2022

Employee Training Strategies for New Technology Implementation in Small Business

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MBA, Walden University 2015

BS, University of South Florida, 2009

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Walden University

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Abstract

Failure to implement new technology creates a barrier to success for small businesses. Small business owners must create competitive advantages by implementing new technology as there is a need to maintain an advantage when competing in the local market economy. Grounded in the human capital theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the employee training strategies small business owners use to implement new technology. The participants were five small business owners in Central Florida who used employee training strategies to implement new technologies Data were collected using (a) semistructured interviews, (b) member checking interviews, (c) company documents, (d) direct observations, and (e) reflective journaling. Data analysis was conducted using constant comparison analysis. Five themes emerged: (a) focusing on employee emotional health, (b) using digital resources and third-party resources, (c) using individualized and differentiated strategies, (d) employee selection, and (e) resource conservation. A key recommendation is for small business owners to promote strategies respectively in consideration of the emotional health and well-being of the employees as employees may encounter coping issues with new technology implementation and adoption. The implications for positive social change include the potential for small businesses to increase local tax revenue, which may improve local community members' lives through enhanced community standing and expanded social programs derived from tax revenue.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my wife and children. Without you, I could never reach my goals.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small business owners should maintain a competitive advantage to achieve profitability and sustain business operations. Holladay (2015) found that implementing technological innovation increased the potential to improve competitive advantage. However, to realize the potential of these technological implementations, small business owners may use training to adequately prepare employees to use new technologies. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to identify and explore the employee training strategies small business owners used when implementing new technologies.

Background of the Problem

Organizational leaders focus on creating competitive advantage to target increased internal and external organizational performance (Ngambi, 2015). Innovation is a critical driver of organizational success, which may provide an organization with a competitive advantage (Cetindere et al., 2015). However, small business owners in the United States may experience difficulty in realizing the full potential of innovation and new technology implementation due to an inability to absorb the impact of adoption and support (Bidan et al., 2012; Kesting & Günzel-Jensen, 2015, Metsos et al., 2022). Therefore, there may be a need for small business owners to adopt employee training strategies to support technology implementation.

Problem Statement

Employee error can pose a threat to organizational success through decreased quality and lessened productivity (Arslan & Uzaslan, 2017). Fifty to 75% of technology implementation projects experience a failure to meet intended outcomes with employee

training shown to be amongst the significant mitigating factors (Motohar et al., 2018).

The general business problem was that without employee training for new technology

implementation there was potential for innovation project failure. The specific business

problem was that some small business owners lacked employee training strategies to

implement new technologies.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore employee

training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies. The target

population for this study was five small business owners located in Central Florida that

used employee training to implement new technologies. Lalone and Tapia (2016) asserted

that social change was feasible through employees' ability to create change opportunities

within the local community based on newly attained skillsets and increasing their

employability, as well as their social capital. Furthermore, social change feasibility may

increase with an employee's social capital improved through expanded learning (Bleich,

2017). Therefore, the findings of this study may contribute to social change by increasing

employee skillsets, employability, and social capital through enhanced community

stability, sustainability, and new employment opportunities.

Nature of the Study

I employed a qualitative research methodology to explore employee training

strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies. In conducting

research, the researcher employs specific tools to investigate the material (Almalki,

2016). The three research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method

(Almalki, 2016). Qualitative researchers use open-ended questions to collect the words, texts, and images from participants as data to formulate interpretive and critical meaning (Denzin, 2017; Hesse-Biber, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, qualitative researchers focus on participant first-person experience to explore the nature and meaning within the phenomenon, as well as possible implementations and feasibility of these implementations (Moustakas, 1990; Tarrant, 2017). In contrast, quantitative research is a deductive approach for objectively testing hypotheses by testing or measuring the relationship among variables in numerical terms (Almalki, 2016). The mixed method researcher combines elements of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Almaki, 2016). Consequently, by using a mixed method, the researcher is able to explore more complexities and intricacies of a phenomenon than possible using one approach (Shannon-Baker, 2015). However, I did not develop a hypothesis to test, nor did I use statistical analysis, so neither a quantitative method nor a mixed method approach were appropriate for my study. I used open-ended questions to gather data and explore what training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies; therefore, I employed a qualitative research method.

Qualitative research encompasses a variety of designs, including ethnography, phenomenology, and case study (Lewis, 2015). Researchers conduct ethnographies to perform cultural analysis of beliefs and meanings through member accounts providing subjective, contextual viewpoints during a specified time duration (Bass & Milosevic, 2018; Cappellaro, 2016; Fusch et al., 2016). I chose not to use an ethnography as the focus for the study was not on the cultural analysis of beliefs and meanings through

member accounts providing subjective, contextual viewpoints during a specified time duration. Phenomenological researchers use a participant's interpretation of lived experiences, their natural attitude, the emotional and nonverbal communications, and contextual background to understand the phenomena (Giorgi, 2005; Sohn et al., 2017). I chose not to use a phenomenological design as I was not focused on the participants' lived experiences, natural attitude, or subjective, emotional interpretation of the phenomena. Researchers employing a case study design collect data from an in-depth and up-close analysis that explores detailed accounts of bound population, which is denoted by the persons within the group distinguished from those outside the group (Barnham, 2015; Yin, 2018). Researchers conduct case studies to explore real-world situations for demonstration of application or decision (Lewis, 2015). I chose to use a case study design to explore the employee training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies using open-ended questions in an interview format and within a bound population of five small business owners.

Research Question

The research question was: What employee training strategies do small business owners use to implement new technologies?

Interview Questions

1. What employee training strategies did you use to support your technology implementation?

2. How did you address issues with your employees regarding your strategy?

3. How effective were the employee training strategies in supporting your new technology implementation?

4. How did you measure the impact of the employee training strategies on the new technology implementation?

5. What challenges did you experience when using employee training strategies for implementing new technologies?

6. How did you overcome the challenges you encountered when using employee training strategies for implementing new technologies?

7. What additional information would you like to add regarding the employee training strategies you have used to implement new technologies, which I did not include in the interview?

Conceptual Framework

I used human capital theory (HCT) as the conceptual framework to support this study. HCT has origins that date back to 1776 (Sweetland, 1996); however, Schultz (1961), provided modern context and suggested that companies needed to invest in human capital through schooling, adult education, on-the-job training, migration, and health, to increase economic growth. Furthermore, Becker (1962) found that organizations benefitted from an investment in education and training the human capital. Schultz (1971) further expanded on the theory and asserted that organizational leaders should recognize individual education, individual health, and the individual's ability to maintain mobility as capital investment for the organization. Moreover, Becker (1994) asserted that employees who engaged in professional learning increased their salary,

employment opportunities, and were overall more economically productive. Sweetland (1996) asserted that education was consistently viewed as the main investment in human capital due to the impact education had on the health and well-being of the individual, as well as the ability for education to be measured with quantitative metrics in economic costs. Furthermore, while the contribution to a company's profitability was difficult to measure, providing training and education to employees contributed to increased skills, dexterity, decision-making, and enhanced employee job performance, which may extend business longevity (Sweetland, 1996). Organizational managers apply HCT to manage change in an organization through employee training and individual growth (Kucharčíková et al., 2015). Therefore, as there is a relationship between HCT and employee training, I used HCT as the framework to explore the employee training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies.

Operational Definitions

The following terms and phrases instill clarity within this study.

Knowledge diversity: A component of knowledge management considered in terms of the degree to which varying knowledge sources, the breadth of information, and unique individual member knowledge contribution impact the quality of information and organizational performance (Chen & Liang, 2016; Pee & Chua, 2016).

Knowledge management: The processes used to create, store, retrieve, transfer, and apply knowledge within an organizational context (Chen & Liang, 2016).

Knowledge transfer: A value creation process of information transference between individuals or organizational entities that occurs as a by-product of

organizational learning and knowledge management systems and with the intent of creating competitive advantage (Aerts et al., 2017).

Organizational learning: A context-dependent process of knowledge search and exploration with the objective of goal accomplishment and continuous improvement wherein the creation, retention, transfer, and application of knowledge enhance an organization's dynamic capabilities (Desai, 2018; Lyman et al., 2018; Peris-Ortiz et al., 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

This section includes a discussion of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations for this study. Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations delineate the study's parameters and establish the boundaries used within the study.

Assumptions

Within qualitative research, assumptions are recognized as valid but are unable to be confirmed (Roy & Pacuit, 2013). The assumptions concerning participants were that: (a) data saturation was possible with the bound population and (b) that the participants would be honest and unbiased in their responses to interview questions. My assumption concerning the data collection instruments was that I could use methodical triangulation to answer the research question sufficiently.

Limitations

Limitations are aspects of the research outside of researcher control and may potentially impact the outcome of the study (Holmes, 2014; Reeves et al., 2013). As participant honesty is an assumption that may impact answering the research question,

limitations may exist with coding and themes during data analysis. Defining the bound population may have an impact on research results (Lamberg et al., 2018). The limitations of this study included the geographic area and the variety of participants. Case study research is limited in that the findings often are not transferable (Yin, 2018). I limited the study to a bound population of five small businesses owners who have implemented a new technology with employee training support; therefore, the findings may not be transferable beyond the scope of this study. The limitations for this study were (a) that limitations may have existed with coding and themes during data analysis, (b) that the bound population may have had an impact on research results, (c) that the geographic area and the variety of participants were limited, and (d) that the findings often were not transferable.

Delimitations

Delimitations are restrictions a researcher establishes within the study to focus the scope and create boundaries, including sample size, population, and instrumentation (Bhat et al., 2014; Merriam, 2014). Yin (2018) asserted that when researchers select delimitations, they are setting intentional parameters to collect relevant data and develop convergent evidence. The delimitations of this study were: (a) the selection of a specific geographical location in Central Florida; (b) binding the population to five small business owners that have used employee training strategies to implement new technologies; (c) the selection of data collection instruments using semistructured interviews, member checking, organizational documents, direct observation, and reflective journaling to corroborate the data collected; and (d) the selection of HCT as the conceptual framework

as the conceptual framework limited potential employee strategies to address new

technology implementation support to employee training.

Significance of the Study

Small businesses are integral to the global economy. However, focus on the issues

related to small businesses is a relatively new area of research (Padachi & Bhiwajee,

2015). This study was significant as I explored employee training strategies for new

technology implementation that may contribute to small business owners supporting new

technology implementation in Central Florida. The employee training strategies for new

technologies implementation in Central Florida were not known. Furthermore, with

99.8% of all businesses in Florida being small businesses and employing approximately

3.3 million people, or 42.2% of the private workforce in Florida, the 18,474 Florida small

businesses exiting the economy and causing 75,721 job losses in the third quarter of 2016

was concerning (Small Business Administration (SBA), 2018). While there are various

reasons for these businesses to have closed, it was important to explore the strategies

used by small business owners to assist others in avoiding failure. Therefore, with my

study I explored the employee training strategies small business owners used to

implement new technologies.

Contribution to Business Practice

Florida firms with fewer than 100 employees maintain the largest share of all

small business employment (SBA, 2018). The implications for business practices in

Florida are mainly the potential to provide employee training strategies to small business

owners to assist in the implementation of new technologies. Employee training is

fundamental in eliminating or improving performance issues through increasing the human capital skillset in a job-specific manner (Atan et al., 2015). Moreover, investments in training are rising in importance as businesses strive for competitive advantage through the adoption of technology (Antonioli & Della Torre, 2016). Therefore, employee training strategies maybe used by small business owners in adequately implementing new technologies and attaining competitive advantage.

Implications for Social Change

The implication potential for positive social change is provided by focusing on employee training strategies for small business owners to better implement new technologies. The unintentional advantages and changes inherent in business solution implementation have the potential for positive and negative, large-scale, social impact (Niedderer et al., 2016). The potential for social change is present in the individual employee's new abilities. The organization is providing the employee the opportunity to create change within the local community through the provision of an altered skillset, thereby increasing the employee's employability. Additionally, the local economy may be improved through a possible increase in generated revenue and taxable revenue resulting in improved communal financial and social standing as fewer organizations may close, employees can apply new skillsets to community needs (Baggio et al., 2016; King & Gish, 2015), and the economic status of the community is enhanced by the employee contribution.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore employee training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies. In the literature review, I provide a critical analysis of the existing body of knowledge on the research topic. By conducting this critical analysis, a researcher creates opportunities for the identification of gaps within the body of knowledge through the process of identifying a topic, identifying appropriate literature pertaining to said topic, reviewing said literature for relevant information and themes, and a review by the researcher of the critical analysis to develop a synthesis of the extant literature (Baker, 2016; Rowson, 2016). Furthermore, researchers then use the synthesis of this information to form a coherent understanding of the information and to elicit themes, which form the core of the literature review (Price, 2017). The purpose of my professional and academic literature review was to critically analyze and synthesize various sources and data pertaining to HCT and to research extant literature on the employee training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies.

Within this literature review, I examined peer-reviewed sources pertaining to HCT, including the history and practices, the impact of employee training on organizational performance, and the impact of knowledge management within an organization. To obtain resources, I used several databases within the Walden Library including Business Source Complete, ScienceDirect, and ProQuest, as well as Google Scholar. Key terms I am used to generate the searches included *human capital theory,*

knowledge, knowledge structures, employee training, social exchange theory, expectancy theory, small business, and *innovation.*

I began the literature review with a critical analysis of HCT. Then, I continued by discussing alternative theories considered as possible conceptual frameworks for my study to provide proof that I had evaluated and selected the correct framework for the study. Within the employee training concept, I included discussions on training types, training programs, training technologies, the employee training effect in new technology implementation, the employee training effect on small businesses, and the barriers to implementing employee training in small businesses.

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory was the conceptual framework for this study. As organizations seek to increase competitive advantage, there is a requirement to consider organizational resources and capital that may be leveraged. HCT was developed from the neoclassical school of economics by Becker, who regarded human capital as an investment and asset similar to the equipment in an organization (Cooper & Davis, 2017). As economists considered the relationship between education and income, Becker (1994) correlated an individual's increased skills and knowledge through education, training, and other experiences with an increase in income. Additionally, Becker (1994) identified that general employee training enhanced the overall skill set of the employee, while specific training provided the employee skills relevant to the current organization. Becker (1994) regarded the return on investment a company may generate from human capital investment similar to the possible return on investing in other organizational resources,

such as equipment, technology, and facilities. The study I conducted explored how small business owners used employee training strategies to improve individual employees' skills and yield increased organizational benefit through the support of new technology implementations.

Human resources serve as a source of information and support for the human capital in an organization. Organizations may compare human resources to human capital due to the underlying assumption that investing in employee knowledge and ability through training and development will provide increased organizational value (Becker, 1994). Human capital is developed through a combination of education, performance capabilities, and shared knowledge and expertise through training and development (Cooper & Davis, 2017). HCT correlates education with increased individual productivity, which should correlate to increased earnings, as well (Becker, 1994; Cooper & Davis, 2017; Schultz, 1961). In this manner, increased education may be viewed as formal training or formal education within an educational institution. However, in both instances, the enhanced development of the individual is the end goal, albeit for distinct organizational purposes or for general organizational improvement through individual contribution.

As HCT continued to evolve, researchers began to consider what investment in the human resource of an organization could mean. Schultz (1971) further expounded on HCT by explaining the benefit and need for organizational leaders to invest in employee education, health, and job opportunities. Moreover, Schultz (1971) focused on the increased benefit of human capital investment in education and training over investment

in physical capital. Schultz (1961) also suggested that education and training provided knowledge and strategies that contributed to an increase in employee productivity and efficiency. These investments were found to provide the employee with extended ability, which may provide the employee with more opportunities (Schultz, 1961). Therefore, the organization's investment in the individual provided organizational benefits, as well as individual opportunities with the possibility of continued return.

Similarly, Mincer (1974) recognized the positive correlation between education and an increase in potential earnings but asserted that education did not necessarily equate to formalized schooling per se and on-the-job training also yielded improved human capital effectiveness for an organization. HCT focuses on the notion that individual experience and education in formal and informal settings impacts potential productivity (Pocas, 2014). This perspective of individual employee skills supporting organizational ability creates new opportunities for increased organizational benefit through the increased improvement of the individual employee. The way these skills are developed may also impact the expected organizational outcomes.

Human capital can be categorized into the distinct areas of: (a) capability and potential, (b) motivation and commitment, and (c) innovation and learning (Muda & Rahman, 2016). Schultz (1961) supported this concept in noting that organizations need to recognize individual resources and abilities as a form of organizational capital. Capability and potential refer to the employee's level of education, professional skills, attitudes, and personal networks and the potential of the employee to evolve within the organization (Muda & Rahman, 2016). Motivation and commitment refer to whether

employees align their interests with organizational need and future plans (Muda & Rahman, 2016). Innovation and learning show the degree to which employees continue education and maintain alignment with organizational changes (Muda & Rahman, 2016).

Matherly and Al Nahyan (2015) demonstrated, through a framework of reciprocal knowledge transfer, education to be a critical principle in HCT, establishing that knowledge is transferable between employees and employers. While the researchers focused on this transformation through the lens of expatriate-national interactions in the same organization, the organizational factors employed to initiate and maintain knowledge transfer may be similar to other organizations in different circumstances. Small business owners may have a need to employee similar knowledge transfer to develop the human capital of the organization.

Ha et al. (2016) suggested that from an employer's perspective, educated employees transfer knowledge to other employees, which may improve organizational performance. In their quantitative study, Ha et al. (2016) investigated the relationship between knowledge management process capabilities and small business performance. Considering the need for small businesses to cultivate knowledgeable employees capable of successfully performing organizational processes, organizational leaders may invest in human capital by providing employee training and opportunities for increased knowledge gain. When developing strategies for new technology implementations, small business owners may need to understand HCT and consider how the integration of employee training strategies may benefit the organization and support new technology

implementation. For my study, I explored the employee training strategies used by small business owners to support new technology implementation.

Alternative Theories

Total quality management (TQM), expectancy theory (ET), social exchange theory (SET), and screening theory (ST) are alternative theories that I could have used as the conceptual framework for this study. Although I considered using these theories, HCT was better suited to support answering the research question. I used Bowles and Gintis's (2011) neo-Marxist theory as a contrasting theory.

Total Quality Management

TQM is a viable alternative management theory to HCT that researchers might use as a conceptual lens to explore the employee training strategies small business owners use to implement new technologies. Organizations may use TQM concepts to acquire and integrate practices for organizational enhancement through a quality improvement approach, which generates continued benefits to the organization through: (a) increased quality in process and product, (b) reduced costs, (c) improved financial position, (d) improved stakeholder satisfaction, and (e) increased competitive advantage (Zehir et al., 2012). TQM is employed by organizational leaders to integrate separate but connected elements of the organization in a concerted effort to improve the organization.

