disciplines during day-to-day operations. According to the Baldrige Excellence Framework (BPEP, 2019), learning is an integral part of an organization's operations and contributes to competitive advantage and workforce and organizational success.

Figure 13

Average Days to Let Homes

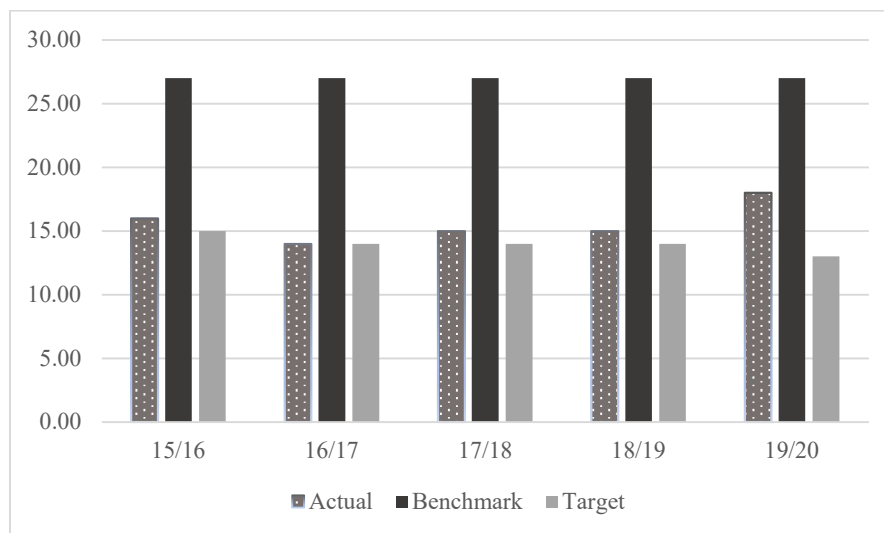
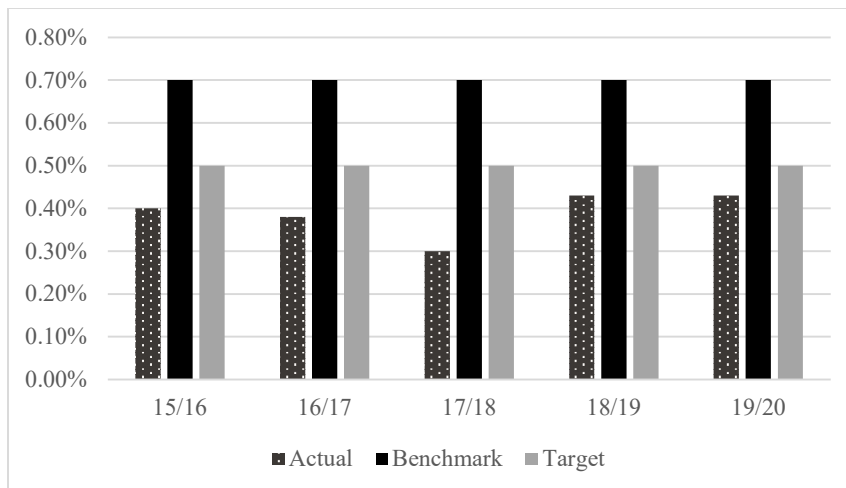


Figure 14*Rent Lost Due to Empty Property***Customer Results**

Company XYZ's SLT works diligently to nurture and develop relations with customers making up their key base within both letting and factoring, focusing on customer needs and expectations. The Baldrige Excellence Framework evaluation criterion focuses on achieving and sustaining customer results that meet or exceed expectations (BPEP 2019). Developing and implementing processes that aid the SLT gauge customer perceptions of service performance is essential to understanding overall organizational effectiveness. According to Itani et al. (2019), customer perception of value directly affects customer engagement quantity and quality. Company XYZ engages an independent organization to undertake their annual customer surveys for their RSLs, incorporating many questions, including those specified by the Scottish Housing Regulator. The customer survey data captured forms the basis of most strategy development by the SLT. Company XYZ's Investing in our Futures strategy established

targets to achieve top quartile performance or above by 2020. Company XYZ benchmarks its housing-related perception measures and performance indicators against other RSLs in the top quartile for the Scottish Housing Regulator's Annual Return on Charter measures (see Figure 15-17).

