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Leadership Strategies to Implement an Effective Remote Working Program

Carter Lewis
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Carter Lewis

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Ronald Black, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Gwendolyn Dooley, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

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

Walden University
2023

Abstract

Leadership Strategies to Implement an Effective Remote Working Program

by

Carter Lewis

MBA, Nova Southeastern University, 2018

BS, Palm Beach State College, 2016

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

November 2023

Abstract

Leaders experience higher productivity and lower turnover due to implementing an effective remote working program. The need for leaders to understand their role in productive remote working is critical to program success. Grounded in the organizational leadership theory, the purpose of this single qualitative case study was to explore strategies financial leaders use to implement an effective remote working program. The participants were three leaders of a major financial services corporation in Florida, USA. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and company documents, and three themes emerged from a thematic analysis: leadership strategies and styles, management of remote workers, and the benefits and drawbacks of remote working. A key recommendation for financial leaders is to dedicate training and development for frontline managers to avoid using a micromanagement approach to manage the remote staff. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to remove barriers to gaining employment for individuals residing in underserved areas.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research study to God, with whom I do all things and who strengthens me. I also dedicate this study to my loving and supporting wife, Octavia Lewis. She has been my rock when things got shaky. She was the support when I wanted to break down. She believed in me when I was doubting myself. She pushed me to excellence and loved me when I struggled. I also want to dedicate this to my children, CJ, Nysha, Sarah, and Kyle, who cheered for me every step of the way. I also want to thank my Walden family, especially my chair, Dr. Ronald Black, who was instrumental in guiding and supporting me throughout this journey. I also want to thank all my friends that encouraged me to keep going and celebrated my milestones. I would like to dedicate special dedication to my brother, Greg, who unfortunately passed during this journey, but I know he is celebrating from heaven.

Acknowledgments

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

Remote working, also known as teleworking or flexible working, is work performed from home using technology (Chiru, 2017). Remote working was first introduced in the 1970s by Jack Nilles to help traffic congestion and pollution (Narayanan et al., 2017). Companies used remote working during the oil crisis of the late 1970s (Torten et al., 2016). Remote working gained tremendous growth in the 1990s, increasing over 200% from 1992 to 2002 (Smith et al., 2018). In 2020, the global pandemic caused companies to move to remote working for non-essential employees.

From March 13, 2020, to April 2, 2020, the percentage of remote workers increased from 33% to 61% (Graves & Karabayeva, 2020). Workers can perform the work at any location using technology to connect and complete their tasks. Not everyone is a good fit to work remotely. Wong (2020) reported that approximately 51% could successfully work remotely. This statistic is not valid for every company and every position. Still, companies should be cautious to ensure the employee has the best qualities to perform well outside of the office. There are many positive and negative benefits for the employee to work remotely. There are also positive and negative benefits for the employer to allow employees to work remotely. Leaders need to possess the strategies to implement an effective remote working program.

Problem Statement

Some supervisors of remote workers may have a negative attitude toward the success and productivity of a remote working program (Lembrechts, 2018). Remote

working increased more than 87% in 2020 due to the pandemic, and there will be approximately 36 million remote workers in the United States by 2025 (Courtney, 2020). The general business problem is that companies are negatively affected by ineffective remote working programs, which results in increased turnover, poor employee engagement, and low job satisfaction. The specific business problem is that some leaders lack leadership strategies to implement an effective remote working program.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this single qualitative case study was to explore the leadership strategies that leaders use to implement an effective remote working program. The sample was three leaders of a major corporation within the financial services industry who have an effective remote working program in Florida. The results of this study may contribute to social change by helping to improve the economic situation of undeserved areas by hiring remote workers from those areas. These households will have a financial increase that they can use in their local communities.

Nature of the Study

I used the qualitative methodology for this study. There are three methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Saunders et al., 2015). A qualitative methodology provides more in-depth knowledge of how or why a phenomenon occurs (Yin, 2018). A qualitative method is appropriate because the study explores how and why leaders use leadership strategies to implement an effective remote working program. Researchers use a quantitative method to evaluate the relationship between variables

(Saunders et al., 2015). The quantitative method was not appropriate because the intent was not to evaluate the relationship between variables.

I selected a single case study design to explore leaders' leadership strategies to implement effective remote working programs. Some design options include phenomenological, ethnography, and case study (Saunders et al., 2015). The single case study research design is used to study the phenomenon in a real-world setting (Yin, 2018). A single case study design is appropriate to examine the phenomenon among three leaders because the phenomenon was explored in a real-world setting. A phenomenological design explores the participant's lived experiences with the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2015). An ethnography design focuses on the participant's specific culture regarding the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2015). A phenomenological and ethnography design would not be appropriate for this study because the specific intent was to explore strategies leaders use to implement an effective remote working program, not a specific experience or culture.

Research Question

What leadership strategies do leaders use to implement effective remote working programs?

Interview Questions

The following are the research questions used in the study.

1. What specific leadership strategies do you use to implement an effective remote working program?

2. What leadership strategies do you feel have the greatest impact on improving the remote working program?
3. What leadership style works best with the strategies to improve the remote working program?
4. Have the leadership strategies improved the overall performance of the remote workers? Please explain your answer.
5. What would you consider to be the least effective leadership strategies to improve the effectiveness of a remote working program?
6. What leadership strategies did you use regarding front-line managers of the remote workers?
7. What results have you seen after implementing the remote working program?
8. What impact, if any, did the pandemic have on your strategies with the remote working program?
9. What other information do you wish to share?

Conceptual Framework

The organizational leadership theory (OLT) is the conceptual framework used for this study. The OLT was developed in 1956 by Robert Kahn (Kahn, 1986). A researcher selects OLT to describe individual behaviors within organizations that are a result of leadership. These behaviors include solidarity based on the mission statement, values and beliefs, and organizational preferment (Kahn, 1986). The presence of rewards or penalties also helps motivate employees of the organization (Kahn, 1986). A key component of OLT is interdependence within the organization, based on how individuals or teams

relate or work. This theory relates to how remote workgroups are managed and engaged as part of the organization since they work remotely. Organizational leadership is needed to manage remote workers effectively, and it is up to the business leaders to implement ways to engage and manage them.

Operational Definitions

Engagement: Engagement is the rewarding and positive state of mind resulting from the perception that an employee's supervisor supports their personal work goals (Masuda et al., 2017).

Job satisfaction: Job satisfaction measures how happy or content an employee is in their job (Smith et al., 2018). Smith et al. (2018) further defined it as the relationship an employee has with their position based on human resources elements and organizational environment.

Laissez-faire: A leadership style centered around the idea that employees do not require any oversight and they can make decisions on their own based on the training and guidance from the leadership (Ahmed et al., 2021).

Remote working: Remote working is performing full-time work at a location other than the usual workplace (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017; Smith et al., 2018).

Remote e-working: Remote e-working is generally a term used in Europe to describe a very mobile remote worker that uses technology to access from anywhere (Charalampous et al., 2018).

Telecommuting: Telecommuting is working in a remote location and uses technology to "commute" to perform the duties (Narayanan et al., 2017).

Teleworking: Teleworking is used to identify an employee that works remotely part-time and works in the office the rest of the week (Eddleston & Mulki, 2017).

Work-life balance: Work-life balance is balancing satisfaction and functioning between work and home that does not have conflicting roles (Felstead & Henseke, 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

It is essential to identify and justify the assumptions needed for the study's research design to test a particular theory (Armstrong & Keppler, 2018). Assumptions are things people believe to be true but cannot verify (Armstrong & Keppler, 2018). There are three assumptions in this study. The first assumption is that the participants in this study had the knowledge and experience to answer the interview questions. The second assumption is that the participants would provide open and honest responses to the interview questions. The third assumption is that the participants in this study were not biased when responding to the interview questions.

Limitations

Limitations are helpful to understand the research finding, translate the possible errors, assist in the credibility, and place the study into context (Ioannidis, 2007). Limitations are things that are out of the researcher's control (Ioannidis, 2007). Remote working agreements can be either formal or informal. The first limitation is all remote working arrangements were considered equally. The second limitation is no emphasis was placed on the type of remote working agreement established.

Delimitations

Delimitations constrict the scope of the study into a manageable size and help establish what the study will not do (Ellis & Levy, 2009). There are three delimitations in this study. The first delimitation is I only used participants that are business leaders for this study. The second delimitation is only leaders from one industry were included in this study. The third delimitation is that I only used companies who operate in Florida in this study.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Remote workers need to have increased performance, increased job satisfaction, and lower turnover rates (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017). Remote workers reported increased job satisfaction, which has led to increased performance. Remote workers with high job satisfaction are at a lower risk of leaving their jobs. With additional employees desiring to have the ability to work remotely at least a few days a week, leaders need to understand the types of remote working agreements and the ways to implement these into the company. Implementing a remote working program will improve the production rate and reduce the turnover rate. The results of this study may provide leaders with strategies to implement a remote working program.

Implications for Social Change

Social change is ideas, strategies, and actions that promote the wealth, dignity, and development of a culture or society's communities, organizations, and individuals (Walden, 2019). Remote working programs allow companies to hire workers from areas

that are not around an office. Hiring remote workers from underserved areas will help to improve those areas' economic situation. An example would be hiring customer service workers in India. The income that workers in India earn would support the needs in India to increase the local economy through the purchase of goods and services.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Literature Opening Narrative

The purpose of this single qualitative case study was to explore the leadership strategies that leaders use to implement an effective remote working program. An effective remote working program will allow the company to reduce employee turnover and increase productivity by increasing employee job satisfaction. I will cover remote employee performance, engagement, job satisfaction, and the turnover rate in this literature review. I will cover leadership concepts and transformational leadership in this literature review with the relevance of the literature to the phenomenon. This literature review will include leadership topics, transformational leadership, leadership support to research, remote employee performance, performance indicators, remote employee job satisfaction, remote employee engagement, remote employee turnover rate, diversity team management, and social change.

Literature Review Search

To search for the literature in this study, I utilized the Walden University Library, Google Scholar, and Scholar Works. The keywords used in the database searches included: remote working, teleworking, virtual working, flexible working, distance working, telecommuting, transformational leadership, gift exchange theory, management

exchange theory, social exchange theory, social change, job satisfaction, engagement, production performance, performance indicators, and turnover. The databases utilized were ABI/Inform, EBSCO, Emerald Insight, ProQuest, ScholarWorks, and Sage Journals. I used a total of 111 sources in this study, which included 98 peer-reviewed sources and 13 from other sources. Table 1 reflects the breakdown of the sources.

