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Exploring Increased Productivity Through Employee Engagement

Wayne K. Richards Jr.
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Walden University
2013

Abstract

Exploring Increased Productivity Through Employee Engagement

by

Wayne K. Richards Jr.

EMBA, Troy University 2007

BS, University of Maryland University College, 2005

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

November 2013

Abstract

Disengaged employees cost U.S. companies billions of dollars annually in lowered productivity, a cost which has been compounded by the difficult economic situations in the country. The potential for increasing productivity through increased employee engagement was examined in this study. Using personal engagement theory and the theory of planned behavior, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how the experiences of salaried aerospace employees affected productivity and the financial performance of an organization. Interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of 20 aerospace employees whose responses were codified and analyzed to identify themes. The analysis indicated that (a) the lived experiences of employees influenced employee engagement, (b) employee engagement affects organizational commitment and performance, and (c) trust and respect and leadership are essential components to keep employees engaged. Eighty percent of the participants indicated that as employee engagement increases so too does organizational performance. The implications for positive social change include new insights for leaders seeking to increase productivity and financial performance, and to support employee engagement for maintaining sustainability, retaining talent, increasing profits, and improving the economy.

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Dedication

I thank God for giving me the inspiration through his Holy Spirit to embark on this rewarding and great academic journey. I also want to honor my spouse, children, and close friends for encouraging me through the course of my study not to give up. In addition, this study is dedicated to those youth who march onward and upward toward the light.

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge my committee: Dr. Emad Rahim (chair); Dr. Strickland (second committee member), and Dr. Judith Blando (university research reviewer), for their diligence in helping me successfully complete this highest level of academic achievement.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Many organizational leaders understand that improving employee productivity tends to increase profitability. Many approaches, methods, and principles exist for increasing productivity (Deming, 1986; Fotopoulos & Psomas, 2010; Ishikawa, 1985; Juran, 1988). Process-improvement initiatives are among the most accepted means of improving employee productivity. Organizational leaders develop process-improvement initiatives to improve the efficiencies personnel will implement (Woodward, 2009). Lean manufacturing is a cost-reduction strategy designed to eliminate non-value-added steps and processes from a bottom-up approach to quality assurance management (Lian & Van Landeghem, 2007). Lean manufacturing and Six Sigma reduce variation by developing repeatable steps to increase productivity. Lean initiatives would fail if leaders do not factor in the behaviors and attitudes of employees needed to execute tasks (Shetty, Componation, Gholston, & Utley, 2010).

Deming's (1986) 14 points for total quality management (TQM) address the behavioral attributes that lean is missing. Deming's 14 points for TQM create a logical connection of increasing efficiencies through increasing employee morale, which supports the need for quality change to come from a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach. Employee engagement affects productivity, profitability, and financial performance in the workplace (Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Productivity derives from employee engagement, and a need exists to develop more strategies to increase employee engagement (Westover, Westover, & Westover, 2010). Employee engagement refers to managing the discretionary effort of

employees that furthers the interests of their organization (Kennedy & Daim, 2010; Villara & Albertína, 2010). Many theorists have indicated that engaged employees bring optimal value to organizations (Gilson & Mathieu, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore how the lived experiences of a purposive sample of 20 salaried aerospace employees affect productivity and the financial performance of an organization.

Background of the Problem

The use of technology, Six Sigma, best practices, skilled labor, and education has helped to increase efficiencies in large-scale manufacturing and engineering firms; however, lowered productivity caused by disengaged employees has affected the financial performance of many U.S. companies since 2002 (Heger, 2007). Examples of lowered productivity include increased rework, excessive waste, growing cycle times, and a reduction of product produced because of missed deadlines, budget overruns, and defect increases. Productivity has an effect on the financial performance of an organization. Lost productivity represents a gap in the financial performance of companies and affects the longevity of an organization. The financial performance of an organization relates to the manner in which productivity increases (Bottazzi, Secchi, & Tamagnci, 2008).

The productivity of an organization also relies on the efforts of employees (Nadler, Cundiff, Lowery, & Jackson, 2010). The efforts of employees play a primary role in helping organizational leaders achieve financial goals (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Mishra, 2011). Interpersonal behaviors affect productivity; consequently,

organizational leaders have begun to monitor how interpersonal behaviors influence productivity (Somech, Desivilya, & Lidogoster, 2009). Negative interpersonal behaviors could lower employee engagement and could have a negative effect on productivity. In a professional setting, interpersonal behaviors include trust and respect, collaboration between teams, employee skill building, and the willingness to share knowledge, leadership, and followership (Abu Bakar, Dilbeck, & McCroskey, 2010; Wallis, Yammarino, & Feyerherm, 2011). Interpersonal behaviors influence employee engagement, and negative interpersonal behaviors can lower productivity. Kennedy and Daim found in 2010 that as many as 50% of employees in the United States are less than fully engaged in their work roles. In addition, perhaps as many as 23% are completely disengaged in their roles, and as many as 27% are fully engaged in their roles (Kennedy & Daim, 2010). Organizational leaders will need to understand that the execution of any task is contingent on the engagement level of their personnel. Leaders who factor in the engagement level needed to execute workloads may experience higher productivity in the workplace. Employees in organizations with highly engaged workforces tend to produce the desired business results in a more efficient manner and leaders retain talent effectively (Shucka, Reio, & Rocco, 2011; Villara & Albertína, 2010; Zigarmi, Nimon, Houson, Witt, & Dieh, 2009).

Problem Statement

The decline of the U.S. economy has caused volatility in the financial performance of several industries, as evidenced by a $250 billion decrease in the gross domestic product from 2008 to 2009 (U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of

Economic Analysis, 2009). The financial crisis caused U.S. business leaders to manage the financial performance of their businesses carefully, which resulted in decreased employee engagement (Campello, Graham, & Harvey, 2010). Disengaged employees cause approximately $300 billion in lost productivity annually in the United States, creating a financial burden greater than the decrease in the gross domestic product (Attridge, 2009). The general business problem is that aerospace companies are losing profits because of disengaged employees (Kennedy & Daim, 2010). The specific business problem is the lack of information about how to increase employee engagement in U.S. aerospace companies (Campello et al., 2010; Gruman & Saks, 2011).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore how the lived experiences of a purposive sample of 20 salaried aerospace employees affect productivity and the financial performance of an organization. The 20 salaried employees worked at a global aerospace defense company in the southwest region of the United States comprised of entry-level to midgrade employees responsible for performing daily operations. The salaried employees had experience working in a project management environment in which cost and schedule were primary contributing factors to complete the targeted objectives of a project. Learning more about what employees think about their own level of work engagement and their productivity will help the leaders of aerospace defense companies develop strategies to improve employee engagement and productivity. Increasing employee engagement in projects may increase the productivity and profitability of aerospace defense companies.

The study involved exploring the lived experiences and perceptions of employees as they relate to engagement and productivity in the workplace in an aerospace environment. The lived experiences and perceptions of employees identified how the behaviors of disengaged employees affect productivity in a project management setting (Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Richman, 2006). The analysis from this study revealed that increasing the engagement level of employees would improve productivity in a project management environment, thus increasing the financial performance of organizations. Increasing employee engagement could create financial gains and effect positive social change by increasing productivity and developing project management labor forces with higher levels of engagement in aerospace companies.

Nature of the Study

The phenomenological research method is an inquiry method used to explore individuals' lived experiences (Giorgi, 2008; van Manen, 2007). The qualitative phenomenological method was appropriate for this study because the study involved exploring a phenomenon to understand the perceptions of others through recurring themes. Moustakas (1994) developed a clear approach for researchers to conduct a phenomenological study. Moustakas's model was applicable to this study because exploring the lived experiences and perceptions of employee engagement could help the leaders of aerospace defense companies develop strategies to improve employee engagement. Ethnography, case studies, and grounded theory were not appropriate because they do not involve gathering the personal lived experiences of each individual in a personal setting for an acknowledged phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The

phenomenological study involved interviewing 20 aerospace employees working in project-oriented settings to understand how to increase employee engagement to improve productivity.

Research and Interview Questions

Research questions help researchers to focus a study on the problem (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012; Schultze & Avital, 2011). In this study, I included interview questions to gather data about the lived experiences of professionals working in a project management setting. Interview questions are valid for gathering information about a particular phenomenon (Petty et al., 2012; Schultze & Avital, 2011). I also included four, fundamental research questions that I developed to identify the strategies that may increase employee engagement in an aerospace environment.

Research Questions

R1: What are the attributes that define how employees become engaged or
    disengaged in their tasks?

R2: How does employee engagement affect productivity?

R3: What role does leadership have in employee engagement?

R4: What are the factors that employees perceive to have an influence on
    employee engagement?

Interview Questions

Q1: How do you define employee engagement?

Q2: In your role, what keeps you fully engaged in your tasks?

Q3: In your role, how and why do employees become disengaged in their task?

Q4: How do you remain motivated in your current role?

Q5: In your role, how does job satisfaction affect your engagement level?

Q6: How does your engagement level affect your decision to remain with the

company?

Q7: What gives your work meaning in your role?

Q8: How would you describe the role of leadership in employee engagement?

Q9: How do you believe employees can be reengaged?

Q10: What effect and influence do disengaged employees have in the

organization?

Q11: How does trust and respect in the organization and leadership affect

employee engagement?

Q12: What is your perception of employee engagement?

Q13: How would you describe the relationship between employee engagement

and organizational performance?

Q14: What effect does employee engagement have on productivity?

The research questions helped me to identify and develop these interview questions to

understand employee engagement in an aerospace environment.