Figure 15

Tenants Satisfied with Overall Service

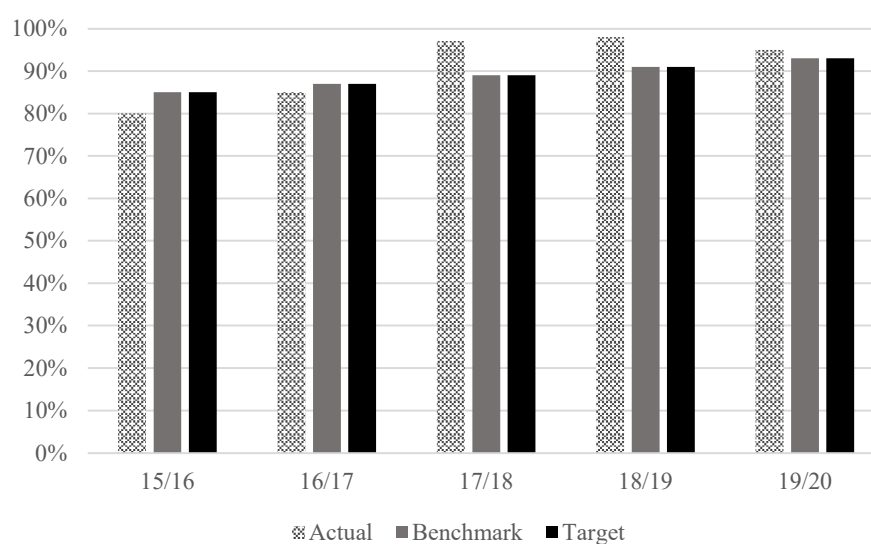


Figure 16

Tenants Satisfied Rent Amount is Good Value for the Money

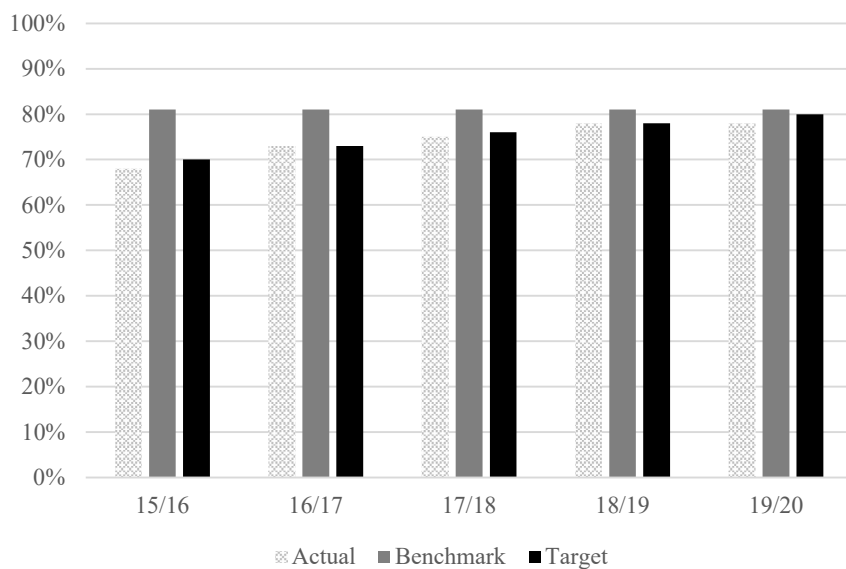
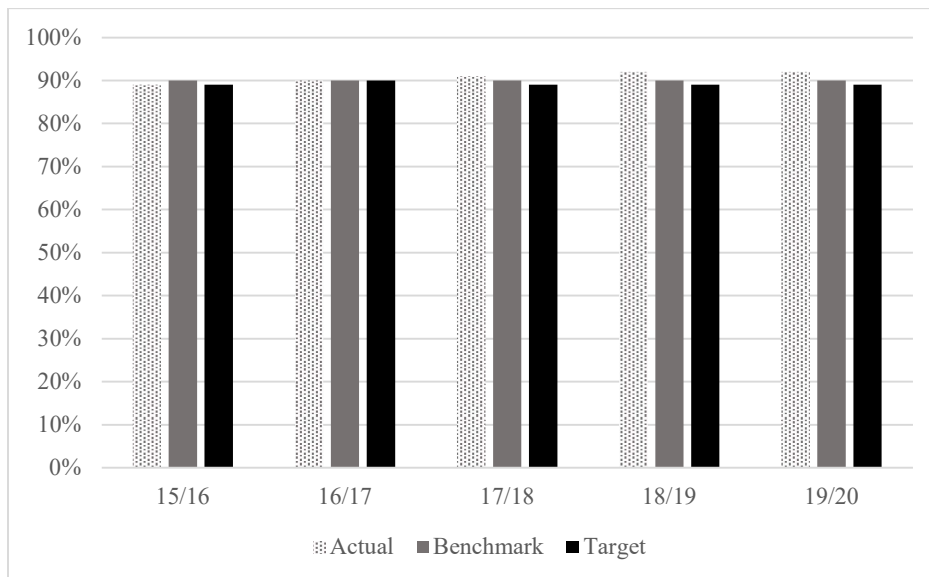


Figure 17

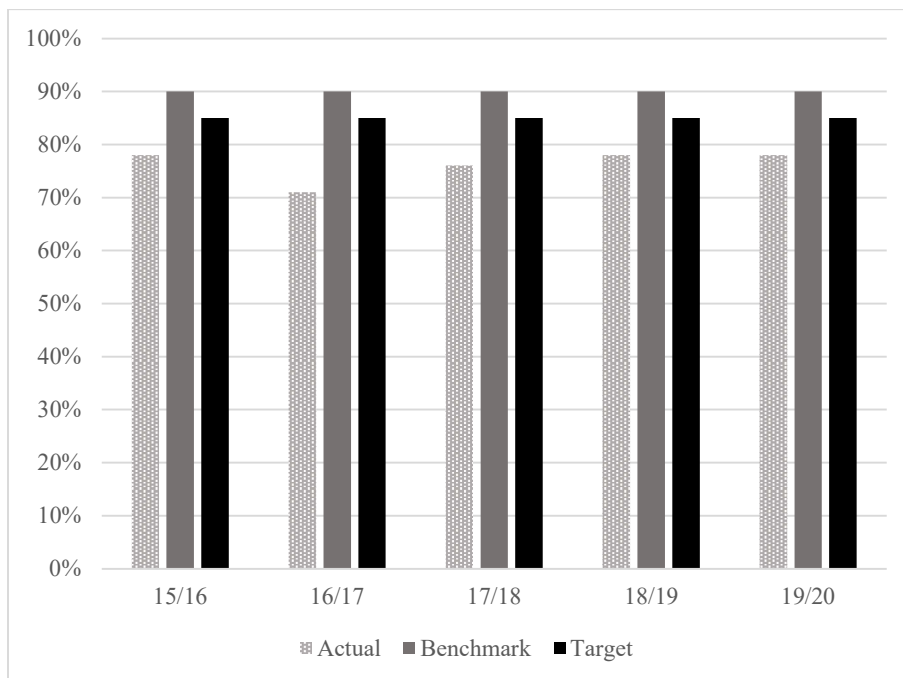
Tenants Satisfied With Landlord Communication



Additionally, Company XYZ's Customer Service Centre undertakes the factoring services surveys for repair services; analyzed monthly (Figure 18).

Figure 18

Tenants Satisfied With Repair Service



Also, Customer XYZ uses other ways to gauge customer needs and expectations. In 2020, the SLT used data from customer feedback to develop customer engagement processes and strategies captured in their WE Excel process discipline (Table 31).

Table 33*Customer Service Discipline Approach*

| Number | Approach title | Approach and deployment | Assessment and refinement | Link to strategy and key results | Evidence and owner |
|--------|---|--|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 5e.1 | Engaging with customers at a strategic level | Company XYZ has several ways to engage customers strategically within its Engagement Framework. These include customer representation on their Boards and Scrutiny/Customer Panels. Also, they have a ‘month of engagement’ each year to attract new members onto their Boards and Panels and engage at all levels with their customers. | As part of the Engagement CoEs research into innovative engagement methods, Company XYZ held an international engagement conference with the Democratic Society. They also researched examples from around the world to identify new ideas for future engagement. | WE Excel 6a, 6b | Community governance |
| 5e.2 | Engaging with customers at an operational level | At an operational level, Company XYZ’s staff engage with customers daily. The think yes culture and small patch sizes mean that their Staff interact with customers and use GoMobile and webchat to resolve their issues at the first point of contact. Their housing officers, care Workers, and Customer Service center staff are often the critical point of contact. They build relationships with their customers, meaning they are ideally positioned to link customers into appropriate ‘wrap-around’ services provided by Company XYZ 360. | Company XYZ leaders have consulted customers and Staff about current engagement practices and what they would like to change as part of the Engagement CoE. This close interaction has, for example, led to the production of more vlogs and the introduction of a new real-time digital Voice of the Customer feedback tool. | WE Excel 6a, 6b | Subsidiary Engagement Plans |
| 5e.3 | Customer feedback | Company XYZ’s SLT uses a host of mechanisms to gather customer feedback, including Voice of the Customer, customer surveys, webchat, social media, mystery shoppers, and Customer Inspectors. They also have a structured complaints process to gather customer feedback. | Company XYZ consults its customers on the best methods of gathering their feedback and improving. For example, they hold more local communities to suit their customers. In addition, they analyze complaints to identify service improvements. | WE Excel 6a, 6b | Subsidiary Engagement Plans |