Table 1

Literature Review Sources Count

Literature type	Current sources (1-5 Years)	Older sources (Over 5 years)	Total sources	Percent
Peer-reviewed journals	66	32	98	88%
Other sources	12	1	13	12%
Total and percent	78	33	111	100%

Leadership Concepts

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory originated in the 1920s and 1930s based on the work of Bronislaw Malinowski. Still, the title of “father of social exchange” goes to George Homans based on his work in the 1960s (Muldoon et al., 2018). The social exchange theory was initially established to offer a safe environment for workers to work in exchange for their labors (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). Wage discount for remote workers has fallen from 30% in 1980 to 0% in 2000 (Bloom et al., 2015). There has been a shift from an industrial approach to a psychological approach (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018).

The social exchange theory refers to the tangible and intangible exchanges and mutual relationships between the remote worker and the company (Caillier, 2018; De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017). Caillier (2018) states that the social exchange for remote working gives the employee the allowance of working from home. The employee feels they have to repay that allowance by behaving and performing to help the company reach its goals. In this instance, the employee feels obligated to perform in exchange for working from home (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Lee & Kim, 2018). This obligation is what leads to increased performance and production. The remote workers also feel that they will secure their opportunity to continue working remotely by increasing production. The remote workers fear losing their opportunity to work remotely if their performance does not meet the manager's or company's expectations. In a recent study of IT remote workers in India, the researchers found that management negotiated a deal with the employees to work from home in exchange for more intensified work than in the office (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). Intensified work included working irregular and long hours. Irregular hours are the overnight shift because companies in the United States were conducting business, and the firms performed most of the work for these US companies. Often the IT teleworkers would have to work 12-hour shifts (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019). These conditions were understood and agreed upon for the allowance to work from home.

Gift Exchange Theory

The history of gift exchange goes back to modern cultures of monetary exchange. Gifts were given as a form of payment or appreciation but did not explicitly expect to be repaid (Duffy & Puzzello, 2014). Duffy and Puzzello (2014) continued to explain that

there was a social understanding that the gift receiver would repay the gift giver somehow, even if through another person. The modern gift exchange theory originated in 1925 by Marcel Mauss (Heins et al., 2018). Heins et al. (2018) define gift-giving as transferring something of social value to another without guaranteeing that there will be reciprocity. This definition would alter the idea of a gift. However, in many cultures, it is common to return the gift-giving with a similar valued item. Heins et al. (2018) further stated that Mauss identified exchanging gifts and certain reciprocity between the giver and the receiver.

Matthews (2017) performed a qualitative study regarding gift-giving and reciprocity. The act of the gift exchange creates a bond between the giver and receiver, and the receiver is “indebted” to the giver (Matthews, 2017). This exchange also creates a level of trust between two parties that the receiver will do a “favor” for the giver in the future. While there is no formal agreement to this relationship, the understanding is part of the social expectations and norms (Matthews, 2017). The receiver has the option to reject the gift, thereby declining the relationship. However, if the gift is accepted, the receiver has also agreed to the relationship with the giver. While the gift does not have a formal expectation of reciprocity, failure to reciprocate the gesture will create a sense of untrustworthiness. It will likely end any future gifts from the giver (Matthews, 2017).

In another study done by Moldovan and Van de Walle (2013), the authors describe how gifts could be bribes. The authors detailed patient-doctor relationships in Romania and how patients felt they could not receive the level of care they needed unless a family member provided a gift of value to the doctor (Moldovan & Van de Walle,

2013). Neither party initiated this relationship, but it seemed to be an expectation in this culture since healthcare was provided free as part of the health insurance they paid. In this example, the gifts were a bribe as the relationship was not built on trust but necessity. The patient needed the doctor more than the doctor needed the patient. That is why the relationship is the most important part of the gift exchange theory.

In relation to the workplace, Akerlof (1982) stated that gifts were anything above wages that an employee could not get if they left their current company; this provided a sense of commitment to the company from the employee, which helped the employee retention. Gifts can come in many forms. A company may give tickets to a local sporting event or merchandise like shirts from the sports teams. If the gifts resulted from good performance, the worker would continue the work performance or improve on it to ensure they get the gifts in the future. De Menezes & Kelliher (2017) connected remote working as a gift the manager or company gave to the employee. They were obligated to repay that gift with increased production and performance towards the common goals. Due to the recent pandemic, companies offered remote working as a necessity (Graves & Karabayeva, 2020). The employees did not have a choice. They could either work remotely or get laid off. This scenario changes the dynamics of the gift of allowing the employee to work remotely. One study raises the question of the employees' rights to negotiate any terms that have been considered (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). After the pandemic, remote working might end. In a recent poll, about 65% of remote workers will want to continue working remotely (Tanzi, 2020). Remote workers might need to have increased performance to show the company they can still perform while

working from home, and the company might recognize that and allow them to continue to work from home. The remote workers will have the opportunity to negotiate the terms of the working relationship or if they choose to decline it entirely.

Management Control Theory

The management control theory originated in 1965 by Robert Anthony (Hewage, 2012). Management control was the level between strategic planning and operational control. The contributions of this theory were the accounting measure and responsibility placed on worker performance (Hewage, 2012). Managers had to control the performance behaviors of the workers. Management control is defined as the controls that management utilizes to monitor the organization's progress towards the established goals and identify if and how to meet the goals and make necessary adjustments (Gutenberg, 1964). In many cases, the managers ensured employee attendance remained high by visually verifying the employees were working. Managers monitored employee behaviors to keep them on task and productive.

With the growth of remote working, managers could not control the performance behaviors of the remote workers (Groen et al., 2018). Groen et al. (2018) stated that management had to emphasize output controls rather than behaviors. This shift created an environment where the remote worker was responsible for a specified amount of production to ensure the organization reached its goals. The remote worker then knew what to expect regarding production and focused on achieving that requirement. System administrators used computer programs to monitor the progress. Managers use this information to institute corrective actions to get the organization back on track to

reaching the goals if they seem to deviate from the projections (Groen et al., 2018).

Managers wrote control measures for remote workers compared to verbal ones for traditional workers. The defined expectations made it easier for remote workers to know if they were meeting the production expectations.

Ruiller et al. (2019) conducted a study with 22 remote workers and supervisors of an IT company in France. The purpose of the study was to determine the impact that leadership has on the perceived proximity of remote working teams. Ruiller et al. (2019) define perceived proximity as the perception of how far or near a person is. This distance is affected by the communication and technology used to connect as well as face-to-face interactions. The leader of one of the remote working teams was praised for their contribution and efforts to make the team an organized and cohesive group (Ruiller et al., 2019). The authors concluded that the success of a remote working arrangement depends on sound leadership (Ruiller et al., 2019). The need for leaders to understand the importance of their role in remote working is critical to its success.

Transformational Leadership

Leadership is critically important to the success of a remote working program. In a survey of 7,200 employees who voluntarily separated from their companies, about half of them decided to leave due to a bad manager (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). Leaders should tap into the motives of followers to meet the goals of both leaders and followers (Latham, 2015). Transformational leadership can help move employees to exceed production goals, improve job satisfaction, and commitment to the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership originated in 1978 by James MacGregor Burns (Bass &

Riggio, 2006). Some of the benefits of transformational leadership include empowering employees and aligning their goals to management and the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leaders can motivate these employees to succeed in a remote working environment. As is the case where not every leader is the same, employees are also not the same.

Transformational leadership is the most influential leadership style researched (Lee et al., 2020). Transformational leadership theory suggests that leaders possess the ability to motivate followers by being a good example, focusing on the goals of the organization, show care and concern for the followers, and develop the followers to think outside the box (Urlick, 2020). These traits are a dramatic shift from previous leadership theories. Four sub-dimensions can describe transformational leadership theory. These dimensions are:

1. Idealized influence – the leader is seen as a role model for their followers
2. Inspirational motivation – effective communication to deliver an attractive vision that promotes team spirit and optimism
3. Intellectual stimulation – the leader questions assumptions to promote innovation and creative problem solving
4. Individualized consideration – identifying the needs of the followers and acting as a mentor or coach for their development (Jensen et al., 2020).

When the leader has a transformational leadership style, lower levels of management emulate this style, which will dramatically affect the organization's overall productivity. Recent studies have shown a positive relationship between transformational

leadership and performance indicators (Jensen et al., 2020). Jensen et al. (2020) described these indicators as employee perception of leadership, the leader's job performance, sales performance, and profits.

Idealized influence involves the leader providing a clear mission and values, and beliefs to the organization (Jensen et al., 2020). The leaders will also act as role models and provide clear communication of the expectations. Inspirational motivation involves presenting challenging expectations, exhibiting strong organizational commitment, and give meaning to the employees (Jensen et al., 2020). This motivation will help drive the individuals to achieve high-performance levels to allow the organization to reach its collective goals. Leaders also have to utilize intellectual stimulation to promote innovation within the company by questioning the assumptions and finding creative ways to solve complex problems that will help improve company performance (Jensen et al., 2020). Individualized consideration involves the leader paying attention to the employees' needs and encouraging individual growth and development (Jensen et al., 2020).

Based on the study results conducted by Jensen et al. (2020), intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation had the most substantial positive effect on organizational performance. These dimensions will have a direct correlation to the current increase in remote working. The remote workers will feel comfortable providing suggestions on improving the remote working program, and they will have clear communications regarding the performance expectations. The study results showed that leaders who scored high had responses indicating their support and motivation of the teams and pushing them to reach high, manageable goals (Jensen et al., 2020). Also,

providing the company mission and values helps the employees to support the organization and push to exceed performance expectations.

The recent pandemic has brought a significant change to the way work is done in most companies. Companies have had to make difficult decisions and implement far-reaching changes that affect the majority of the employees. Accepting change does not come naturally to most workers. Transformational leadership style is the best leadership style during and after the pandemic (Sukoco et al., 2020). Sukoco (2020) states that the pandemic has caused additional employee concerns not related to the work or their jobs but family needs and additional responsibilities. A transformational leader can look beyond the transactional aspect of the employee and view them as a person with needs that require attention outside of the company's work. Making adjustments or accommodations to their schedule or expectations is what a transformational leader does to strengthen the employee's loyalty and help avoid rising turnover rates (Sukoco, 2020). Transformational leaders will ensure they engage with the employees to keep them motivated and show they are concerned about their well-being and not just profits.