Anschutz (1996) traced TQM back to George Washington, the first president of the United States, who described methodical management's impact on organizational management and the ability to create quality and growth through action. From 1900 until after World War II, the ability to limit defects in products defined quality management,

which allowed organizations to limit costs and retain customers (Weckenmann et al., 2015). This designation was best exhibited in the Ford assembly line system as the managers of the line prioritizes punctuality and quality parts to ensure precision during assembly of Ford automobiles (Lahidji & Tucker, 2016). The perspective on what elements of an organization is transformational have changed with each generation's business mindset. However, despite shifting concepts, new method development, and differentiation of tools, the core of TQM is to create competitive advantage through the provision of quality, focusing on the processes and factors needed to improve organizational performance (Al-Shdaifat, 2015; Weckenmann et al., 2015). The creation of value and competitive advantage was clarified in Deming's 14 principles.

In 1982, Deming published his 14 principles of TQM that are inherently transformative to an organization and create opportunities for the adaptation to change needed for improvement in organizational performance (Anschutz, 1996: Deming, 1982). These principles are applied in varying ways dependent on the organization. However, the core of the 14 principles is meant to be practiced in a manner complementary to each of the principles. In a quantitative research study, Oschmann (2017) found that it is crucial for organizations to strategically plan and implement TQM practices to enable employees to perform more efficiently and to realize intended outcomes. In this manner, strategic planning becomes a key factor in the purposeful structuring of intended outcomes for the organization. Strategic planning is at the core of implementing other principles within Deming's framework, including continued education and employee training.

Harris et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative study to explore the use of business improvement methods and TQM strategies to overcome geographic and resource limitations to further innovation implementation efforts and the production of new products and services. The researchers found that using business improvement methods and TQM strategies aided continuous improvement and incremental innovation (Harris et al., 2013). The adoption of TQM as an organizational component and the integration of the practices within the culture of the organization is necessary for the continued success of TQM implementation (Panuwatwanich & Nguyen, 2017). The TQM framework, unlike HCT, is inflexible in design and fundamentals, yet somewhat flexible in practice. There is a need to use all components of TQM in conjunction in order to realize quality management completely.

In this regard, the implication of continuous improvement as an organized and systematic process of change for improving organizational performance is possible only through total employee engagement (Antony, 2015; Boer & Gertsen, 2003). Continuous improvement is proactive, as improvement indicates setting new standards for excellence more than merely correcting mistakes (Lahidji & Tucker, 2016). Organizations integrating continuous improvement models and methods into procedure benefit from a dynamic ability to augment when needed. Dynamism in an organization's need to innovate as a means of continuously improving the organization and organizational processes (Boer & Gertsen, 2003). Organizations may employ dynamism to shift focus or course as a means of meeting challenges or establishing value. As the entire organization must adopt and exercise the TQM philosophy, there is a need to allow employees,

departments, and the activities practiced, to influence each other and improve through exposure and influence (Bolatan et al., 2016; Topalovic, 2015). Often, organizational leadership exercises this influence as a means of honing and integrating business growth efforts.

Leadership in an organization implementing TQM is vital to the success of the organization. Leadership provides the initial implementation of TQM, inspires the strategic vision, and guides organizational action toward the strategic vision (Yadav, 2015). Furthermore, organizational leadership creates the necessary environment for employee empowerment and contribution to thrive in meeting the strategic goals and targets across the quality improvement process (Antony, 2015). The implementation of targeted success or improvement negatively impacts the ability for improvement to be derived from the employee in interaction with the process or product and lowers the creativity and innovation of the organization (Bourke & Roper, 2017).

In their quantitative study, Anil and Satish (2016) asserted that there could be a positive relationship between training, education, and organizational performance and developed and proposed a conceptual framework and research model for implementing TQM with an effect on organizational performance. Bajaj et al. (2018) conducted a Pareto analysis of 102 studies from 1995 to 2015 and discerned 17 vital internal and external practices that have gained increased importance in the research field for TQM. Employee training and employee education were found to be vital internal practices for organizations practicing TQM (Bajaj et al., 2018).

While TQM involves the use of employee training and continuing education for the betterment of the organization, these activities are not singular in the TQM approach and are used in conjunction heavily with the other activities to derive organizational transformation and value. As my study was specific to the employee training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies, I did not use TQM and chose to focus on HCT as the conceptual framework for the study.

Expectancy Theory

Vroom (1964) suggested that individuals seek to achieve personal goals and use organizational rewards and outcomes to meet personal goals. Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory (ET) focused more so on the choices to maximize pleasure and minimize pain within the scope of personal gain or personal satisfaction (Vroom, 1964). Personal reward potential serves as motivation for the employee to achieve a higher level of productivity. However, the level or type of organizational rewards and work outcomes are dependent on the performance of the employee providing a synergistic relationship driven by the employees' expected or desired outcomes (Vroom, 1964). Employees may then reconsider which job skills or work outcomes to pursue dependent upon the expected return (Frenkel & Bednall, 2016). The focus on the individual's ability to direct their own course of action is realistic within the business world. However, the focus is on individual choice above organizational need.

Expectancy theory maintains focus on the personal choice of the individual, which did not align with this study as I explored the employee training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies and required employee to learn to

better support the implementation. For this reason, I did not use ET for this study and

chose to focus on HCT as the conceptual framework for the study.

Social Exchange Theory

Homans (1958) developed social exchange theory (SET), which asserts that

positive social interactions between an organization's leadership and the employees of

the organization are equitable to the value of monetary gains. Przemysław (2019)

employed HCT, SET, and social comparison theory, when analyzing the dimensions of

human resource differentiation and characteristics influencing a sample of 978 Polish

banking employees' attitudinal responses to unequal working conditions. The researcher

found that while the employees may calculate their long-term benefits from work, there

was moderating effect of negative feelings generated by disadvantaged employees toward

a poor social exchange relationship with leadership. Klotz and Bolino (2016) conducted

four quantitative studies using SET to contextualize the influence social exchange

relationships have on the voluntary employee turnover intentions of employees. Huang et

al. (2016), used SET to indicate how leadership support within an organization impacted

employee engagement. In each of these studies, the focus is on the social interaction,

employee relationships, and impact these exchanges have on employee perception.

As SET is preoccupied with the relationship between organizational leadership

and the employees, I did not choose this theory to explore the employee training

strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies. My study focused

on specific employee training strategies, which included maintaining a positive

relationship with employees, but this may not play a central role. Therefore, I chose to

remain with HCT as the conceptual framework, which focused on the development of the organization's human capital through education and knowledge management.

Screening Theory

Screening theory (ST) was hypothesized by Spence (1973), Arrow (1973), and Stiglitz (1975), and provided an alternative view of the role of education as an essential screen to production and wages. Rivera (2011) argued that ST supported an employer's perceived value for an employee's degrees and credentials. Within the scope of ST, formal education indicates potential employee productivity. Higher education, then, is viewed as an affirmation of ability to perform in higher-level jobs, which may yield higher wages (Brown & Sessions, 2004). ST prioritizes the employee selection needs of an organization to use hiring decisions to manifest or better determine desired production requirements.

Screening theory is focused on the notion of higher education and the role education plays in employee productivity, which does pertain to exploration of employee training strategies used by small business owners to implement new technologies. ST is similar to HCT in that both theories recognize the effect of education on employee productivity. However, ST has an increased focus on the earned degrees by an employee to indicate possible employee ability and productivity, and HCT focuses on the impact of increased education on earned wages. This was not completely contrary to the approach within this study, but HCT, which looks more at the steps taken by the organization to train and develop the employee, was a better fit for this study.

Neo-Marxist Theory of Human Capital

Bowles and Gintis's neo-Marxist theory is discussed here as a contrasting theory. Bowles and Gintis (1975) viewed human capital through a neo-Marxist lens and argued that to determine the precise outcome of investment in human resources within an organization was not feasible. There are multiple human capital sources that include an employee's innate ability, formal education, school quality, non-education investments, organizational training, and influences (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). This perspective considers the formal and informal, intended and unintended sources of education for an employee as an individual.

Within the neo-Marxist view, formal education was established to instill in individuals the ideology and approach toward life within a capitalist society necessary to be productive (Bowles & Gintis, 1975). The researchers suggested that employees with higher education may receive higher wages; however, this process would be in alliance with existing rules and established hierarchies within the organization (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Moreover, Bowles and Gintis (1975) asserted there was a necessity to also understand and align how human capital formation affects the social relations of production and class relations within the organization or the larger society. In this manner the neo-Marxist perspective is preoccupied with the structural, societal, and possibly political forces impacting the ability for the intended outcome to materialize. Therefore, the neo-Marxist view of human capital development is rooted in understanding and overcoming the hierarchical structures of capitalist society (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). An employee's education may or may not assist with overcoming structural obstructions,

such as income inequality and ownership, which is a determinant of the effectiveness of

human capital theories (Bowles & Gintis, 1975). Bowles's and Gintis's Neo-Marxist

view of human capital is an opposing view of human capital as it is a critical theory of

human capital development. HCT is used recognize the effect of education on employee

productivity and employee wages. However, the theory offered by Bowles and Gintis has

an increased focus on the social inequalities experienced by an employee which may

inhibit the employee from realizing increased income. Therefore, as my study did not

recognize these forces within the scope of the research question, the neo-Marxist theory

was not pertinent.

Knowledge

Organizations need to transfer knowledge to employees as a means of retaining

organizational knowledge internally to sustain positive practices, avoid repetitive

mistakes, leverage past mistakes to generate new success and implement new processes

or products successfully (Wei & Miraglia, 2017). As an organization increases

knowledge and increases the methods for obtaining knowledge within the organization,

the complexity derived through the use and transformation of the knowledge is increased,

as well (Beaume et al., 2009). Employee training methods within an organization consist

of the design and utilization of knowledge structures to assist employees with obtaining

contextual learning of the organizational knowledge. These knowledge structures are

managed through the organization's knowledge management processes to support

employee learning through training. As an employee gathers knowledge through formal

and informal structures, the employee learns new behaviors and refines skills that will

effectually shape performance (Amin et al., 2013). Knowledge structures are used to gather tacit knowledge through experiential learning to increase the shared knowledge of the individual employee and employee teams, which may be established to increase the longevity and the continued impact of shared knowledge within the organization (Harris, 2009). Therefore, organizations may leverage knowledge to create continued advantage. However, organizations must cultivate and transfer this knowledge to the employees and between employees to sustain advantage and create new opportunities for growth.

Human capital theory is used by organizations to address the loss of organizational knowledge when employees leave the organization through establishing organizational knowledge and transferring that knowledge to the employee through employee training (Becker, 1994). Employee training is the active transfer of knowledge to human capital in an organization. Training may be defined as the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies, which may then be used to modify behavior through performance (Sherwani & Mohammed, 2015; Tahir et al., 2014). Organizational leaders may then work to leverage human capital to create value for the organization. However, the process may be complex and organizational leaders may need to consider the formal and informal knowledge structures that exist within the organization.

The knowledge management process concentrates information efforts on manipulating tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge to improve organizational performance (Duran et al., 2014). Organizations use formal and informal knowledge management structures to conduct these manipulations and maintain organizational learning capabilities to train employees. Autonomy in employee learning and positive

employee fulfillment had a direct influence on knowledge diffusion through knowledge transfer, which has an impact on the ability of the organization to successfully train (Alimohammadlou & Eslamhoo, 2016). Employee training is a communicative knowledge transfer that allows for the diffusion of knowledge to an individual and enables the ability to execute and perform.

Matherly and Al Nahyan (2015) demonstrated, through a framework of reciprocal knowledge transfer, education to be a critical principle in HCT establishing that knowledge is transferable between employees and employers. While the researchers focused on this transformation through the lens of expatriate-national interactions in the same organization, the organizational factors employed to initiate and maintain knowledge transfer may be similar to other organizations in different circumstances. Small business owners may have a need to employee similar knowledge transfer to develop the human capital of the organization.

Employee Training

Employee training is the active transfer of knowledge to human capital in an organization and is essential to increasing employee competence and productivity (El Hajjar & Alkhanaizi, 2018). Training may be defined as the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies, which may then be used to modify behavior through performance (Sherwani & Mohammed, 2015; Tahir et al., 2014). These modifications are often meant to improve the overall ability of the employee and enhance the human capital of the organization. Organizational leaders use training to instill these skills within the organization. In this way, employee training may be seen as a core element of HCT.

Employee training is vital to organizational performance as training enhances employee knowledge and performance through the systematic development of the employee's knowledge and skills to yield the desired behavior required to perform effectively (Shaheen et al., 2013). Once attained, enhanced employee performance should provide expanded value to organizational production and increased profitability from an increased competitive advantage (Shaheen et al., 2013; Sherwani & Mohammed, 2015). As organizational leader's embrace the investment in development of human capital as a means of building competitive advantage, the organization may then realize increased profitability from the investment and this advantage for the betterment of the organization. However, organizational leaders may need to further support employees through continued employee training to sustain a return on the investment in a continued cycle to yield enhanced business growth.

Employee training consists of formal and informal methods determined by need and involving diversified activities to achieve individual strategic objectives and organizational objectives (Sak-Colareza & Hammami, 2017). Schultz (1971) recognized educational investments for human capital as including on- the-job training, apprenticeships, and formal education. The organization would devise the best course of action based on the need of the organization and the employee if the training is part of the organization's need for the employee. Furthermore, training may be planned, formal knowledge events, activities, and programs used to increase the knowledge, skills, competencies, and achievement of the participants, or the informal knowledge events that employees encounter through daily interaction and involvement in organizational activity

(Sherwani & Mohammed, 2015). Employee training has a significant effect on employee performance as the ultimate objective of employee training is to improve the quality and quantity of production through the performance of the employee (Shaheen et al., 2013). Olteanu (2015) hypothesized that organizations that invested in employee training registered higher productivity over non-training organizations and determined there was a moderate correlation between the number of training hours for an employee and the subsequent individual employee performance. This view of employee training involves the use of informal and formal knowledge structures within an organization, which may be employed for different purposes.

Training does not simply develop employee ability but also provides employees with the ability to critically and creatively process information (Elnaga & Imran, 2013). Employee performance correlates to organizational efficiency and achievement, but employee performance may be exhibited through employee behavior and is dependent upon technical knowledge, declarative knowledge, and motivation (Sherwani & Mohammed, 2015). Therefore, employee training may provide organizations with continued, unintended benefits through employee performance and behavior. However, to do so in a manner consistent with an increase in profitability, maintenance of organizational position, cost reduction, risk reduction, and improvement of the organizational management method, employee training must be consistent with the organizational mission and performance objectives (Shaheen et al., 2013; Sherwani & Mohammed, 2015). This method for structuring employee training may increase training effectiveness and assist the organization with realizing an intended return.

Training Effectiveness

Training effectiveness is influenced by training factors including: (a) training content, (b) training environment, (c) training facilities and materials, (d) training schedule, and (e) the presentation style of the training (El Hajjar & Alkhanaizi, 2018). Furthermore, the education of the employees and willingness to learn will further impact training effectiveness, as well (Al-Swidi & Al Yahya, 2017). These elements, in combination with intangibles, including a positive environment, uniqueness, and levels of interaction, affect the effectiveness of an organization's training ("Improving the effectiveness," 2018). Therefore, organizations should consider these elements when producing and implementing employee training as a means of increasing training effecting and creating opportunity for employees to derive value from the training.

El Hajjar and Alkhanaizi (2018) demonstrated that there is a positive linear correlation between each of these factors and training effectiveness in their quantitative study; however, the researchers did not find that the trainee respondents found value in the overall training because of a lack of focus on the employee needs when attending the training. Moreover, the researchers recommended training administrators or developers design and implement trainings specific to the needs of the employee to improve on the learning process (El Hajjar & Alkhanaizi, 2018). These improvements would then impact the overall effectiveness of the training offered to employees.

The impact of disjointed training objectives, coupled with a lack of awareness of employee needs, may create a chasm, which the employee must overcome prior to benefitting from the training. This disparity is disadvantageous to the employee and to the

organization when seeking to improve human capital. Organizational leaders have a vested interest in improving organizational ability, which may be furthered through the development of the organization's human capital by means of employee training and employee learning.

Training Types

Employee training varies based on organizational needs, organizational level, and resource availability. Employee training relies on the transfer of knowledge from one entity or individual to another but may exhibit in a multitude of ways. Formal and informal communications support knowledge transfer between employees or from employer to employee (Wei & Miraglia, 2017). Organizational knowledge communications may be formalized trainings or informal knowledge transfers between employees but yield a resulting transfer of information. As informal communication is more difficult to control, organizations may focus on strictly formalized trainings. However, it is essential for training to involved different strategies and techniques to meet the intended objectives suitably (Vásquez-Torres, 2017). As these communications compose the core of employee training and are necessary to the training process, organizations adopting a balanced strategy of intensity and diversity, within the overall communication process of formal and informal methods, creates a sustainable environment (Chen & Liang, 2016). Therefore, organizations may seek to leverage formal and informal communicative trainings as a means of meeting intended goals and increasing the spread of organizational knowledge.

Beynon et al. (2015) investigated the impact of types of employee training on employee retention and employee ability and identified various types of training that an employee may engage in, which included: (a) independent learning, (b) formalized training in the workplace provided by an outside provider, (c) formalized training outside the workplace provided by an outside provider, (d) formal learning through in-house staff training, (e) informal job training, (f) distance learning, and (g) E-learning. Similarly, Kotey and Folker (2007) identified employee training types as: (a) formalized training, (b) seminars or workshops, (c) computer or E-learning, (d) on-the-job training, (e) apprenticeships or trainee sessions, (f) job rotation training, and (g) informal training. The researchers demonstrated that the types of training adopted by organizations changed as the organization increased in size and complexity with formalized, structured training strategies and development-oriented strategies adopted more often as the organization became larger (Kotey & Folker, 2007). Eby et al. (2017) classified types of formalized training that provided formal knowledge transfer as including specific and targeted activities, such as lecture, guided practice, audio recordings. These types of formalized training activities lend to businesses with the necessary resources regardless of size. However, typically small businesses may encounter difficulty in garnering the necessary resources for more formalized trainings.

While research has shown that informal training may be sufficient for some small businesses, more formalized training may be necessary to grow employee ability and sustain organizational growth with other small businesses. The size of the business may impact the types of training and knowledge transfer that can occur as employees in a

small business may be more apt for informal training compared to larger businesses due to intimate settings and close physical proximity (Uma Mageswari et al., 2015). Similarly, Harris (2009) suggested that small businesses were more likely to implement mentoring and action-based learning more than formalized training programs. Small businesses may construct a blended model of training to meet intended goals and maximize return while minimizing expended resources.