Conceptual Framework

Kahn (1990, 1992) introduced the term *personal engagement* and furthered

research on employee motivational factors. Kahn (1990) developed the personal

engagement theory, which researchers have used in both academic and professional

studies that relate to employee engagement. Kahn's personal engagement theory

measures the engagement or disengagement level of employees through commitment. Human behaviors drive employee engagement and have a connection to the theory of planned behavior (TPB) through cognitive self-regulation (Ajzen, 1991). The theory is a disposition approach that researchers can use to predict the outcomes of human behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The engagement level of an employee derives from his or her ability to make a cognitive decision to display a given behavior. Ajzen (1991) noted that human intentions capture the actions that motivate employees. Intentions also influence the behaviors to which individuals commit themselves to attempt to align behaviors to accomplish daily tasks.

Kahn's (1990) personal engagement and disengagement theoretical framework aligns with the TPB with regard to understanding the concept of employee engagement from a behavioral aspect of organizational commitment. Kahn defined personal engagement by noting that employees express themselves in a physical, cognitive, and emotional manner in their job-related roles. Employees are more excited and content in their roles when they can use their strengths to perform well. Personal engagement theory also indicated that individuals fluctuate in their levels of attachment to one in three of their roles (physical, emotional, and cognitive roles). Employees become physically involved in their tasks, whether in a group setting or alone, and become cognitively observant and empathically connected to the individuals while completing a task through a personal connection (Kahn, 1990). Employees may have a greater sense of task ownership when they have a commitment to their organizations.

According to personal engagement theory, individuals withdraw from situations and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally while performing their roles in the workplace (Kahn, 1990). Kahn (1990) explained that disengaged employees detach themselves from their roles by removing or suppressing their expressive and energetic personalities from a task. Uncertainty, anxiety, insecurity, stress, and apprehension are factors that increase the likelihood of employees disengaging from tasks (Chughtai & Buckley, 2008). Unethical leadership behaviors such as loss of internal controls, not adhering to checks and balances, or ignoring company rules and regulations can also cause employees to become disengaged from their tasks and lower organizational commitment (Van Vugt, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2008). The meaningfulness of a perceived benefit or the safety of a situation causes an individual's personal engagement to vary.

Personal engagement and disengagement align with TPB because in a behavioral state, motivation is the key driver to demonstrating behavior at both a personal and a professional level. Motivation is an attribute that helps to increase the productivity of employees. Job satisfaction relies on the motivational level of an employee. Motivation relates to whether an employee feels emotionally charged to complete assigned tasks (Buchner, 2007). The productivity of an organization depends on the engagement level of the employees. Conversely, individuals can become disengaged and defend themselves by withdrawing and hiding their identity, ideas, and feelings; the aforementioned behaviors have an adverse effect on work performance (Kahn, 1990).

Definition of Terms

To explore employee engagement, the following definitions helped me to establish and clarify unique terms germane to the research.

Absorption: The level of intensity that employees engage in within their roles (Rothbord, 2001). Absorption determines how employees physically engage in their roles.

Affective commitment: The emotional attachments that employees have for an organization's culture, job characteristics, and personal interaction of coworkers (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In a professional setting, affective commitment is important because it pertains to an employee's personal commitment to stay with an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Attention: The amount of time an employee spends thinking about his or her role in an organization (Rothbord, 2001). Attention determines how employees mental engage in their roles.

Appreciative inquiry: An organizational development process or philosophy that engages individuals within an organizational system in its renewal, change and focused performance; which utilizes the 4D model; discovery, dream, design, and destiny to develop change initiatives (Ferris, 2009). Appreciative inquiry can facilitate the transformation of an organization and is a beneficial tool that organizational leadership can use to develop managers who build consensus and buy-in for any change effort (Ferris, 2009).

Collaboration: Group process work that promotes employee engagement and occurs when employees work together to produce or create something and consists of employee skill building; and the willingness to share knowledge, leadership, and followership (Abu Bakar, Dilbeck, & McCroskey, 2010; Wallis, Yammarino, & Feyerherm, 2011).

Cost and schedule: Cost is the price that a contractor or project champion pays for services, and a schedule lists the activities needed to provide the services for which a contractor or project champion is paying (Davey, 2004).

Continuance commitment: An attribute of organizational commitment that creates opportunities for employees to feel satisfaction in their job and add value to their organizations (Gong, Law, Chang, & Xin 2009; Wang, Indridason, & Saunders, 2010).

Employee disengagement: Removing oneself. Psychologically, or devoting less attention to work (Chughtai & Buckley, 2008; Kahn, 1990). Disengagement means detaching emotionally from work performance (Kahn, 1990). Negative influences can lead to an increase in the level of engagement or disengagement (Kahn, 1990). Uncertainty, anxiety, insecurity, stress, and apprehension are factors that increase the likelihood of employees to disengage (Chughtai & Buckley, 2008). Unethical leadership behaviors such as loss of internal controls, checks and balances, or ignoring company rules and regulations can also cause employees to become disengaged from their tasks and lower organizational commitment (Van Vugt et al., 2008).

Employee engagement: The management of the discretionary effort of employees that furthers an organization's interests (Kennedy & Daim, 2010; Villara & Albertína,

2010). Kahn (1990) defined employee engagement as the level to which employees are willing to commit to accomplishing the goals of an organization. Employees become committed when they feel valued and rewarded for their accomplishments and experience a level of trust from their leaders (Catteeuw, Flynn, & Vonderhorst, 2007). When employees feel valued and trusted, they may become more willing to commit to the goals of the organization.

External self-related employability (SRE): Job opportunities outside an organization and affects the engagement level of an employee (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011).

Internal self-related employability: The perception about the job opportunities within an organization and affects the engagement level of an employee (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011).

Job satisfaction: A foundational element of employee engagement (Villara & Albertína, 2010). Job satisfaction refers to how content an employee is with his or her job (Kennedy & Daim, 2010; Villara & Albertína, 2010).

Kaizen: A continuous improvement philosophy that has caused a shift in process improvement and encourages everyone from the executive to the individual contributor within the organization to seek ways to improve efficiency (Farris, Van Aken, Doolen, & Worley, 2009)

Leadership: The ability to motivate and encourage a group of employees to achieve a particular scope of work Hong, Catano, & Liao, 2011; Dalakoura, 2010; Erwin, & Garman, 2010; Ferris, 2009).

Motivation: The process that employees use to maintain goal-oriented behaviors. Motivation is what causes us to what causes employees to engage in their work (Kahn, 1990; Zigarmi et al., 2009).

Modified Van Kaam method: An analysis method used to group them by themes, analyze them for understanding, and to identify recurring themes within the phenomenon being explored (Moustakas, 1994).

Normative commitment: An employee's perceptions of their obligation to their organization. (Meyer & Allen, 1991) Normative commitment serve as motivating factors that increase employee engagement (Macmillan-Kang, Stewart, & Kim, 2011; Meyer et al., 2011).

Organizational commitment: An organizational relationship that determines an employee's willingness to remain with a company based on the psychological condition and circumstances of the employee (Bamberg, Akroyd, & Moore, 2008). Committed employees take the initiative to resolve organizational problems (Kumar & Giri, 2009). Level of commitment can depend on employee preferences and work experience (Kumar & Giri, 2009).

Personal engagement: The behaviors by which employees bring in or leave out their personal selves during work role performances (Kahn, 1990)

*Qualitative self-related employability: T*he perception that employees have about the hierarchical level of job opportunities and affects the engagement level of an employee (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011).

Quantitative self-related employability: The perception about the amount of job opportunities within an organization (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011).

Six sigma: A process improvement strategy that organizations use to combat the results of lowered productivity (Shafer & Moeller, 2012).

Superficial improvement initiatives: An initiative developed based on limited data without performing a proper root cause analysis to understand the nature of a problem within a process (Sutton, 2010).

Throughput: The amount of material or items passing through a system or process. Productivity is often measured by the amount of throughput that possess through a particular process (Álvarez, Calvo, Peña, & Domingo, 2009).

Total quality management: A management system that is derived from Deming's (1986) 14 points for total quality management (TQM) The 14 points for TQM outlines the behavioral attributes needed maintaining high standards of work in every aspect of an organization's operations.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

This study included two basic assumptions. The first assumption was the participants of the phenomenological study would be available and would provide clear, honest, and unbiased feedback related to the topic. Validating the response of the participants was not part of the scope of this study. The research that I conducted pointed to recurring themes. The second assumption was that participants would respond to the interview questions relating to employee engagement.

Limitations

Time constraints to gather data, access to participants, complexity of a changing environment, and the timeliness of data interpretation were limitations of the study. Executives such as presidents, vice presidents, and directors were not participants in this study. The study took place in the southwest region of the United States. The research did not involve aligning the findings to a statistical probability of occurrence.

Delimitations

The focus of this study was aerospace defense employees in the southwest region of the United States. The data from this study provided insight to help develop strategies to improve employee engagement in an aerospace environment. The unbiased perceptions and experiences of aerospace employees were fundamental to an accurate synthesis of the information received. The participants were from diverse populations of multiple engineering disciplines, including project managers, business analysts, human resources personnel, and administrative personnel.

Significance of the Study

Reduction of Gaps

The successful completion of job-related tasks in organizations depends on the efforts of employees. Highly engaged employees are assets to their organizations, and disengaged employees can be liabilities; highly engaged employees make a substantive contribution to their agency and can predict organizational success (Gruman & Saks, 2011). In this study, I helped reduce a gap by demonstrating the effect of employee engagement and might help organizational leaders to achieve high levels of productivity

for organizations in an aerospace environment. Aerospace companies are project-oriented, and meeting cost and schedule requirements depends on the level of effort by employees. Keeping employees engaged in a project-oriented setting has a positive effect on the financial and schedule performance of projects in an aerospace environment.