Leadership Support to the Research

Management needs to be selective when choosing employees to work remotely. Following a study of call center employees, the company changed those allowed to work at home and those required to work in the office (Bloom et al., 2015). The production rate increased from a 13% improvement from the study to 22% after the post-study period. Managers need to focus more on the employee's output (Groen et al., 2018; Walker, 2018). Remote working is not suited for every employee, and management needs to

determine who would be best fitted to work remotely (Dunn, 2018; Groen et al., 2018; Hunter, 2019; Walker, 2018). In a recent study of 191 managers at US Universities, managers have assessed the trustworthiness of each employee's ability to handle working remotely successfully (Kaplan et al., 2018). Managers may only allow their best employees the opportunity to work remotely. With this frame of mind, the performance of the remote employee would not decrease given the employee's high performance and the expectation to perform to retain the ability to work remotely. This scenario is the best example of the gift-exchange theory of leadership.

Leadership must be fully committed to remote working to help ensure success (Kwon & Jeon, 2020). Remote working has been around for decades, but it has only recently become more popular and accepted in the workplace. Some leaders still have the old-school way of thinking that employees are not working unless management can physically watch them. When these leaders enter into an environment of remote working, they can negatively affect the program's success. Remote working requires careful managing to ensure the program's benefits are not diminished (Hunter, 2019). One of the benefits of remote working is increased production and quality from increased employee autonomy (Giovanis, 2018). When managers do not trust the remote workers, they exhibit an increased level of control that results in a lower perceived autonomy (Delanoetje & Verbruggen, 2020). Lower autonomy results in a reduction of production rather than an increase.

Due to the recent pandemic, companies required their workforce to work remotely without having the luxury of choosing who is best suited to work from home. This

change has caused leaders to make quick adjustments to their way of thinking about remote working. Leaders of remote workers need to have a different mindset and approach when dealing with these remote workers. For that reason, these leaders are skilled in e-leadership or electronic leadership (Contreras et al., 2020). E-leadership is developing distinct abilities to improve organizational functions in a virtual team setting. The skills that leaders have in a face-to-face environment may not be adequate when dealing with remote workers. Communication in multiple platforms is crucial, especially in digital media like videoconferencing and virtual communications (Contreras et al., 2020). Technology plays a vital role in the leader's ability to communicate with the virtual teams, and a lack of this ability will be detrimental to the success and productivity of the team.

Remote Employee Performance

One of management's concerns regarding remote working is whether the production will suffer if they cannot physically monitor the employees. Remote workers believe they can have higher production than working in the office. Based on a recent study, 91% of remote workers surveyed stated they feel more productive outside of the office (Elshaiekh et al., 2018). Many factors contribute to this, such as reducing commute time, improved work-life balance, and more productive time. In a survey conducted with 2,617 across four organizations in the United Kingdom, the authors found a positive correlation between remote working and job performance (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017).

Commuting to the office is a very time-consuming activity. In a survey conducted in Japan with 9200 regular teleworking employees, there was an increase in production with teleworking employees compared to non-teleworking employees (Kazekami, 2020). In some urban areas, commuting to work can take over one hour, including getting ready for work, driving or transportation, parking, and getting to their workstation. Remote workers do not have to deal with the commute, parking, traffic, accidents, or the prep time of getting ready for work (Elshaiekh et al., 2018; Radu, 2018). This time saved can be used as productive time spent. Not dealing with traffic or accidents also helps the remote worker have a positive mindset when starting work rather than being frustrated with traffic. Commuting by carpool, bus, or train can also be stressful. Avoiding rush hour commuting, whether by automobile, bus, or train, can increase productivity for remote workers (Kazekami, 2020). Employees that telework avoid mental stress and start their day in a better mental state of mind. They also save the time they would be commuting to either start their day or other positive activities that will help promote productivity at work.

Eliminating commute time is not the only way remote working helps to increase the productive time. Remote workers have less distraction from co-workers and have less non-productive time (Golden & Gajendran, 2018; Kazekami, 2020). A recent survey of 1,004 full-time employees revealed that remote workers have less unproductive time and work an average of 1.4 days more per month than in-office workers (Schwantes, 2019). In a study conducted with two call center groups for nine months with one group working remotely and one group working in the office, the authors found that production

improved by the remote working group and no improvement by the in-office group (Bloom et al., 2015). Remote workers are also less likely to call in sick. In a 2012 survey, the results revealed that 56% of employers decreased the number of absences (Elshaiekh et al., 2018). Remote workers have more productive time and less non-productive time than in-office workers. This production will help the company have a higher production rate while reducing costs associated with office space employees.

The work environment also plays a part in remote working productivity. In a recent study, Golden and Gajendran (2018) considered the effects of the environment on remote working compared to traditional working. They collected data from 273 remote working employees from one organization along with their supervisors. The respondents remote worked a minimum of 2 days per week and held varying difficulty levels in their work. The results showed a positive relationship between remote working and job performance (Golden & Gajendran, 2018). The authors also concluded that job performance increases in the remote setting with a higher degree of complexity. Remote workers can alter their work to maximize production due to the work environment they have at home (Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2020; Golden & Gajendran, 2018).

Work-life balance has become an important point for employees. Many employees complain that they do not get enough time to spend with their families. Remote workers who work from home spend more time with their families than in the office every day. Employers consider remote working as a win-win scenario because the employees have a higher job satisfaction due to a better work-life balance, which results

in higher productivity for the company with reduced overhead costs (Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Wheatley, 2017).

Performance Indicators

Performance measures help the organization reach its goals by aligning the daily activities to strategic objectives (Parmenter, 2010). Performance equates to an actual figure like sales volume, call volume, close ratio, etc. For positions that do not have an actual figure, performance can be more challenging to identify. In many cases, attendance is usually one of the best indicators for performance in a traditional setting. In a remote setting, attendance takes on a different look as the manager cannot just look out and see the workers. Some managers do not feel comfortable not being able to see the workers. One of the reasons managers do not support teleworking is that they do not trust the employees to perform as they would if the manager was present (Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2020; Kaplan et al., 2018). Some managers feel that employees will not be able to stay on task if the employees are unsupervised. This performance issue will prevent the employees from meeting business deadlines.

Productivity is the ratio between the output generated per unit of input (Drumea, 2020). Defining inputs and outputs can sometimes be difficult, and managers need to ensure clarifications and expectations when setting production goals with remote workers. Productivity does not equate to performance, but some managers make this connection (Drumea, 2020).

In 1996, the Austrian government published a manual measuring performance using key performance indicators (KPI). KPIs are a set of measures that focus on what

the organization deems most critical for the company's short- and long-term success (Parmenter, 2010). There are seven characteristics of KPIs. These include:

1. Nonfinancial measures,
2. Frequently measured,
3. Acted on by the CEO and senior management
4. Indicate what action is required for staff,
5. Measures that are the responsibility of a team
6. Have a significant impact
7. They encourage appropriate action

KPIs are monitored hourly, daily, or weekly. If the KPI is monitored any less frequently, it is not considered a KPI. KPIs should also not have any financial tag to them like dollars. Having this tag would make it a key result indicator and not a KPI. KPIs will be assigned throughout the organization but should be on the specific work groups. For example, the leader's KPIs would not be the same as a staff's KPI. Also, the leader should be able to tie a KPI to a team and have a team lead do action on the KPI. The KPIs should also be directly linked to the organization's goals and significantly impact these goals (Parmenter, 2010).

Designing the KPIs for the organization requires careful planning and execution. Design failures happen when too many or too few KPIs are defined and when the KPIs do not align with the company's overall strategy (Purevsuren et al., 2020). If there are too few KPIs will lead to an imbalance and not achieving the desired outcomes toward the company's objectives. If there are too many, the KPIs that will achieve the desired results

are overlooked due to the number of non-essential KPIs reported. The other concern is if the business unit KPIs are not aligned with the organization's strategy. This misalignment will result in the company not achieving the results because the business units were not focusing on the daily activities that would help to get the company to reach its goals.

Remote Employee Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to employees' reactions regarding how the job affects them and makes them feel (Lee & Kim, 2018). Job satisfaction is difficult to quantify, but it has an impact on both production and retention. In a survey conducted with 2,617 across four organizations in the United Kingdom, the authors found a positive correlation between remote working and job satisfaction (De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017). In a study conducted with two call center groups for nine months with one group working remotely and one group working in the office, the authors found that job satisfaction improved by the remote working group and no improvement by the in-office group (Bloom et al., 2015). Management plays a critical role in the level of job satisfaction of remote workers.

Remote working involves working outside of the office, which has some positive benefits. Remote working removes some of the negative aspects of office work, like politics, sexism, harassment, and unwanted interruptions, which leads to increased job satisfaction (Collins et al., 2016). As the number of remote workers increases, employee positive emotions increase (Charalampous et al., 2018). While these office distractions are removed, remote workers need to feel that management supports them. Remote working allows the employees freedom and autonomy, which leads to increased job

satisfaction (Charalampous et al., 2018; Delanoetje et al., 2019; De Menezes & Kelliher, 2017; Elshaiekh et al., 2018).

Remote workers also need support from their colleagues. Job satisfaction is related to social support in those remote workers that had a high level of social support from colleagues who had a higher level of job satisfaction (Charalampous et al., 2018; Collins et al., 2016). Support from management and colleagues happens by way of engagement. In a study of 28 organizations in New Zealand, 804 remote workers participated regarding social support of the remote working program and the correlation to job satisfaction (Bentley, 2016). Organizations that provided social support to remote workers had higher job satisfaction.

Remote working satisfaction occurs by reducing conflicts that arise from work-to-home conflicts and home-to-work conflicts (Delanoetje et al., 2019, Bhattacharya & Mittal, 2020). Work-to-home conflicts reduce because the employee is at home to handle any pressing concerns during the workday (Nakrošienė et al., 2019). Handling issues at home might cause the employee to work longer due to the interruption, but there would not be a conflict compared to working late at the office. Remote working requires boundary roles between home life and work-life (Delanoetje et al., 2019). As the employee works from home, they are better suited to deal with home issues or childcare activities to save money on childcare expenses. This freedom increases the employee's job satisfaction.