Training Programs

Organizational leaders implement training programs to meet strategic goals and provide employees with the appropriate knowledge and skills to effectively perform (Kaur, 2016). Organizational leaders often use training programs to strategically disseminate job-specific information or requirements, strategic knowledge, and interpersonal skills or behaviors that support coordination and teamwork (Tracey et al., 2015). Organizational leaders may then institute training programs to strategically improve employee ability and competency within the organizational context (Elnaga & Imran, 2013). The role of training program implementation then focuses on the attainment of organizational goals through the development of human capital in a focused, organized manner. The use of training programs creates opportunities for the organizations to increase continued yields and predictable returns on the training investment.

Furthermore, as training is a continuous activity, training programs enable employees to acquire and maintain the current skills needed to combat change while enhancing individual knowledge, which may reduce organization attrition rates and

increase employee retention (Kaur, 2016). Organizations utilize training programs to facilitate strategic planning and sustain high levels of productivity and efficiency (Tracey et al., 2015). Successful training programs identify participant or organizational needs and must contain defined objectives, specific content, and appropriate methods of teaching, execution, control, and evaluation (Vasquez-Torres, 2017). The strategic training objectives within said training programs are customized to meet the needs of the organization.

While organizations use training programs to serve a specific need, such as the onboarding of new employees, organizations may also utilize training programs to introduce creative, innovative concepts from external sources to increase perspective (Danvila-del-Valle et al., 2018). The training program is then utilized to provide employees with enhanced knowledge and skills as a catalytic for growth or creation for the betterment of the organization. Kaur (2016) demonstrated through quantitative research that instructional training programs focused on knowledge enhancement, skill development, and technical analysis had a significant and positive effect on the organization. Tracey et al. (2015) determined that organizations yielding significant results developed a culture of continuous improvement with training and development as an integral element of organizational activities. Moreover, training programs should consist of ongoing learning opportunities that are used to address the various professional development needs of employees (Tracey et al., 2015). When an organization is able to meet these needs, it creates opportunity.

Griffeth et al. (2018) examined employee training for leadership and the impact on the employee's abilities to fill knowledge gaps and meet changing needs. Griffeth et al. (2018), established through mixed method research that organizations using the Extend Advanced Leadership Training Program (Extend) could train staff to adapt to organizational changes and meet organizational needs. The organization found that implementing the Extend training program created opportunities for personal and professional growth (Griffeth et al., 2018). Opportunities for employee growth yielding organizational benefit may be the impetus for implementing a training program, if there is not a focused, job-specific objective. Bai et al. (2017) suggested that small businesses consider purchasing a prepared, yet customizable training when affordable, to leverage available resources, and meet unique needs. However, some small businesses may not have the resources to purchase a full training program.

Employee Learning

Intentional employee training within an organization yields employee learning (Sherwani & Mohammed, 2015). Employee learning is the process by which individuals in an organization obtain knowledge through varied methods and practices, then share or transfer this information within the organization to other employees to create a competitive advantage. Ibrahim et al. (2017) suggested that organizations not only focus on the transfer of knowledge, but on skill building, mindset, attitude, and behavior development. The process produces a working body of knowledge on organizational ability, practices, and available solutions that organizations can leverage through employee ability and increased competitive advantage. Organizations use knowledge

management processes to create, store, transfer, and apply individual and organizational information (Aerts et al., 2017). Interestingly, employee learning is often aided by the use of technology to deliver the knowledge needed to increase employee ability (Treasure-Jones et al., 2019). However, organizations that lack the necessary resources or support for these technological enhancements may then resort to more traditional means of providing formal and informal opportunities for employee learning.

Small Business

Small businesses serve a vital role in creating opportunities for employment and facilitating development (Bai et al., 2017). In many countries worldwide, small businesses support social and economic development through the generation of high revenue, create increased opportunities and healthy competition, encourage the adoption of new strategic measures and processes in the development and production of better products and services, and contribute to industrial output and productivity (Khan & Trzcieliński, 2018; Mallinguh et al., 2020). In the United States, 99.7% of employer firms and 42.9% of the private sector workforce exists through small businesses (Depken & Zeman, 2017). Small businesses are fundamental to economic development, innovation, employment, and economic growth (Bai et al., 2017). The Small Business Administration categorizes small businesses based on the number of personnel employed, from 1 to 500 people (SBA, 2018). For the purpose of this study, a small business was a privately-owned organization with 50 or fewer employees that engaged in profit-seeking operations.

Small businesses serve and important role within the local economy of a city and state, as small businesses increase the instances of job creation and increase economic growth in the United States (Guo & Cheng, 2018). The Small Business Administration (2018) stated that 50% of new small businesses survived more than 5 years and approximately 33% survived beyond 10 years. However, while small businesses are affected by a number of factors that may impact their survivability, the impact of small businesses closing may send further ripples throughout a community. Small business failure may contribute to reduced tax revenue for local and federal governments and increased unemployment (Valdez-Juárez et al., 2016). Therefore, people in local communities may have a vested interest in encouraging, creating, and sustaining small businesses.

Recognizing the impact small business success may have on a community, Dennis (2016) focused on the lack of government policy supporting the reduction of impediments to small business success, which Bishop (2015) also touched upon when he considered government regulation of training initiatives. Dennis (2016) maintained that an alarming number of new small business startups fail, which affected government policy, unemployment, and national economy. In recognizing the high percentage of small business failure, it is important to examine strategies to assist small business owners with sustaining business operations. Therefore, an exploration of employee training strategies used to assist small business owners with mitigating failure may prolong small business operations.

Types and Sizes of Small Businesses

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (2018), there were 30.2 million small businesses, comprising 99.9% of all businesses in the United States. Small businesses are defined by the number of employees in residency (SBA, 2018). For the purpose of this study, a small business was a privately-owned organization with 50 or fewer employees that engaged in profit-seeking operations.

As small businesses are typically categorized by the number of employees in the organization, there are variations in the impact from each level of small business. A small business with less than 20 full-time and part-time employees is a microbusiness (Henley & Song, 2020; Samujh, 2011). Microbusinesses comprised more than one-half of all small businesses in the United States, and a majority of businesses begin as small businesses (Monahan et al., 2011). Small businesses, particularly microbusinesses, are needed to develop communities economically, which in turn impact the social, environmental, cultural aspects of a community (Samujh, 2011). Similarly, microbusinesses might hold the key to economic development and revitalization for communities as microbusinesses make up a significant portion of the business population in most economies (Henley & Song, 2020; Monahan et al., 2011). As microbusinesses are a subset of the small business designation, understanding strategies that may bring value and growth to small businesses may positively impact the overall United States economy.

Small Business in the State of Florida

The economy of Florida is reliant on small business. Small businesses significantly impact Florida's economy as small business owners in Florida employ 43.2% or 3.1 million of the private workforce (Guo & Cheng, 2018; SBA, 2016). In 2015, Florida small businesses employed 3,280,800 people, or 42.2% of total employment in the state (SBA, 2018). Furthermore, small business owners represent 98.9% of all employers in the state with organizations with fewer than 100 employees maintaining the largest share of these firms (SBA, 2016). While small businesses are a recognized force within Florida's economic landscape, there is a lack of research on small businesses in Florida within the extant literature. Therefore, this study began to fill a gap in the literature through an exploration of the employee training strategies used by small business owners in Central Florida to implement new technologies.

During 2014, 18,673 new Florida small businesses started up, but 16,293 businesses exited the economy causing 68,247 job losses (SBA, 2016). There were 2,471,260 small businesses in Florida in 2015, which is an increase from the 2,368,331 small businesses in Florida in 2014 (SBA, 2018). In Florida, in 2015, there were 395,394 employer microbusinesses in operation and 430,921 total employer small businesses in operation (SBA, 2016). The reasons for these closures vary, but the impact on the state economy is not lessened. Guo and Cheng (2018) investigated the role of local fiscal policy in the establishment and closure of small businesses in Florida. The researchers asserted that small businesses served an essential role in economic development and the cultivation of new businesses was an important task and goal for policymakers to focus

efforts on the development of responsible policy for the betterment of the Florida economy (Guo & Cheng, 2018). Furthermore, Sarmiento et al. (2016) examined the impact of disaster risk management and business education on small and medium sized businesses in Florida. The researchers found that small and medium sized businesses were assisted through the availability of educational resources on disaster planning and collaboration with business schools (Sarmiento et al., 2016). Unfortunately, despite the role small businesses play in the economy of Florida, there has been little research into Florida small business. Therefore, recognizing the importance of studying Florida small businesses to aid in sustainability of economic well-being of the state of Florida, my proposed study is meant to fill a portion of this void.

Small Business Owner

A small-business owner is the proprietor of a firm with fewer than 500 employees (SBA, 2016). The small business owner is responsible for the conception, execution, and assumption of risk for a business venture (Turner & Endres, 2017). For the purpose of this study, a small business owner was a person in possession of a privately-owned organization with 50 or fewer employees, that was actively pursuing profit and sustainability.

Atamian and VanZante (2011) suggested that small business owners are required to incorporate continued education in business strategy to reach success and recommended small business owners continue acquiring knowledge and skills from available resources to increase the likelihood of success further. However, Barrett (2015) found that while small business owners may possess this attitude toward continued

growth, employee training may be limited in scope or context based on an arbitrary approach of the owner-manager, used to ensure necessary skills were held by employees for the immediate needs of the business and used to ensure the employee behavior was consistent with the current business environment. Similarly, Baumeler and Lamamra (2019) found that small business owner personalities and attitudes toward training manifested in the space allocated to conduct formative activity and organizational training.

Perceived Small Business Failure Factors

Gupta et al., (2015) noted that small business bankruptcies are difficult to track and measure. In the third quarter of 2016, 18,474 Florida small businesses ceased business operations resulting in 75,721 lost jobs (SBA, 2018). While the reasons for these exits vary, organizations subjectively define their own success and failure (Le & Raven, 2015), which may impact the way the owner conducts business operations. Regardless of how the organization conducts business, however, the SBA (2018) recognized the increased survival probability for an organization as the organization continued to operate and conduct business. Similarly, Altman et al. (2010), found a non-linear relationship between firm size and insolvency risk, with insolvency risk being a fluctuating function of organizational size. Owners may subjectively recognize their organization's situation, then use their own experience to mitigate the situation and become successful.

Businesses process information in order to form organizational actions and procedures as a means of averting failure. However, organizations experience business failure, and exhibit said failure, in multiple ways. Business failures arise when: (a)

competition, (b) economic factors, (c) crises, (d) shifts in priorities, and (e) varying

expectations, are ignored or neglected by small business owners (Miettinen & Littunen,

2013). Furthermore, business failures may be preempted by internal and external forces.

Marion and Bacon (1999) viewed internal disruptions to business operations as

leadership errors, a decline in worker morale, and a decline in product quality. Moreover,

failure to utilize employee ability as a source of competitive advantage to increase

productivity and improve quality can further impact organizational success (Bakotić &

Rogošić, 2017).

Similarly, external disruptions may present as market decline or negative public

opinion against the organization (Marion & Bacon, 1999). Pabst et al. (2016) identified

management commitment and organizational culture as the leading factors of

organizational failure when implementing a new system, technology, or process.

Therefore, if an organization establishes enabling processes that support new technology

implementation, then the organization may work to mitigate failure.

Barriers to Employee Training in Small Businesses

While Hayek et al. (2016) suggested that some leaders neglected HCT

components due to a lack of knowledge of human capital, small business owners face

different barriers to implementing employee training, including limited financial

resources and uncooperative or uninterested employees (Piperkova & Lozanoska, 2021).

Furthermore, small businesses may have limited training resources and few ways to gain

or create these materials to conduct sufficient and efficient training, as well. Pozo et al.

(2019) found that small business owners and managers recognized the need for

innovation for the enhanced development and productivity but were unable to produce a favorable environment to foster and support innovation. Moreover, when asked about their perception of promoting innovation, the small business owners perceived innovation support to primarily focus on the purchase and application of new equipment (Pozo et al., 2019). Similarly, Padachi and Bhiwajee (2016), demonstrated that Mauritian small business owners found value in employee training; however, the Mauritian small business owners felt that high costs and minimal funds, increased external pressures, and lack of understanding in designing and dispensing a formalized training cycle, inhibited their ability to implement employee training. While the research was conducted in Mauritius, the Mauritian small business owners' experiences are indicative of issues plaguing small businesses in other areas.

Harris (2009) recognized that often, small business owners were unable to provide the necessary training to fully implement competitive advantage activities, such as leveraging new technologies. Furthermore, the increased tension small businesses experience when conducting production activities and implementing employee training due to perceived time and resource constraints, negatively impacts the ability of the small business owner to prepare employees adequately (Baumeler & Lamamra, 2019). Some small business owners decidedly favor increased production over workplace training due to limited resources. Harris's (2009) findings showed limited resources were a distinguishing characteristic and common barrier to small business competitiveness. Therefore, innovation and implementing new technologies are growth methods for small

businesses. However, the lack of resources in small businesses inhibits small business owners from conducting these practices.

Harris (2009) posited that if small business owners could find advantages inherent to their organization, such as flexibility and a willingness to experiment, they may be able to create opportunities for innovation and growth. Small business owners may find it beneficial to explore continued means of creating competitive advantage, wherein employee training strategies for technology implementation may serve to create said competitive advantage, increase profitability, and improve business operations (Desai, 2013; Haned et al., 2014). Autonomy in employee learning and positive employee fulfillment have a direct influence on knowledge diffusion through knowledge transfer, which has an impact on the ability of the organization to successfully train (Alimohammadlou & Eslamhoo, 2016). Therefore, employee training is a communicative knowledge transfer that allows for the diffusion of knowledge to an individual and enables the ability to execute and perform.

Impact of Employee Training on Small Businesses

Small businesses require resources, knowledge, and skills to increase performance, improve efficiency, and increase operational capacity and capability (Beynon et al., 2015). Employee training may improve employee job satisfaction, increase productivity, encourage innovation, and improve financial performance (Atan & Mahmood, 2015; Beynon et al., 2015). Furthermore, as employees are a crucial resource for the development and function of small businesses (Atan & Mahmood, 2015), the development of the organization's employees account for a significant improvement in

organizational capability. However, small businesses often do not have the resources necessary to implement organizational training objectives.

Vasquez-Torres (2017) made a distinction in how the activities that constituted training differed in valuation dependent on company size, managerial job seniority, and company age. Therefore, context and perspective based on these elements provided variation in implementation and expected results, which was vital when conducting strategic planning utilizing training (Vaquez-Torres, 2017). The researchers found that small businesses often implemented training based on short-term needs and within their available resources. This may limit the overall benefit from employee training and employee learning for an organization as the organization is not able to realize continued dividends from the training practice.

While organizations may benefit from learning from past experiences and disseminating said knowledge, small businesses may regard training as a minor, inessential, and insignificant activity (Harris, 2009). Small businesses that see the value in employee training are often affected by the state, resources, and capabilities of the organization during implementation. Kotey and Folker (2007) determined that informal, on-the-job training was the predominant form of training in small businesses. However, the researchers also asserted that formal and development-oriented employee training is more relevant to small business survival beyond the initial growth phase and tends to coincide with firm size (Kotey & Folker, 2007). However, Harris (2009) and Padachi and Bhiwajee (2016) identified that small businesses tended to implement informal training rather than a more formalized training design. This is reminiscent of other research that

has shown small businesses are shackled by limited resources and other organizational detriments.

Similarly, Anderson et al. (2010) stated that often, small businesses lack the technical knowledge and education needed to implement successful training programs. The researchers found that the use of e-learning methodology and techniques required a higher level of readiness and maturity for successful implementation in small businesses (Anderson et al., 2010). Bishop (2015) agreed with the need for formalized training; however, he contended that the real-world application within small businesses often was contrary to the nature of the small business, government policy, and the skills demanded and utilized within small business operations. These limitations impact the ability for small business owners to consistently implement formalized training and may impact the ability for the small business to innovate.

Innovation and New Technology

Change is a natural aspect of industry. To anticipate change, organizational leaders may need to develop a sustainable management strategy that enables proactive activity and demonstrates adaptability (Todorut, 2012). Innovation and the adoption of new technology within an organization serves as a functional method of creating competitive advantage and meeting stakeholder needs as means of adapting to these changes proactively. Entrepreneurs innovate as a result of intrinsic motivation and organizational need, despite the inherent risk in innovation (Taneja et al., 2016). Organizations may adopt new hardware, software, or process technologies to improve or substitute materials or functions, increase customer benefits, decrease or alter resource

consumption, and improve efficiency (Klein et al., 2016). Dostie (2017) identified

innovation as four types: (a) new products or services, (b) improved products or services,

(c) new processes, and (d) improved processes. Furthermore, product, process, or

organizational innovation or technology adoption was found to improve organizational

performance, but only when organizational changes were imparted to support the

integration of the new innovation (Phan, 2019). Therefore, organizations should reflect

upon and support the reason for implementation and create support structures for this

implementation. This is especially true when looking at small businesses with limited

resources.

Business quality and innovation often are interconnected. An exhibition of the

link between innovation and quality is visible through the practices and innovative

activities of: (a) research and development, (b) exploring new markets and customers, (c)

continuous improvement, and (d) knowledge management (Antunes et al., 2017).

However, small business owners may be unable to enact these activities due to variables

and limitations inherent to small business operation. Manso (2017) acknowledged that

while innovation is a critical imperative for small businesses to create value through the

creation or implementation of new ideas, governance and short-term thinking thwarted

the ability of small businesses to innovate. Furthermore, while small business owners

may realize a need to innovate, the lack of resources or inability to create long-term plans

may interrupt innovation. Therefore, small business owners should be encouraged to

consider innovative methods outside of the normal avenues of innovation and implement

new technologies through hardware and software in irregular ways.

New Technology

Innovation serves as the creation and integration of new technology into procedures drives the increased ability of an organization to perform. Innovation then is a formal process of development for improving production or the operational environment resulting in new products or processes or creates improvements to existing products or processes to enhance quality or performance (Pozo et al., 2019). The new technology created may exhibit as hardware, software, or procedural innovation that provides advantages to the organization. These innovative advantages are how organizational leaders may then devise strategies to make their organizations and products competitive through implementing the new technology (Mallinguh et al., 2020). Therefore, as the innovation is practically realized within a new technology, organizational leaders can integrate these new products or processes for the betterment of the organization.