One platform Company XYZ uses extensively is digital and social media. The increased use of digital media, i.e., webchat and various social media platforms by Company XYZ’s customers, provided the SLT the opportunity to interface more with customers and to offer new and unique options for customer communication and feedback. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Company XYZ’s website and social media platforms provided access to many COVID-19 related topics to ensure timely awareness of local and regional information, offer solutions to their needs, suggest ways tenants

work through any disruptions to services, and innovative ways to adhere to the mandatory masking requirements imposed by the Scottish government. The Facebook and Twitter websites featured community groups and postings to increase the communication paths between tenants and from tenants to Company XYZ customer service personnel during lockdowns. Together with community groups and RSLs, Company XYZ staff instituted live Q&A sessions through social media providing COVID-19 updates, online events and participation activities, and advice on returning to work, school, and other support services.

Workforce Results

Company XYZ's SLT understands the critical role its workforce plays in achieving the company's strategic objectives and mission. The Baldrige Performance Excellence Program (2019) and Porter's five forces theory identify people as a valuable resource that can aid in market influence leading to competitive advantage (Choi et al., 2019; Porter, 1980). From 2016 to 2020, Company XYZ used the Investors in People Q40 (IiP Q40) employee survey to gather their employees' perceptions. The IiP Q40 survey included 40 questions around nine indicators aligned to the Investors in People framework (Table 32). Before this, an independent survey provider undertook the Company XYZ employee survey. Using the IiP Q40 survey as part of the Company XYZ Excel initiative strategy made it possible to benchmark their workforce results with organizations within their sector and other sectors. Benchmark data remains within the Company XYZ data archives available on site (Figure 19). As part of their commitment

to achieving Investors in People recognition, they have set an overall target to maintain employee perceptions at the IiP Gold level.

Figure 19

IiP Q40 Survey Results Employee Perceptions

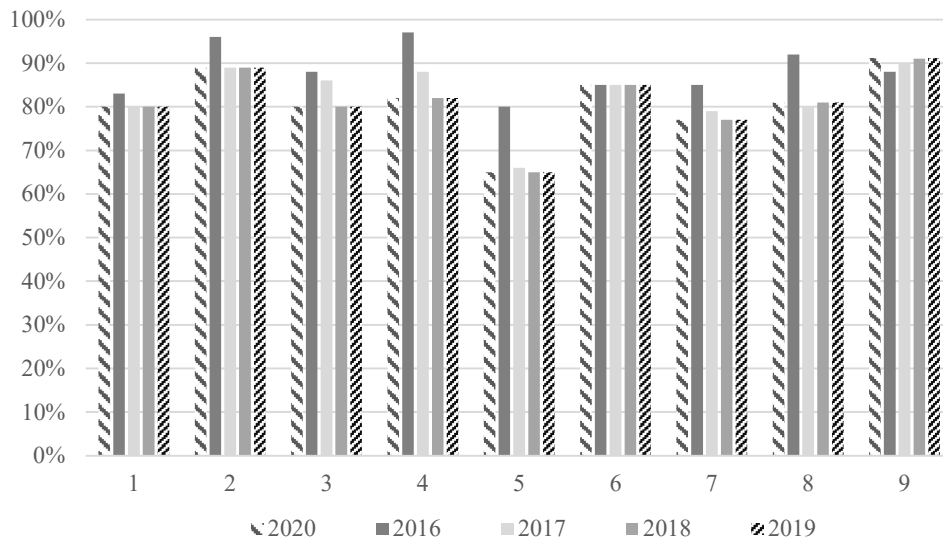


Table 34

IiP Q40 Survey Questions Categories

| Category | Category description |
|----------|--|
| 1 | Leading and inspiring People |
| 2 | Living the organization's values and behaviors |
| 3 | Empowering & involving people |
| 4 | Managing performance |
| 5 | Recognizing & rewarding high performance |
| 6 | Structuring work |
| 7 | Building capability |
| 8 | Delivering continuous improvement |
| 9 | Creating sustainable success |

Company XYZ put several mechanisms to maintain employee perceptions at a high level, including tailored wellbeing programs for their environmental operatives.

Also, pulse surveys to gather real-time feedback from their employees to generate weekly real-time litmus tests during significant engagements and even high-stress global situations where the workforce feels the impacts. Survey data captured over time proved leaders with correlative data that provided Company XYZ's SLT with Key Process Indicators (KPI) to track overall employee satisfaction and retention metrics when matched to job satisfaction and retention data.

Job satisfaction data captured through surveys add to the toolsets the SLT use to assess workforce status and performance. Job satisfaction is crucial and motivation for employee retention (Fan & Potočnik, 2021). Staff turnover and absence rates captured at Company XYZ add to the KPI metrics used by the SLT to understand employee perceptions (Figure 20-21).