Another aspect that leads to increased job satisfaction is the remote worker's ability to control their working environment (Nakrošienė et al., 2019). In a recent study

of 128 remote workers in Lithuania, one of the contributing factors to job satisfaction is the suitability of the working conditions at home (Nakrošienė et al., 2019). The authors stated that working conditions in the office correlate to the company's position and status. Remote workers can have an office set up at home that is better than what they had in the office, making them more comfortable and having higher job satisfaction. Nakrošienė et al. (2019) continue to explain that a remote worker can spend time with family that they would not otherwise be able to do, like eating breakfast with their children in the morning. These aspects may seem minor, but they allow the remote worker to control their work environment, making them happy. Allowing the employees' opportunity to work remotely can impact employees who are not allowed to work remotely. In a recent study of 194,739 US federal employees, there was a positive correlation between remote workers and job satisfaction (Lee & Kim, 2018). Remote workers had higher job satisfaction than traditional office employees. However, there was also a negative correlation between non-remote workers who could not work remotely and job satisfaction. The authors show that employees who were not allowed to work remotely for reasons other than technical reasons had lower job satisfaction than non-remote workers not allowed to work remotely due to technical limitations (Lee & Kim, 2018). When employees choose to telework and decide not to telework, their job satisfaction is like those of remote workers.

Remote Employee Engagement

Engagement is the state of mind that work is fulfilling and positive, and the supervisor supports and monitors their personal work goals (Groen et al., 2018).

Traditionally, engagement is face-to-face interactions with employees (Golden et al., 2008). With the increases in technology, engagement includes video conferences, teleconferences, phone, email, and instant messaging (Smith et al., 2018). There have been many studies on the positive impact of engagement on traditional workers, but few studies examine the effects on remote workers. Remote working has a beneficial result for new product development due to increased cross-functional communication using virtual communications (Groen et al., 2018). Remote working can become lonely without engagement from management. One of the negative aspects of remote working is social isolation (Bloom et al., 2015; Narayanan et al., 2017; Golden et al., 2008). Social isolation could hurt the employee turnover rate. However, the researchers concluded that there is no positive relationship between professional isolation and decreased turnover rates (Golden et al., 2008).

Managers need to work on a solid relationship with the remote workers to ensure they feel engaged (Graves & Karabayeva, 2020). Open communication is one of the building blocks of trust between the manager and the remote worker (Contreras et al., 2020). Communication can get lost when dealing with remote workers since they are not seen in the office daily. Managers should not underestimate the importance of communication and should be proactive in establishing and maintaining lines of communication. Remote workers need to feel that managers are concerned about their well-being and their contributions are valued (Graves & Karabayeva, 2020). The authors concluded a positive relationship between social support and job performance (Golden & Gajendran, 2018). When the remote workers have a high level of social support from

their managers, they have higher performance than remote workers with low social support. Engagement helps remote workers to perform their jobs more effectively (Golden & Gajendran, 2018).

One of the other concerns with engagement is the diversity of the workforce. While diversity positively impacts innovation and collaboration, it can challenge management when dealing with engagement. Many organizations have generational diversity that had communication breakdowns in a traditional workplace, and these breakdowns have increased as the work transitioned to remote working (Urick, 2020). The perception is that older generational workers are not as comfortable working with technology as younger generational workers. These breakdowns occur based on perceptions and stereotypes that older workers struggle with when dealing with or learning new technology (Urick, 2020). There is no empirical data to support these perceptions. Another perception is that younger generations are not as experienced as older generations, making them unprepared to handle crises. Younger generations perceive that older generations cannot handle emergencies because they cannot adapt quickly to changes (Urick, 2020). These issues can lead to avoidance, which is difficult in a traditional workplace. However, in a remote working environment, it is easy for workers to avoid one another. These issues can cause a breakdown in information sharing and teamwork, which would lead to reduced team performance. Management needs to ensure that engagement within the team is positive, supportive, and productive.

Remote working can harm the psychological need for the workers to have social support, relationships, and interactions, which is called psychological isolation (Wang et

al., 2020). Physical isolation is also a factor. Physical isolation is the feeling that people miss out on benefits and opportunities due to not working within the office (Wang et al., 2020). Remote workers can feel that they are missing career opportunities due to not having daily personal interactions with managers and supervisors compared to their in-office colleagues.

With the recent pandemic, traditional workers have shifted to become remote workers. Unfortunately, some of these workers lacked a suitable environment to have a work office at home. Golden and Gajendran (2018) stated that the work environment could allow the remote worker to perform higher than the traditional worker. Remote workers' performance could suffer from a poor environment and require a higher level of engagement to overcome that. Golden and Gajendran (2018) found that a higher level of engagement will result in higher performance than other remote workers because it helps ensure the remote worker is working effectively.

Remote Employee Turnover Rate

Employee turnover is very costly to a company due to hiring and training costs and disruptions to business operations (Fang & Messacar, 2019). Turnover is one of the management controls items to help reduce costs and increase production. If a company has a high turnover rate, mainly voluntary separation, it is due to poor management or leadership. In a recent study, less than 30% of employees are loyal to their companies (Hornickel, 2019). Four contributing factors lead to a lower employee turnover rate.

1. Know your employee
2. Provide effective leadership and supervision

3. Provide and encourage feedback and recognition
4. Offer professional development

Knowing the employee is not easy in a traditional workplace. The average supervisor only spends about 25% with the team members (Hornickel, 2019). Spending time becomes even more difficult in a remote working environment, but it is necessary to reduce the turnover rate. Engagement is another way to help reduce turnover. Providing effective leadership and offering professional development will let the employees feel they are valued and appreciated. This attention will go a long way to helping lower the turnover rates.

When employees are denied the opportunity to work remotely, they are more likely to leave the company within a year (Caillier, 2018). In a survey conducted with government agencies from 2011 to 2014, the author found that as remote working numbers increased, the number of voluntarily separated employees decreased (Caillier, 2018). More employees desire to work remotely, and the number of companies allowing remote work has also increased. In the case of relocating a headquarters or closing a divisional office, remote working can provide a solution to avoid losing quality talent that does not want to relocate (ElBoghdady, 2006).

In a study of 5,452 employees across 127 companies in Germany, remote working had a negative relationship with voluntary employee exits (Marx, 2020). This relationship means that employees are far less likely to quit if they know that work-life balance options are available. Marx (2020) further discovered that parents and women workers are less likely to leave if remote working is available. These findings are essential to

companies as they review post-pandemic work arrangements. Allowing workers to remain working at home can help prevent voluntary separation. Conversely, having a remote working program can enable the company to hire quality talent from other companies that do not allow for remote working.

Kröll and Nüesch (2019) studied different working arrangements about turnover intentions and job satisfaction. The study included 8,325 employees that worked flextime, 7,585 employees that were allowed sabbaticals, and 6,132 employees that worked from home. The authors concluded a positive relationship between job satisfaction and each of the working arrangements (Kröll & Nüesch, 2019). There was a positive relationship between reduced turnover intentions and working from home and sabbaticals, but no significant relationship with flextime (Kröll & Nüesch, 2019). This study supports the point that remote working reduces turnover.

Diversity Team Management

Companies operate in a global economy, and technology has benefited from a globally diverse workforce (Heinz, 2014). It is not uncommon for a company to work in several countries or do business with companies worldwide. This operation has created situations where companies may have teams comprised of members from various cultures or backgrounds. Leaders must possess additional skills to handle multicultural teams. Also, many of these teams are worldwide, and they cannot meet face-to-face like they would in an office setting. Leaders need to have the knowledge and skills to handle the challenges that come with this diversity. Many benefits come with operating globally, but

leadership must have the knowledge or experience to manage diverse teams effectively and negotiate in foreign countries.

Companies use technology more to share ideas across borders and reduce innovation and knowledge sharing (Eisenburg & Mattarelli, 2016). This knowledge sharing has helped create innovative ideas and improve employees' knowledge of other cultures. A person who can handle various cultural settings has high cultural intelligence (Erez et al., 2013). Managing cross-cultural differences is one of the severe issues that multinational companies face (Sogancilar & Ors, 2018). These issues do not prevent companies from hiring global talent or acquiring global companies to gain the benefits of these actions.

One of the benefits is that diverse teams have various cultural backgrounds and experiences shared with everyone and can help with innovation and reduce costs (Eisenburg & Mattarelli, 2016). Learning about other cultures helps team members to understand each other better. Another positive is that innovation improves by sharing knowledge and various cultures and backgrounds within the team (Levitt, 2013). Another positive benefit to diverse virtual teams is a lack of physical contact or interaction between team members. This physical separation will reduce communication confusion due to body language or physical cues (Zakaria et al., 2013).

Cultural intelligence is an essential skill that managers and leaders need to have in this global environment. Working in a global environment has led to the idea that individuals need to have the ability to work in any given cultural team setting. Some people have more experience in dealing with other cultures than others. This experience means that

they have higher cultural intelligence than others. Cultural intelligence is how well an individual can effectively handle a culturally diverse setting (Erez et al., 2013). A person gains cultural intelligence by working with other cultures, being around different cultures, or learning about other cultures. Individuals have a natural global identity based on the country they were raised in or their cultural heritage. Global identity is a sense of belonging to a group and identifying within the global work context (Erez et al., 2013). This identity is crucial because it allows others to have at least some basic knowledge of a person. For example, you would not refer to a person from Japan as Chinese, as this would be an insult. A person with a darker complexion and black hair living in South Florida does not always speak Spanish. These can be damaging stereotypes.

Current Issues or Dilemmas

Communication is essential for any company. Communication for remote workers happens using technology such as email, phone, teleconference, video conferencing, or instant messaging (Morgan et al., 2014). Most of these methods are static and require the reader to interpret the meaning of the message. Video conferencing is the only one where the two parties can see each other and receive visual cues to help communicate. Sometimes, this lack of visual cues can benefit since visual cues can confuse a message (Zakaria et al., 2013). People send messages with their body language that they may not intend to send. For example, rolling of the eyes, crossed arms, and lack of eye contact are visual cues that can convey a negative message that can be confusing when trying to deliver a positive message.

Conflict is conventional in every teamwork setting and is inherent within the daily interactions of the team members (Tabassi et al., 2019). Conflict is one of the biggest challenges facing organizations. Conflict is the perceived disagreements and incompatibilities between individuals (Windeler et al., 2015). Some conflicts can be positive, but there can also be destructive conflicts that dramatically affect the team. Managers and leaders need to be able to recognize when conflict is damaging and address it. Destructive conflict should not be ignored (du Plessis, 2012). Ignoring the conflict conveys the message that the leadership is not concerned with the issues causing the conflict. This message has a damaging impact on team performance until the conflict is recognized and resolved. Understanding team dynamics is essential when trying to evaluate the conflict that is occurring. For example, Tabassi et al. (2019) found that conflict can be ignored when dealing with a temporary construction company in Malaysia. This approach, however, does not apply to every situation. Team members need to remember that communication is the most important thing when working with individuals from other countries. If there is something that a person doesn't know, do not assume anything, but rather, ask the other person about it (Markman, 2018). People will have more respect if a question is asked rather than assuming something that is not accurate. Organizations that support diversity management will have less damaging conflict because they will promote an environment that values diversity and encourages harmony among the teams (Bae et al., 2019).