As organizations adopt these new technologies, there are realized advantages afforded to the organization. New technology implementation may increase organizational flexibility, competitiveness, and risk mitigation (Caca & Kushi, 2011). For example, the adoption of cloud technology may minimize cost burden on the organization while benefitting from a built-in infrastructure accessible through internet and increasing organizational flexibility (Khan & Trzcieliński, 2018). Furthermore, organizations may invest in (a) specific skills, (b) organizational methods, (c) patents, (d) data, and (e) software that may shape or define the knowledge-based capital for the organization (Younas & Rehman, 2021). Organizations may consider new technologies that afford the

organization, or its individual employees, resources or capability gains as integral to organizational sustainability.

Organizational sustainability is an inherent necessity when considering longevity and the ability to continue business operations. In terms of new technology adoption, small businesses are often more flexible, adaptable, and more apt to develop and implement new ideas due to their simple organizational structure and low risk (Islam & Nasira, 2017). Small businesses may find that the implementation of one aspect of a new technology or innovation will meet the organizational need and have the ability to integrate the one aspect (Powell et al., 2018). Conversely, a larger organization may be less inclined to implement new technologies in this manner, opting instead for a systemic adoption. However, while the adoption of new technologies is an inherent aspect of innovation within a business but may be difficult to implement successfully for organizations with limited resources or restrictive operations, such as small businesses, it does not lessen the need to create new competitive advantage for organizational sustainability.

New Technology Implementation in Small Business

Small business owners need to create and sustain competitive advantage as a means of remaining operational. Small businesses often maintain flexibility and adaptability to change and adopt new strategies, which may be leveraged to increase innovation and aid in the adoption of new technologies (Harris, 2009; Islam & Nasira, 2017; Taneja et al., 2016). Small business owners may seek to innovate within the organization for many reasons, including to improve sales, increase profitability, or to

manifest competitive advantage for sustainability, as new technology introduction, increased competition, and new industry knowledge may threaten the organization (Linton & Solomon, 2017; Taneja et al., 2016). Furthermore, new technology and advances in telecommunication and internet marketing have led to increased self-employment opportunities, especially among women (Monahan et al., 2011). However, Malaquias and Hwang (2016) found that the size of Brazilian small businesses impacted strategic planning, which also impacted the organization's ability to interact and serve customers. This is important as the size organization's size may delineate the resources available to the organization for exploit, which impacts the decision-making process and organization's ability to innovate.

While it may be important for small business owners to implement new technologies and innovations, there are factors or components that may be prohibitive. Small businesses may face enhanced risk in implementing new technologies due to inadequate resources and insufficient knowledge (Khan & Trzcieliński, 2018). Pozo et al. (2019) found many small businesses looked to improve business operations by implementing innovation through increasing the scale of production, improving the use of installed capacity, and improving allocative efficiency. These implementations may be small and focused, but small businesses must still attempt to maximize returns in the way a larger organization would maximize potential proportionally. The researchers found that small business owners and managers recognized the need for innovation for enhanced development and productivity; however, small business owners and managers were unable to produce a favorable environment to foster and support innovation.

Moreover, when asked about their perception of supporting innovation, the small business owners perceived innovation support to primarily focus on purchasing and applying new equipment (Pozo et al., 2019). Therefore, small business owners who realize the potential gains from new technology implementations may develop ways to innovate and implement that are atypical.

As small business owners develop a method conducive to the business situation, there is a need to capitalize on organizational resources and circumstances. Soto-Acosta et al. (2018) used the integrative research model to assess the effect of technological, organizational, and environmental factors on innovation and small business performance; the researchers found that small businesses tended to rely on exploitative innovations, which capitalized on previous innovative efforts and made them more likely to outperform competitors. Mansfield-Devine (2016) echoed the need for innovation in small businesses but found small businesses were unlikely to assume the potential costs involved and may instead rely on employee skills, which may be lacking in microbusinesses or areas with a limited resource pool. Small businesses may not have the resources to enact large-scale innovations. However, these restrictions may then manifest in improvement and support of those new technologies that the organization may implement. Furthermore, limitations found in an organization's human capital may be augmented to meet the organization's needs through employee training. I studied how employee training strategies may be used to support new technology implementation in small businesses.

Transition

Section 1 contained the problem statement, purpose statement, and the nature of the study, which contained the justification for using a qualitative method and multiple case study design. Section 1 contained the: (a) interview questions, (b) conceptual framework, (c) assumptions, (d) limitations, and (e) delimitations of the study. Lastly, Section 1 contained the significance of the study and the review of professional and academic literature, which included a critical analysis and synthesis of various sources and data concerning: (a) HCT conceptual framework, (b) alternative theories, (c) employee training, (d) small business, and (e) innovation and technology.

Section 2 contains the: (a) purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) participants, (d) research methodology and design, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection instruments and technique, (h) data organization technique, (i) data analysis, and (j) reliability and validity.

Section 3 begins with an introduction, which includes the purpose statement, research question, and findings. Section 3 includes: (a) application to professional practice, (b) implications for social change and behaviors, (c) recommendations for action, (d) recommendations for further research, and (d) concludes with reflections.

Section 2: The Project

The research justification presented in Section 1 included insight as to nature and need for employee training to support new technology implementation. Section 2 includes the research process, design, and method. As valid and reliable research is necessary to achieve the intended purpose of the study in providing employee training strategies for small business owners to support new technology implementation, this section consists of detailed aspects of my research project. Section 2 includes the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, the participants, the research method and design, the population and sampling, the data collection, the data analysis, and the validity and reliability of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore employee training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies. The target population for this study was five small business owners located in Central Florida that have used employee training to implement new technologies. Lalone and Tapia (2016) asserted that social change was feasible through employees' ability to create change opportunities within the local community based on newly attained skillsets and increasing their employability, as well as their social capital. Furthermore, social change feasibility may increase with an employee's social capital improved through expanded learning (Bleich, 2017). Therefore, the findings of this study may contribute to social change by increasing employee skillsets, employability, and social capital through enhanced community stability, sustainability, and new employment opportunities.

Role of the Researcher

Within the scope of conducted qualitative research, the researcher is the data collection instrument, which may influence the research process due to supposed predispositions or biases on the part of the researcher; thus, it is essential for researchers to be aware of predispositions and biases, which may threaten the integrity of the qualitative research (Wadams & Park, 2018). My role as the researcher was to select the appropriate methodology and design, locate potential participants, and collect and analyze collected data. Using multiple methods of data collection is the most credible way of achieving methodological triangulation and data saturation (Fusch et al., 2018). Data collection involved using: (a) semistructured interviews and member checking, (b) company documents, (c) direct observations, and (d) a reflective journal.

As the researcher is responsible for the validity and reliability of the research, there is a need to maintain consistency and overall appropriateness in selecting all elements of the research process (Leung, 2015). Researchers use interviews to collect data and conduct in-depth investigations into participant responses and information. Semistructured interviews are prepared using guiding questions to direct the movement of the interview but allow for participants to expound on their response (Turner, 2010). By using a semistructured interview method, the researcher is able to use probing questions to delve further into participant responses and elicit more information (Kisely & Kendall, 2011). I used semistructured interviews to delve further into participant responses and reach data saturation. Data saturation is the point when no new information, codes, or themes are found within the data collected (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I

employed an interview protocol to standardize the method in which I conducted the semistructured interviews. I recorded and transcribed the interviews for data analysis in alignment with my interview protocol (Appendix A).

Once interviews had been conducted, I interpreted the interview recordings into a summary transcript and met with the participants to conduct member checking for validity and clarification. Member checking is a procedure wherein data is shared and participants confirm that the researcher's interview response interpretations are valid (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Member checking should be used following transcription or interpretation to ensure intended message and for further clarification from the participation regarding the topic (Houghton et al., 2013). Research participants who engage in member checking experience more comfort with the overall research process (Birt et al., 2016). Therefore, I conducted member checking to ensure clarity in the data collected, which contributed to the study credibility and validity, as well as increased the participants' comfort with the research process.

In order to gain a comprehensive, triangulated view of the phenomenon, I used multiple data collection methods, including document analysis as a data collection method. Inherent flaws within data sources may impact the data and present the need to ensure data sources are of quality and validity is established through methodological triangulation (Fusch et al., 2018). Analyzing company documents may provide researchers the opportunity to support data through provision of a background explanation for attitudes and behaviors, as well as verification for details supplied by

participants (Shenton, 2004). Document review for this study included documents related to employee training, training materials, and financial records.

As the primary data collection instrument, I needed to mitigate bias. One method for mitigating bias is through researcher reflexivity. Qualitative researcher reflexivity is key to minimizing the negative impact of the researcher's preconceived notions and acknowledging the changes brought about in the researcher as a result of the researcher's active involvement in the research process and how these changes may affect the research process (Palaganas et al., 2017). A reflective journal may be used to reflect and document thoughts and feelings pertaining to the study as a means of recognizing and classifying subjectivity (Cope, 2014). Moreover, the use of a reflective journal makes the researcher more aware of their biases and more apt to understand how these biases may affect the research (Bruno & Dell'Aversana, 2017). Therefore, I employed a reflective journal as a means of further mitigating researcher bias through reflection and documentation of my biases, thoughts, and feelings pertaining to my involvement in the study and observations.

Participants

Researchers must ensure that participants are suited to meeting the objectives of the research. Participant selection is vital when using the qualitative method (Patton, 2015). In recognizing participant qualification and access to the participants, the researcher must consider participant eligibility, gaining access to participants, and establishing a working relationship between the researcher and the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Participant Eligibility

Qualitative research studies are defined by the parameters needed to answer the research question. It is important for the researcher to clarify what constitutes a case by specifying the limitations or boundaries, including the unit of analysis and specific time boundaries and that participants should be selected from a population that experienced a phenomenon to best answer the research question (Yin, 2018). To achieve data saturation, participants in this study needed to meet the eligibility criteria, including: (a) that the participant was a small business owner, (b) that the participant had successfully implemented new technologies, and (c) the participant could efficiently explain employee training strategies used when implementing new technologies in the small business. I ensured that participants met the criteria and were eligible to participate in the study. I used the small business resource data available through local Chamber of Commerce's websites to find small businesses that met the criteria. Then, I compiled a list of these small businesses to screen for eligibility requirements.

Gaining Access to Participants

Initially, to gain access to the small business owners, I contacted the organization via phone and email, then scheduled a time to discuss and answer questions regarding the study. I used various methodologies to gain and maintain access to the participants, including virtual meetings, email, social media, telephone calls, and traditional mail. The researcher should explain initially the reasons for the organization to have been selected as a fieldwork site, the expected fieldwork, the possibility for disruption and disturbances, and reporting procedures of the completed study (Shenton & Hayter, 2004).

I explained the decision for selecting the organization as a fieldwork site, the expected fieldwork, the possibility for disruption and disturbances, and reporting procedures of the completed study. Gaining access to participants is a critical concern for qualitative researchers as successfully gaining access to the participants and organizations is a critical factor that may halt progress (Shenton & Hayter, 2004). If participants had further questions regarding the study, I answered questions regarding the study to ensure that I maintained access to the participants.

Participant involvement in my research study was voluntary. A voluntary arrangement is at the center of the researcher and participant relationship, with each party expectant that the study will generate useful knowledge that may not be obtainable otherwise (Bromley et al., 2015). Upon meeting with the participant and following the interview protocol, I reviewed the informed consent form and ensured the participant understood the form and the process. Subsequently, I had the participant sign all required documentation and provided the participant with a copy before the data collection process progressed. During the interview process I reminded each participant that involvement in the study was voluntary, and that they may contact me with any questions or concerns that may have arisen.

Establishing a Working Relationship

Researchers may struggle to establish a relationship with participants. However, establishing a relationship with the participants means that researchers recognize the participants as people participating in research and not merely subjects within the research (Bromley et al., 2015). Recognizing participants as people has led to an increase

in awareness of the need for ethical and respectful treatment of participants. In considering the paradigm shift in the way researchers perceive participants, I established respect for the welfare and well-being of the participants.

In order to formally establish positive rapport, respect, and trust with the participants, I communicated through email: (a) the study's purpose, (b) the data collection strategies, (c) the interview protocol, and (d) the information security protocol with each participant prior to the participant acceptance and gave a copy to each participant prior to conducting interviews. I explained the information security protocol processes I used to ensure participant confidentiality, including data encryption and coded participant identifiers, to reduce any trepidation amongst the participants. After receiving participant consent, establishing rapport and trust with the participants is important (Bromley et al., 2015). Participants may be more amiable during the research process if there is a bond of friendship and trust between participant and researcher (Bromley et al., 2015). Therefore, I worked to establish rapport and a relationship built on respect and trust.

In order to informally establish positive rapport, respect, and trust with the participants, I arranged for an initial conversation with each individual participant at a neutral, quiet, and semi-public venue during an agreed upon time to begin to establish rapport and a conducive relationship for interactions during research data collection. Elwood and Martin (2000) argued that the interview site may carry with it multiple forms of spatial relations and meaning, which may then impact participant responses. Participants, therefore, should be able to choose a comfortable location to discuss the

research process. Elwood and Martin (2000) suggested conducting interviews at a location outside of the participant's place of work to provide the opportunity for participants to make inconspicuous observations. Similarly, I asked participants to designate a comfortable location to conduct interviews to elicit rich, in-depth responses from the participants.

Research Method and Design

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore employee training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies. Researchers use different methods and designs to conduct research and collect data. A researcher chooses a research method by selecting the approach that most adequately addresses the research question and yields appropriate results (Shannon-Baker, 2015; Yin, 2018). Alignment between the research method, research design, and research question is vital to conducting qualitative research (Gaudet & Robert, 2018). I discussed in detail the research method and research design for my exploration of employee training strategies used by small business owners to implement new technologies.

Research Method

Research methods vary based on the techniques used to collect and analyze data. The three main research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method (Almalki, 2016). I used the qualitative method for this study. Qualitative researchers focus on the subjective analysis of participants' experiences, attitudes, behavior, and motivations to explain a phenomenon (Barnham, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Taguchi, 2018). The qualitative method is most appropriate as a research method when

the focus of the study is to explore and gather subjective meaning from differing experiences in subjective accounts (Hesse-Biber, 2016). As the researcher, I was focused on subjective analysis of the participants' experiences and was looking to conduct an exploration into these experiences.

Qualitative researchers seek to explore and find deeper insight and a rich understanding of real-world experiences without the use of treatments, manipulation, or predefined variables (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Researchers adopt the qualitative method to explore and better understand a phenomenon, rather than testing a hypothesis (Taguchi, 2018). I did not develop a hypothesis to test, nor conduct an evaluation or comparison of variables with my study. Through analysis of the participant experience, qualitative researchers reduce the emotional and behavioral responses to words to formulate the qualitative data and produce context (Barnham, 2015). Qualitative researchers focus on gaining in-depth insight and understanding of participant perceptions and lived experiences to understand a phenomenon through the use of open-ended questions (Barnham, 2015; Denzin, 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Moser & Kortsjens, 2018). I selected the qualitative methodology to explore the employee training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies because it was essential to collect in-depth, rich data from the participants' real-world experiences. Furthermore, as the objective of the study was to gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon through the use open-ended questions, the qualitative research method was most suited to the exploration of employee training strategies used by small business owners to implement new technologies.

While a qualitative researcher focuses on exploration, quantitative researchers focus on the use of statistical measurement to determine the relationship, correlation, and significance among variables within the investigation of a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Researchers use the quantitative research method to establish a data representation for a phenomenon through variables, as well as conduct deductive research to test the relationship among these variables (Barnham, 2015). Quantitative researchers formulate and test hypotheses using these variables, draw inferences, and use close-ended questions to collect data (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018; Taguchi, 2018). Concerning my research study, I did not develop a hypothesis to test, use close-ended questions, conduct statistical analysis, nor conduct an evaluation or comparison of variables, so the quantitative research method was not appropriate.

Mixed method research integrates the qualitative and quantitative research methods allowing the researcher to link observations from separate investigations of the same phenomenon (Alavi et al., 2018). Researchers use mixed method research to develop a qualitative and quantitative perspective, as well as to explore information that is inaccessible through a single methodological approach (Mauceri, 2015; Shannon-Baker, 2015). In this way, the mixed method researcher is able to blend the qualitative method and quantitative method to obtain desired elements from both methodologies. The mixed method researcher may use open-ended questions from the qualitative method to explore individual experiences and perceptions, while simultaneously formulating and testing hypotheses to draw inferences and using close-ended questions to obtain data, which is part of the quantitative method (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018; Shannon-Baker,

2015; Taguchi, 2018). Taguchi (2018) asserted that the mixed method researcher should use the quantitative and qualitative methods to reinforce the results and interpretations gained from the opposing method. The mixed method researcher purposefully develops their mixed method research to provide this reinforcement.

Consequently, using mixed method research allows for the researcher to explore the complexities and intricacies of a phenomenon through open-ended questioning, while incorporating the investigation of the relationship of variables within the phenomenon (Shannon-Baker, 2015). I did not use a mixed method approach as I did not develop a hypothesis to test, use close-ended questions, conduct statistical analysis, nor conduct an evaluation or comparison of variables; therefore, the quantitative research method components of mixed method research did not apply. However, I maintained the qualitative research components and used the qualitative method to explore the employee training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies.

Research Design

The research design refers to the framework and corresponding method used to collect and analyze data, which will influence the robustness of the analysis and findings (Korstjens &Moser, 2018). The research design may be the most important component of the research proposal when ensuring that the researcher can answer the research question (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The research question is central to qualitative research design as the research question connects the purpose of the study to the method and design (Gaudet & Robert, 2018). The research question was: What employee training strategies do small business owners use to implement new technologies?

For this research study, I considered three qualitative research designs: (a) phenomenology, (b) ethnography, and (c) case study. In a phenomenological study, researchers use a participant's perception and contextual background to interpret commonalities between individual perceptions and inform description or documentation of events (Sohn et al., 2017). Phenomenological researchers consider that while individuals may experience the same event, they may not interpret the event in the same manner (Robertson & Thomson, 2016). Researchers use this exploration to understand the meaning individuals ascribe to lived experiences, as well as to gain an understanding of the event itself (Gorichanaz & Latham, 2016). I did not use the phenomenological design as I did not target nor explore the meaning participants have derived from their experience.

Researchers conduct ethnographies to perform cultural analysis of beliefs and meanings through member accounts providing subjective, contextual viewpoints during a specified time duration (Bass & Milosevic, 2018; Cappellaro, 2016; Fusch et al., 2016). As ethnographic researchers often focus on the social context, culture, or community within natural events, the researchers may then use this data to ascertain a significance within these behaviors (Cappellaro, 2016; Tierney, 2017). I chose not to use the ethnographic design as the focus for my study as my focus was not on the cultural analysis of beliefs and meanings through member accounts providing subjective, contextual viewpoints during a specified time duration.