Figure 20

Staff Absence Rate

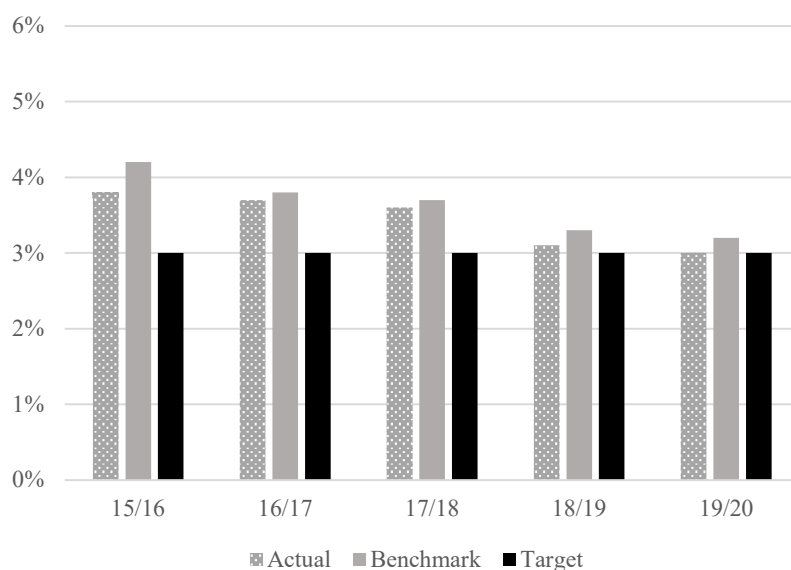
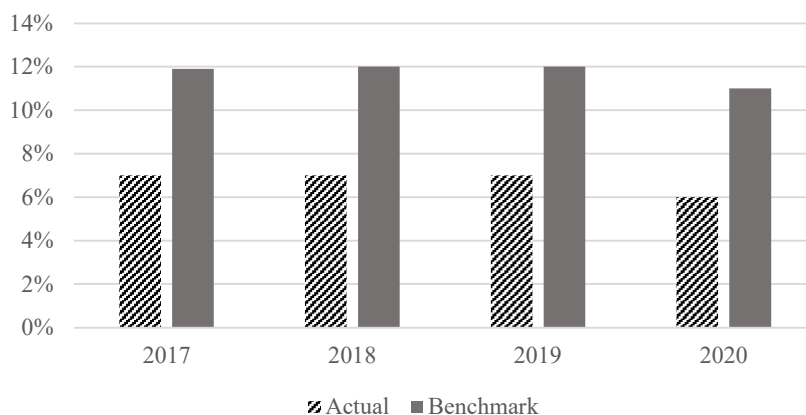


Figure 21*Staff Turnover***Leadership and Governance Results**

Company XYZ is a for-profit business registered in Scotland under the Companies Act (SC 402836) and is a registered property factor under the Property Factors (Scotland) Act. What sets Company XYZ apart from its competitors is the company operates as a registered charity, whereas 100% of the profits were released to its parent group and applied to charitable work across Scotland. The parent group board is responsible for Company XYZ's overall strategy, while the administration and daily operations fall with the local and cooperative partner leadership teams. Through the Leadership of Company XYZ's Managing Director and parent company leadership, the future of Company XYZ's continued focus on combating poverty and vulnerability remains a priority in the 2021-2026 5-Year Strategy, which includes a refocus and escalation of their commitment to building affordable, and safer communities.

Organizations striving for excellence implement strategies that (1) account for the needs of customers and stakeholders, (2) measure operational performance trends against

internal performance and capabilities, (3) develop policies that support the integration sustainability, and (4) monitor the processes and strategies to ensure alignment with established goals and communicate the results to stakeholders (EFQM, 2019). These strategy implementations reflect a company's core values and commitment to quality.

Company XYZ's SLT and managers embrace the behaviors and modalities considered core values of the organization and are proud of their social conscience and commitment to Making Lives Better. In establishing the IiP Q40 survey questions, Company XYZ leaders created an anonymous feedback loop that can directly influence those KPIs designed to measure leadership and governance process and accomplishment and the extent to which Staff feels empowered. Table 33 tracks the historical responses of Company XYZ staff to the questions focused on the SLT's positive influence on organizational results, communication, and innovation.

Table 35

Staff Survey Results - Senior Leadership Team Effectiveness 2016-2020

| Survey on SLT effectiveness | 2016 agree | 2017 agree | 2018 agree | 2019 agree | 2020 agree | Overall trend |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------|
| The SLT is effective when leading and inspiring People (1) | 83.0% | 80.0% | 79.0% | 80.0% | 82.0% | ↔ |
| The SLT is effective in empowering and involving People (3) | 84.0% | 87.0% | 80.0% | 82.0% | 85.0% | ↑ |

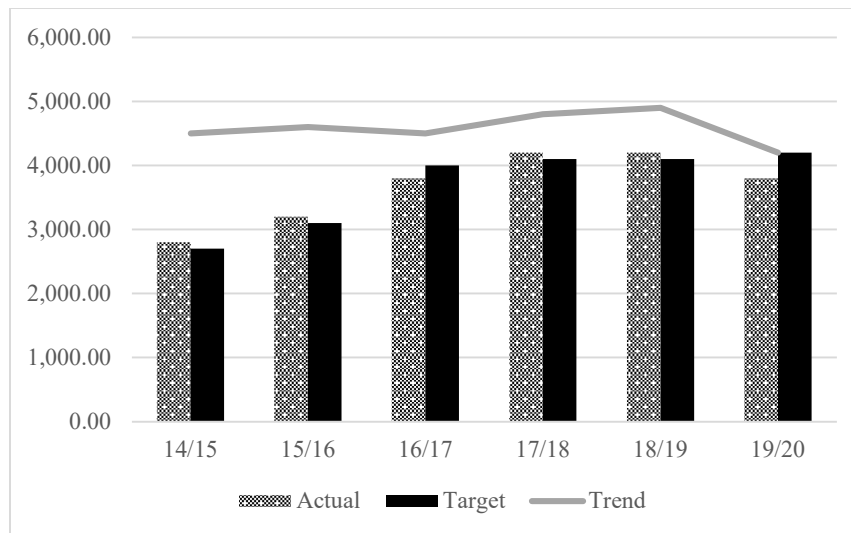
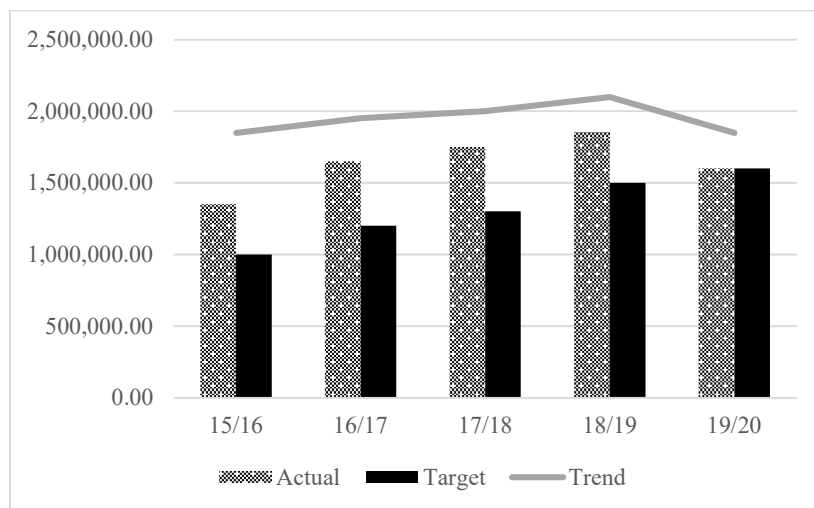
Note. Changes of +/- 3% from 2016 to 2020 are represented as upward or downward trends. Changes of 3% or less are indicated as no material change.