Sogancilar & Ors (2018) identified three main challenges when dealing with diverse teams. These were ineffective communication and misunderstandings, different

working styles and expectations, intolerance, and lack of knowledge related to diversity. The authors also identified three solutions offered by the executives of their study. These were embracing diversity and encouraging team members to acknowledge it, becoming approachable and eager to learn more, and communicating simply and straightforwardly (Sogancilar & Ors, 2018).

The global economy has caused companies to operate in countries they had not previously operated in. This change has also changed the dynamics of the workforce and created a need for diversity. Diversity came with benefits like knowledge sharing, innovation, and cost reductions. These benefits also came with challenges of dealing with cultural differences that caused conflicts among the teams. Conflict management is one of the most critical skills that a manager can possess, as conflict is a constant when employees work in groups of two or more. Technology has also improved and led to teams connecting in ways they had not done before. Communication issues arose that caused confusion and conflict. Leaders had to learn how to deal with these new diverse teams by learning the most effective way to identify and handle communication and conflict. One of the tools to work on this was to identify and increase the leader's cultural intelligence. A leader's cultural intelligence is developed through experience and education. Cultural intelligence is a topic that needs further research to help leaders identify and improve their executives' cultural intelligence and the best way to accomplish this critical task. Companies will not go back to operating domestically only, so leaders will need to understand the benefits and challenges of having a diverse

workforce and help create an environment that will encourage open communication and allow knowledge sharing and innovation to grow and succeed.

Social Change

Social change is ideas, strategies, and actions that promote the wealth, dignity, and development of a culture or society's communities, organizations, and individuals (Walden, 2020). Creating jobs is a form of social change because it improves the economic future of a community. Another form of social change is preserving jobs. Several cities have been negatively affected when mining companies abandoned mining facilities leaving the cities struggling financially. In 2005, the US Government informed the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) they would be moving their operations from Virginia to Maryland, and the almost 4,000 employees would be relocated (ElBoghdady, 2006). Roughly 2,000 employees would refuse to relocate. The government decided to implement remote working for these employees to avoid relocating (ElBoghdady, 2006). The decision to offer remote working prevented the city from losing more than 2,000 residents.

Remote working programs can have a positive effect on social change by creating jobs. Hiring remote workers allows companies to select from a much larger talent pool that spans the world rather than their geographical limitations (Radu, 2018). The areas where companies hire remote workers will benefit from the increased revenue generated by the workers. An example of this is a rural area in Eastern Kentucky. The Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program (EKCEP) has placed almost 600 local

workers in remote customer service jobs (Brown, 2017). These placements equate to roughly \$12 million in wages earned that will help the local community.

China also had social change from creating jobs for remote working. Following a study of the benefits of having a remote working program, a Chinese call center established regional offices in lower-wage areas of inland China using the same technology (Bloom et al., 2015). The company was able to help the economic status of these areas by hiring remote workers at a higher wage than they can get locally. Some states in the USA offer businesses tax deductions up to \$1,200, and Virginia allows tax credits up to \$50,000 (Galardo & Whitacre, 2018). These tax benefits can be passed down to the employees' wages, increasing their household income.

Social change can also come from employees' savings used in the local economy. According to Hambly and Lee (2019), the average cost savings to a remote worker in Canada is approximately \$15,000 per year. This estimate is based on the time and distance saved from not commuting to work every day.

Social change can also come from increasing wealth. A recent study of 3,523 home and farm residences in Southwest Ontario implemented the SouthWest Integrated Fibre Technology Inc (SWIFT) network (Hambly & Lee, 2019). This network improved the internet access to broadband capabilities which allowed for faster transmission speeds. This increase in technology allowed more employees to work remotely at least three days per week. The study results were that employees who worked remotely at least three days a week saved at least \$12,000 per year. Based on 2,899 residential homes, the savings total is \$34,788,000. These savings are a result of reduced commute costs and

hours spent commuting. The savings represent a significant increase in the wealth of the workers as well as the communities.

Social change can also come from the organization's diversity due to hiring individuals from around the world. Recent studies have revealed that diversity can help with innovation and complex problem solving (Baradello & Dibble, 2020; Brunetta et al., 2020). Having cultural experience from around the world can help bring multiple perspectives to virtual collaborations when discussing new ideas or problems. With the recent pandemic causing companies to create remote working programs, it has also created opportunities to explore talent outside of the geographical area they operate. By seeking and hiring a diverse workforce, it is helping both the organization gain critical knowledge and experience while assisting various economic regions that were not in the recent past.

Transition

In Section 1, I provided the background of the problem, problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, and the research question. I also provided the interview questions. Section 1 also included the conceptual framework and operational definitions. I also had assumptions, limitations, delimitations, the study's significance, and implications for social change in Section 1.

Section 1 also included an exhaustive literature review on the business problem that leaders lack strategies to implement a remote working program. I used social exchange theory, gift exchange theory, and management control theory to help understand the factors involved with remote working. Transformational leadership was

discussed as the best leadership style for remote working programs, along with the impact that leadership has on remote workers. Remote employee performance, performance indicators, job satisfaction, engagement, and turnover rate were also discussed. Diversity and social change were also covered in Section 1.

In Section 2, I will provide the details of how the study will be completed, including my role as the researcher, the study participants, the research method and design, and the population of the study. I will define the data collection instruments and techniques. I will also discuss the data organization techniques, data analysis, data reliability, and data validity.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the leadership strategies that leaders use to implement an effective remote working program. The target population was three leaders of major corporations within the financial services industry who have effective remote working programs in Florida. The results of this study may contribute to social change by helping to improve the economic situation of undeserved areas by hiring remote workers from those areas. These households will have a financial increase that they can use in their local communities.

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary instrument in this study. One of the primary roles of the researcher is data collection (Yin, 2018). As the data collector, I used an interview protocol as the method of collecting the data. I used open-ended questions to gather used data from leaders regarding strategies to implement a remote working program. I transcribed the answers to these questions into coded data for analysis. I analyzed the data and formulated my findings.

One concern for the researcher is the amount of bias towards the subject. Bias is a concern when the role of the researcher coincides with the role of the practitioner (Karagiozis, 2018). Qualitative research is considered participatory, and there is a risk that the researcher's bias may affect the study's outcome (Clark & Vealé, 2018). Clark and Vealé (2018) also advised that researchers disclose their assumptions or biases while collecting, coding, and sorting the data. I have direct knowledge of the subject matter due

to working remotely for the past five years in a senior leadership position at two financial services companies who operate in the State of Florida. I mitigated bias by taking a scientific approach to the collection and interpretation of the study data. This was accomplished by setting up an interview protocol, conducting member checking, and reviewing the accuracy of the data collected. I also used data triangulation to increase researcher objectivity. I also checked my interview questions for any bias I unintentionally had when initially developing the questions.

Ethical research is one of the most important factors in the study. A recent study was conducted regarding ethics in research (Pan, 2020). Pan (2020) stated a growing concern over ethical misconduct in research in the past 20 years. One concern mentioned was a conflict of interest. Conflict of interest is when a researcher has a financial, personal interest, or opinion that might affect their ability to be objective in performing the research and reporting the findings (Pan, 2020). While performing the research and data collection, I remained objective and performed the tasks ethically by following the interview protocol (Appendix A) and keeping detailed accurate records. I kept the study participants' identities confidential and used codes when referencing their responses in the study. Examples of these codes are P1, P2, and P3 to represent the three participants.

Participants

The focus of this study was to explore the strategies that leaders utilize to implement a remote working strategy. I limited the scope of the study to the financial services industry because that industry tends to have the highest number of remote workers. To further reduce the number of possible participants, I focused on companies

with operations in the State of Florida. The participants are leaders of companies in the financial services industry and operate in Florida. The main eligibility criteria for the participants is that they have a portion of their workforce that works at least 3 days a week or more remotely, preferably that they work full-time remotely. The company is a large-sized corporation.

Access to the participants was by direct contact via phone and email.

Bakkalbasioglu (2020) described making a list of the potential participants before contact to find them on any professional websites to get contact information. I used the company's website to obtain the name of the leaders and the contact phone numbers and email. I connected with the leaders, presented my study's purpose, and requested that they participate in a short interview. I explained that their identity will remain confidential and provided an informed consent form for their approval and signature.

The study participants answered the questions openly and honestly. Developing a working relationship has been identified as the best way to ensure open and honest responses from the study participants (Pinnegar & Quiles-Fernández, 2018). The interview process should have more of a personal feel, so the participant is comfortable answering honestly. Having transparency with the participants helped them to feel more comfortable.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

There are three methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Saunders et al., 2015). The qualitative methodology provides more in-depth knowledge of how or

why a phenomenon occurs (Yin, 2018). Prior research indicates a qualitative methodology is used to explain and understand complex scenarios (Alam, 2020). I used the qualitative methodology for this study. Qualitative methodology is used more often with written or verbal information that does not involve numbers as data. Quantitative methodology is used to evaluate the relationship between variables (Saunders et al., 2015). A quantitative method is not appropriate for this study because the study will evaluate the relationship between variables. A mixed method is used to evaluate the relationship of variables and the how or why a phenomenon occurs (Yin, 2018). Mixed methodology is not appropriate for this study because the study will evaluate the relationship between variables.

Research Design

I selected a single case study design to explore leaders' leadership strategies to implement effective remote working programs. Some design options include phenomenological, ethnography, and case study (Saunders et al., 2015). A case study allows data to be collected that explores the scenario in a real-world setting (Alam, 2020). This method helps the researcher to have a better understanding of the phenomenon and be able to describe it accurately (Alam, 2020). A single case study is the research of the phenomenon in a real-world setting from a single source or group (Yin, 2018). A single case study is appropriate to explore the phenomenon among three leaders. A phenomenological design explores the participant's lived experiences with the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2015). An ethnography design focuses on the participant's specific culture regarding the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2015). A phenomenological

and ethnography design would not be appropriate for this study because the clear intent is to explore strategies leaders use to implement an effective remote working program, not a specific experience or culture.

Data saturation is when new data are no longer being added to the database because of duplication or no longer having references or quotes in a certain position (Alam, 2000). Saturation can occur at different points depending on the type of research participants. Alam (2000) defined data saturation as the point when no more new information is generated from the data. I reached data saturation when no new codes or themes were generated.