Case study researchers explore success within bound situations or systems to demonstrate the effectiveness of applications or decisions (Lewis, 2015). A case study

design is based on an in-depth exploration of a single case or a collection of cases (Yazan, 2015). For my study, I bound the population to five small business owners who had successfully implemented new technologies and could efficiently explain employee training strategies used when implementing new technologies in the small business.

The case study design enables the researcher to obtain authentic accounts participants' experiences through the use of observation and interviews which allows for the researcher to learn of each particular individual's experience and their interpretation of phenomena experienced (Haines, 2017). In this way, case study researchers are able to approach a phenomenon and investigate from multiple perspectives within a bounded context, which allows the researcher to provide a rich and deep description of the phenomenon and immerse the audience in context (Singh, 2015; Taylor & Thomas-Gregory, 2014). For my study, I gathered data through semi-structured interviews, direct observation, company documents, and reflective journaling to best investigate the phenomenon within the bounded context of the five small business owners that used employee training strategies to implement new technologies.

A case study design is the preferred method when a researcher is researching *how* or *why* questions with little or no control over behavioral events and the event is occurring currently (Yin, 2018). Similarly, case study design allows the researcher the ability to explore the experiences and behaviors for individuals and groups through direct interaction in a way that other research methods may prohibit or deny due to impracticality or ethicality (Moustakas, 1990). I selected the case study design over the phenomenological and ethnographical research designs because it allowed me to control

the scope of my study into the employee training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies. Furthermore, I chose to use a multiple case study design to explore the employee training strategies small business owners used to successfully implement new technologies. A multiple case study design allowed me to use data collection techniques to gather significant amounts of data while employing replication to ensure that I gathered data rich in context and insight of the phenomena.

Population and Sampling

For my study, I explored the employee training strategies used by small business owners to implement new technologies. To ensure that the data collected addresses the research question, population and sampling techniques should be decided early in the planning stages of the study to ensure that the techniques chosen to correspond with the study objectives and reaching data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Martinez-Mesa et al., 2016; Yin, 2018). Therefore, I aligned population and sampling techniques with the research question to reach study objectives.

Population

Ensuring the research population meets the need to answer the research question may be a concern for qualitative researchers. Moreover, Asiamah et al., (2017) stated that as participants belong to the research population, and credibility is driven by data integrity and the integrity of the data sources, defining the population and participant criteria is essential to the study's credibility. Establishing the criteria for participants delineates whom should belong to the research population, which is the group of individuals having one or more shared characteristics and relevant to the study (Asiamah

et al., 2017). Moreover, critical components of qualitative research are the number of individuals available to participate in the study and the methods used to collect data, which are integral elements for researchers to conduct an exploration into a phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The population for this study consisted of small business owners in Central Florida. Of the small businesses I approached to participate in my study, only those that have used employee training strategies to implement new technologies were relevant. I selected five members of this population to participate in my study.

Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting or searching for situations, context, or participants to provide the researcher a source of information with depth and range on the research topic (Gaudet & Robert, 2018). In qualitative research, sample techniques will vary, as the determination of sample techniques is contextual and dependent upon the needs of the study, reaching data saturation, and remaining consistent with the methodological approach (Boddy, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Fusch et al., 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Therefore, I used the research question and population to help derive the best contextual sample to assist with reaching data saturation on the research topic.

There are two types of sampling methods employed in research: (a) probability sampling and (b) non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is based on random or chance events to determine the sample; however, non-probability sampling, which is based on researcher choice determined through population accessibility and availability, is conducted using purposive sampling, quota sampling, or convenience sampling (Setia,

2016). Probability sampling randomizes the sample selection and increases the opportunity for variability in data collected while also increasing the need for adequate resources to collect said data (Boddy, 2016; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Setia, 2016). Researchers using a probability method choose a study's sample size randomly, then perform inferences from data obtained, which may impact generality or transferability (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Setia, 2016). I purposefully narrowed the scope of my population and sample to maximize resources and increase the ability to achieve research objectives. Therefore, a probability sampling method was not appropriate for this qualitative case study.

Researchers using non-probability sampling methods deliberately select participants that conceptually meet the data requirements to best answer the research question (Boddy, 2016; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Non-probability sampling methods very in their generalizability but avoid the randomness and resource taxing elements of probability sampling methods (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Setia, 2016). I used a non-probability method to deliberately select participants based on their ability to best provide data needed to answer the research question.

Although several probability and non-probability sampling strategies exist, qualitative sampling methods include convenience sampling or selection based on accessibility, referral sampling involving previous participant recommendation, and purposive sampling wherein the researcher selects the sample based on the ability to answer the research question (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Therefore, I evaluated (a) convenience sampling, (b) referral sampling, and (c) purposive sampling.

Convenience sampling is a non-probabilistic technique that draws a sample of the population based on the availability and accessibility of the participants to the researcher (Andrade, 2021). Using convenience sampling may yield participants based on an accessible location but may then yield a biased or stunted data collection as the research is inhibited based on the availability of participants within the specific accessible location who may also have relevant data to the research question (Emerson, 2021). Use of convenience sampling does limit the ability to generalize the results of the study and may lack external validity, as well (Andrade, 2021; Emerson, 2021). I did not use convenience sampling as the sample was selected based on convenient accessibility and results may lack generalizability.

Referral sampling is a non-probabilistic technique wherein participants are selected through referrals collected from previously selected participants or by people who may have access to potential participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This sampling method is also known as snowball sampling and may involve a sample that grows beyond what is manageable for the researcher as the referral process continues until data saturation is attained (Audemard, 2020; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). For this reason, referral sampling may be very resource intensive. However, referral sampling may also assist in uncovering participants that are not known to be part of the target group and can aid in discovery of previously unobtained data (Audemard, 2020). I did not use referral

sampling as the I was limited on resources and based selection on predetermined criteria not on referrals from previous participants.

Purposive sampling is a non-probabilistic technique and allows for the selection of participants based on their ability to provide appropriate and sufficient data that answers research questions and achieves research objectives (Andrade, 2021; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Purposive sampling relies upon the researcher's judgement to for selection of the participants that will provide sufficient data based on predetermined criteria (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). For my study, I used a purposive method of sampling to ascertain the participants for the study based on the participants' ability to meet predetermined criteria and the ability to answer the research question.

Increasing the specific criteria to include or exclude selection for the sample creates a sample that is more purposive (Andrade, 2021). The criterion used to determine sample size for this qualitative case study was new technology implementation in the last two years and the use of employee training to support the implementation. This sample size criterion was purposefully selected because these participants were sufficiently positioned to provide data consistent with reaching research objectives.

Data Saturation

Researchers strive to achieve data saturation to enhance the validity of the qualitative research study, which is the point wherein the collection of additional data does not produce new information related to the research question (Denzin, 2017; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Kisely and Kendall, 2011; Lowe et al., 2018). To reach data saturation, it is essential to solicit participants' views on the research topic using in-depth, probing

interviews. The techniques that I used to ensure data saturation in this study were (a) semistructured interviews, (b) direct observation, (c) document collection, (d) member checking interviews, and (e) maintaining a reflective journal. The member checking process involved providing participants with a summary transcript of their original responses and probing for additional information. Therefore, for this study, to reach data saturation and achieve a high-quality qualitative study, I conducted follow-up member checking interviews until the occurrence of repetitive data emerged from participants.

Ethical Research

Researchers are expected to comply with Institutional Review Board (IRB) regulations as these regulations are meant to provide a foundation for the conduct of ethical research (Hull & Wilson, 2017). I conducted the proposed study after receiving approval from the IRB at Walden University, in accordance with the university's ethical standards and ensuring the ethical protection of the participants. I gained approval from the Walden IRB to ensure my procedures followed proper ethical procedures and avoided human rights violations. I conducted this study following Walden University IRB approval (IRB approval number # 09-27-21-0448039).

Ethical research is typified by researcher conduct and practice, as well as participant treatment. In conducting research, adherence to the major tenets of research ethics is essential (Qamar, 2018). As ethical concerns for the welfare and well-being of participants were of importance, it was necessary to establish specific parameters within the study. The role of the IRB is to protect the rights and welfare of the involved participants (Hull & Wilson, 2017). The Belmont Report established research principles

that included respect for persons, beneficence, and justice in research involving human subjects (Cini, 2018; DHEW, 1978). Hammersley (2015) stated that while specific, prescribed rules often are of little use in qualitative research, it is up to the researcher to use sound judgment in practicing responsible and ethical research. I ensured the use of sound judgement in practicing responsible and ethical research.

In considering ethical research, the researcher needs to be mindful of using sound judgment prior to, during, and following contact with participants. When conducting research with human participants, the researcher should consider the way the participant is approached and treated as a means of maintaining ethical research (Grady, 2015). Therefore, maintaining participant autonomy, or the participant's ability to make decisions for themselves, is an underlying principle of informed consent, and it is necessary to fully disclose, check for participant comprehension, and receive the participant's authorization to collect the data when advocating for participant welfare (Cini, 2018; Grady, 2015; Hammersley, 2015; Qamar, 2018). To accomplish this, I used an informed consent form (Appendix C) from Walden University as an ethical guide.

In order to establish initial consent with participants, I contacted participants through email, phone, or in person to plan a convenient time and location for the first meeting, and I provided participants with a copy of the informed consent form (Appendix C) for their review prior to the meeting. Informed consent forms typically include: (a) the study title, (b) researcher identification and credentials, (c) identification of study population, (d) purpose statement, (e) description of the study procedures, (f) data collection procedures, including expected interview duration, (g) potential benefits and

risks, (h) confidentiality assurances, (i) assurance of voluntary participation, (j) statement of the right to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time, (k) offer made to answer any and all questions pertaining, (l) the procedure for obtaining study results, (m) a guarantee to follow ethical conduct guidelines, and (n) dated participant and researcher signatures (Ibrahim & Edgley, 2015; Qamar, 2018). The informed consent form for this study is Appendix C.

The initial meeting with the participant was used to provide a full and complete explanation of the issues in the informed consent form to ensure participant comprehension and autonomy during the establishment of access to the participant and prior to obtaining consent from the participant. Voluntary participation of the research participants is an essential ethical requirement when conducting research involving human elements and should be established with the signing of the informed consent form (Cini, 2018; Qamar, 2018). Prior to conducting participant interviews, I asked participants to read, review, and sign the informed consent form in paper or digital form. Then, I provided the participant with a copy before the data collection process began.

Informed consent should be given voluntarily from participants competent to consent, who have been provided alternatives to participation, and made aware of their ability to withdraw from the study at any time and free from repercussion (Connelly, 2014; Haines, 2017; Kumar, 2013; Qamar, 2018). Participants have the right to withdraw from a study at any time without penalty or consequence maintains respect for human subjects (Ibrahim & Edgley, 2015). Participants had the right to withdraw at any time and for any reason without repercussion by informing me of their decision by phone, email,

or in person. I reminded the participants of their right to discontinue the research process at any time. In addition, I reminded the participants that there was no incentive or reward for taking part in the research process and research findings would be shared with the participants following completion of the study.

Researchers are obligated to protect the participant confidentiality and the information they share with the researcher to maintain respect for human subjects (Drake & Maundrell, 2017; Qamar, 2018). During data collection, I protected participant confidentiality by assigning identification labels in lieu of participant names, which consisted of the participant's initials in reverse order. Additionally, I assigned identification codes to each participant during data analysis. Lastly, for the findings of the study, I assigned each participant and company an unrelated pseudonym to reference participants. I stored the research data, notes, interview transcriptions and all other related materials in a safe and secure manner for five years to protect participant confidentiality. If the participant were to withdraw from the research process, I would remit any notes and data pertaining to the participant for destruction. If participants are interested in the findings of the study, I provided the participants a summary of the results or the completed study electronically or in physical paper form.

Data Collection Instruments

Accurate data collection is based on the quality of the raw data collected by ensuring the data collection instrument is appropriate and that the data collection process is established and executed well (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). In qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Clark & Veale, 2018). In this

qualitative multiple case study, I was the primary data collection instrument. I collected

data through (a) semistructured interviews, (b) member checking interviews, (c)

document collection, (d) direct observation, and (e) maintaining a reflective journal.

In my study, I used semistructured interviews to collect data. Semistructured

interviews are initially structured and protocol-guided dialogue between the researcher

and participant that is supplemented by probing, adaptive follow-up questions

(DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). This requires the researcher to use skill to elicit quality

data from the participant through initial and follow-up questions while practicing active

listening and non-directive questioning (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Roulston, 2018).

Researchers using this form of questioning are awarded the ability to gather the necessary

data from the participant's perspective with clarification. I used the interview protocol in

Appendix A to conduct semistructured interviews.

I used my interview protocol (Appendix A) to conduct follow-up member

checking interviews. The process of member checking enhances the credibility and

validity of qualitative research studies by allowing participants the time to review, verify,

and add to collected data to ensure intended meaning and mitigate bias (Thomas, 2016).

Member checking invites the participant to actively engage in the interpretation and

correction of the data, while also increasing the likelihood of expansion on the previously

gathered data (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). Therefore, I conducted member checking

follow-up interviews to allow the participant to check for intended meaning within the

summary transcript, while I probed for further information from each participant.

I conducted document collection and document analysis. Researchers use document analysis to gain textual context for an enhanced understanding of events and decisions (Cardno, 2018). When conducting document analysis documents may be treated or considered differently depending on the focus of the study (Siegner et al., 2018) Moreover, document analysis is typically considered an efficient and cost-effective data collection instrument that is often readily available to the researcher (Cardno, 2018). Document analysis presents many positive aspects within the scope of methodological triangulation, as well, allowing the researcher the ability to validate previously acquired data and provide a richer context when employed with other data collection instruments or strategies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Siegner et al., 2018). Therefore, I conducted document collection and document analysis to validate previously acquired data and provide a richer context.

I conducted direct observations using my direct observation protocol, which is located in Appendix B. Direct observation is viewed as a foundational element in qualitative research, as well as enhancing individual performance and organizational performance (Gauthier et al., 2018; Rea et al., 2020). Direct observation allows the researcher first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Therefore, I conducted direct observations of physical work environment for the organization to gain first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon.

As the primary data collection instrument, I must mitigate personal bias. One method of mitigating researcher bias and avoid using a personal perspective is the practice of reflective journaling. Reflexivity is the practice of maintaining a constant

internal discourse and self-assessing predispositions with the full acknowledgment and understanding that said predispositions may influence the study, data, and findings (Amaechi & Fusch, 2019; Berger, 2015; Cope, 2014; Ibrahim & Edgley, 2015). Kisely and Kendall (2011) recognized reflexivity to extend beyond consideration of potential conflicts of interest, to recognizing the imbalance of power between researcher and participants, as well. Researcher reflexivity presents in three orientations: (a) when the researcher shares experience with participants, (b) when the researcher moves from a position of an outsider to an insider during the research process, and (c) when the researcher has no prior experience with the research topic (Berger, 2015). While these positions have inherent advantages and disadvantages, there is a need to be aware of bias and mitigate said bias through active processes to ensure the integrity of the research is maintained. One possible way to mitigate bias is to keep a reflective journal to reflect and document thoughts and feelings pertaining to the study as a means of recognizing and classifying subjectivity (Bruno & Dell'Aversana, 2017; Cope, 2014). When researchers use reflective journaling, they focus on their impact on the study in an attempt to understand the knowledge, values, and feelings associated with their choices during the creation of the research questions, the selection of research methods, designs, and data analysis, and perspective of findings from the study (Amaechi & Fusch, 2019). Therefore, I employed the use of a reflective journal to assist in mitigating bias, understanding my impact on the study through my own knowledge, values, and feelings, while collecting data.

Data Collection Technique

The purpose of this proposed multiple case study was to explore what employee training strategies small business owners use to implement new technologies. To answer the research question, I conducted (a) semistructured interviews, (b) member checking interviews, (c) document collection, (d) direct observations, and (e) maintain a reflective journal.

To obtain data and explore the employee training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies, I used my interview protocol located in Appendix A to conduct semistructured interviews using open-ended questioning techniques. The semistructured interview process enables the researcher to introduce additional questions based on participant response and related to the standard interview questions, to further explore the phenomenon (Kallio et al., 2016). Walker et al. (2018) found that semistructured interviews were beneficial as researchers used the interview guide to start the interview and participant response to further explore the participant experience, which created depth in participants' responses. I scheduled one hour to 90-minute semistructured interviews and follow-up member checking interviews at a location picked by the participant. Furthermore, I recorded the interviews using a Tascam DR-40X digital four track recorder. I created a summary transcript from the recorded interviews. Recording the interview with a participant increases the data reliability by allowing for the recorded information and summary transcript to be checked by the participant for the intended message (Houghton et al., 2013). I conducted semistructured interviews with consenting participants following IRB approval and in accordance with

the guidelines provided by Walden University. My interview protocol is located in Appendix A.

To reach data saturation, I also conducted member checking interviews with the participants. As the main purpose of interviewing is to gain knowledge from what participants explain about their experience, it is important for the researcher's interpretation of the participant's words to be accurate (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Birt et al. (2016) found that member checking provided opportunities for the participant verify the researcher's interpretation was satisfactory of the initial interpreted transcript, and it allows the researcher an opportunity to probe further for pertinent information. Member checking may be used to ensure that the intended message was conveyed from the participant, as well as to use new information provided from the participant to provide multiple analysis points (Hanson et al., 2011). Therefore, I performed member checking to allow participants the opportunity to verify that the interpreted interviews met the participants' intended meaning and to probe further for information to assist in reaching data saturation.

I conducted document analysis of relevant business documents from each participant's organization. Business documents may present in a variety of forms, including digital and paper, and may include files such as public records, webpages, and papers (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The documents I requested included training materials or manuals, performance reports or balance sheets, annual reports, and human resource manuals or employee guidance sheets. I requested documentation from prior to and following the new technology implementation to analyze individual and organization

performance related to employee training strategies used by the organization. I emailed or called the small business owner, or my organization contact, to provide the documents.

I conducted direct observation using my direct observation protocol (Appendix B) to watch and note participant behavior and the employee training strategies employed by the participant. Direct observation is defined by watching and recording a participant's behavior in the researcher's field notes (Harte et al., 2019; Rea et al., 2020). For direct observation as the researcher, I had a non-participative role. Harte et al. (2019) noted that while a researcher may make every effort to not influence the observed setting and actions, there is a potential for disruption that may have an effect on the data. Therefore, I made every effort to not interact nor disrupt the organization's operations. I observed only the physical work environment for evidence of the employee training strategies used to support new technology implementation. I did not observe for data collection other stakeholders of the small business or interact with other employees who are not my participants. To gain access for direct observation, I requested permission from the participant and conducted the observation in accordance with the direct observation protocol (Appendix B).