Company XYZ's SLT needs to measure the impact its dedicated teams have made on customers and the broader society at a national level. Company XYZ's SLT set internal targets of 85% of employee satisfaction with leadership and communication. The

focus maintained by Company XYZ on leadership and governance and the positive trends seen there directly affect Company XYZ's financial and market results.

Financial and Market Results

Company XYZ measured a range of financial and non-financial indicators to assess its performance. Many indicators fall in line with statutory requirements defined by industry regulators. Company XYZ's targets align with their 'Investing in our Futures' 5-year strategy, making comparisons with other RSLs in the top quartile. Commercial profit for Company XYZ shows a positive trend and exceeded targets until the 2019/2020 period, where the effects of Covid-19 may have influenced the data (see Figure 22). Gift Aid, the amount of profit generated by Company XYZ and offered to the parent group for charitable use (Figure 23), exceeded targets for all years with a positive trend until 2019/2020. Again, the effects of Covid 19 may have influenced profitability. Accurate and complete financial data are necessary for the SLT to assess Company XYZ's financial health and performance. According to Porter's five competitive forces framework, leaders develop an analytical archetype used to gauge the effects of external forces on an organization's competitive environment (Oyadomari et al., 2017). A sign of financial sustainability within an organization is its ability to effectively manage its financial needs within its competitive environment (Khan et al., 2018). According to Memon et al. (2019), organizations that maintain a stable financial environment can more easily enhance their competitive position in new markets by adopting strategies focused on expanding services into new markets (Memon et al., 2019).

Figure 22*Commercial Operating Profit (£000)***Figure 23***Gift Aid Generated (£)*

According to company records, a leading independent economic research institute highlighted that Company XYZ contributed £2billion to Scotland's Gross Domestic

Product in the last 15 years as part of its parent company. Positive contributions to the organization and the public are committed to serving those in need.

Key Themes

The following sections contain a strengths and opportunities evaluation of Company XYZ's leadership, Strategy, Customers, and workforce processes using the Baldrige factors of approach, deployment, learning, and integration (ALDI). The ADLI evaluation process facilitates assessing an organization's overall performance (BPEP, 2019). Next, a strengths and opportunities evaluation of Company XYZ's processes, customers, workforce, Leadership and governance, and financial and market results using the Baldrige levels, trends, comparisons, and integration (LeTCI). The LeTCI evaluation process facilitates an assessment of an organization's overall results of achieving its expected outcomes (BPEP, 2019).

Process Strengths

The BPEP (2019) defined process approach is what organizations use to accomplish work to achieve operational excellence. The model explains the performance of organizational processes and the measure of their appropriateness and effectiveness (BPEP, 2019). Next, process deployment measures the approach consistency throughout the work process (BPEP, 2019). Then, the continuous improvement cycle of learning, modification, and innovation throughout the organization and workforce (BPEP, 2019). Finally, integration brings processes, plans, measures, and actions together to support the strategic objectives and goals (BPEP, 2019). In the following subsections, ADLI evaluation methods supported by Porter's five competitive forces theory as the

framework of this study and the existing body of knowledge on effective business practice provide analysis of process strengths.

Strategy. As a strength, Company XYZ embraces strategy as a critical process discriminator. Company XYZ follows their Investing in our Futures 2015 to 2020 Group 5-year strategy to ensure it would help them deliver on priorities. Company XYZ embraces the strategic planning process identified within the EFQM specified criteria. Organizations who embrace excellence in quality management develop strategies that (1) account for the needs of customers and stakeholders; (2) evaluate operational performance against internal performance; (3) implement complementary policies that embrace sustainability; and (4) monitor the strategies to ensure alignment with established goals (EFQM, 2019). Company XYZ's senior leaders implemented and followed its 5-year strategic planning process to aid in crafting their goals and objectives development and monitor progress against their established targets.

The strategy development process starts as outlined in the Strategy Enabler Map (Table 18). Research and development at Company XYZ review the external environment to include national and local policy, legislation, and any policy changes that could impact the company. Also, the SLT's knowledge and experience and critical partners across the Group and professional research institutes influence the strategy development process. Then, customer expectations and other customer care components are factored into strategy development. Lastly, the engagement inserts the Staff in the strategy development. An established engagement program within Company XYZ (see

(Table 19) ensures the output of various engagements filters into the strategy development and planning.

Customers. A significant portion of Company XYZ's business is rented housing, with close to 50,000 homes designated as social housing. Social housing provides high-quality, low-cost accommodation for people who cannot afford a home that meets their needs in the private rented sector. The second most prominent part of Company XYZ's business is property management, servicing over 30,000 homes. Company XYZ's property management service is designed to assist homeowners in shared blocks to maintain the building and surrounding environments through sourcing and managing repairs, cleaning, and associated services for those shared common areas. Company XYZ provides property management for a mix of owner-occupiers and social housing tenants, working in partnership with the social landlords in the Group. Company XYZ offers a range of services to financially insecure and vulnerable customers. To understand the needs and expectations of their customers within these two support areas, the senior leaders gather customer feedback through various methods. Methods include customer impact surveys, feedback from the 17 local authorities, and other social media platforms and interactions, including call centers supporting customers 24 hours a day.

The measurement and evaluation process conducted through EFQM and BPEP bear significant focus on the importance of customer service results at or exceeding customer expectations for those companies seeking organizational excellence (BPEP, 2019; EFQM, 2019). Company XYZ strives to deliver an exceptional customer experience as part of a five-tier approach to customer service. EFQM uses the terms

Customer Satisfaction and Customer Results, where BPEP uses the term voice of the customer to single out their approaches to how customer-related information is used in a process that strives for continuous improvement of services to address customer needs and expectations (BPEP, 2019; EFQM, 2019). By continually reshaping processes and spurring dialogue between leaders of all areas of the organization, Company XYZ's leadership team fosters an understanding of how their offered services affect customer decisions across all aspects of customer engagement.

Workforce. Company XYZ's workforce numbered 40 personnel responsible for the daily operations in 17 local authorities throughout Scotland and support group responsibilities. Most personnel resided in three major locations (Figure 4). The job categories included administration, business support functions, letting agents, business advisors, managers, and the managing director (Table 5). All members of Company XYZ's SLT recognize the critical role the workforce plays in achieving the company mission, as evidenced in the company's strategy deployment process through staff engagement activities (Figure 8) and the introduction of a comprehensive group learning framework (Figure 10) and professionalization of the workforce in 2017. Company XYZ sponsored all managers, agents, and officers for essential industry qualifications and membership as Associate Members of the Institute of Residential Property Management and the registration requirements for Letting Agents introduced by the Scottish Government (Table 6). The managing director is responsible for disseminating the local and Group policies and procedures related to workforce staffing and local workforce matters. Additionally, she is actively and collaboratively working with group boards and

HR in recruiting and developing the workforce and managing strategic change while focusing on inclusion, culture, and values. A central tenant of Company XYZ's inclusive culture is creating an organization supportive of inclusion and diversity as presented in their MyContribution platform and demonstrates Company XYZ's commitment to inclusion and equality and embracing diversity within the workforce.