Population and Sampling

The sample was three leaders of a major corporation within the financial services industry who have effective remote working programs in Florida. One of the criteria for a participant is the leader of a mid-range or larger company. Other criteria was for the company to have a successful remote working program. The last criterion was that they have a working knowledge of the remote working program. To ensure that participation is voluntary, the participants did not receive compensation. This rule helped ensure that the responses provided are open and honest. The participants' identities are kept confidential. Confidentiality also helped to ensure the participants respond openly and honestly because there was no fear of repercussions based on any answer they gave to the interview questions.

Sampling methods are categorized into two main groups called probability and nonprobability sampling (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Divakar, 2021). Qualitative research

studies use nonprobability sampling to ensure the participants meet certain criteria and quantitative research uses probability sampling (Ellis, 2020). Sampling for a qualitative research study is determined by the researcher's access to potential participants. Convenience sampling is when a researcher selects participants based on their geographical or spatial proximity (Alkassim & Tran, 2015). This method is not considered convenience sampling because the sample area will be the entire State of Florida and not the local city. Purposive sampling is choosing study participants based on established qualifications of knowledge or experience (Alkassim & Tran, 2015). I used purposive sampling for the study because the participants are leaders and have a successful remote working program.

Ethical Research

Ethical research is one of the most important factors in the study. A recent study was conducted regarding ethics in research (Pan, 2020). Pan stated a growing concern over ethical misconduct in research in the past 20 years (Pan, 2020). One concern mentioned was a conflict of interest. Conflict of interest is when a researcher has a financial, personal interest, or opinion that might affect their ability to be objective in performing the research and reporting the findings (Pan, 2020). While performing the research and data collection, I remained objective and performed the tasks ethically. I kept the study participants' identities confidential and used codes when referencing their responses in the study.

The Belmont Report is a highly regarded study of how researchers should ethically behave when conducting research involving human participants (Miracle, 2016).

Miracle discussed the three main principles of the Belmont Report are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Respect for persons ensures that the participants are treated fairly and respectfully (Miracle, 2016). Respect for people would include not taking advantage of a person that might be vulnerable. Beneficence is the idea of doing good (Miracle, 2016). Beneficence would consist of not doing harm and helping to increase potential benefits. Justice is the idea of creating trust and giving equal, fair treatment to all people without discrimination or prejudice (Miracle, 2016). Justice would include ensuring the participants all have a safe, comfortable environment and the assurance of confidentiality.

Compliance with the Belmont report is critical. To ensure compliance, I conveyed verbally and in writing the assurance of security and confidentiality of the participants' identities and their data. Their identities remain entirely separate from the data and research study and will only be referenced by codes and not by name. The location of the data are on a separate password-protected thumb drive. The participants were given a confidentiality statement to provide further reassurance of their protection. To ensure they understand these protections, they were required to sign an informed consent form agreeing to the terms of the research study. Any participant that did not sign the informed consent form were removed from the participant pool.

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection is necessary in order to perform data analysis. Yin (2018) stated that data collection could come from six sources. These sources are documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, physical artifacts, and participant observations

(Yin, 2018). I was the primary instrument for this study. I used semi structured interviews as the method for collecting the data. Semi structured interviews are open-ended questions that allow the respondents to answer with more explanation than simply yes or no (Yin, 2018). The interviews took place via phone. Yin also recommended that a researcher utilize two data collection methods for qualitative research studies. Alam (2020) stated that an interview taken personally will help stimulate the depth of the responses because the participants will have a better understanding of the questions.

Data Collection Technique

There are several methods that can be used to collect data. Data collection for a case study can be done using structured, semi structured, and unstructured interviews (Alam, 2020). These interviews can be done through face-to-face interviews, telephone calls, or online meetings (Alam, 2020). The interview can be one-on-one or group setting interviews (Yin, 2018). I used one-on-one interviews as the method of collecting the data. The interviews were conducted with participants over the telephone. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The interview consisted of a set of open-ended questions (Appendix B). I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) for the data collection process.

One of the most important components to ensure quality interview data are developing an interview protocol (Yeong et al., 2018). An interview protocol is an established plan to conduct the interviews to ensure quality data responses. The first step in the protocol is to ensure the interview questions (Appendix B) align with the research question (Yeong et al., 2018). The questions should be in-depth and allow the participant to respond with details. The next step is to establish an inquiry-based conversation

(Yeong et al., 2018). The interviewer should feel relaxed so the participant can respond freely. The next step is to receive feedback on interview protocols (Yeong et al., 2018). Other sources should test the questions to anticipate the responses and refine the questions as needed. The final step is to receive feedback from the actual participant (Yeong et al., 2018). This is called member checking.

Member checking helps to improve the quality of the data and to reduce researcher bias. Member checking is confirming with the participants that the interpretation of the interview responses is accurate (Anney, 2014; Candela, 2019). Any feedback from the participants can help to refine the interpretation of the data (Candela, 2019). I provided my findings of the analysis to the participants to ensure the accuracy of the data based on the understanding of their individual responses. I used the information gained from the member checking to update the data. Member checking continued until the participants confirmed the interpretation of the data was accurate.

Data Organization Technique

It is important to have the data organized prior to data analysis. Before data analysis can be performed, the data needs to be organized (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) described five ways data can be organized. One way is to put the data into different arrays or use different themes or subthemes (Yin, 2018). Another way to organize the data is to set up a matrix with contrasting categories and place the data into the cells (Yin, 2018). Yin described creating visual displays like flow charts or other graphics to examine the data. Yin states another way to organize the data by tabulating the frequency

of different events. The final way to organize the data is to put the data into sequential or chronological order (Yin, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is needed to interpret the data and report the findings. I used Yin's five phases of analysis to analyze and interpret the data. Yin's five-phase cycle of data analysis. The five-phase cycle includes compiling the data, disassembling the data, reassembling the data, interpreting the data, and concluding the data (Yin, 2011). The data analysis can be performed manually or with computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software like CAQDAS, Atlas.ti, or NVivo, (Yin, 2018). Data triangulation was used for data analysis. There are four types of triangulations: method triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and data source triangulation (Carter et al., 2014; Fusch et al., 2018). I used data source triangulation in this study.

The first phase is compiling the data (Yin,2011). I developed a set of questions that were asked of the study participants during semi structured interviews. The interviews were recorded to capture the exact responses from the study participants. I took the recordings of the semi structured interviews and uploaded them in a secured location with password protection separate from the other research. I then transcribed the interviews, so the data were compiled for further analysis.

Each participant's interview has their own folder to ensure integrity of the data. All notes and member checking data are also stored in their respective folders. A database was created for each participant where the data created from the recordings is

stored for data analysis. The data analysis was performed by MAXQDA, and the database was compatible with the software used.

The second phase is disassembling the data (Yin, 2011). Disassembling the data includes breaking down the data into categories and creating codes to sort the data into themes (Yin, 2011). I categorized the responses to each question into codes. The codes have words that reoccur in the data included in a table format. These codes were then grouped into themes. I used MAXQDA to search for themes in the data. The themes helped show strategies that leaders use to implement a successful remote working program.

The third phase is reassembling the data (Yin, 2011). Reassembling the data includes categorizing and tabulating the data and analyzing it to determine if any patterns or themes exist in the data (Yin, 2011). The data tables created were run through MAXQDA to identify themes based on the codes of data from the interviews. I was able to determine any patterns that developed in the data. These patterns represented themes that helped answer the research question.

The fourth phase is interpreting the data (Yin, 2011). Interpreting the data includes triangulating the data to provide meaning and to answer the research question (Yin, 2011). The data were formatted into codes and themes to allow the data analysis to determine any connections the themes have with the research question. There was sufficient data to answer the research question and the conclusion phase began.

The fifth phase is concluding the data (Yin, 2011). Concluding the data includes answering the research question based on the results of the research study (Yin, 2011). I

used member checking to confirm the data. Member checking allows the study participants the opportunity to verify the interpretation of the interviews are accurate (Yeong et al., 2018). I used the results to provide the conclusion of the study and to make recommendations for future research.

Another strategy to analyze data is the general inductive approach. The general inductive approach is designed to condense the data, make connections between the data and the research objectives, and provide a theory based on the connections (Dufour et al., 2019). The approach has three phases, consolidating, ranking, and establishing connections (Dufour et al., 2019).

The first phase is consolidating the data (Dufour et al., 2019). This phase involves looking at the participant's responses, placing words or phrases into categories, and assigning a code (Dufour et al., 2019). This process should result in about 30 to 40 codes. The second phase is ranking. In this phase, the codes are placed into categories to develop sensitizing concepts (Dufour et al., 2019). This phase should result in 15 to 20 categories (Dufour et al., 2019). The third phase is establishing connections (Dufour et al., 2019). The categories are then compared to the concepts to develop a new theory (Dufour et al., 2019). The result should be no more than 8 to 10 categories as most important (Dufour et al., 2019).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability is essential in research studies. The goal of reliability in research studies is to limit the amount of bias and errors in the study (Yin, 2018). Reliability is

essential, so future researchers should get similar results following the same procedures in a different case. One main factor in reliability is documentation (George et al., 2003; Yin, 2018). The researcher needs to have detailed documentation of the procedures used for the study. This process involves using a case study protocol or a case study database (Yin, 2018).

A case study protocol has the procedures and rules used during the research study (Yin, 2018). The case study protocol has four main sections to document these rules and procedures. These include an overview section, data collection procedures, protocol questions, and a tentative outline (Yin, 2018). These sections will help the researcher remain focused on the topic. The sections also help with how reports are completed because the audience will be identified (Yin, 2018). A case study protocol is used when doing a single case study (Yin, 2018).

A case study database organizes and documents the data collected during the case study (Yin, 2018). The data will be both narrative and numeric to represent the sources of the evidence used in the study (Yin, 2018). The database can be set up using CAQDAS or a simple word processing or spreadsheet software program (Yin, 2018). This database allows others to inspect the data used to arrive at the study's results. Using a case study protocol and a case study database will dramatically increase the reliability of the case study (Yin, 2018).

Dependability

Dependability adds to the reliability of the research study by providing a trust in the data. Connelly (2016) stated dependability is how stable the data are over time and

conditions of the study. Dependability has a focus on the conditions of the study. Not every study will have the same conditions but might have similar conditions. Having dependability in the study will provide future researchers confidence that the data will be reliable based on the same study conditions.