As personal bias may be an issue during the research process, I used reflective journaling to monitor my thoughts and biases throughout the study, as well as note other relevant elements of data that was observed. I will wrote in the reflective journal during the research process to assist in mitigating bias and to add context or depth to the data collection. I used a bound paper notebook and made notations on relevant occurrences or thoughts.

Data Organization Technique

Data organization is key in conducting proper data analysis. Data organization involves the incorporation of a logical system for naming and categorizing files, establishing privacy for participants, and securing data (Robins & Eisen, 2017; Yin, 2018). Therefore, the data obtained from (a) semistructured interviews, (b) member checking interviews, (c) document collection, (d) direct observations, and (e) the reflective journal, was organized appropriately using coding and pseudonyms in place of all participant and organization names. To prepare the data for analysis, I used the NVIVO software to organize the data by concept, then further organize the data into reoccurring concepts.

The data collection and storage is in alignment with IRB standards and requirements. Researchers must maintain records and data from past research for a minimum of five years. I used an online cloud storage option for my primary storage location of digital documentation with a personal, password-protected, external hard drive as a backup storage option. Hard copy data was used, stored, and secured in its original form. Moreover, the Walden University DBA Doctoral Study Rubric and Handbook requires that data is stored securely for a minimum of five years to protect the confidentiality of the participants (Walden Writing Center, 2021). I will store the electronic data on a personal, password-protected, external hard drive, for a period of five years. After five years, the hard drive will be deleted. Hard copy data will be stored in my personal fireproof safe, for a period of five years. After five years, the hard copy data will be shredded and burned.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is crucial in the research process as it produces findings for the research question from the research data gathered. The data analysis technique the researcher chooses to employ impacts the reliability and validity of the research study (Castleberry & Neon, 2018; Orquin & Holmqvist, 2018; Yin, 2018). Furthermore, in qualitative research there are various methods for data analysis. A constant comparison analysis, often referred to as *coding*, is used by researchers to find recurring concepts and ideas within a dataset (Leech & Onwuebuzie, 2007). I used a constant comparison analysis to analyze data collected through (a) semistructured interviews, (b) member checking interviews, (c) document collection, (d) direct observations, and (e) the reflective journal.

Researchers using multiple methods of data collection are using methodological triangulation to achieve data saturation (Flick, 2018; Fusch et al., 2018). Methodological triangulation is used conceptually to improve the validity and precision of a perspective through adjustments based on convergent data (Abdalla et al., 2018). Therefore, I used methodological triangulation to reach data saturation through convergent data in a constant comparison analysis method. Constant comparison analysis is preferred by researchers who are intent on analyzing the entirety of the dataset to derive themes deductively, inductively, or abductively (Leech & Onwuebuzie, 2007). I used an abductive method of conducting a constant comparison analysis to identify codes and themes through an iterative process.

I used (a) semistructured interviews, (b) member checking interviews, (c) document collection, (d) direct observations, and (e) the reflective journal to obtain data for the research study. Once I had collected the first interview, I created a summary transcript of the interview and coded the data by separating similar data into sections and assigning a color code to each section. These color-coded sections served as a visual representation of ideas, which were then added to or combined with the intake of subsequent data. Next, I scheduled a member checking interview with the participant to review the summary transcript and probed for new information. Next, I created a summary transcript of the member checking interview, coded the data, and began to group the codes by similarity into emerging themes. Lastly, I compared the new data with previous codes to identify repeating themes. Following this process, I conducted my second participant interview, created the summary transcript, coded the data, and compared the new data with the codes and themes from the first round of interviews. Using methodological triangulation, the researcher can identify repeating information and, by extension, reach data saturation (Fusch et al., 2018). I conducted the data analysis process with all methods of data collection in an iterative process until I was no longer finding new themes and had reached data saturation. The codes generated from the constant comparison analysis were then analyzed with NVIVO software.

The use of qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) creates increased opportunities for researchers. Researchers that use QDAS are able to analyze data quicker and in a more complex, rich manner (Robins & Eisen, 2017; Salmona & Kaczynski, 2016). Specifically, QDAS is useful for the development of three-dimensional graphs and

conceptual maps that visually provide readers with the visual representation and

relationships between concepts (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). To process and analyze the

data collected, I utilized NVIVO (https://www.qsrinternational.com/NVIVO-qualitative-

data-analysis-software/home) qualitative data analysis software to organize and prepare

the data for analysis. I used the QDAS NVIVO specifically for organization and

graphical elements making the identification of patterns more apparent. NVIVO did not

create the codes or themes for me, but I analyzed and coded the data prior to entering it

into NVIVO, then analyzed the graphic representations created within the software to

identify the main themes. Furthermore, I compared the themes with the conceptual

framework, HCT, to reach a robust and comprehensive data analysis.

Reliability and Validity

Researchers have disagreed on what constitutes qualitative research rigor.

However, research rigor may be considered the establishment of trustworthiness,

dependability, validity, credibility, authenticity, transferability, and confirmability (Cope,

2014; Hays et al., 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Whittemore et al., 2001). Reliability and

validity are assessed by the establishment of credibility and trustworthiness within the

data and the researcher's ability to maintain techniques to increase credibility and

trustworthiness (Cope, 2014). In quantitative research, reliability is demonstrated through

the replicability of data collection procedures within future research that may yield

similar results (Yin, 2018). In qualitative research, the researcher demonstrates reliability

through the consistency of results amongst subsequent studies (Leung, 2015). In

qualitative research, the researcher produces validity by using the appropriate methods,

design, and choices to establish (a) dependability, (b) credibility, (c) confirmability, (d)

authenticity, and (e) transferability (Cope, 2014; Hanson et al., 2011; Korstjens & Moser,

2018; Leung, 2015). I used the appropriate methods, design, and choices to establish

reliability and validity within my study.

Reliability

Reliability in a study can have an impact on the credibility and trustworthiness of

the research. The reliability of a study is measured by the ability to replicate the study's

findings in similar contexts referencing the research process's documentation,

methodology, and strategies through logical, traceable documentation (Ali & Yusof,

2011; Kihn & Ihantola, 2015; Merriam & Grenier, 2018). Lincoln and Guba (1985)

recognized that dependability is the basis for reliability, and researchers may need to

recognize the dependability of research when weighing the reliability as the two are

interlinked. Lindhult (2019) recognized consistent and dependable data and findings,

critical reflection and researcher reflexivity, auditability and member checking, and

confirmability of findings, as critical to research reliability and dependability. Moreover,

Moon (2019) recognized methodological triangulation as a method of increasing the

validity, reliability, and legitimacy of research through the ability to confirm consistency

in the data and findings, enhancing auditability, and enhancing documentation. Therefore,

to ensure dependability, I conducted member checking follow-up interviews to have

participants verify the interpretation of the interview using the summary transcript,

followed the interview protocol during the interviews, and used the direct observation

protocol when conducting direct observations.

I used semistructured interviews with follow-up member checking interviews. Member checking provides the participant an opportunity to check the connotation of the initial interpreted transcript, and it allows the researcher an opportunity to probe further for pertinent information to reach data saturation (Birt et al., 2016; Harvey, 2015; Iivari, 2018; Thomas, 2016; Yilmaz, 2013). Hanson et al. (2011) used member checking to ensure the intended message was conveyed and provide multiple analysis points for data examination by participants to establish dependability in the study. Moreover, Birt et al. (2016) recognized the role member checking played in allowing in-depth, sequential data triangulation, which Roberts and Kovacich (2018) found enhanced the dependability and validity of the research data. Therefore, I performed member checking to allow participants to verify that the interpreted interviews met the participants' intended meaning and allowed the researcher to probe further for information.

The dependability of a study may impact the audience's perception of the research. In qualitative research the dependability of a study is measured through the consistency of findings confirmed or corroborated by additional researchers using similar research protocol (Hays et al., 2016). The interview protocol is used to align and replicate the interview questions and the interview process (Patton, 2015). Increasing alignment between different interviews within the same research study may increase the dependability of the study (Hanson et al., 2011). I used the interview protocol to ensure consistency in the delivery and order of the interview questions. I listed interview questions in sequential order to maintain cohesiveness and assure questions were presented in the same order between different interviews. Furthermore, I used probing

questions developed only to assist the participant with providing further in-depth information.

Validity

Research validity is vital to the acceptance of a research study within the larger literature on a topic. The validity of a study is dependent on the purpose, context, and data of the research, and the validity of a study refers to the plausibility of the conclusions within the scope of the framework and research question (Fitzpatrick, 2019; Hays et al., 2016). To establish validity in a qualitative study is to establish research rigor or research quality (Hays et al., 2016). Research validity is judged on the criteria of credibility, confirmability, authenticity, and transferability (Cope, 2014; Fusch et al., 2018; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I established validity within my proposed study through establishing credibility, confirmability, authenticity, and transferability.

Credibility. Credibility refers to the overall plausibility of research findings based on the research process and the alignment between the employed conceptual framework, research question, data collection, and analysis methods (Hays et al., 2016; Twining et al., 2017). Moreover, credibility requires the demonstration of a grounded relationship between researcher observations, data, categories, and materials, so that the audience may decide whether these elements are congruent and if they agree with the claims (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Credibility may be achieved through consistent engagement with participants, methodological triangulation, and member checking by having participants verify the data collected is consistent with their experience (Harvey, 2015; Iivari, 2018; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Thomas, 2016; Yilmaz, 2013). Therefore, I established and

enhanced credibility in my study through engagement with participants, methodological triangulation, and member checking.

Confirmability. Confirmability may be noted as the recognition of research bias and the acknowledgment and mitigation of said bias to establish objectivity (Hanson et al., 2011; Shenton, 2004). Shenton (2004) discussed the impact confirmability had on the trustworthiness of a study as confirmability is comparable to researcher objectivity in quantitative research. Hanson et al., (2011) recognized confirmability as the *paper trail* needed for a reader to review the procedure, protocol, data collection, and analysis and interpretations of findings for plausibility and confirm validity. Confirmability is achieved through the accurate and explicit description of the research process, explanation of decisions conducted, and interpretations easily understood by the audience (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Furthermore, confirmability is achieved through research process reinforcement, data, and findings emerging from the research, not from the researcher's biases or predispositions (Chowdhury, 2015; Shenton, 2004). Therefore, I (a) recognized my own biases and predispositions, (b) kept an accurate and explicit description of the research process, (c) explained the decisions conducted in developing the study, and (d) used the research process to collect data, to enhance the confirmability of my study.

Authenticity. Authenticity is established through genuine description, plausibility, and the ability to establish that the researchers have been there (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Chowdhury (2015) recognized methodological triangulation and intertextuality as possible means of establishing the authenticity of research data and findings, as well as

reinforcing decisions during the research process through the analysis of multiple, verifiable texts. Schultze (2000) recognized that member checking could lead to increased authenticity (Iivari, 2018). Therefore, I used member checking, methodological triangulation, genuine and plausible descriptions, and textual support to establish authenticity.

   Transferability. The transferability of qualitative research refers to the degree research results may be transferable to other contexts or settings (Hays et al., 2016). Kihn and Ihantola (2015) referred to transferability as the similarities between research contexts and the ability to yield similar results. Ali and Yusof (2011), described transferability by the ability to apply the study and find similarities within given contexts. The burden of transferability rests not with the initial researcher, but with the proceeding researcher attempting to replicate the findings in a different context (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). As it is impossible to note a future researcher's setting and context, it is not possible to ensure the research will be transferable (Kortsjens & Moser, 2018). Therefore, I enhanced the study's transferability within other contexts by detailing the research process, the data collection process, and the findings; however, the transferability of this research was placed on future researchers.

Transition and Summary

   Section 1 contained the problem statement, purpose statement, and the nature of the study, which contained the justification for using a qualitative method and multiple case study design. Section 1 contained the: (a) interview questions, (b) conceptual framework, (c) assumptions, (d) limitations, and (e) delimitations of the study. Lastly,

Section 1 contained the significance of the study and the review of professional and academic literature, which included a critical analysis and synthesis of various sources and data concerning: (a) HCT conceptual framework, (b) alternative theories, (c) employee training, (d) small business, and (e) innovation and technology.

Section 2 contained the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, and the subsection on participants, which contained the justification of criteria for participants. Section 2 contained: (a) research method, (b) research design, (c) population and sampling, and (d) ethical research. Lastly, Section 2 contained: (a) data collection instruments, (b) data collection technique, (c) data organization technique, and (d) data analysis, which included a detailed explanation of data collection, organization, and analysis.

Section 3 begins with an introduction, which includes the purpose statement, research question, and findings. Section 3 includes: (a) findings containing the themes supported by collected data, (b) potential business application, (c) implications to social change, (d) recommendations for actions, (e) suggested further research, (f) a reflection, and (f) a conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore employee training strategies small business owners use to successfully implement new technologies. In Sections 1 and 2, I explained the importance of the study to small business owners who may be integrating new technology into their organization, as well as outlined the design and procedures for the study. Section 3 includes a discussion of (a) findings containing the themes supported by collected data, (b) potential business application, (c) implications to social change, (d) recommendations for actions, (e) suggested further research, (f) a reflection, and (f) a conclusion.

The conceptual framework for this study was HCT. To improve the research validity and reliability, I used methodological triangulation. Data collection consisted of in-person semistructured interviews, member checking, direct observations of the physical work environment, a review of business documents, and reflective journaling. To assist in data organization and data coding, I used NVIVO software. I conducted data analysis using constant comparison analysis. I found that the research findings aligned with the tenets of HCT.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question for the study was: What employee training strategies do small business owners use to successfully implement new technologies? To answer the research question, I collected data through semistructured interviews with five small business owners, conducted member-checking, collected documents, conducted direct

observations of the physical work environment, and kept a reflective journal. I continued

interviewing participants and collecting data until I attained data saturation. Researchers

achieve data saturation when new information is not attained through subsequent

iterations of the data collection process (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Martinez-Mesa et al., 2016;

Yin, 2018). The documents I reviewed were related to the organization's training

methods and strategies. The direct observations I conducted were a visual inspection of

the physical environment to identify training opportunities, communication on training or

training support, and strategies employed. I used methodological triangulation to confirm

consistency within the data. Through data analysis, I was able to develop a deeper

understanding of the employee training strategies small business owners use to

successfully implement new technologies.

I conducted data analysis using constant comparison analysis after each data

collection session with each participant. Data analysis resulted in five emergent themes

relating to the business problem. The major themes were (a) employee emotional health,

(b) using digital resources and third-party resources, (c) resource conservation, (d)

employee selection, and (e) individualized and differentiated strategies.

Theme 1: Employee Emotional Health

The participants discussed employee emotional health as a consistent and

necessary focus in the development and implementation of employee training strategies.

Purnama (2017) found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and

occupational health with a simultaneously significant effect on employee performance.

Garcia et al. (2019) found a similar pattern of need for employees to attain specific

intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in order to become motivated or driven to meet organizational goals, which organizational leaders may find it beneficial to provide and support. For this study, the participants focused on employee motivation and employee health and well-being as a means of increasing productivity and acceptance of the new technology implementation.

Table 1

Subcategories of Emergent Theme 1

	Participants	Frequency
Emotional Motivation	5	36
Employee Health and Well-being	5	30
Employee Engagement	4	18
Employee Resistance to Change	3	28

Employee Motivation

Participant 1 (P1) identified employee emotions to be a deciding element within the success or failure of a project. P1 stated a need to, "keep them satisfied," "make sure it was a great experience," and to "encourage and inspire" as means for improving employee performance and acceptance. Participant 2 (P2) stated a similar need to "get people acclimated, energetic, and onboard" to improve the likelihood of project success.

Participant 3 (P3) focused on the need to maintain employee motivation despite the boredom that may exist in the job and what may need to be said or done to improve employee performance. According to P3, there is a need to balance organizational need against employee motivational needs "because you might just kill their will" if the

employer is too harsh in their delivery of assessed needs for improvement, which "just kills people's morale and motivation."

Similarly, Participant 4 (P4) identified how this focus on employee motivation may then translate to improved technology integration and customer satisfaction. P4 stated that getting the employee to "realize that the technology is like a Stradivarius violin, Beethoven's piano; it's the tool that you use to make yourself look really good." Once P4 was able to motivate the employee "to understand the importance of knowing their equipment, utilizing their equipment, and realizing that the equipment that they're using is a tool to make them look better," P4 found "that person likes their job, and is more willing to be a gracious person towards my customer."

Participant 5 (P5) focused on employee motivation through the lens of interpersonal relationships and how this impacted productivity. P5 noted that when introducing a new technology, "[the employees will] be like, 'I stink at this, why?' Why am I even bothering, but you start off with something really easy and they're like, 'Oh, this is pretty good. Okay, I'm doing pretty good here.'" P5 then uses these successes to introduce the next technology and continue to motivate the employee to want to succeed, which in turn impacted their "passion" for the position. While the participants stated that employee motivation was a key factor to success, the manner in which they addressed the issue or kept the issue central to the organizational goal, was different. This trend continued with the subcategory of employee health and well-being.

Employee Health and Well-being

The participants discussed employee emotional health as a key factor in the success of an organization but expressed their techniques of handling employee emotional health very differently. P1 expressed a need to "try to deal with the emotional," and to try "to keep them happy, keep them satisfied," as "the biggest challenge is a human issue," when implementing a new technology, conducting training, or completing a project. P3 shared this sentiment stating that "you don't want to just be on someone's back when they're learning," but stressed that the information still had to be conveyed and the employee needed to produce. In both situations, the participants were concerned with employee productivity and saw the emotional aspect as an obstacle that must be navigated successfully.

From a different perspective, P2 recognized a need to "to sit there and understand what your employee is going through" as a means of "helping everybody because there's a lot of emotional contact." P2 continued by noting that especially in a training situation it was important to ascertain "how can you make the information for them to do their job better without offending or intimidating them or offending the other staff members that are around." P4 also discussed the necessity to maintain decorum when providing feedback as the employer does not want to, "make your employee feel stupid." Moreover, there was a need to balance correction with positive reinforcement; "I can validate my employee, that they're doing a good job personally, that they're doing a good job for me, then that makes a happier employee." P5 also looked at improving the morale or happiness of the employee but did so using attainable tasks or goals, which were used to

instill "a little more confidence." If small business owners lack a focus on employee emotional health and well-being, other training strategies may be negatively impacted as the employee may simply "tune out" or ignore the material and the technology if not motivated to do otherwise. Employee emotional health then impacts employee engagement through the desire of the employee to remain engaged.