Implications for Social Change

Increasing employee engagement could create positive social change by helping organizational leaders to increase productivity, which would lead to improved financial performance of organizations. Loss of productivity represents a void in a failing economy. Increasing the profitability of organizations could create a stable workforce and increase the longevity of the organizations. Understanding the phenomenon of employee engagement, as it relates to productivity, would add to the academic body of knowledge. Leaders of academic institutions, business organizations, and communities would benefit from this study by using the information to develop strategies to reduce the number of disengaged employees in the workforce.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Problems related to employee engagement affect many industries within the United States. The literature review includes information collected from several industries and applied to a qualitative phenomenological study within the aerospace industry. Employees find engaging in their roles difficult when organizational change is imminent and occurs often (Catteeuw et al., 2007). The demanding makeup of job-related tasks could also have an adverse effect on employee engagement (Morrison, Burke, & Greene, 2007). This qualitative phenomenological study involved exploring strategies

that could promote higher levels of employee engagement in the workplace. The objective of the study was to develop the framework to provide leaders in the aerospace industry with reliable information to develop management intervention strategies to increase employee engagement in the workforce.

The source of the literature that I reviewed was Walden University Library's article database and books from the following databases: ABI, Business Source Complete, EBSCO, Sage, and Science Direct. A large amount of research exists on employee engagement. The sources of the information garnered for this literature review were articles and books published since 2007 as well as information beyond that period. Key words that I used to search the databases included: *employee engagement, disengagement productivity, job satisfaction, emotional intelligence, appreciative inquiry,* and *leadership.* Conducting searches using the key words in several research databases resulted in scholarly references that related to employee engagement.

Leadership Theories

Employee engagement. Researchers have studied employee engagement and applied it among business professionals and consulting firms. Often referred to as organizational commitment or organizational citizenship (Robinson & Schroeder, 2009**;** Slack, Orife, & Anderson, 2010), employee engagement is an emotional and intellectual commitment to an organization (Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Meyer, Stanley, & Parfyonova 2011). Kahn (1990) defined employee engagement in an academic context, asserting that employees harness themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally while completing tasks. Rothbard (2001) synthesized employee engagement into two categories: attention

and absorption. Attention refers to the amount of time an employee spends thinking about his or her role in an organization. Absorption refers to the level of intensity that employees engage in within their roles. The term *employee engagement* has a number of similarities in both professional and scholarly definitions. Both academic and professional views of employee engagement appear throughout this research.

Employee disengagement. The opposite of employee engagement is *employee disengagement*, which refers to employees not engaged or disengaged employees. The behaviors of disengaged employees have an adverse effect on productivity in the workplace (Meyer et al., 2011; Richman, 2006). Kahn's (1990) personal engagement theory, which discusses the positive aspects of engagement as well as the adverse effects of disengagement, was the central theory of the research. Reducing the number of disengaged employees in the workforce could increase productivity and could create positive social change by increasing the profitability and productivity of U.S. companies.

Factors that promote employee engagement. Researchers (Macmillan-Kang, Stewart, & Kim, 2011; Meyer et al., 2011; Scherrer et al., 2010; Khan 1990) defined employee engagement from both an academic and a professional context. The exploration included factors that promote employee engagement. Exploring the factors that promoted employee engagement helped to explain employee engagement in a professional setting.

Organizational commitment. The foundation of employee engagement in a professional setting is organizational commitment, which consists of three psychological components: a desire (or affective commitment), a need (or continuance commitment), and an obligation (or normative commitment; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Meyer and Allen

(1991) noted an employee had to exhibit all three components to continue to be effective in an organization. Affective commitment relates to the emotional attachments that employees have for an organization's culture, job characteristics, and personal interaction of coworkers (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In a professional setting, affective commitment is important because it pertains to an employee's personal commitment to stay with an organization. The emotional attachment to an organization is the first barrier an employee overcomes when deciding to commit his or her talents to a job and its functions.

The second barrier to an employee's commitment to an organization is *continuance commitment*, which is the cost of maintaining employment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The cost of leaving an organization plays a role in whether employees choose to stay with their employer. Continuance commitment creates an opportunity for employees to feel satisfaction in their job and add value to their organizations (Gong, Law, Chang, & Xin 2009; Wang, Indridason, & Saunders, 2010). Retention is fundamental for organizations to grow and mature to ensure they have the appropriate mix of talents and skills to remain competitive (Carleton, 2011). Both the employee and the employer have to balance the benefits of staying in an organization compared to the potential risks of leaving.

The third barrier, *normative commitment*, is the internalization of normative pressures that an employee feels before entering an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The pressures that affect employees' commitment levels could serve as motivating factors that increase employee engagement (Macmillan-Kang, Stewart, & Kim, 2011; Meyer et al., 2011). The pressures may include mortgage notes, college tuition, children,

and so forth. Normative commitment can influence an organization positively if employees choose to align normative pressures to their motivation for completing tasks included within their job description (González & Guillén, 2008; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010).

Understanding the outcomes of employee engagement through the experiences of employees is foundational to increasing the commitment level of employees. Researchers at BlessingWhite (2008) conducted a study in North America of 3,000 employees and indicated that 19% of employees felt disengaged, 52% experienced moderate engagement, and 29% experienced full engagement. In the United States, Villara and Albertína (2010) found that 20% of employees felt disengaged, 26% experienced active engagement, and 54% were neutral about their organizational roles. Kennedy and Daim (2010) noted that 23% of employees were disengaged in their organizational roles for various reasons (i.e., lowered job security, process changes, lack of reward systems, and uncertain succession paths). The 2008-2010 downturn of the U.S. economy caused variability in the livelihood of many employees, which could have had an effect on organizational commitment.

Lowered organizational commitment could increase the level of disengagement among employees. Forced career shifts caused by layoffs could lead to a high number of employees who are neutral about their engagement. The Conference Board researchers (2008) found that 66% of employees did not align or feel motivated to produce results to help their organizations achieve their business goals (as cited in Attridge, 2009). No alignment occurred between 25% of these employees and their employers; the employees

reported they worked to receive a paycheck. Attridge (2009) also found that organizations with a significant number of highly engaged employees outperform those companies that have a disproportionate number of disengaged employees. Companies that have many disengaged employee could become less competitive.

Highly engaged employees contribute to a company's competitiveness. Eighty-four percent of highly engaged employees believe they could positively affect the quality of their employer's performance, whereas 31% of the disengaged felt that they could positively affect the quality of their employer's performance (Attridge, 2009). Attridge (2009) highlighted opportunities for organizational leaders to develop a series of actions to facilitate the engagement of employees. Organizational leadership must embrace the soft skills needed to help employees become more involved, engaged, and aligned to the needs of the organization.

Self-related employability. Organizational commitment forms the foundation of employee engagement in terms of self-related employability (SRE). Self-related employability refers to the performance and reduced commitment of employees (Marais & Perkins, 2012). Four categories of SRE perceptions are quantitative, qualitative, internal, and external. Quantitative SRE refers to the perception about the amount of job opportunities, and qualitative SRE refers to the perception about the hierarchical level of job opportunities (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011). Internal SRE refers to the perception about the job opportunities within an organization, and external SRE refers to job opportunities outside an organization (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011).

External and qualitative SRE could cause employees to lose commitment and become disengaged from their current role if there are better opportunities. Retention strategies could increase commitment and employee engagement. Managing perceptions of these issues is critical. Organizational leaders must provide work environments conducive to the emotional needs of their employees (Neumann, Eklund, Hansson, & Lindbeck, 2010; Tremblay, Blanchard, Taylor, Pelletier, & Villeneuve, 2009). Understanding the emotional needs of employees could increase commitment and employee engagement. Giffords (2009) found that the commitment level of employees indicates a modest relationship between organizational commitment and an organization's size, annual earnings, and medical benefits. Neglecting the needs of employees limits their commitment level and could minimize business results.

Dispositional measure of employability. The dispositional measure of employability affects the commitment level of employees. The dispositional measure of employability is a collection of individual differences that influence individuals to adapt proactively t to work and careers. Interest on the dispositional predictors of a variety of individual and organizational criteria has increased (Fugate, Prussia, & Kinicki, 2012). The most common dispositions investigated are transformational leadership, job performance, career satisfaction, and core self-evaluations, which include measures of self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and neuroticism. These dispositions significantly relate to perceptions of the work environment, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, task motivation, and performance (Fugate et al., 2012). The effective management of the dispositional measure of employability factors could help

organizational leaders promote higher engagement levels in the workplace (Fugate et al., 2012).

Leadership role in employee engagement. Rapid rates of workplace and social change have caused traditional leadership to dissipate because organizations are operating at levels that are often complex (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009). Concepts such as emotional intelligence (EI), appreciative inquiry, and complexity theory overshadow traditional leadership (i.e., participative leadership, servant leadership, transactional leadership). The convergence of these leadership methods could help organizational leaders manage the interdependent human actions needed for a collaborative approach to completing workplace tasks. Leadership is not always an intrinsic function, but should evolve into a highly adaptive interactive series of events in which knowledge, action, preferences, and behavioral changes affect the nature of business execution. Organizational leaders that embrace EI, will be able to manage the use of intellectual capital by developing their personnel to be open to new learning opportunities, become highly adaptable, and become self-sustaining through employee engagement.

Leaders in matrix organizations will have to become flexible in presenting viable solutions to emerging employee engagement issues. Flexibility will help leaders mobilize their employees to seize new opportunities to address complex problems (Kainen, 2010). In addition, leaders who become knowledgeable in EI will have tools to reduce tension and motivate disengaged employees (Hong, Catano, & Liao, 2011). Organizational leadership should develop leaders and managers in EI to increase organizational commitment by fostering emotional resonance. When leaders and managers exude

emotional resonance, they establish an environment that promotes organizational citizenship, which allows employees to develop their skills further and accept change (Hur, van den Berg, & Wilderom, 2011; Riggio & Lee, 2007).