Validity

Validity is the credibility and accuracy of the research study (George et al., 2003). Validity has two general divisions, internal and external (George et al., 2003). Internal validity determines if the actual observations and data measurements are actual and true observations and measurements (George et al., 2003). Yin (2018) describes internal validity as establishing a causal relationship between an event and a result. One concern with internal validity is inferences made by the researcher regarding events not observed (Yin, 2018). External validity generalizes the findings beyond the research study (George et al., 2003; Yin, 2018).

Credibility

Credibility is one of the essential indicators for a strong qualitative study (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Credibility techniques include sampling, prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checks (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Prolonged engagement is when a large amount of time is spent in the field researching the phenomenon (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Member checking is when the data and analysis are shared with the participant to get their feedback (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). I used sampling and member checking to ensure credibility and dependability in the study.

Data triangulation also helps for credibility and to reduce bias. Triangulation is using multiple data sources or methods to reach a complete understanding of the phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014). There are four types of triangulations: method triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and data source triangulation (Carter et al., 2014; Fusch et al., 2018). Method triangulation uses multiple methods of data collection like interviews, observations, and field notes (Carter et al., 2014). Investigator triangulation requires two or more researchers studying the same phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014). Theory triangulation uses different theories to study the phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014). Data source triangulation is collecting data from different data types like individuals, groups, families, or communities to understand and validate the data (Carter et al., 2014). I used data source triangulation for this study.

Conformability

Conformability refers to utilizing the same processes used in one study to research another occurrence of the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Similarly, the process should also be able to be used to find contrasting results. Slevin et al. (1999) used the word consistency to describe the stability and validity of the research to ensure the findings repeated with the same results. I used strict adherence to the interview protocol (Appendix A) to ensure the conformability of the research study.

Transferability

The study findings should be able to be applied to other studies or scenarios. The term transferability concerning the research study means the findings may apply in other

studies or scenarios (Slevin et al., 1999). Slevin et al. (1999) state that five criteria enhance transferability. These criteria are:

1. Providing rich and dense data.
2. Focusing the study on the typical situation.
3. Investigate more than one site.
4. Study the leading edge of change.
5. Using a systemic approach.

I presented the study's findings using rich and dense data to ensure the transferability of the study.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, the researcher restated the purpose statement to explore leaders' leadership strategies to implement an effective remote working program. The role of the researcher was identified and discussed, along with the participants, the targeted population, and the geographic location of the participants. The research method, research design, and ethical research were also discussed in Section 2. Data collection and data analysis were addressed. Section 2 concluded with the reliability and validity of the research study. In Section 3, the findings will be presented and how the results are applied to professional practice and any impact on positive social change.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

Section 3 includes the presentation of the findings, application for professional practice, implication for social change, and recommendations for action. This section concludes with suggestions for further research, personal reflections, and a conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

The objective of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies used to implement a successful remote working program. In this study, I used Kahn's (1989) OLT as the conceptual framework used to represent the way leaders motivate and measure remote workers. The importance of this theory is to connect remote working behaviors to production metrics used by managers to ensure the workers are meeting the defined goals set by the leadership.

The research question is, what leadership strategies do leaders use to implement effective remote working programs? Qualitative data were collected using structured interviews conducted with three leaders of a company that has a successful remote working program with operations in the State of Florida. The interviews were transcribed, and the transcriptions were sent to the participants for member checking.

The participants' identities were kept confidential in the transcripts and are referenced using the codes P1, P2, and P3. The data are secured on an external drive with encryption security. The drive will be kept in a locked location for a period of 5 years.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was needed to interpret the data and report the findings. I used Yin's (2011) five phases of analysis to analyze and interpret the data. Yin's five phase cycle of data analysis. The five phase cycle includes compiling the data, disassembling the data, reassembling the data, interpreting the data, and concluding the data (Yin, 2011). The data analysis can be performed manually or with computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software like CAQDAS, Atlas.ti, or NVivo (Yin, 2018).

The first phase is compiling the data (Yin, 2011). I developed a set of questions that were asked of the study participants during semi structured interviews. The interviews were recorded to capture the exact responses from the study participants. I took the recordings of the semi structured interviews and uploaded them in a secured location with password protection separate from the other research. I then transcribed the interviews, so the data were compiled for further analysis.

Each participant's interview has their own folder to ensure integrity of the data. All notes and member checking data are also stored in their respective folders. A database was created for each participant where the data created from the recordings is stored for data analysis. The data analysis was performed by MAXQDA, and the database was compatible with the software used.

The second phase is disassembling the data (Yin, 2011). Disassembling the data includes breaking down the data into categories and creating codes to sort the data into themes (Yin, 2011). I categorized the responses to each question into codes. The codes have words that reoccur in the data included in a table format. These codes were then

grouped into themes. I used MAXQDA to organize the data. The themes helped show strategies that leaders use to implement a successful remote working program.

The third phase is reassembling the data (Yin, 2011). Reassembling the data includes categorizing and tabulating the data and analyzing it to determine if any patterns or themes exist in the data (Yin, 2011). The data tables created were run through MAXQDA to identify themes based on the codes of data from the interviews. I was able to determine any patterns that developed in the data. These patterns represented themes that helped answer the research question.

As the data were reassembled, there emerged themes that several data points could be grouped together. The data pointed to leadership which was further categorized as leadership strategies and leadership styles. Another theme that emerged was management. There were several data points that could be categorized as management, but no further subcategories could be made. The third theme to emerge was pros and cons. After further analysis, it was categorized as benefits and drawbacks.

The fourth phase is interpreting the data (Yin, 2011). Interpreting the data includes triangulating the data to provide meaning and to answer the research question (Yin, 2011). The data were formatted into codes and themes to allow the data analysis to determine any connections the themes have with the research question. There was sufficient data to answer the research question and the conclusion phase began.

The fifth phase is concluding the data (Yin, 2011). Concluding the data includes answering the research question based on the results of the research study (Yin, 2011). I used member checking to confirm the data. Member checking allows the study

participants the opportunity to verify the interpretation of the interviews are accurate (Yeong et al., 2018). I used the results to provide the conclusion of the study and to make recommendations for future research.

Based on thematic analysis, three themes emerged in relation to strategies used to implement a successful remote working program. Those themes are leadership strategies and styles, management of remote workers, and the benefits and drawbacks to remote working. The leaders were very familiar with strategies used by the company for the remote working program. The study findings confirmed the leadership strategies that are best to utilize a successful remote working program.

Theme 1: Leadership Strategies and Styles

Leadership Strategies

There are many strategies and styles leaders use to maximize production. The study participants stated that using production incentives and metrics was the most effective way to maximize production. Concerning incentives, P3 stated, “Definitely incentivizing those that perform has been a big part of our success.” P1 stated, “So, the most effective way that we have used so far is through incentive programs on volume and quality.” Concerning metrics, P2 stated, “Articulate to the team how you are looking to benchmark success, and if you have metric-driven businesses, you know that is even better.” P2 went on to say, “Measure them based more on the output.” Production metrics is what managers used to evaluate if the remote workers were reaching their production targets.

Leadership Styles

The participants also discussed that micromanagement is not a good leadership style for a successful remote working program. P2 stated, “I don’t think that micromanagement works very well.” P1 went on to say, “So, it’s more of about trying to recognize and reward than it is about looking constantly over somebody’s shoulder.” P1 additionally said, “And not crossing the line or again where it feels like micromanagement versus being there to support them.” P3 said, “We don’t like to manage by fear and having people worried about her jobs.” This identified clearly that micromanaging a remote working program would not lead to overall success.

Leadership strategies relate directly to Kahn’s (1989) OLT because the focus is on incentives for the remote workers to promote a positive behavior of giving a high level of production and quality. The presence of rewards or penalties also helps motivate employees of the organization (Kahn, 1989). Leadership styles relate to the OLT based on the engagement of the remote workers. Micromanaging does not support a positive rewarding environment for remote workers.

Theme 2: Management of Remote Workers

Management of the remote workers was an important theme from the interviews. The participants discussed the impact the global pandemic had on the operations, the results the pandemic had on operations, and management styles managers use with remote workers. They also discussed the importance of metrics and incentives when motivating remote workers. The participants also discussed the challenges managers faced when dealing with a remote working staff.

The global pandemic had a tremendous impact on business operations around the world. The participants discussed how it impacted their organization and what changes were needed to ensure continued operations. P3 stated, “And when covid hit we actually had to have those resources in India, we had to have equipment shipped to their houses, and other types of security protocols and incentives in place to make sure that individuals in India were able to perform and execute out the strategies.” Additionally, P3 said, “Really having the right protocols and the security management incentives is key.” Having a remote working program in the United States allowed the company to apply the same processes to India and initiate the remote working program there quickly to have the least amount of impact on operations.

The global pandemic also affected the leverage the company had to offer remote working to top performers. P1 stated, “There was nothing to be earned anymore because it was automatic, so it was a great motivational tool because folks like to work at home.” P1 also said, “When it becomes an assumed given, you have to figure out how to help the folks that may not be as good remotely perform better.” P2 stated, “When you’re going through covid as a for instance, everything had to be done remote, and now people are looking more rationally at it and saying that ‘hey, remote may work, but maybe not for these two things. It works for these eight, but not for these two.’” All workers became remote workers overnight and leadership had to make adjustments to how they handled the staff.

Remote working takes effort from managers and the participants have mentioned the importance of metrics. The results of remote working help to determine the success of

the program. P3 went on to say, “We’ve seen both offshore and onshore, people have gotten more efficient.” P3 provided further clarification with the following comment: “Increased throughput, better quality, which when you think of offshore, or when I thought offshore, you know it’s the low cost option, you can potentially pass pricing onto clients, and you can be the low-cost provider, but that was not the story at all, the story was, increased efficiency and increased quality.” P1 said, “Because of the way we split it out, and bifurcated that process, the quality has improved, and the productivity has improved. Which is what you want, and that’s what it is about.” Leadership has definitely seen increased production and quality but has clarified that it takes managers to support the remote workers to realize the full results of the remote working program.

Managers are an important part to the remote working program’s success. There are different aspects that make up a good manager for a remote working program. Their management style is one of the biggest components. When asked what the least effective style would be, P3 stated, “I would say ‘Laissez-faire,’ just kind of let people flow and not have oversight.” They went on to say, “Productivity is going to decrease in that environment.” The participants agreed that micromanagement also does not work well. What they all agreed on is an environment driven by personal accountability where the remote workers have goals and metrics are key to success. P3 confirmed by saying, “You need to have these controls in place to be successful in a remote environment.” Having incentives was also important. P3 specified that “everyone was aligned with the goals, and when we hit our goals, they were incentivized accordingly.”