Employee Engagement

As a means of combatting employee apathy within the training or technology implementation, Participants 1, 2, 4, and 5 discussed employee engagement and its impact on employee emotional health. P2 viewed employee engagement as necessary to avoid employees "tuning out" by "[getting] an employee to be active during the meeting." However, P2 was unable to specify how they increased employee engagement specifically, but noted it was an important aspect of successful training and overall business operation.

P1 focused on challenging employees as a means of increasing employee engagement. P1 noted that when employees would receive training from third-party sources, "people would get back from the training, they wouldn't be as excited" about the material, and they noticed an increase in employee's disregarding the importance of the material. Therefore, P1 created trainings to provide "a better experience for my employees and volunteers to receive that training," as a means of increasing the engagement and creating "a better experience for my employees… rather than kind of, you know, the typical death by PowerPoint."

Participants 4 and 5 spoke briefly on employee engagement within the larger scope of employee motivation. However, P4 felt that employees were "engaged in the training and using the equipment" with more understanding of the technology. P5 felt that employee motivation and engagement was driven by the employee's enjoyment of the training content. P5 stated, "I can tell which ones are probably not going to be there long, because they're just [doing] what we call 'slinging it out,' just to get the job done," but "the most valuable to me are the ones that take the deep breath and absorb in what you're teaching them." P5 felt that this ability to engage in the training and absorb the technology was an important quality that they looked for when conducted employee selection.

Employee Resistance to Change

There were variations in which aspects of employee emotional health were targeted, with Participants 1, 2, and 5 expressing issues with employee's resisting change and a need to overcome this issue for the employee to not only accept the training but embrace the new technology. P1 identified employee pushback through verbal disagreement with an employee referring to the needed training or technology as "stupid, or not what I want to be doing." Employees would also passively ignore the implementation and revert to known technologies or processes. P1 stated, "multiple times where I would introduce new technology, and I would come back into the business and it would not be being used," and "as soon as we went to the simple spreadsheet, the people that were used to writing down on a piece of paper [because] they weren't computer savvy, just kind of throw their hands up." According to P1, this became one of "the

biggest issues" of the implementation and required intervention to mitigate the impact to the technology implementation and the organization. P5 shared a similar experience with employee resistance to change wherein the employees seemed to value prior knowledge or experience over the new technology or process. This aversion to change created further issues for P5 and the business.

P2 discussed resistance to change from a different viewpoint and through a lens of employee emotional health which then impacted productivity. P2 stated,

> We have one employee who quote unquote, 'is scared of Alexa,' and will not go
> anywhere near her whatsoever one user, because he feels as though Alexa will
> take over the world. So when you have somebody who tells you that you smile,
> and you go, 'Okay, let me show you how this works.'

According to P2, the resistance to change may be driven by an intrinsic need, as well, with an employee stating that, "they feel stupid because they feel like they can't operate [the technology] correctly." This response by the employee then impacted the employee's productivity, their emotional health, and their motivation to continue, but was exhibited as simply not wanting to change.

Conceptual Framework

Employee emotional health and well-being has the potential to affect multiple aspects of a business from daily operation to overall business health. Schultz (1971) explained the benefit and need for organizational leaders to invest in employee education, health, and job opportunities. These investments then create opportunities for the organization through an improvement in employee motivation and engagement, as well

as lessening an employee's resistance to change. However, it is important to focus on organization need in conjunction with, not excluding, individual need and well-being (Hull & Pasquale, 2018; Orlova, 2021). Nemeth (2017) found that employees who were motivated were more willing to learn and apply learned knowledge and skills into the organization. Incorporating a focus on employee health and well-being into the strategic focus on human capital may improve the impact of training on the individual employee.

Theme 2: Using Digital Resources and Third-Party Resources

Employees are the foundation for productivity within an organization. Organizations often deem it necessary to train employees as a way to improve the organization (Esteban-Lloret et al., 2018) However, small businesses may be at a disadvantage when needing to conduct employee training due to financial barriers, a lack of training content or materials, and a lack of employees' motivation (Piperkova & Lozanoska, 2021). Therefore, small businesses may need to adopt suitable and available training methods to meet intended goals within the realistic parameters of the organization's abilities.

Table 2

Subcategories of Emergent Theme 2

	Participants	Frequency
Online and Digital Resources	5	25
Print Resources	4	16
Third Party Training	3	19

Online and Digital Resources

Online and digital resources may be used to implement employee training due to availability, cost-savings, optimal information, or other reasons. P1 used a mixture of videos that they created, as well as videos found online as "digital media to train." According to P1, the availability and cost-savings of these training materials was a primary reason for their adoption. However, when the third-party materials were "sub-par," unlike the other participants, P1 would create videos that better met the training objectives. I observed these training materials within the direct observation.

P3 used online digital media that was often specific or sourced from the "equipment manufacturer, literature, and manuals," as well as an industry-specific site that contains resources for businesses within the specific industry. P3 does have plans to eventually "get into making our own videos for training," but had not done so at the time of the interview. P3 pointed to the necessity of having the employee conduct individual training because of a shortage of time and the inability to pause production to teach one individual an extended topic. The use of the videos allows the small business the ability to have the employee learn the material, then create follow-up or hands-on training to ensure the material was absorbed.

Participants 2, 4, and 5 also used online "videos and tutorials" whenever possible to provide the materials needed for employee training. The cost-savings available to the small business owner was stressed as invaluable and the primary reason for using videos that were available as opposed to creating their own digital media. Unlike P1, these participants found that sometimes the method for the business would augment to meet the

materials found in the available videos. However, efforts were made to ensure that not only was the material being sourced the best-fitting for the business, but also the most recent in its publication to increase the chances of gaining a competitive advantage.

Print Resources

Participants used print resources to provide additional content for their training, to supplement training, and to reinforce trained material. Participants 1, 3, and 4 utilized manuals with required information that extended into equipment use or instruction. P1 created most of the material found in their manual, while P3 used manufacturer manuals and literature for the basis of their manual. P4 similarly used these manuals as a base for employee required knowledge and supplemented this information with the use of printed process sheets ("cheat sheets") to reinforce the taught material and increase the exposure to the correct procedure or information. P3 also used printed process sheets throughout the work environment with "each station within production [having] its own card" as a means of keeping the employees "on track […] almost like a checklist." These sheets were observed throughout the work environment for Participants 3, 4, and 5, as well.

Third Party Training

Third-party training, or outside-the-job training, is employee training that takes place with an outside entity being the primary deliverer of information (Klepić, 2021). Small business owners may use third-party training because it is necessary for a specified technology implementation, may be more cost-effective, to ensure information is provided in the correct manner, and to meet an organizational need. Participants 1, 3, and 4 discussed the use of third-party training as consistent source of employee training.

P1 primarily use third-party when it was not possible to use a training method within the organization. P1 stated that these "were certificates and things that I couldn't give and so I had to had to use subcontractors and other agencies to do that" and they "would have to use outside agencies to do that formal training." This seemed to be a requirement for the industry and was not negotiable in many instances because of the nature of the organization. However, P1 would "source the best training in a way to get that certificate" and would source an outside organization to get "them to come into the office and do training" whenever necessary.

Other instances of sourced training involved the manufacturer or distributor training for a technology or product. Similarly, P3 sourced "training from the manufacturer during installation" with "ongoing support via phone [and] email" to ensure that the employees were gaining the necessary skills and knowledge. P4 relied on the "trained representative [to] come in and show us how to use the equipment and how to how to implement it," while contracting with another third-party resource to provide continued support.

> Originally on our startup on that and setting up the company […] we did go to an outside person and he set it all up for us and you know got everything. We spent about three days with that whole system. And we started up getting it getting any kind of put in and getting it where the employees understood what was going on. I still sometimes have to call [and say], How do you do this?

This method provided P4 to effectively learn the technology themselves, prepare employees to best use the technology, and gain continued support whenever issues would

appear, creating a more sustainable system of implementation that were within the means of the organization.

Conceptual Framework

As HCT focuses on the training and development of the individual, the resources used to train the individual need to be quality to impart quality within the individual. Becker found a significant correlation between the level of education of the individual and the individual's vertical mobility (Galiakberova, 2019). However, Shultz expounded on this by associating organizational productivity with individual education, as well (Galiakberova, 2019). By choosing to use outside resources and reinforce these trainings with additional print resources, small business owners may be attempting to impart the highest level of quality on the employees attainable by the organization as a means of creating organizational value through enhanced individual value. However, in some instances, there may be other mitigating factors, including cost-effectiveness, availability, and industry policy dictating the use of these training resources.

Theme 3: Individualized and Differentiated Strategies

Individual employees have individual needs, which is consistent when discussing human capital development for the organization. There are policy topics that may need to be standardized and delivered consistently as a means of ensuring compliance. However, when seeking to improve the knowledge and skills for an individual, it may be necessary to augment the training strategies to best meet the needs of the individual as an improvement in the quality of training, which is vital to the effectiveness of the training (Felstead et al., 2010).

Table 3

Subcategories of Emergent Theme 3

	Participants	Frequency
Individualized and Differentiated Instruction	5	27
Remediation	4	17
Prior Knowledge Activation	4	10
Small Group Environment	3	5

Individualized and Differentiated Instruction

Individualized and differentiated instruction look to the learner and the learner's

needs to derive methodology and content needs (Alsalhi et al., 2021). In realizing learner

needs amongst employees, employers may use a variety of methods. However, once

differentiated needs have been identified, the development of individualized instruction

may commence. P2 discussed understanding what is needed for each employee; "I've had

to literally go to each employee and figure out like, what are you not understanding about

a quarter of an hour?" P2 emphasized that "you have to really know how to read your

people and never assume one stands for everyone" to have this strategy work for the

organization. P2 discussed how it was important to note that "this person is processing it

this way this person is processing this way," then question, "How do I get them on my

same page?" P2 stated that they would try "to take each individual and try to let them run

a little bit with it," in a "one-on-one approach," which allowed for the review of the

employee's progress to ensure training goals were being met.

P1 discussed a need to look at the individual employee for needs and meet those

needs; "Alright, so let's take a step back from the actual technology we're trying to use,

let's just train you on, you know, basics two steps back from where we need to be, and let's bring you forward." In doing so, P1 noted that "a lot of times people aren't necessarily the most computer savvy that are, you know, familiar with a product, and so bring them up to date with that, with that training." However, P1 found individual study using online videos to be ineffective. P1 stated, "I would send it to the employees via email, and they would watch it, and they would have to implement that, that was probably the least effective." However, P1 did find that having the employee study through "reading again, I would feel like that was one of the least effective ways," but stressed that adding the reading was "still was more effective than just the email or just the video."

P3 discussed individual instruction as a process wherein "we used to actually send it home with our [employees], like over the weekend and say, Hey, come back knowing everything about this [technology]." However, unlike P1, P3 found that they'd "sent the lead guys home with the manual and they came back knowing ." […] they returned the press on it was rotating shirts were getting printed

P4 and P5 were more limited in their discussion of individualized training. P4 described sending home changes or new information on "the piece of equipment, or whatever we'll send, we'll send the email out," to have employees review the information. However, P4 mainly conducted individual instruction through remediation after this point. Similarly, P5 used individualized instruction as a time that the employee " in the evening […] could spend a little time doing that [learning]." However, P5 also used more time for directed learning while the employee was in the production environment.

Remediation

To establish the effects of employee training and determine the value creation from a training event, organizations must conduct some form of training assessment. Moreover, evaluating the employee for learned information allows for the ability to distinguish results from training and areas needed for remediation to further the return on investment for the organization (Tolici, 2021). This process of training, assessing, and remediating based on assessed gaps in the employee's understanding or ability is necessary to ensure optimal outcomes.

P1 used key performance indicators (KPIs) to establish training goals and expected operational activities following training. P1 stated "the KPI, the baselines were there, then, we would see if there's an increase with that technology move, or if there was orphan state." If the employee was found to not have grasped the intended goals of the training, then P1 would "retrain the employees" through "remediation [because] that's when we can use different strategies." P1 stated that this was also the time for "the back end with one-on-one" training.

> "And then to effectively communicate that one on one, we could certainly go outside of that, you know, as long as the procedures were higher than the standard recap, we can certainly teach it in a different way, explain it in different way."

Similarly, Participants 3 and 4 used observation and discussion to establish remediation needs. P3 would approach remediation in an immediate fashion; "So we just bring it up. Hey, notice this. Here's what we think and fix it." P3 stressed that correction should not be delayed to make effective change; "if you see anything major, maybe step

in." Lastly, P3 discussed being open to employee need, allowing for the employee to say

"'Hey, I don't quite get this.' And so always 'Okay, what don't you quite get?' And then

we just kind of work through it." This immediate form of remediation allowed for P3 to

make distinct correction and produce desired outcomes from employee training.

P4 also discussed the propensity to ascertain employee needs and abilities based

on training objectives; "I don't have employees here that work here for months. And I'll

go ask them a question and they don't know," so, "we'll retrain." P4 noted that this was

necessary to keep production moving and would yield data that may point to training

errors, as well.

> "If they're not processing it, right, and I keep having the same mistakes over and
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> over again. And something's wrong with their training, I need to figure out how to
>
> make that to where everybody can keep doing."

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Similar to P3, P2 looked for the optimal way to have employees perform and

discussed the need for the small business owner to know their employees.

> "So how do I get them to add this correctly. And then when you come to find out
>
> that an employee is dyslexic, so the issue that they're having is the processing of
>
> the numbers, then you begin to handle in a different approach and go like, 'Okay,
>
> well, we're working on a quarter of the hours, like let's go to go through an

example of this.' And so sometimes you'll sit down with somebody and find a way to break it down."

P2 discussed the frustration that may accompany this process; "I've had to literally go to each employee and figure out like, 'What are you not understanding?'" P2 also stated, "I can't even remember what 100% looks like, I'm just looking to get the majority of them to fill it out correctly and go from there."

Prior Knowledge Activation

Activating prior knowledge within a learning situation creates an opportunity to build upon previous experiences and learned information. Hattan and Alexander (2020) recognized prior knowledge as information that a student brings to a new learning situation, including textual or personal knowledge, formal, explicit instructional knowledge, and knowledge gained through informal, everyday experiences. Utilizing prior knowledge enables the instructor to connect to, build upon, and challenge to provide a deeper understanding of the new information.

P2 discussed instances wherein "a lot of the employees already had a lot of basic knowledge" as somewhat easier to find success for the employee training. Similarly, P3 found that when employees "had come from a previous automatic press, so they knew the basics," the instruction had a foundation.

"Previous experience, you know, [conducting similar processes on previous technology], you know, basically doing everything by hand, we knew, you know, we could compare that the angles."

P4 noted that with employees that were employed before the technology transition, "it was a fairly simple transition as far as like moving from the newer system moving from the older system, a newer system because we'd already used it, they'd been out they've been around for a while." P4 acknowledged that the demographic of the employees seemingly impacted the ease of the transition, as well; "these guys are definitely much more tech oriented."

Conversely, P5 stated, "I don't want [the employee] knowing too much when they come in. It's okay sometimes, but a lot of them are so set in their ways." This was counter to the other participants and seemed to predicated upon previous experiences with employees who had received substandard training.

Small Group Environment

The training environment is a factor when planning training sessions. The workplace environment influences the level to which an employee is motivated to learn, which continues once in the training environment (Na-nan et al., 2017). P1 hosted "group sessions" as one instructional delivery method, then used individual instruction when needed or appropriate. Conversely, P2 found group sessions to be a distraction.

"The problem is once you gather everybody together, you know it's funny, people uniformly blend together for the greater good. So everyone, even if they have a question, Well, actually, they don't have a question. Just not to look like the person who needs help."

P4 preferred groups with "like two three people only" due to problems that could arise with "getting them all in the same room at the same time." During observations, I

noted that the physical layout of the business for P4 and P5 seemed to be more suited to individual instruction, as well.

Conceptual Framework

Schultz (1971) recognized educational investments for human capital as including on- the-job training, off-the-job training, distance training, formal education, and informal education. These various forms of training are not necessarily occurring with different organizations, but are varying forms of learning that may occur with an employee. By differentiating the method of training to meet the needs of the individual, small business owners create additional opportunities for the employee to absorb the content and build upon the training. Schultz Becker referred to this process as human capital growth and development of the human capital (Galiakberova, 2019).

Theme 4: Employee Selection

Organizations have a need to ensure that the employee placed into a position is appropriate for that position. In small businesses, this responsibility rests with the small business owner to ensure that employees are selected for the correct positions to ensure the organization will function well (Ibrahim & Daniel, 2019). Therefore, employee selection can improve an organization's function or work against the business's ability to be profitable.

Table 4

Subcategories of Emergent Theme 4

	Participants	Frequency
Employee Selection	5	19
Employee Input	4	12

Employee Selection

Participants found employee selection to be an important aspect when considering the success of employee training, new technology implementation, and successful business operations overall. P1 discussed the necessity to change employees serving in a role when that person may not be performing or may be a hindrance to progress. P1 stated that sometimes discussing with the employee by "have a conversation about maybe this particular position for you, and then finding a good fit" that met the needs of the individual and the organization. Similarly, P3 discussed the need to sometimes move an employee and tell them, "Why don't you go do this thing you already know how to do," to accomplish organizational goals.

P2 had similar comments about the need to find "somebody who can be part of making your dream happen, and not everybody is capable of doing it," "so it's a person who offers not just the best skills and packages, but the best work and fire." When considering training, P2 discussed how hiring impacted the training process; "So I could just hire anybody at the position and but the more specialized the field, the harder it is to train." Therefore, "it's finding the right fit and the right dynamic."

"I need more of a person who can interact not just with the customer, but also with the employees within here. So it's finding a very unique dynamic with that. And that takes a lot of skill set by itself.

P4 discussed "the placement of somebody," from a stance of individual ability and meeting organizational needs, as well.

"They may be uber proficient on using equipment, but they just have a lack of the

ability to talk to people who which we try to, you know, over hundreds of 1000s

of interviews in 25 years, I've tried to like weed out those people."

P4 also discussed how employee selection has allowed them to establish

organizational processes and maintain business standards.

"But then I also have kids that come in, they never had any experience at all and

they're unsure of themselves and like whatever. So training that and I was trained

the kitchen staff all myself, you know, because I know how I want it done."

P5 shared similar considerations when filling positions; "it depends on what I'm

looking for in the in the business. So am I looking for somebody that is well trained in the

industry?" P5 also explained that,

"I like to hire somebody that has a passion to work […] so that's the hardest part I

find in training somebody and in hiring and finding an employee is that part right

there […] for even start training is finding somebody that really wants to have a

passion for what they're doing."