Process Opportunities

Process opportunities are areas where Company XYZ can achieve operational excellence through continuous improvement. The ADLI evaluation method helps focus on opportunities for improvement. Although Company XYZ exhibited process strengths in most areas, Leadership fell short of targets. Additionally, areas of opportunity could affect some aspects of the effective customer and workforce processes if not addressed by the SLT.

Leadership. Leadership at Company XYZ is a testament to positive energy and its release to fuel positive results. At Company XYZ, Leadership is about passion and building trust and confidence in people. Company XYZ's approach to Leadership aids in ensuring their communication messages, both internal and external, are aligned. The flat staffing structure of their divisional management teams creates an authorizing environment that aims to empower teams to make operational decisions at the point of delivery that focuses on doing the right thing for their customers. The drawback of this fostering environment is its complexity. The structure of many different communication paths and governing boards, community boards, call centers, and online and interactive

customer feedback makes for a complex data evaluation steam that may slow timely feedback across platforms.

Results Strengths

The BPEP (2019) focuses on organizational results measured across four results factors: (1) levels, (2) trends, (3) comparisons, and (4) integration (LeTCI). The results achieved across the four factors influence the evaluated business metrics. According to the BPEP (2019), levels indicate an organization's current performance level. Trends indicate evidence of decline and improvement and track the relative rate. Comparisons allow organizational leaders to review performance indicators relative to benchmarking results of the company's competitors or established industry best-in-class companies. Finally, integration infuses the best practices with organizational goals typically used in creating a concept of operations picture (CONOP).

Company XYZ's strengths and opportunities identified through the use of the BPEP tools, i.e., workforce results, leadership and governance results, product and process results, customer results, and financial and market results, display the organization's ability to provide performance evidence. In the following subsections, supported by Porter's Five Competitive Forces framework and the existing body of knowledge on successful business practice, I applied the LeTCI evaluation method, supported by Porter's Five Competitive Forces framework, to analyze Company XYZ's results strengths.

Results Opportunities

Results opportunities represent areas where Company XYZ can improve to support and nurture continuous improvement and a path to achieving operational excellence. The integration result factor, LeTCI evaluation method focuses on an organization's results strengths and identifies improvement opportunities a business can act on as they work toward best practices. Although Company XYZ showed high-performance results strengths in customer engagement, safety, emergency preparedness, governance, market, and financials, they exhibited partially effective processes in leadership and workforce that could affect organizational excellence if not addressed by the SLT.

Project Summary

Changes in the United Kingdom housing sector are expected. However, for rental property providers, adaptation to change necessitates using hybrid growth models leveraging M&As (Agarwal & Kwan, 2017; Sedlacek & Valouch, 2018). In this study, I used Baldrige's Performance Excellence Program 2019–2020 as the basis for analysis of Company XYZ's critical business processes with a focus on integration strategies developed for M&As in the United Kingdom housing sector with measured success through sustainable growth after M&As activity. I leveraged the Baldrige's Performance Excellence Program 7 category criterion and other data organized as follows: (1) organizational profile, (2) leadership, (3) strategy, (4) customers, (5) measurement, (6) analysis and knowledge management, (7) workforce, (8) operations, and (9) results. I obtained data and other information used to evaluate the organization's strengths and

weaknesses through direct and indirect means, specifically directly from Company XYZ's general manager and indirectly through publicly available information to understand the organization's strengths and opportunities. Semistructured interviews with four senior leaders provided additional critical insight and knowledge into Company XYZ's midmarket rental programs and factoring business model. The model demonstrated how to aid Company XYZ's development post-merger as viewed through the lens of Porter's five competitive forces theory.

The primary thematic findings demonstrated this organization's focus on the development of M&A integration strategies aimed at achieving sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector requires (1) cooperative synergies of M&A assets, (2) executive communication and direction, and (3), leveraging organizational identity. The basis for my recommendations focused on Company XYZ's strengths and opportunities evaluation driving actions the SLT can implement to develop M&A integration strategies focused on achieving sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. Additionally, my research within this study, my subsequent findings, and recommendations could help Company XYZ's SLT expand operations across the United Kingdom by applying their business strategies, i.e., corporative engagement of M&A assets.

Contributions and Recommendations

Adequate, safe, and affordable housing is a basic need that has become a global shortfall. The social housing sector in the United Kingdom provides below-market rental accommodations to people and families where the market falls short of supporting all

needs (Hickman, 2019; Wright et al., 2019). Higher demand with lower availability and capped midmarket rental income pushed the local authorities and housing associations to outsource midmarket units to private factoring and letting businesses. (Hansson & Lundgren, 2019; McCall & Mooney, 2018). The outsourcing efforts produced regionally located companies managing blocks of homes for the local authorities. Company XYZ leaders sought to partner with these businesses to drive competitive advantage and sustainable growth through the execution of an M&A process focused on cooperation rather than assimilation.

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. According to Yin (2018), single case studies are focused on a single case and thus are not generally applicable. Yet, it is my thought that letting and factoring leaders may use the recommendations I provided to Company XYZ as the basis for developing M&A integration strategies to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom housing sector; thereby increasing their presence within the sector and increasing their ability to provide letting and factoring services to an expanded customer base.

Application to Professional Practice

The findings of this study and research results based on the conceptual framework and evaluation of evidence using the 2019-2020 Baldrige Performance Excellence Program add to the existing body of knowledge of M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector.

Leaders within the United Kingdom and worldwide who seek strategies to leverage cooperative synergies within M&A assets to ensure sustainable growth in the United Kingdom housing sector may benefit from the findings and recommendations in this study. The primary themes developed focused on the importance of (1) unique cooperative synergies of M&A assets, (2) measured executive communication and direction, and (3) effectively leveraging organizational identity.

The results captured in this study may add to the body of knowledge in M&A integration strategies within social housing sectors. Additionally, the research and findings could be used to fill gaps in the academic literature related to applying Porter's five competitive forces theory in the United Kingdom housing sector. Letting and factoring leaders facing M&A integration challenges may review my recommendations for Company XYZ to determine situational applicability. The recommendations include (1) M&A integration strategies using cooperative synergies of M&A assets to leverage regionality and expanded community presence, (2) measured yet informative executive communication and direction, and (3) capitalizing on extensive organizational identity.