Managers faced challenges having to adapt to a fully remote working program. P1 explained, “It’s so hard of now because managers – we have solid strong managers – they’re not equipped to work in a remote environment and to make people get on phones, if they don’t pick up the phone, does that mean they are moving their mouse?” P2 further explained, “As a manager, you need to be comfortable with the fact that remote can also just be remote to your physical location, and if you were used to running a team of 40 to 50 people who all sat in offices or cubicles kind of in front of you, and now you have this geographically dispersed model, it will be different. You need to think about ‘how do I benchmark those people,’ ‘how do I think about being successful in that context,’ whether somebody is working from a home office, or whether they are working from a company office in a different part of the globe.” P2 also stated, “I think it’s around education of how to think about and benchmark people. I will say that there are a lot of folks that spent their entire careers working with teams that were directly in front of them. And they really struggled with moving to more of a remote type of work environment.”

To help managers with this challenge, the company split the management duties. P1 explains, “We’ve tried to make it a ‘help yourself’ environment so that we have folks that are production managers (PMs) or quality managers (QMs). So, we’ve bifurcated out the management a bit. So that the remote staff can kind of seek where they feel the most assistance based on the issue they are having.” P1 further clarified this split: “So what we get is we split it up that specialization component I talked about a little bit. There’s a quality group that holds lunch and learns, there is a performance group that works

through HR issues and scheduling issues with them, there's a productivity group with quick hints on what they can do to improve, so it's kind of hitting them with multiple different teams or folks instead of having just one manager that's a do all, credit and grade specialist." This approach is a nonconventional way of managing, but it has proved to be successful. P2 states, "It proved that people could be effective working remote if properly managed, which gets you to a place where you can have more of a hybrid or even fully remote work structure and have more people over the organization comfortable with that." Effective managers play a critical role in the success of the remote working program.

Management applies directly to the OLT because the focus is on the metrics and performance of the remote workers. These measurements determine if the remote workers receive an incentive or have a redesignation to work in the office. Also, there is an expectation that the remote worker has to hit production goals to continue working remotely, which the remote worker holds as a benefit.

Theme 3: Benefits and Drawbacks to Remote Working

The third theme that emerged was benefits and drawbacks to remote working. Understanding the benefits and drawbacks is important when deciding to implement a remote working program, otherwise, the program will not be successful. The benefits are split between benefits for the remote worker and benefits for the company. The drawbacks would be any concerns the company would need to be aware of with a remote working program.

The OLT describes an exchange of social values between two parties (Kahn, 1989). The remote worker determines the worth of the gift by the benefits they receive from working remotely. Leadership should be aware of these benefits. P1 describes one of the benefits as, “They can start at 6 in the morning and finish up earlier in the afternoon which is more conducive, and you can’t do that in the office as easily.” P3 stated, “Having people who were commuting into offices an hour, an hour a half each way, they are losing 2 and a half to 3 hours of their day just commuting, and we actually saw higher productivity domestically as well just having people waking up and working, you can take some time off to recharge during the day, and flexibility that I feel is strongly we are never going to get back to 5 days a week where you have to be in an office.” P2 explained, “You are minimizing your time spending getting to and out of work, adding some flexibility to your life, and really it’s a good fit, because that is your lifestyle.” The main benefit is having more control over the work time and environment. Avoiding loss time to traffic and commuting and having the flexibility to work different hours are important benefits to remote workers.

Benefits for the leaders of the company are a little different. These focus on the productivity and financial benefit for the company. P3 summed it up as, “So it isn’t just about doing it cheaper, it’s about doing it better and faster than our competitors.” They further clarified this by saying, “it’s given us a competitive edge where certain firms we compete against don’t have offshore or had a return to office policy too early. We were really able to recruit employees and retain those employees even in a tough market, so can’t stress enough how important it has been to our strategy overall and success as a

firm.” P2 stated, “they are able to find that time during the day when they are the most aligned with getting the maximum amount of throughput.” P3 added quality to throughput as they are equally important.

There are drawbacks to remote working that impact both the remote workers and the company. The drawbacks center around the personal connection lost by working remotely. P1 states, “This is kind of like so impersonal, it’s a challenge, you know everything is remote and then you mail them a laptop, you know?” P1 also said, “I miss the connectivity you get to have with folks, right?”. P2 added, “as far as taking away potential community aspects of building a culture and alignment on bigger, strategic projects, which take more active discussion and problem-solving.” There is a need to have a higher level of engagement with remote workers to overcome this disconnection.

The benefits and drawbacks directly relate to the OLT because they relate metrics and production goals with the benefits of working remotely. The remote workers accept both the benefits and the drawbacks of working remotely and perform accordingly to ensure they do not lose the privilege of remote working.

Application to Professional Practice

The results of this research study contributed to a number of strategies that leaders can take to implement a successful remote working program. Leaders utilize a supporting style of management built with well-defined metrics and clear expectations. Managers do not have a micromanagement style when managing remote workers. Leaders also incorporate an incentive program to incentivize the remote workers to reach their

maximum production and quality levels. Managers play a critical role in the success or failure of the remote working program.

The results of the data revealed that managers are a key component of the remote working program because they have the direct contact with the employees. Since the employees do not work in the office, the manager might be the only contact the employee will have with the company. That is the reason the managers need to have a supportive role rather than a micromanager. The managers will also have the responsibility of monitoring the production and quality of work from the remote workers. Leaders need to work with managers that don't have much experience working with a remote work staff since it requires a different approach than dealing with an in-office staff. Dividing the management roles allows managers to focus on their assigned metrics. That might be a production manager that focusses on the production any quality, and a personnel manager that focuses on the employee's attendance and professional goals.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Social change is ideas, strategies, and actions that promote the wealth, dignity, and development of a culture or society's communities, organizations, and individuals (Walden, 2019). Remote working allows companies to hire talent regardless of their geographic location. The company developed a large workforce in India utilizing the benefits of remote working. This provided jobs for many workers in India. These jobs provide money that will go directly into the local economy in India.

Recommendations for Action

This research study focused on strategies used by leadership to implement a successful remote working program. The following may help leaders when implementing a remote working program. Leaders should dedicate training and development to the frontline managers to ensure they do not use a micromanagement approach to manage the remote staff. Leaders and managers should develop metrics that the remote workers will be measured to determine their production and quality. Leaders should develop a support system for the remote workers to utilize for help and guidance.

One of the drawbacks to the remote working program is a lack of engagement or feeling of isolation by the remote worker. To avoid this problem, leaders should encourage engagement by offering opportunities to connect with the remote workers on at least a weekly basis. Managers should be in contact with the remote workers daily to offer support and encouragement. This engagement will help improve the job satisfaction of the remote workers and will increase production and quality.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this single qualitative case study is to explore the leadership strategies that leaders use to implement an effective remote working program. The results of the study indicated that managers play a key role in the success of the remote working program. Future research is needed regarding the strategies that managers use to develop and maintain a successful remote working team who operates at a high level of efficiency, production, and quality.

The research study also revealed an issue regarding connectivity felt by both leaders and the remote workers. Engagement is the state of mind that work is fulfilling and positive, and the supervisor supports and monitors their personal work goals (Groen et al., 2018). Future research could be done to explore the strategies used to improve the engagement between leadership, management, and the remote working staff.

Reflections

I have worked remotely for 6 years prior to COVID. When I began my doctoral journey, I felt that more companies were considering a remote working program. What I did not plan for was a global pandemic that would force companies to develop a remote working program out of necessity rather than planning. What I later discovered was that companies that did not utilize the right strategies in their remote working programs ended up going back to the office sooner than others. Many companies have ended their remote working programs stating they failed. This study has shown that a successful remote working program can be accomplished and can provide a strategic advantage for hiring and retaining top talent. Also, there is a dramatic financial benefit by expanding the remote working program to areas like India where the costs are much lower.

Another discovery was the impact managers had on the success of the remote working program. Not every manager can manage a remote working staff. Leaders just assume that there is no difference, but it became clear during this study that bad managers, or managers that micromanage can have a negative impact on the success of the remote working program. This might be the reason that other companies failed in their attempts at remote working.

Conclusion

Business leaders face challenges when trying to implement a successful remote working program. The goal of this qualitative single-case research study was to use the OLT as a lens to identify strategies leaders use to implement a successful remote working program. The results of this study addressed the research found via the Literature Review, which identified there was a need for strategies needed to implement and manage a successful remote working program. Data were collected using open-ended questions with semi-structured interviews of three leaders of a financial services company. The data were analyzed using MAXQDA software to identify three themes. The themes were leadership strategies and styles, management of remote workers, and the benefits and drawbacks to remote working.

Leaders face challenges with remote working, particularly due to COVID that forced companies to adapt to working remotely. Workers were able to experience the benefits of working remotely and have expressed the desire to continue working in this manner. When employees are denied the opportunity to work remotely, they are more likely to leave the company within a year (Caillier, 2018). It creates an opportunity for companies to recruit top talent if they have a successful remote working program. The study confirms that effective leadership strategies can result in a successful remote working program, but there are still opportunities for further research.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

1. Contact target leaders via email addresses found on company websites and trade websites.
2. Send an email with the informed consent as the invitation to join the research study.
3. Once the informed consent form is received, schedule a one-on-one interview via their preferred method of contact: Phone, Zoom, Teams, or other video or teleconferencing application.
4. Prior to the start of the interview, share the questions with the participant.
5. Start the interview by starting the recording and ensuring to cover the confidentiality and approval to record the interview.
6. Ask all of the interview questions and follow-up questions.
7. Thank the participants for their time and participation in the research study and let them know I will send them follow-up emails with the data and analysis to ensure accuracy in their responses.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What is your current role or title?
2. What specific leadership strategies do you use to implement an effective remote working program?
3. What leadership strategies do you feel have the greatest impact on improving the remote working program?
4. What leadership style works best with strategies to improve the remote working program?
5. Have the leadership strategies improved the overall performance of the remote workers? Please explain your answer.
6. What would you consider to be the least effective leadership strategies to improve the effectiveness of a remote working program?
7. What leadership strategies did you use regarding front line managers of the remote workers?
8. What results have you seen after implementing the remote working program?
9. What impact, if any, did the pandemic have on your strategies with the remote working program?
10. What other information do you wish to share that was not asked in this interview session?