Employee Input

Organizations should not conduct employee training for the sake of conducting

training. The use of specific goals are necessary for successful training sessions.

Furthermore, training the organizational workforce allows for the employees to become

knowledgeable stakeholders within the organization. This will allow for the employee to

perform for the betterment of the organization and possibly provide insight into further

ways that business operations may be improved. Demetriades and Eiffe (2017) found that

involving employees in the decision-making process may lead to beneficial

transformation within the business through experiential data. P1 discussed the employee

input as mainly coming from new employees.

> There were occasions where employees came in, and they had ideas and you
>
> know, they had, or the manager would come in, hey, I've got this new idea for
>
> this. And we would talk it out. And if it was something that really added value,
>
> we would implement it.

> However, P1 admitted that typically "[P1] was typically the one that was kind of

steering the ship," which may be indicative of organizational culture. However, when

implementing new technologies, P1 stated they discussed the progress of the

implementation with the managers to ascertain need; "the manager would come in, hey,

I've got this new idea for this. And we would talk it out. And if it was something that

really added value, we would implement it."

> Similarly, P2 surveyed employees on the progress of technology implementations

to ascertain if the implementation was "working," and to "gather feedback" and "human

input." P3 found that through similar discussions their employees had alternative methods

to previously taught processes with employees asking, "Hey, how about we do it this

way?" P3 found this could be problematic with "a lot of training during training

employees, they have the best ideas ever." Then, through asking about different

processes, "as soon as you do that someone else comes with something else." P3

discussed how this process sometimes was a distraction, but that overall, "That's a good

problem. Let's figure out solve that. And then it just kind of goes in that repertoire up here."

P4 discussed how sometimes employee input came in the form of employee training that was not adopted; "Either they forgot about it, or they lay in a shortcut, and then the shortcut becomes the operational procedure and stuff doesn't get stuck, stuff doesn't get done." However, P4 noted that in order to improve organizational procedure, "I gather feedback from the employee, like, 'Is this working?'"

Training for Capacity

Establishing each employee to be holders of organizational knowledge creates opportunities for growth through production and innovation. Moreover, when labor shortages exist or there is an increase in need for specific labor within the organization, the higher skilled workers may fill in or help to develop lower skilled workers (Ruf et al., 2022). Two of the participants discussed the need to train employees to gain organizational advantage.

P1 looked at the ability to overcome employee unavailability and employee turnover through "systematic business, […] where no matter who's doing what they all know exactly what to do." This problem was focused on by Ruf et al. (2022) when examining random resignations and how these impacting workforce planning. P1, when considering training capacity through the lens of implementing new technology, recognized this method for ensuring consistency in information because "we want everybody on the same page," which assists in lowering miscommunication and time expended on corrections.

P2 also looked to employee turnover and considered the benefits and pitfalls with training for capacity. P2 trained "So the process [was] that at any point in time, […] anybody outside of the chain will be able to [perform]." Moreover, "you need to have more hands in the pot to be able to balance if something goes wrong," which meant employees would be able to troubleshoot only those processes they understood. However, P2 also supported the idea of training for capacity through the lens of employee value.

> What is the value? [An] employee become so valuable, everything is so much on their plate, that you realize that you're on the road to self-destruction, because when something happens to that employee, and it normally does, then no one knows how to do anything, no one can do anything, and everything falls apart.

> In this way, P2 was considering the need for each employee to understand the business processes regardless of position to help guard against negative performance when faced with resignations.

Conceptual Framework

HCT recognized the potential resources available within an organizations' human employees. These human capital resources can be leveraged for potential gain to the organization (Galiakberova, 2019). Employee selection and placement purposefully positions human capital to provide potential organizational gain. Considering how employee placement may impact future business possibilities, as well as how individual ability best meets organizational need, small business owners may extend gains.

Theme 5: Resource Conservation

Small business owners may face barriers to new project implementation. These barriers to implementation may include limited financial resources, an unfavorable work work environment, a lack of time beyond the work day, and uncooperative or uninterested employees (Piperkova & Lozanoska, 2021; Pozo et al., 2019). Resource conservation allows for small businesses to use and maintain necessary resources when conducting business operations. As Khan and Trzcieliński (2018) discussed, small businesses may be averse to adopt new technologies or processes due to inadequate resources and inadequate finances. Moreover, due to limited resources, small businesses may then opt to forego technology implementation or augment the implementation to preserve resources, which may further create challenges for the organization (Bouwman et al., 2019). Similarly, in this study, each participant shared the manner in which resource conservation was conducted.

Table 5

Subcategories of Emergent Theme 5

	Participants	Frequency
Time as a Resource	5	30
Human Resource Conservation	5	16
Money as a Resource	5	8

P2 was perhaps the most resource aware as many of the interview questions brought them back to considering the expenditure of resources and how these expenditures would benefit the organization. P2 focused on the need to be time conscious

to enhance value for the organization and the individual employee. P2 considered "how to accomplish [the] goal at a faster rate," what was "the best possible use of time," and if the time could be spent more efficiently for every business action. Regarding training specifically, P2 stated that training strategy decisions for delivery were often based on time usage, cost, and how efficient the delivery of the material could be for the employees. For example, "taking 10 minutes with six employees, or spending an hour and a half with every employee is still not getting through everything," but "it was more costly to have a big group meeting than to speak to everybody one on one." Moreover, "a limited amount of cost, because you're still dealing with the same flows that everybody else has, which is you've got limited revenue." Subsequently, P2 would also ascertain failure using time and costs as a measurement; "I failed because that training now cost me more than it does before." Lastly, P2 recognized how limited the business had become in attaining and retaining the necessary employees.

> I still find myself so falling behind the raise of my competitors, and people who are been doing this longer, or who have more resources, whether it be capital to invest in newer technology, whether it be people who they can hire that can take that technology, and one further with it.

Furthermore, P2 expounded on specific issues of having "one woman sitting on a computer," while a larger organization may have a team of people serving a similar function. This was then correlated to the lack of resources; "I'm way far behind him that next competitor with just the resource element, let alone finding the people."

P1 intertwined the concepts of time, money, and the human resource when considering how business practices or decisions impacted the overall business and the ability to maintain positive growth from the decisions. P1 considered the time needed to "train on technology" and the "spent money on the technology" as the technology implementation went past projected timelines due to employee resistance. This caused P1 to reevaluate strategies due to lost time and to eliminate "downtime" created through inefficiencies in the training. Similarly, P3 found that time was a resource they were short on when attempting to implement necessary employee training, which led to required delayed, individualized training for each employee to ensure that the information was eventually disseminated before implementation could be considered complete. P2 also relied more on the employees reviewing the manuals and process sheets ("cheat sheets") found on the production line to increase the overall speed of training and implementation through repetitive exposure to the information.

P4 and P5 focused more on money as a resource with time being represented through the cost of the time. P4 discussed the need for efficiency within the processes to save time and, in actuality, money. Moreover, P4 looked for ways to improve processes to minimize waste and increase profits. This focus carried over to employee training as P4 used process sheets for product lines, processes, and expectations to remove employee confusion and cut "downtime." P4 stated, "let's save you time, it saves you effort, saves us product." This view on "saving" time with efficiency in product control and employee training was shared by P5. P5 looked for the most efficient method for training employees as this method would decrease waste and provide for more opportunities to

maximize profits for the organization. The viewpoint shared by both organizations was to limit confusion and focus on efficiency as a means of creating advantage and improving the chance of attaining profits.

Conceptual Framework

The development of the individual is the root of HCT. However, small businesses may have limited resources, which impacts the level of investment in employee training (Brunet Icart & Rodríguez-Soler, 2017). Therefore, there is a need to effectively manage organizational resources to better develop employees and create advantage for the organization. By conserving organizational resources, including operational time and finances, small business owners may extend these resources into further ventures for organizational gain.

Applications to Professional Practice

I used HCT to guide my research analysis and as the lens for viewing the role of employee training within the organizations. The specific business problem was that some small business owners lacked employee training strategies to implement new technologies. The themes generated from the data analysis were derived from (a) the semistructured interviews of five small business owners, (b) member checking interviews, (c) analysis of company documents, (d) physical observations of the office environment, and (e) and reflective journaling.

The findings from this study support strategies to assist small business owners in increasing the successful implementation of new technology through employee training and the development of increased value within the organization's human capital.

Improving the value within an organization's human capital may provide a strategic competitive advantage and increased profitability for the organization (Lee et al., 2018). The findings from this study may equip small business owners with strategies to better implement new technologies through employee training, which may assist with increasing implementation effectiveness, building competitive advantage, lessening the impact on business resources, and leading to enhanced productivity. Furthermore, the findings from this study may create opportunities for small business owners to create new opportunities for employee retention and utilization, which may then assist in avoiding business closure or bankruptcy.

Implications for Social Change

The results of the study may contribute to positive social change through the development of enhanced skills for employees, which may result in improved employability for the individual and growth of the organization. Improved business performance and enhanced employee ability may then impact the larger community through reduced employee dissatisfaction, improved production, increased taxable revenue, and increased spending within the community (Baggio et al., 2016; King & Gish, 2015; Matei & Abrudan, 2016; Poissonnier, 2017). Organizations may improve their technology integrations through the use of employee training strategies, including focusing on the employee emotional health and motivation, cost savings associated with using online and digital resources, resource conservation, focused employee selection, and differentiated instruction to meet the needs of the employee. These organizational improvements may then yield varying implications for social change through community

investment with savings, as well as lowered transience from employee turnover, which may support community stability and reduced economic strain (Acikgoz et al., 2016; Staelens et al., 2018). Community improvement has shown to increase overall social benefit for the residents of the community (Niedderer et al., 2016). The results of this study may then improve the lives of residents living within the communities surrounding small businesses that utilize the recommended strategies presented.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore employee training strategies small business owners use to successfully implement new technologies. The target audience for this study included small business owners that are implementing a new technology into their business but may lack the employee training strategies necessary to properly support the implementation. To further encourage the use of these strategies within small business, I will provide each participant with a summary of this study's findings. The findings from this study elicited many different recommendations that small business owners may adopt to improve new technology implementation through employee training.

Small business owners typically have interest in improving and sustaining profitability within the small business. The results from this study may be considered when developing technology implementation plans, human resource manuals, staffing plans, and internal project management models to better improve on business practices. Participants in this study indicated that using individually driven training strategies based on the needs of the employee yielded improved results. I recommend that small business

owners work to develop project plans with a concentrated effort to develop human capital. This development should focus on individual needs, outcomes and expectations, and necessary actions to reach these outcomes. Creating these plans will afford the small business owner opportunity to adjust training to meet individual needs while maintaining expected organizational outcomes. These adjustments should include a focus on the delivery method, as well as the training content, to optimize effectiveness.

When implementing a new technology within an organization it may be beneficial to increase communication and consider the emotional health and well-being of the employees as they may encounter coping issues with new technology adoption. Furthermore, it may be important for small business owners to further investigate employee resistance as a means of improving not only the technology implementation, but possibly positively impacting the employees' emotional health and well-being. Therefore, I recommend that small business owners build rapport with their employees and seek to create an environment that fosters growth for each employee. This would mean understanding individual need and meeting that need for the continued growth of the individual.

Based on the findings from this study, I would also recommend investigating what third-party learning resources may exist prior to the development of learning materials and training agendas. The participants discussed free and available resources that were found to be invaluable to the development of the employees and, ultimately, the improvement of the technology implementation. By investigating what resources may

already exist, the small business owners may find cost-savings and enhanced materials over what may be possible within the confines of the organization to develop.

Recommendations for Further Research

My purpose in this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the employee training strategies used by small business owners when implementing new technologies. The findings of this research may expand on the understanding and foundation of the existing research on small businesses, employee training, and improved technology implementation, which may also impact small business competitive advantage. However, further research is necessary to establish a greater understanding of this topic. Therefore, I am recommending the following areas for further research.

One limitation of this qualitative multiple case study was the use of purposive sampling, which yielded a relatively small sample size within the chosen geographical location. This may have impacted the ability for the findings to be generalized. Therefore, the first recommendation for future studies is to include research with more participants in more varied geographical locations using non-purposive sampling. This may give a broader understanding of the employee training strategies used within small businesses.

A second limitation of this qualitative multiple case study was the use of only the qualitative method. The second recommendation for future research is to conduct a mixed methods research study. The combined qualitative and quantitative methodology within mixed methods research may produce further insight into the employee training strategies used by small business owners implementing new technologies and how these strategies effect the implementation.

The third recommendation is to conduct a quantitative or mixed methods research study with a focus on understanding how the perception of employee training by small business owners effects employee training implementation and the topic information adoption by employees. A tangential element of this research would be how these perceptions shape which employee training strategies are adopted and how they are implemented. The role of the small business owner in creating the organizational training method may seemingly impact many variables within the training cycle which future research may seek to explore or investigate.

Reflections

Employee training is not a foreign concept within the small business world. However, often small business owners are faced with limited resources to effectively train employees in a manner conducive with best practices. This may mean that a small business owner may need to augment what and how an employee is trained to best serve the business and the employee. Having an interest in technology implementations, my focus with this study was on the employee training used to support technology implementations within small businesses. When conceiving and conducting the study, I was aware of any preconceived notions and biases that I may have had to assist with the reliability and validity of the study.

My experience in conducting this study taught me more than simply the doctoral process as I was introduced to elements of small business ownership and employee training that I had not considered to be pertinent. The prevalence of awareness for employee emotional health was particularly interesting to me as I had not considered how

employee emotional health may disrupt business operations to such an extent that mitigating emotional crises becomes a main priority within employee training. This was very enlightening within the scope of the study. The overall complexity of the research process and my study topic created a challenging, yet rewarding, experience.

Conclusion

Small businesses are the backbone of the United States' (US) economy. The need for research that may aid in the continued growth of small business is paramount for the continued growth of the US economy. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore employee training strategies small business owners used to implement new technologies. Klepić (2021) concluded that investment in employee training (a) enhanced competitive advantage, (b) improved production, (c) increased the organization's ability to adapt to competition, (d) improved overall performance, and (e) had a positive effect on employee job satisfaction, involvement, and commitment to the organization. Currently, European, Asian, and African research exists in much larger detail on the impact of employee training within small business and the strategies to increase business growth through employee training. However, in the US, this research is not widely conducted.

For this study, I used HCT as the conceptual framework to frame the focus on enhancing the organization's human capital in order to improve specifically new technology implementation. However, researchers using HCT are able to show the interconnectedness of improving the human workforce, improving production, potential earnings, and overall business performance, as well (Mincer, 1974). In this manner, there

is a need for small business owners to look to the resources that they have at hand, specifically the human resource, to improve the overall business performance and create new competitive advantage. The adoption of new technology may be an improvement. However, without the training and development of the human workforce tasked with using the new technology to bring value to the organization, the business may not see returns on that initial investment. Therefore, the study presented was meant to bring initial employee training strategy suggestions toward that realized outcome of creating value from new technology adoption and implementation within small business.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol	
What you will do	**What you will say - Script**
Introduce the interview	**Introductory Statement** Good morning/afternoon, my name is Eddy Varela. Thank you very much for assisting with my study. This interview will last approximately one hour to 90 minutes during which I will be asking you about employee training strategies you have used as a small business owner to increase implement new technologies at _____. The purpose of my study is to identify employee training strategies small business owners use to implement new technologies in small businesses similar to _____.
Ask to record the interview and ensure the participant states their approval.	**Recording Permission** To facilitate my notetaking, I would like to record our conversation today. The purpose of the recording is so I can get all of the details and at the same time actively focus on our conversation. Is that okay? **If yes**: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you would like me to turn off the recorder or keep something off record. **If no**: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.

Ensure participant understands they can ask questions at any time throughout the interview.	**Initial Questions** *Before we begin the interview, are there any questions you would like to ask?* **If yes**: discuss questions **If no**: If any questions arise at any point in the study, please feel free to ask them at any time. I am more than happy to answer your questions.
• Watch for non-verbal queues • Paraphrase as needed • Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in depth	1. What employee training strategies did you use to support your technology implementation?
	2. How did you address issues with your employees regarding your strategy?
	3. How effective were the employee training strategies in supporting your new technology implementation?
	4. How did you measure the impact of the employee training strategies on the new technology implementation?
	5. What challenges did you experience when using employee training strategies for implementing new technologies?
	6. What additional information would you like to add regarding the employee training strategies you have used to implement new technologies, which I did not include in the interview?
Bridge all learning after the initial interview questions and reflect on questions that you have unanswered after probing.	**Reflection** You said earlier that _____ or Can you clarify _____ ?
Wrap up interview thanking participant	**Conclude Interview** Thank you for your time. You have given me a very clear explanation of the employee training strategies you have

	used to implement new technologies at. ____.
Schedule follow-up member checking interview	**Follow up Interview Request** To ensure that I authentically capture your voice, I would appreciate the opportunity to verify that I understood your responses correctly by scheduling a follow-up member checking interview. At that time, I will have a succinct synopsis of your responses for you to review. **If yes**: Is there a specific time you prefer? Again, thank you very much for your time and help. **If no**: Thank you again for your time and help.
Follow-Up Member Checking Interview	
Email summary transcript to participant with instructions	**Follow Up Interview Script** Please review the attached transcript summary and add comments, as needed, to ensure your intended meaning was

Share a copy of the succinct synthesis of the interview. Bring in probing questions related to other information that you may have found—note the information must be related so that you are probing and adhering to the IRB approval.	conveyed during our initial interview. Please return the edited file to me prior to our next meeting. Thank you for agreeing to another interview with me. This follow-up interview is to ensure I understand your responses from our initial interview. Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add? Thank you for meeting with me and for your participation. I appreciate your supporting my research.

Appendix B: Direct Observation Protocol

Direct Observation Protocol	
Steps	**Procedures**
Schedule direct observation dates with small business owner.	I will communicate via email with participants to schedule times and dates to conduct a direct observation of the office environment.
Duration of observations	I will request a 30-60 min duration to conduct the direct observation.
Observation areas	I will conduct the direct observation at the participant's office environment. If an escort is needed, I will ask the participant to be the escort as they have signed the consent form. If an escort is not needed, I will conduct the observation without an escort.

Take notes	I will identify visually available information regarding training strategy policies and practices, including
	
	    a. Training opportunities
	    b. Training advisories
	    c. Training references
	    d. Training communications
	
	The purpose is to identify how the training strategies used by small business owners are communicated or made available to the employees.

End of observations and wrap-up	I will thank the participant for allowing me to conduct my direct observational research for my doctoral study. This is the end of the direct observation.