First, the expansion of cooperative M&A integration strategies within Company XYZ's overall corporate growth strategy may create leverageable attributes within the cooperatively merged entities. These strategies may increase market presence, and community acceptance across the United Kingdom through areas of advantage (i.e., dialect familiarity) focused on the premise that listening to someone who speaks and sounds like the listener may add an air of familiarity and acceptance (Myers-Burg, & Behrend, 2021). Also, the cooperatively merged assets employ persons who are part of

and familiar with the local community bringing unique experience and presence within the community. Second, informative, quality communication from a company's leadership team ensures several advantages, including having a well-informed staff that, now armed with sound information, can provide a quality experience to customers both internal and external to the company. According to Bommaraju et al. (2018), the criticality of communication during M&As through the human interface between leaders and salespeople influences positive outcomes of M&As. Third, engaging and leveraging the cooperatively merged asset's organizational identity may increase competitive advantage in the local market through the previous cultivation of trust within the current letting community and the connections and relationships with the local authority (Rolfe et al., 2020). Lastly, for-profit organizational leaders may find the use of the BPEP Framework within this study helpful in identifying areas of strength and opportunities within their organization.

Implications for Social Change

Based on this single case study, the implications for social change extend beyond Company XYZ's staff, leaders, and customers. Other for-profit and nonprofit letting and factoring leaders may use the findings of this study to provide business leaders the tools and skills to seek alternatives to the status quo by introducing more diverse methods for property factoring services and midmarket rentals to include enhanced property services by providing communities with improved, sustainable infrastructure, leading to improved basic-needs items, such as clean water and safe, affordable housing. Social housing partners offering affordable housing play a critical role in society by providing housing

accommodations to individuals and families where the market does not support their needs (Hickman, 2019; Wright et al., 2019). Also, positive social change implications extend beyond the business environment to include individuals and families needing the enhanced services offered by social housing providers. By leveraging letting and factoring service's extensive organizational identity within the communities they serve, letting and factoring leaders have the potential to reach more community individuals in need who otherwise would not have these services available. Increased community presence may not just lead to expanded services to a community. Still, it may also create more opportunities for individuals in need of specialized service and improve the quality of life for those living with hardship. Property factoring services diversification could provide long-term cash and equity balance to promote employment, sustain positive community impacts, and reduce volatility in housing markets.

Recommendations for Action

The evidence contributed by Company XYZ and the findings of this study influenced my recommendations for action to the SLT focused on improved M&A integration strategies to improve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. The thematic analysis of all data displayed the importance of (1) unique cooperative synergies of M&A assets, (2) measured executive communication and direction, and (3) effectively leveraging organizational resources. Using the BPEP criteria as a framework to engage process results from identified strengths and to continue the development of identified areas of opportunity, I recommend Company XYZ's leaders continue: (1) expansion of cooperative M&A synergy strategies to increase their market

presence in more communities across the United Kingdom, (2) bringing to bear, all the organization's extensive resources to support the mission across the United Kingdom, and (3) use executive communication both internal and external to the organization to build confidence in M&A strategies within Company XYZ and to gain support and drive excitement in the communities where cooperative M&A synergies are applied. In the subsequent sections, I provide additional detail regarding each preceding recommendation and describe how the recommendations may be shared with the broader community.

Company XYZ's SLT recognized the opportunities to leverage unique cooperative synergies of M&A assets to achieve the organization's strategic objectives. Significant time and effort researching the performance of other housing providers and their positions within their perspective markets produce usable data for the SLT. The SLT empowers front-line community boards and internal staff CEOs, and VMBs to contribute ideas to the DMTs and ET to the overall strategic planning process identified within the EFQM criteria. According to EFQM (2019), top organizations strive for quality excellence through strategy implementation that (1) accounts for the needs of customers and stakeholders, (2) synthesizes operational performance trends against internal performance and capabilities, (3) develop policies that support sustainability; and (4) communicate the processes and strategies to ensure alignment with established goals. Company XYZ then extends the engagements and conversation to all levels, from interns to senior leadership, to include cooperative partners and customers through several accessible platforms and forums, both in-person and online (Table 19). Although

listening to all opinions and ideas is admirable, the sheer volume of input dilutes the organization's focus on those inputs that directly improve sustainable growth. Company XYZ's leaders need to develop a streamlined strategy to help them understand the specific inputs that generate the most impact on growth, allowing these attributes to quickly flow to the strategy development teams yet continue to garner supporting data across all groups to be used as supporting data. As a first step, I recommend a detailed review of the strategy enabler map to identify and add a weighting factor to each approach allowing for the most valuable growth data to be easily identified and flow along the quick path for executive evaluation and use by creating the weighted factors, critically relevant and impactful data bubbles to the top of the data stream, allowing for swift course correction when needed, such as situations driven by the recent pandemic.

The emerging paradigm shift in workforce dilution, accommodation, and location due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the effect on resources is another recommended area of attention for the SLT. During the shelter in place order in the United Kingdom, Company XYZ's leaders furloughed many members of the factoring staff due to an inability to provide direct services to tenants and other customers. According to Participant 1, while our factoring strategy focused on the specialization of services identified as desirable by tenants via focus groups, the reduction in force required staff to adapt to a more generalized customer service approach of communicating the short staff situation to the customer and documenting their maintenance or other issues they reported to be addressed when the shelter in place order was rescinded. Even emergencies like roof failures could not be immediately addressed due to a lack of personnel and, to a

large extent, a lack of materials. Moving forward, Company XYZ needs to evaluate the maintenance needs of tenants and customers focused on critical needs items and solutions, i.e., duct tape, and create a pre-expended-bin (PEB) warehousing schema that can be activated quickly when pandemic type scenarios arise.

Additionally, Company XYZ should develop a cross-training for emergencies strategy that ensures critical personnel retained during pandemic type situations are trained to handle multiple critical job categories to widen the area of effectiveness in dire situations. Developing innovative strategies to embrace reduced workforce and truncated services will require the support and integration of processes across the entire organization. Company XYZ has a robust strategic planning process capable of supporting this recommendation. Finally, another area of opportunity involves executive communication and direction. Effective organizational communication aids in transition, enhances commitment to the new entity post-M&A, reduces uncertainty, and increases M&A success rates (Angwin et al., 2016; Rebner & Yeganeh, 2019).

Conversely, ineffective communication fuels trust erosion, breeds insecurity and contributes to negative organizational results (Angwin et al., 2016; Galli, 2018). Organizations focused on developing strategies exploring the use of digital media, online connectivity tools, and other media connection platforms, increased awareness about the organization's mission and available services, and developed trust in the community by eliminating perceived service inequities created through mass communication failures. Research shows communication skills are critical in influencing the effectiveness of the digital media strategy of a company (Park & Rhee, 2019). I recommend the processes

Company XYZ successfully used during the COVID-19 pandemic to communicate internally with staff and externally with the customers and be incorporated into their digital media strategy, ensuring consistent messaging and alignment with Company XYZ's goals and priorities.