Organizational leaders must understand that the use of intellectual capital and the behaviors that drive and promote employee engagement perfect task completion. Harsh deadlines, aggressive schedules, and labor shortages are barriers to increasing employee engagement (Scherrer et al., 2010). Employees can become disengaged when organizational leaders shorten timelines for difficult tasks (Shuck & Wollard, 2008). Organizations whose leaders overlook the behavioral aspect of completing difficult tasks in shorter periods will continue to experience decreased employee engagement.

Appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry is an increasingly popular organizational change method that focuses on changing how people think instead of what they do and explores how to support self-organizing change processes that flow from new ideas. Organizational leaders should invest in developing leaders to manage change through appreciative inquiry. Using the 4-D model that includes discovery, dream, define, and delivery will help employees understand the rapid pace of change from a collaborative standpoint (Ferris, 2009). Collaboration may create opportunities to finish a higher percentage of products on time and under budget. Appreciative inquiry can facilitate the transformation of an organization and is a beneficial tool that organizational leadership can use to develop managers who build consensus and buy-in for any change effort (Ferris, 2009).

Further exploring the creation of a knowledge-sharing community will create a collaborative environment within an organization. An examination of the development of an environment where employee engagement aligned with productivity and instantly affected the profitability of an organization was necessary. Innovation is driving change, and organizational leaders should develop and train their employees to embrace the change rather than resist it (Dainty & Moore, 2007; Shetty, 2010). Modeling the aforementioned behavior will increase efficiency, and organizational leaders will increase their return on invested capital and the engagement level of their workforce. To facilitate organizational change, leaders should understand why undesired behaviors exist. Seeking first to understand will help organizational leadership garner the social and historical causes of undesired behaviors as they relate to newly developed processes.

Organizational leaders have developed and deployed initiatives to help them continually improve. As a result, the continuous improvement methodology has yielded a vast number of process improvement initiatives. Isern and Pung (2007) conducted a survey of 1,536 executives involved in a wide variety of change initiatives and found that only 38% of change initiatives were successful and only 30% of the surveyed executives believed they contributed to the sustained improvement of their organizations. Isern and Pung indicated that 68% to 70% of change initiatives are unsuccessful. The aforementioned change initiative statistics represent an opportunity for organizational leaders to consider before developing change initiatives.

According to the number of change efforts encountered, some levels of resistance lower employee engagement. Bell, Gomez, and Kessler (2008) noted that people resist

change because change is a disruption in a process repeated over the course of time, and an association exists between change and learning something new. Employees can indicate resistance by displaying cognitive negative reactions. The reactions or attitudes toward change initiatives decrease commitment and cause employees to view the change effort negatively (Erwin & Garman, 2010). Erwin and Garman (2010) explained that negative responses to change could be contagious. The negative reactions can impede the progress of a new change initiative. Organizational leaders must understand that the development of advanced technology will continue to drive the rate of change. Organizational leaders will have to manage the exponential growth of technology by developing employees to accept change; otherwise, the exponential growth of technology could continue to lead to the degradation of continuity in the workplace, thus lowering employee engagement. Employees may never get a chance to master a process before it changes. Consequently, organizational leaders will not be able to apply one solution to address the exponential growth of technology.

Managing the rate of change has become difficult. Currently, organizational leadership faces shifting priorities, tighter budgets, and stringent process guidelines. Competition is the antithesis of the status quo. Disruptive innovation has also created the need to reduce cost and increase quality (Skarzynski & Rufat-Latre, 2011). Disrupters are firms that employ the disruptive innovation strategy and offer the 80% solution that the incumbent firms offer at a significantly cheaper price than the current competitive price (Georgantzas & Katsamakas, 2007). The products that exude high quality at lower prices have become lucrative marketing niches. These sequences of events have caused leaders

of business entities to modify their strategies to stay ahead of the evolution of business execution.

Dealing with change in modern organizations is complex. Leadership faces complex change more often; therefore, organizational leadership should ensure leaders are flexible and can communicate why the change is necessary to garner buy-in more quickly. Ineffective leadership could stifle employee engagement and cause a bottleneck in productivity (Powell, 2007). An unsuccessful operation leads to the degradation of revenue. When organizational leaders employ continuous improvement methods, they should understand environmental change is necessary to sustain a desired method of living (Senge, Smith, Kruschmitz, Laur, & Schley, 2008). Deploying a new process without aligning change initiatives to job satisfaction can be detrimental to the productivity of an organization.

Organizational development is a skill needed in the rapid socioeconomic change that organizational leaders in the United States experience (Mitchell & Shepherd, 2010). Managing change through leadership is an effective way to increase the engagement level of employees. Leadership development programs should be a balance between technical expertise and soft skills to help promote an organization that displays EI. Emotional intelligence has a positive influence on organizational performance, significant change transformations, management decision-making, and organizational profitability (N. Clarke, 2010). N. Clarke (2010) noted that organizational leaders and managers should fully understand EI to manage the attitudes of their employees.

A balanced management approach creates a well-rounded platform and increases the engagement of human capital. Change occurs often in organizations; for that reason, leaders manage resistance often. Change causes resistance and highlights unforeseen anomalies pertaining to learning (Leonard, 2008). Organizational leaders often predict that process changes will enhance the volume of work produced or decrease rework quickly by trying to simplify tasks and make them repeatable (Dostaler, 2010; ElMaraghy, Azab, Schuh, & Pulz, 2009). Leaders sometimes implement processes without obtaining buy-in from the key stakeholders, which causes friction and degradation and decreases the commitment level of employees (Eicher, 2006). Matthews (2008) showed that individuals are reluctant to use new technologies and methods without buy-in. Organizational leaders should invest in developing leaders to espouse organizational behavior and development methods. An investment in developing soft skills will enable organizational leaders to gain an understanding of both the technical and the social aspects of business execution (Patnayakuni & Ruppel, 2010; Pettersen, Mcdonald, & Engen, 2010). Understanding appreciative inquiry and emotional intelligence will enable leadership to place both technical and behavioral practices together in their business decisions and could lead to expanding and strengthening the organization to reach higher productivity.

Schiuma, Carlucci, and Sole (2012) used concept system thinking to develop the theoretical framework of implementation as it relates to managing change and process development. Organizational leaders fail to realize that change is hard to manage. Schiuma et al. showed that the implementation of improved processes should include

strategies to facilitate acceptance. The disengagement of employees often impedes the deployment of improved processes. Organizational leaders will need to accept that implementation is ongoing; as such, the outcome variable of perceived change in learning occurs along a continuum rather than as an absolute measure (Mischen & Jackson, 2008).

Managing change effectively will help organizational leaders to develop action plans to mitigate the occurrence of resistance. Organizational leaders should understand how negative reactions to change cause employees to become further disengaged. Properly managing change will increase productivity and improve financial performance (Antony & Bhattacharyya, 2010). Some organizational leaders try to increase throughput in ways that are not costly to the overhead (Álvarez, Calvo, Peña, & Domingo, 2009). In some organizations, employees have seen organizational leaders deploy Six Sigma efforts to rectify problems. As a result, organizational leaders should refrain from deploying superficial improvement initiatives to fix symptoms and instead determine and fix root causes of problems (Sutton, 2010). In other cases, leaders created process improvement initiatives without buy-in from the key stakeholders, and the process owners resisted the change and caused the process to fail (Pryor, Toombs, Cooke, & Humphreys, 2011). The actual problem was the behavior, not the process that needed to change.

Continuous improvement. Continuous improvement involves using Six Sigma, TQM, and kaizen and has changed the outlook of several failing businesses. Continuous improvement will not be able to work completely if leaders do not fully articulate the philosophy to the individuals who will be working these models. Workers who embrace change find it benefits them and their organization. Organizational leaders will have to

use rewards and recognition to motivate their workforce to accept change and enhance innovation. Kaizen is a continuous improvement philosophy that has caused a shift in process improvement. Kaizen encourages everyone from the executive suite to the individual contributor to seek ways to improve efficiency (Farris, Van Aken, Doolen, & Worley, 2009), goes against the traditional model of top-down management, and has transformed strategic thinking into a new frame of mind called diversity of thought. Diversity of thought creates ownership and brings forth thorough solutions. People could create self-fulfilling prophesies when they create their path of success by reflecting on their past victories (Abdel-Hadi, 2012).

Leaders of business units have used kaizen to exploit the learning curve (Farris et al., 2009). Reducing the amount of variation in the way employees perform tasks reduces errors and keeps rework to a minimum (McConnell, Nunnally, & McGarvey, 2011). Reducing rework also reduces wasted labor and materials. Applying continuous improvement to business practices affects countless attributes.

Organizational leaders often forget that change is difficult to cope with if an individual perceives the change as negative. Some organizational leaders have managed change from the technological standpoint and have not taken true advantage of developing their employees to embrace change. Organizational leaders who invest in developing their employees to embrace change may increase employee engagement. Saparnis, Bersenaite, and Saparniene (2009) noted that a company would receive $33 for every $1 invested in the development of employees. Developing employees to interact within a high-performance team would create limitless opportunities to increase

productivity and reduce rework. Technology has accelerated the rate of change; however, if employees become more efficient, change may not have to occur at such a rapid pace. Organizational leaders should develop simple and repeatable processes and develop employees to learn and execute those processes. Organizational leaders must understand that certain behaviors dictate certain outcomes related to employee performance. Organizational leadership must embrace that the ineffective management of human behaviors can lead to disastrous outcomes.

The top-down approach to leadership is dissipating because organizations are operating at levels that are often complex (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009). Traditional leadership may not grasp concepts such as primal leadership and appreciative inquiry. Applying the aforementioned leadership theories to organizational leadership may help organizational leaders expedite the effective management of interdependent human actions suited for a collaborative approach to increasing the engagement level of employees. Organizational leaders should invest in developing leadership to evolve into a highly adaptive interactive event in which knowledge, action, preferences, and behavioral changes affect the nature of business execution (Dalakoura, 2010). Organizational leaders who embrace these concepts will be able to manage the use of their employees' intellectual capital effectively by developing their personnel to be open to new learning opportunities, become highly adaptable, and be self-sustaining through employee engagement.

To lead in complex organizations, individuals must be able to present solutions to emerging issues. Individuals act as leaders when they mobilize people to seize new

opportunities to address complex problems (Skarzauskiene, 2010). Leaders who become

versed in EI aspects of business interactions will mitigate the occurrence of tension

within a specific task. Organizational leaders should invest in developing leaders and

managers in primal leadership to increase commitment to change by fostering emotional

resonance (Perkel, 2004). When leaders and managers exude emotional resonance, they

create an environment that nurtures organizational citizenship, which allows employees

to flourish and accept change (Hur et al., 2011; Riggio & Lee, 2007).

Conducting stakeholder analysis during a project could increase the level of

commitment in key stakeholders. Jepsen and Eskerod (2009) investigated the usability of

current guidelines regarding stakeholder analysis by letting four project managers apply

the guidelines to their renewal projects. The project managers found several challenges in

using the guidelines. The guidelines lacked clarity regarding (a) how to identify

stakeholders and determine their importance and (b) how to reveal stakeholders'

expectations. Identifying key stakeholders and expectations could help increase the level

of commitment in an organization. Jepsen and Eskerod revealed that the project manager

may not have the skills or the resources required to carry out the tasks involved in making

the necessary inquiries, and the basis of the stakeholder analysis may be superficial

knowledge rather than deep knowledge. The guidelines should receive consideration as a

conceptual framework rather than as instructions on how to conduct a real-world

stakeholder analysis.

Project managers may not possess the skills needed to identify stakeholders.

Aaltonen (2011) noted that some project managers believe they should have relied on the

project champion to identify the stakeholders. After the project champion identifies the

stakeholders, the project manager would be able to conduct interviews to identify the

stakeholders who comply with or resist the objectives of a change initiative (Jepsen &

Eskerod, 2009). The project manager would be able to spend more time with the

stakeholders who are resisting to ensure the project is progressing. Identifying the

stakeholders and ranking them by seniority and interactions are the keys to executing a

project as well.

Organizational Change

The failing global economy has created a huge shift in the way business transpires

(Muller, Genta, Barbato, De Chiffre, & Levi, 2012). A lack of resources has created the

opportunity for organizational leaders to think more about decreasing cost, increasing

productivity, and improving efficiency. Most organizational leaders attribute efficiency to

decreasing non-value-added steps in a process and tend to overlook the engagement level

of their employees. Reduced variation will result in decreased cost over time as it relates

to process improvement (Emrouznejad, Anouze, & Thanassoulis, 2010); however,

organizational leaders continue to see the effect of process variation if the engagement

level of employees does not increase. McCuiston and DeLucenay (2010) noted that short-

term cost cutting through process reengineering is not uniformly successful. Process

reengineering must include initiatives to increase productivity from a behavioral aspect

(Neo, 2008). Organizational leaders must align process improvement initiatives to

become leaner, smarter, more agile, and more innovative by increasing the engagement

of employees.

Process improvement initiatives have caused organizational leaders to allocate significant resources to optimize the output of their labor forces instead of looking at increasing productivity through employee engagement (Robinson & Schroeder, 2009). Organizational leaders use continuous improvement methods such as lean Six Sigma to combat the results of lowered productivity (Shafer & Moeller, 2012). The management of human capital is expensive (Theeke & Mitchell, 2008). Optimizing the workforce to produce more will help organizational leaders achieve their organizational goal at lowered costs (Hartwell & Roth, 2010).

The productivity of an organization relies on the engagement level of its employees; thus, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee motivation drive employee engagement (Clarke, 2008; Tremblay et al., 2009). The success of a business depends upon the human efforts that drive and support company objectives. Disengaged employees can be a liability to the productivity of an organization, and highly engaged employees make a substantive contribution to productivity and could predict organizational success (Gruman & Saks, 2011). This study could help organizational leaders understand the effect of employee engagement on productivity. Employee engagement relies on the organizational commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction of employees. Organizations with high employee engagement levels will achieve high levels of productivity.

Transforming an organization's culture takes 3 to 5 years (McDeavitt, Wade, Smith, & Worsowicz, 2012), but leaders of modern organizations do not have 3 to 5 years to change their cultures. Organizational leaders should take a systems approach to

increase the efficiency and productivity of their employees. An organizational culture

consists of multiple and varied human interactions, and employees often resist what they

do not know and what they fear (Bezrukova, Thatcher, Jehn, & Spell, 2012). Initiating

change creates uncertainty, and uncertainty has a negative effect on employee

engagement. When process changes occur, organizational leaders must understand that

each employee deals with change differently. Andrew and Sofian (2012) indicated that

employees have different tolerance levels for situations within their organization.

Employees display variation in their daily interactions with coworkers (Andrew &

Sofian, 2012).

Organizational leaders should develop a culture whereby employees embrace the

positive effects of change. The culture of an organization should consist of employees

who fully embrace change (Hamnett & Baker, 2012). Change is an attribute that usurps

the status quo; it is the antithesis of familiarity. Organizational leaders often forget that

change is difficult to accept if an individual perceives the change as negative. Managers

who encourage employees to embrace change may increase employee engagement.

Saparnis et al. (2009) noted that a company would receive $33 for every $1 invested in

the development of employees. Such a return on investment should inspire organizational

leaders to develop a leadership course to help manage change and increase the level of

engagement of their employees. Developing leaders at all levels to articulate the need for

change should help increase the level of employee engagement (Levay, 2010).

Increased productivity and reducing variation over time could improve an

organization's financial performance (Gnanaraj, Deadasan, & Shalij, 2010). A stronger

financial position is a primary driver in the longevity of organizations in turbulent

markets. Developing employees to interact within a high-performance team may create

limitless opportunities to increase productivity and reduce rework. Inefficiencies in the

workplace have accelerated the rate of change; however, if employees become more

engaged in their work, companies will not change processes as often which will create

stable workforces (Hamnett & Baker, 2012). Organizational leaders should develop

simple repeatable processes that will create synergy in the workplace to execute

preexisting or newly developed processes. Organizational leadership must embrace the

notion that the ineffective management of human behaviors can lead to disastrous

outcomes.

      Organizational behavior. Organizational leaders who seek change must embrace

the notion that employee engagement has a direct link to social and behavioral sciences.

Organizational behavior is the study of employee behavior (Martelli, Stimmler, &

Roberts, 2012). Completing tasks in a team environment involves group interaction.

Human behaviors drive employee engagement and determine an employee's ability to

produce and perform. Employee engagement also consists of heightened emotional and

intellectual connections that employees have for their job, organization, manager, or

coworkers that in turn influence them to apply additional discretionary effort to their

work (Attridge, 2009). The proper management of employee engagement could help

decrease negative expenditures associated with lowered productivity. Negative

expenditures caused by lowered productivity could be detrimental to the longevity of an

organization. Organizational leaders should invest in understanding what increases or

decreases employee engagement. Organizational leaders who effectively manage the use of intellectual capital can become highly adaptable and self-sustaining when employee engagement increases (Harlow, 2008).

Group engagement model. Completing job-related tasks involves completing a work product in a team setting. A team setting includes employee interactions and employee interaction is a foundation of productivity. The group engagement model highlights how procedural justice, rationale, and authority form the basis of employees' interactions (Macgowan & Newman, 2005). The development of the social identity is the basis of an employee's interaction in the group engagement model (Fuller et al., 2009). Social identities develop within groups and influence attitudes, values, and behaviors (Blader & Tyler, 2009).

The Effects of Process Improvement on Employee Engagement

The failing global economy has created a huge shift in the way business takes place (McCuiston & DeLucenay, 2010). The unavailability of resources has led organizational leaders to think more about decreasing cost and increasing productivity and efficiency. Most organizational leaders attribute efficiency to decreasing non-value-added steps in a process and tend to overlook the engagement level of their employees. Reduced variation in processes will reduce cost over time as it relates to process improvement (Emrouznejad, Anouze, & Thanassoulis, 2010); however, organizational leaders will continue to see the effect of process variation if the engagement level of employees does not increase. McCuiston and DeLucenay (2010) noted that short-term cost cutting through process reengineering is not uniformly successful. Initiatives to

increase productivity from a behavioral aspect must accompany process reengineering to increase employee engagement.

The effects of process improvement initiatives. Process improvement initiatives have helped organizational leaders to allocate resources to optimize the output of their labor forces instead of looking at increasing productivity through employee engagement. Consequently, organizational leaders use continuous improvement methods such as lean Six Sigma to combat the results of lowered productivity (Shafer & Moeller, 2012). Continuous improvement is a method that helps processes to run more efficiently; however, focusing on process improvement alone will not increase productivity and employee engagement. Managing human capital is the most expensive cost to an organization. Optimizing the workforce to produce more will help organizational leaders achieve their organizational goal at lowered costs.

The foundation of productivity. Productivity depends on employee engagement, and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee motivation drive employee engagement (Zigarmi et al., 2009). Organizational success results from employees committed and aligned to an organization's vision, mission, goals, and objectives (Branson, 2008). Disengaged employees can be a serious liability to the productivity of an organization, and highly engaged employees make a substantive contribution that may promote organizational success (Gruman & Saks, 2011). This study was designed to help organizational leaders understand the effect of employee engagement on productivity. Employee engagement relies on the organizational commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction of employees. Organizational leaders who

exude high employee engagement levels will achieve high levels of productivity for the organization.