The research findings from this study could influence the strategies developed by Company XYZ's SLT, researchers, and other for-profit and not-for-profit leaders as they explore M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth. During my consulting relationship with Company XYZ, I regularly shared best practices and recommendations for improvement. After the research study, I plan to provide Company XYZ leaders with a copy of the study and an overview shared with the extended leadership team. In the future, Company XYZ may share the results and recommendations contained in this study with other letting and factoring leaders contemplating M&A integration strategies to achieve sustainable growth. With limited consulting experience in housing areas, I will offer my services to our local housing authorities, such as Pinellas County Housing Authority, to present my findings and explore potential benefits it may provide to local housing authorities in the county. Finally, I will disseminate the findings and recommendations through industry publications and academic journals.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study's findings, conclusions, and recommendations may contribute to existing, and future research regarding the strategies letting and factoring business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. Due to

this single case study being limited to a single letting and factoring company located in Scotland, I recommend that future researchers pursue a study based in an alternate geographic region to determine how location influences the outcome. Additionally, limiting this study to a single letting and factoring company and its business leaders influenced my recommendation to explore a multi-case study format. The Findings from single case studies may not be pervasive across other letting and factoring companies inside or outside Scotland. Future researchers may expand the findings by performing multiple case studies to validate the findings across a broader foundation.

Further, I recommend that researchers explore how leaders view the research question using an alternative conceptual framework, i.e., transformational leadership theory or RBV of competitive advantage theory. Using an alternative theory to explore the M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector may provide alternative insight for business leaders. Finally, the for-profit organization used as the focus of this study was categorized as an ethical business, differentiated from other commercial competitors by reinvesting 100% of its profit margin into community benefits through its parent organization. Merging the two companies to establish Company XYZ created combined property management and private letting company with £135M in assets and £26M in turnover, delivering a charitable contribution of £3M per year. Additional research could replicate this study by looking at other business archetypes, i.e., retail services or logistics services, where the company is categorized as an ethical business.

Reflections

The consulting capstone doctoral study offered through Walden University allowed me to evaluate a for-profit ethical business organization's performance using the 2019-2020 Baldrige Performance Excellence Program. As a scholar-consultant, I gained experience in practical and inclusive communication, coaching, and consulting while also providing my client organization consultant information on alternative practices and insight into methods that could aid the company in achieving its short and long-term strategic objectives. Consultants provide vital assistance to clients in knowledge and support to help organizations achieve sustainable business advancements (Sahir & Brutus, 2018).

Throughout the research process, the validity and reliability of the study were of crucial concern to me. As such, I was aware of the need to recognize and mitigate my personal biases to protect the validity and reliability of the study findings. Opportunities within effective communication were realized early in the project, centered on language, cultural barriers, and biases that existed between myself and my client. I found contextual differences between the meaning of many common words in the vernacular of the United States compared to that of Scotland. To help ensure clear and accurate understanding and communication, I established a process of member checking with my client. The use of member checking within the bounds of a study enhances the academic rigor and credibility of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The application of member checking aided in reducing bias and increasing trust while allowing me to maintain and confirm accurate data synthesis.

The DBA consulting study process taught me much about my opportunities. I significantly underestimated the time commitment required to complete the doctoral journey successfully. I found myself challenged both academically and personally throughout the consulting capstone process. Critical personal and professional opportunities presented themselves, necessitating the learning and adaptation of time management principles and practice, allowing me to manage my personal and professional balance while remaining focused on my doctoral study responsibilities. I enjoyed profound personal and professional growth by interacting with my client, chair, and doctoral cohort. The consulting capstone doctoral process provided me with insight and skills I will carry with me through all my future adventures.

Conclusion

This qualitative single case study was to explore M&A integration strategies business leaders use to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector. Leaders within the United Kingdom and worldwide who seek strategies to leverage cooperative synergies within M&A assets to ensure sustainable growth in the United Kingdom housing sector may benefit from the findings and recommendations in this study. Thematic analysis showed the importance of (1) unique cooperative synergies of M&A assets, (2) measured executive communication and direction, and (3) effectively leveraging organizational resources. The findings and recommendations derived from this study have implications for positive social change in that they provided business leaders the tools and skills to seek alternatives to the status quo by introducing more diverse methods for property factoring services and midmarket rentals, providing communities

with improved, sustainable infrastructure, leading to improved basic-needs items, such as safe, affordable housing.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

| Interview Protocol | |
|---|--|
| What I will do | What I will say—script |
| Schedule the interview | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Send each participant a calendar invitation for the agreed date and time. 2. Send an email reminder to each participant the day before the interview. |
| <p>Introduce the interview and set the tone and cadence of the interview.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State the overarching research question. - Acknowledge receipt of the consent form and review details. - Review confidentiality procedures - Request permission to record the interview - Outline member checking process | <p><u>Script:</u></p> <p>Hello (<i>Participant's name</i>), I want to start by thanking you for agreeing to participate in my doctoral study on strategies for equity development through mergers and acquisitions in the United Kingdom housing sector. I want to confirm that this time is acceptable for our discussion. (<i>If not, reschedule at participant's convenience</i>)</p> <p>I have received the email confirming your consent to this interview. Do you have any questions regarding the form or the study? (<i>Answer questions, if any</i>)</p> <p>We will be discussing your experiences related to developing and implementing strategies for equity development through mergers and acquisitions in the United Kingdom housing sector.</p> <p>I want to assure you that our conversation will be kept confidential, and I will not be sharing your personal information with anyone. Using anonymization, all data will be redacted and held in strict confidence.</p> <p>As we discussed, I will be recording our discussion, and you are free to stop the interview at any time. I will later transcribe and analyze the interview as part of the study. I will send a copy of the transcription to you for verification of the accuracy of your meaning. Please return the transcript to me with your approval and any comments.</p> |

Do you agree with the process and details I have described? OK, let's begin.

-
- Watch for non-verbal cues.
 - Paraphrase as needed.
 - Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth
1. What merger and acquisition integration strategies have you used to sustain the growth of your business?
 2. What are the key successful strategies you have used to sustain your business before and after M&A integration?
 3. What key barriers to strategy implementation have you identified?
 4. How did you address each of the identified key barriers?
 5. How does your organization assess the effectiveness of your origination's strategies
 6. What else would you like to share about strategies used to achieve sustainable growth in the United Kingdom social housing sector