Transition and Summary

Section 1 was an introduction to how employee engagement affects productivity in a project-management-oriented organization. The review of the literature included information on the topic of employee engagement, as well as a discussion of the gaps regarding employee engagement and how it affects the productivity and financial performance of organizations. The review included several constructs and attributes regarding job satisfaction, organizational commitment, process improvement, organizational change, and so forth. By highlighting the gaps in the literature, I indicated that leaders manage the aforementioned attributes separately. The mismanagement of those attributes may continue to cause employee disengagement. In the literature review, I provided an historical overview and formed the foundation for this phenomenological study. In this phenomenological study, I built upon the literature review through the lived experiences of professionals working in an aerospace project management setting. Understanding the lived experiences of such individuals broadened the academic body of knowledge. My objective in Section 2 is to expand on the process of this phenomenological study and describe my research methods.

Section 2: The Project

Employees in engineering and project-oriented environments often struggle to remain engaged in their daily tasks (Kainen, 2010). Lowered job satisfaction (Pedrycz, Russo, & Succi, 2011; Sabharwal, 2011) lack of organizational commitment, and motivation (Vandenberghe et al., 2007) affect the struggle to remain engaged and to complete daily tasks. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore how the lived experiences of a purposive sample of 20 salaried aerospace employees affect productivity and the financial performance of an organization. My focus in the literature review in Section 1 was on the attributes that promote and lower employee engagement. Section 2 includes a discussion about the research methodology. In the discussion, I provide reasons a qualitative phenomenological study was the most appropriate method for this study. Section 2 also includes the purpose statement, as well as a discussion on the role of the researcher, research method, research questions, population, data collection, data analysis, and reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The 20 salaried employees who participated in the interviews worked at a global aerospace defense company in the southwest region of the United States and comprised entry-level to midgrade employees responsible for performing daily tactical operations. The salaried employees had practical experience working in a project management environment in which cost and schedule are the driving factors to on-time deliveries. The study involved determining how relating employee perception to employee engagement level would help the leaders of aerospace defense companies develop strategies to

improve employee engagement and productivity. Increasing employee engagement could increase the productivity and profitability of aerospace defense companies.

The study involved exploring the lived experiences of 20 salaried employees relating to employee engagement and productivity in the workplace. Data from the study indicated which factors increase engagement in the lived experiences of the participants in a project-management environment and increase the financial performance of organizations. Understanding how to increase employee engagement could create financial gains and positive social change by increasing productivity and creating a stable labor force.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is not to build consensus but to understand the lived experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). The study involved identifying shared experiences regarding employee engagement. The phenomenological method is appropriate for identifying recurring themes through shared experiences to understand or locate the essence of the lived experience through perception and ascertain the *what* and *how* (Giorgi, 2008; van Manen, 2007) regarding the experiences of employee engagement. A previous study served as the model for the interview questions to help gather the lived experiences of participants relating to employee engagement in a project management environment (Swinton-Douglas 2010). After receiving Institutional Review Board approval (Approval No. 10-26-12-0165871), 30-minute one-on-one interviews began with the 20 professionals.

Participants

In qualitative research, experiences of the phenomenon serve as a basis for selecting participants (Moustakas, 1994). The aerospace division of the defense industry is responsible for the discovery and development of defense technology. In 2012, U.S. Congress passed a $679 billion defense bill in which aerospace defense comprised over 20% of the budget (White House Office of Management and Budget, 2012).

Participants from the population of the aerospace defense industry in Tucson, Arizona, participated in this study. The general population of the participants selected included employees at several sites in southeast Tucson. Moustakas (1994) noted that 20 participants is a sufficient sample for phenomenological research or until saturation occurs to develop themes in the phenomenological research. Twenty individuals participated in the study. The tenure criterion for the participants was 1 year of consecutive service at the selected company. The participants had various project management positions and titles (i.e., project manager, support personnel, human resources, functional engineering). During the course of the research, no individuals who participated in interviews were members of any protected class. The solicitation of volunteers involved a purposeful selection method and obtaining signed consent forms (see Appendices A and B) before conducting any interviews.

Research Method

In qualitative research, researchers must continue to develop and refine the information received from the participants as the reoccurring themes surface and as the research continues to develop (Neuman, 2007). The different aspects of individual

perspectives help to determine how individuals interact within his or her environments (Neuman, 2007). The qualitative method was more appropriate than the quantitative method for this study because the objective of the study was to understand the lived experience and perception of individuals from their perspective (Moustakas, 1994).

Exploring the lived experiences of employees led to an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of employee engagement in a project setting. In a quantitative study, the researcher would only quantify the results and highlight problems based on the data provided (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Employee engagement requires more than just quantifying data and needs a descriptive articulation of the personal experience of participants (Moustakas, 1994). A qualitative study develops from both fact and theory (Neuman, 2007). Qualitative research was more appropriate for exploring employee engagement to understand the problem because ascertaining the problem through quantitative data manipulation was not appropriate.

Research and Interview Questions

Research questions help to increase the focus on a problem under exploration (Petty et al., 2012; Schultze & Avital, 2011). I included interview questions to gather the lived experiences from professionals working in a project management setting. Petty et al. (2012) noted that asking interview questions is a valid process for gathering information about a particular phenomenon. The interview questions helped me to gather the experiences of aerospace professionals to gain insights concerning engagement in the workplace. I included four fundamental research questions to identify the strategies that may increase employee engagement in an aerospace environment.

Research Questions

R1: What are the attributes that define how employees become engaged or disengaged in their tasks?

R2: How does employee engagement affect productivity?

R3: What role does leadership have in employee engagement?

R4: What are the factors that employees perceive to have an influence on employee engagement?

Interview Questions

Q1: How do you define employee engagement?

Q2: In your role, what keeps you fully engaged in your tasks?

Q3: In your role, how and why do employees become disengaged in their task?

Q4: How do you remain motivated in your current role?

Q5: In your role, how does job satisfaction affect your engagement level?

Q6: How does your engagement level affect your decision to remain with the company?

Q7: What gives your work meaning in your role?

Q8: How would you describe the role of leadership in employee engagement?

Q9: How do you believe employees can be reengaged?

Q10: What effect and influence do disengaged employees have in the organization?

Q11: How do trust and respect in the organization and leadership affect employee engagement?

Q12: What is your perception of employee engagement?

Q13: How would you describe the relationship between employee engagement
and organizational performance?

Q14: What effect does employee engagement have on productivity?

The research and interview questions helped me to increase understanding of employee engagement in an aerospace environment.

Research Design

The phenomenological research method was appropriate for the study because the method involved garnering the lived experiences of the participants. Phenomenological research applied to the selected research topic, problem statement, and objectives of exploring employee engagement in a project management setting (Moustakas, 1994; Neuman, 2007). Research methods differ in decision-making requirements, which changes the process of interpreting the research.

During the course of research, knowledge and perspective can influence the interpretation of the data (Neuman, 2007). This study involved investigating a phenomenon and presenting data through the lived experiences of the participants. Phenomenological research is a form of qualitative research in which a researcher conducts an investigation to understand the reason behaviors occur and attempts to explain the events that cause those behaviors to occur (van Manen, 2007). Qualitative research is a subjective inquiry of words (Giorgi, 2008).

In phenomenological research, researchers transform the lived experiences of individuals gathered from interviews to identify themes to help understand phenomena

(Moustakas, 1994). The goal of qualitative research is to understand the experiences of others from several approaches and ascertain how the different aspects of human behavior interact within a particular environment (Neuman, 2007). Using the phenomenological method, I was able to explain how to use the lived experiences of participants to understand employee engagement in a project management setting.

The phenomenological research method is an inquiry method used to explore human experiences about a phenomenon described by participants (van Manen, 2007). The qualitative phenomenological method was appropriate because the study involved exploring a phenomenon to understand the perceptions of others through reoccurring themes. Moustakas (1994) developed a clear approach for researchers to conduct a phenomenological study. The Moustakas model was applicable because exploring the perceptions of employee engagement could help leaders of aerospace defense companies develop strategies to improve employee engagement to complete projects on time and on budget. Ethnography, case studies, and grounded theory were not appropriate because they would not have involved exploring an acknowledged phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological study included interviewing 20 participants from a project management background to understand how to improve productivity through increased employee engagement.

Population

Critical Sampling Strategy

Sampling in a qualitative study includes using a small number of individuals or locations to collect information to generalize the finding to a larger population (Frels &

Onwuegbuzie, 2013). According to Schultze and Avital (2011), critical sampling involves selecting a clear case that enables a researcher to learn about a phenomenon. The basis for selecting participants should be their ability to provide accurate information about a particular phenomenon (Giorgi, 2008; van Manen, 2007). Participants who I selected to participate in the study were from the population of the aerospace defense industry in Tucson, Arizona.

Sample

The general population that served as the source for the participants included approximately 14,000 employees spanning several sites in southeast Tucson. The purposeful sampling method is appropriate for nonprobabilistic samplings and requires saturation to the point where no new themes emerge from the data gathered (Guest, Arwen, & Johnson, 2006). Patton (2002) noted that, in a purposeful sample, a researcher selects participants according to predetermined criteria relevant to the objectives of a particular study. Twenty participants were appropriate for this study because saturation occurred, followed by validation through in-person triangulation. The tenure criterion for the participants was 1 year of consecutive service at the current company. I achieved saturation by studying the transcripts gathered from the interviews in-depth until no additional themes emerged (Guest, et. al., 2006). The participants had various project management positions and titles (i.e., project manager, support personnel, human resources, functional engineering) and had experience dealing with management cost and schedule requirements and the ability to produce project deliverables. Person triangulation was achieved because the 20 participants were at different levels within the

organization and answered the interview questions from their own lived experiences

(Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). During the course of the research, no participants were members

of any protected class. Soliciting volunteers and obtaining signed consent forms (see

Appendices A and B) occurred prior to conducting any interviews.

Ethical Research

Representatives from Walden University provided all necessary approvals. The

interviews of the participants occurred in accordance with Institutional Review Board

standards. Participants received two consent forms written in narrative form. Using the

form in Appendix B as a tool, I informed the participants about the purpose of the study

and their rights to participate in or withdraw from the study. The consent form included

an outline of the confidentiality associated with participating in this study. The consent

form also included an incentive clause informing the participants that they would receive

a $10 gift card for participating in the study (see Appendix C). The data that I collected

from participants will remain on an encrypted thumb drive for 5 years after the study is

complete. I will destroy the thumb drive by smashing it with a hammer after the 5-year

period. Each participant received a code to protect his or her identity. The consent to

record the participants form is in Appendix B and followed the same process for

safeguarding information and identity protection as noted in Appendix A.

<div align="center">

Data Collection

</div>

Instruments

Qualitative research does not include a predetermined or specific way to collect

data. There were no specific research criteria for a specific instrument for the qualitative

study (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). This study included a set of validated open-ended interview questions from a previous study (Swinton-Douglas, 2010) to explore the lived experiences of employee engagement. The participants responded to the questions using personal experiences garnered from working in a project management setting. Swinton-Douglas (2010) designed the interview instrument using the theoretical foundation of employee engagement and validated the questions in a 2-week pilot study.

The Swinton-Douglas (2010) questions served as a model for this study, and Swinton-Douglas previously grouped the questions by category. The first group of questions gathered data about the perceptions of employee engagement. The second group of questions identified how employees relate trust, meaning of work, and satisfaction. The third category of questions gathered information about how retention and performance affect the results in an organization.

Data Collection Technique

Qualitative data collection consisted of establishing the boundaries for the study and collecting information about the problem from participants through interviews gathered in textual, visual, audio, or video formats (Schultze & Avital, 2011). The information gathered was in textual and audio formats. The use of general open-ended questions allowed me to collect information about increasing employee engagement in a nonbiased manner (Kline, 2008). The in-person interviews included open-ended questions to collect information from participants. I transcribed the audio tape-recorded interviews. The 14 questions were appropriate for exploring the phenomenon of employee engagement through the lived experiences of the participants (see Appendix

C). The software selected to analyze the transcribed interviews was NVivo 10 (QSR International, n.d).

The basis of phenomenological research is the perception of knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) recommended identifying the behavioral aspects of a phenomenon by grouping experiences, defining relevance, accepting and eliminating themes, validating information, and creating new meaning from experience groups and clusters. Moustakas's (1994) modified van Kaam method helped to isolate the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants obtained from semistructured in-person interviews.

Using interview questions gave participants the ability to offer responses that the parameters of quantitative research would otherwise restrict (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). In-person interviews were the most appropriate method for collecting responses from the participants because the questions helped to gather information about increasing employee engagement one participant at a time (Giorgi, 2008; van Manen, 2007). Conducting the interviews one at a time helped to explore the perception of employee engagement from the lived experiences of the participants. Ensuring confidentiality helped garner true responses to the interview questions. Retrieving information through e-mail interviews was not appropriate for the population selected for this study because of the company's human resource policy. Keeping the results 100% confidential would have been difficult to prove to the participants in a cyber-environment. Conducting a focus group was also not appropriate for the study, because a focus group could inhibit

the individuals' responses because of their natural desire to maintain the cohesiveness of the group (Hopkins, 2007).

Prior to collecting data, the study went through a University Records Review and an Institutional Review Board review. The participants received an informed consent form (see Appendix A) that they signed before data collection began. Petty et. al. (2012) noted that informed consent is an effective way to ensure the protection of the participants' identities by confidential means and to allow the participants to understand the nature of a study. The participants participated in the study on a voluntary basis.

A pilot study was not necessary for testing the instrument because the model for the instrument was Swinton-Douglas's (2010) study. Swinton-Douglas performed a 2-week pilot study to ensure answers to the questions were repeatable and to ensure the question did not limit the responses from the participants. The instrumentation selected helped with gathering data about the research questions in a project management setting. Kline (2008) noted that using open-ended questions enables researchers to collect an unlimited amount of data about a phenomenon using the experiences of participants.

I wrote the results from the interviews and transcribed the audio files. The participants received a copy within 72 hours by e-mail or hardcopy after participating in the interview to validate the transcripts and to ensure the information captured from the interview was correct. Each participant received a code to ensure the protection of his or her identity.

Data Organization Techniques

The information remained on a laptop and in encrypted password-protected files during the course of transcribing the interviews. The written transcripts and audio-recorded interviews also became files encrypted on a password-protected thumb drive. Both written and audio transcripts will remain stored for a period of 5 years after the study is complete and I will destroy them immediately afterwards by using a cross-cut shredder. Only members of the team that helped interpret the raw data in the transcripts had access to the files. Each participant had a code to protect his or her identity throughout the research. The codes for the participants consisted of a capital P for participant and a number that indicated the order of the interview (i.e., P1, P2).

Data Analysis Technique

The model for the interview questions for this study was Swinton-Douglas (2010). It is essential to understand the relationship identified in the theoretical framework between employee engagement and productivity. Data analysis and interpretation are two important components of the research process (Basurto & Speer, 2012). Data analysis helped to answer the research questions (Basurto & Speer, 2012). NVivo 10 software was appropriate because it helped to highlight the emerging themes in the analysis of both the interview text and the audio recordings. NVivo 10 software also helped to organize the raw data, to reveal themes by aiding in decoding and interpreting the data, and to code the data to identify categories. The categories, or nodes, underwent further categorization after gaining approval to collect data.

Moustakas's (1994) modified van Kaam method of analysis served to develop a foundational description of employee engagement. Following the method of analysis, the next step for the responses from the transcripts of each participant was to (a) group them by themes and experiences, (b) analyze them for understanding, (c) label them, (d) cluster them by themes, (e) examine them for relevance, (f) describe them using verbatim examples, (g) define them for the coresearchers using alternative descriptions or explanations of experiences, and (h) describe them for participants using my understanding of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas's modified van Kaam method provided the rigorous structure necessary for understanding employee engagement. Moustakas (1994) described seven steps for analyzing qualitative data using the modified van Kaam data analysis process:

1. Listing and preliminary grouping with reducing for relevancy.

2. Identifying and finalizing invariant constituents from the raw data.

3. Using verbatim examples from the interview transcripts.

4. Developing structural descriptions from the text.

5. Creating an overview of the responses from the group.

Using Moustakas's (1994) modified van Kaam method helped to identify themes important to the study. Analyzing the recurring themes helped define and understand how participants perceive employee engagement. Data coding took place in two phases. Phase 1 involved coding and importing the interview questions into NVivo 10. Phase 2 involved coding the responses to the interview and breaking the responses down into subcategories to identify reoccurring themes. Neuman (2007) noted that data coding is essential to

identifying themes. Data coding can help sort data to compare the experiences of individuals and helped to categorize information in a uniform manner (Basurto & Speer 2012).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

The phenomenological method allowed me to develop an accurate interpretation of the data to develop conclusions relating to increasing employee engagement in a nonbiased manner (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). The research instrument validated the results of the study because the assumptions for the study matched the real-world experiences and occurrences of the participants (Neuman, 2007). The selection of the appropriate method and instrument ensured the gathering of accurate data and enabled the formation of accurate conclusions (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Problems that result from an inappropriate method and instrumentation can threaten were fully mitigated and increased the validity of exploring increasing productivity through employee engagement (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

Question 1 involved exploring the participants' understanding of engagement (Swinton-Douglas, 2010). Many definitions of employee engagement exist in academic and scholarly literature (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Zigarmi et al., 2009); therefore, Question 1 helped establish the participants' perception of employee engagement as derived from a previously validated instrument, which was important in establishing a foundation for the remaining questions.

Question 2 served to explore the attributes that keep participants engaged in their daily tasks (Swinton-Douglas, 2010). Participants received encouragement to explore the emotional attachment to their task through their lived experiences. The literature emphasized both emotional and behavioral aspects of engagement (Kahn, 1990)

Swinton-Douglas (2010) modeled Question 3 to explore and understand how and why a participant believed employees become disengaged. The behaviors of disengaged employees have an adverse effect on productivity in the workplace (Richman, 2006). Kahn (1990) addressed the adverse effects of disengagement in the workplace. Question 3 served to explore the factors participants believe could negatively influence engagement and result in disengagement. The responses to Question 3 revealed why employees become disengaged in their tasks.

Question 4 represented an attempt to understand if work motivated the participants and asked how the participants were motivated (Swinton-Douglas, 2010). Kennedy and Daim (2010) articulated that motivated employees have higher levels of employee engagement. Question 5 involved exploring how the level of engagement affects a participant's level of job satisfaction (Swinton-Douglas, 2010). Job satisfaction is a foundational element of employee engagement (Villara & Albertína, 2010).

Question 6 helped to explore how a participant described the association between engagement and organizational performance. The responses from the participants could have supported or refuted the argument that a connection exists between employee engagement and the success of an organization. Question 7 helped to understand how participants' level of engagement affects an organization's retention rates (Swinton-

Douglas, 2010). Highly to moderately engaged employees may decide to stay with a company, whereas a highly disengaged participant is more likely to leave an organization (Villara & Albertína, 2010).

Question 8 served to explore what gave a participant's work meaning (Swinton-Douglas, 2010). Compensation was a component in motivating employees to remain engaged in their task by performing at higher level. Aguinis, Joo, and Gottfredson (2013) noted work should have intrinsic meaning for employees to remain motivated in their tasks.

Question 9 involved exploring how the leadership role affects employee engagement (Swinton-Douglas, 2010). Participants received encouragement to indicate who they believe is responsible for individual engagement and what role leaders play in maintaining engagement throughout the workforce. Deming (1986) noted that leaders should contribute to motivating employees to remain engaged in their tasks by demonstrating an appreciation for the work employees complete.

Swinton-Douglas (2010) modeled Question 10 to explore ownership and to explore how participants believed employees disengaged from their tasks could reengage in their tasks. Disengaged employees can be toxic and further degrade the productivity of an organization (Shucka et al., 2011). Question 11 involved exploring how disengaged employees influence the organization (Swinton-Douglas, 2010). Disengaged employees can have a negative effect on engaged employees (Gruman & Saks, 2011).

Question 12 involved exploring how trust in an organization and in leadership affects employee engagement (Swinton-Douglas, 2010). Disengaged employees often

exhibit levels of mistrust in their organization (Kennedy & Daim, 2010). Question 13 involved exploring the participants' overall perception of engagement (Swinton-Douglas, 2010). Question 14 served to explore how employee engagement affects the productivity of an organization (Bottazzi et al., 2008; Catteeuw et al., 2007). Moustakas (1994) noted the perception of knowledge is foundational to understanding the lived experience and perception of an individual, which enabled participants in this study to give an account of their lived experience and perception related to employee questions and also allowed the participants to share further insights not captured through the course of the interview.

The data collected through the interview questions helped to understand the phenomenon of employee engagement in a project management setting. Modeling the interview questions on a previous study increased the reliability of the study. The study entailed the appropriate steps to maintain the highest level of academic research standards by adhering to the strict Institutional Review Board research guidelines to avoid corrupting the data with bias; introducing bias would have negatively affected the validity of the data extracted (Neuman, 2007).

Internal Validity

Internal validity measures the ability to determine causal factors for the outcome (Neuman, 2007). Flawed processes that deviate from appropriate research guidelines and that can alter the results gathered from the participants can threaten internal validity (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Bias affects participant selection, and events in history threaten internal validity and mortality (Neuman, 2007). Triangulation is a method that helps to enhance internal validity (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009; Neuman, 2007).

Triangulation is a concept that involves a combination of information sources, such as individuals and types of data, as evidence to support a premise that enhances internal validity (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). The study involved gathering literature and lived experiences from participants. I allowed the participants to verify their interview transcripts to increase the accuracy of the results. This phenomenological study of engagement involved person triangulation by linking interview questions to the theoretical information garnered from the literature and asking participants to verify their interview transcripts were accurate.

The two types of triangulation increased the validity of study results: triangulation between methods and triangulation within methods (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). The focus of triangulation between methods used more than one research method to facilitate the credibility of study results through transcription and validating the transcripts with the participants. Triangulation within methods involved ensuring validity through observing an issue from different points of view (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009) and was achieved by validating the transcripts results in Nvivo 10 software to produce invariant constituent tables and identified recurring themes The phenomenological study involved exploring various perspectives of engagement. Person triangulation helped to validate the participants' inputs.

External Validity

External validity occurs when a researcher draws incorrect interpretations and generalizes them beyond the controlled conditions of the study to the broader population (Neuman, 2007). Threats to external validity include the inability to apply the results

garnered from the research to the broader environment and the possibility the experiences of individuals in the larger environment differ from those participating in the study (Neuman, 2007). The participants lived experiences garnered several general broad themes that can be applied to the aerospace industry. The social theories used in study were broad in nature and cross represented to enhance the reliability of the information gathered in exploring increasing productivity through employee engagement (Neuman, 2007).

Transition and Summary

The objective of Section 2 was to provide a detailed description of how the project took place. The discussion included an explanation regarding why a qualitative phenomenological study was the most appropriate method for this study and an outline of the purpose statement, role of the researcher, research method, research questions, population, data collection, data analysis, reliability, and validity. The results of the research and include recommendations for future studies are detailed in Section 3.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore how the perceptions and lives experiences of a purposive sample of 20 salaried aerospace employees affect productivity and the financial performance of an organization. The study included four research questions:

R1: What are the attributes that define how employees become engaged or

disengaged in their tasks?

R2: How does employee engagement affect productivity?

R3: What role does leadership have in employee engagement?

R4: What are the factors that employees perceive to have an influence on

employee engagement?

The instrument that I used to conduct the research consisted of 14 questions:

Q1: How do you define employee engagement?

Q2: In your role, what keeps you fully engaged in your tasks?

Q3: In your role, how and why do employees become disengaged in their task?

Q4: How do you remain motivated in your current role?

Q5: In your role, how does job satisfaction affect your engagement level?

Q6: How does your engagement level affect your decision to remain with the

company?

Q7: What gives your work meaning in your role?

Q8: How would you describe the role of leadership in employee engagement?

Q9: How do you believe employees can be reengaged?

Q10: What effect and influence do disengaged employees have in the

organization?

Q11: How do trust and respect in the organization and leadership affect employee

engagement?

Q12: What is your perception of employee engagement?

Q13: How would you describe the relationship between employee engagement

and organizational performance?

Q14: What effect does employee engagement have on productivity?

Twenty, salaried aerospace employees participated in the interviews. The

participant pool consisted of employees of a global aerospace defense company located in

the southwest region of the United States. The salaried employees had experience

working in a project management environment where cost and schedule are the driving

factors for on-time deliveries. The participants' identities remained confidential, but their

roles included human resources, project engineers, project managers, program managers,

and operations engineers. Assigning a research code to participants helped to keep the

identities confidential during the interviews.

This section contains the results of the study. I also discuss implications for social

change, updates to professional practice, recommendations for action, recommendations

for further study, and my reflections. The study involved using the modified Van Kaam

method, and the data analysis involved using the NVivo 10 software. The study took

place as I outlined in the conceptual framework, and the interview questions were as

presented in Section 2. The results for the invariant constituents appear in tabular form.

The sources of the themes and invariant constituent tables were the recorded and transcribed responses to open-ended interview questions. My summary of the findings includes several emergent themes that I developed from the data collection. One of the key themes that I identified was the need for challenges to keep individuals engaged in their roles. This section includes a detailed outline of several other key themes. The Overview of Study section contains a complete list of emergent themes recognized within the study.

Overview of Study

The decline of the U.S. economy has caused volatility in the financial performance of several industries, as evidenced by a $250 billion decrease in the gross domestic product from 2008 to 2009 (U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2009). The resulting financial crisis caused U.S. business leaders to manage the financial performance of their businesses carefully (Campello et al., 2010). Disengaged employees cost U.S. companies approximately $300 billion in lost productivity annually, creating a financial burden greater than the decrease in the gross domestic product (Attridge, 2009). Employee engagement affects the financial performance of the U.S. economy (Campello et al., 2010; Gruman & Saks, 2011). The emerging themes indicate that increasing employee engagement has the potential to increase the productivity and profitability of U.S. companies, specifically aerospace entities, from the perspective of the participants (Campello et al., 2010; Gruman & Saks, 2011).

The successful completion of job-related tasks in organizations continues to depend on the efforts of employees. Highly engaged employees are assets to their organizations, and disengaged employees are liabilities; highly engaged employees make substantive contributions to their organization and help achieve organizational success (Gruman & Saks, 2011). The participants had the opportunity to verify the results of their transcripts individually. I achieved person triangulation by using a purposive sample of participants who represented different perspectives (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). Their perspectives differed because they were in different situations or had different experiences and contributed differing perspectives (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009).

Presentation of the Findings

In order to analyze these data, I recorded the 20 interviews, transcribed them into verbatim transcripts, and validated the transcripts against the audio files, word-for-word, to ensure the transcripts were accurate. I imported the verbatim transcripts from each interview into NVivo 10 and coded each transcript into preliminary groups by creating nodes or rough categories of experience for each specific expression. I examined the text in each node thoroughly to isolate each specific expression as much as possible without stripping its context. It was important not to strip the context of the transcript to increase the likelihood of capturing the lived experience and perception of the interviewee and then I grouped the expressions captured from the transcripts, identified the invariant constituents, and applied short descriptive labels. After eliminating the invariant constituents with meanings that were unclear or irrelevant to the research questions, I

grouped the remaining invariant constituents into similar experiences or dimensions of experience.

In the responses to Interview Question 1, participants defined employee engagement as foundational. Table 1 shows that 40% of the participants interviewed used terms like *continuing, active involvement in their jobs* and *commitment to job duties* in their definition of employee engagement. These terms relate to organizational commitment (Robinson & Schroeder, 2009; Slack et al., 2010). Furthermore, 35% of the participants defined employee engagement by using phrases like: *employees are actively part of a team*, *communication is facilitated at all levels*, and *goals are shared. Employee involvement*, *participation in decision-making processes*, and *management giving and receiving feedback from employees on work processes and environment* was the third highest invariant constituent grouping of ways to define engagement, which garnered from 25% of the participants. The findings from Question 1 aligned with attributes from previous studies that indicated active engagement in the team can refer to having an emotional and intellectual commitment to an organization (Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Meyer et al., 2011). Actively engaged employees are likely to have a commitment to an organization, whereas disengaged employees are less likely to have a commitment to an organization. Actively engaged employee increase employee engagement, and disengaged employees decrease employee engagement.

Table 1

Question 1: How Do You Define Employee Engagement?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants

Continuing, active involvement in and commitment to job duties	8	40	P1, P8, P9, P11, P12, P15, P17, P18
Employee involvement and participation in decision-making processes, management giving and receiving feedback from employees on work processes and environment	5	25	P3, P10, P13, P19, P20
Employees are actively part of a team, communication is facilitated at all levels, goals are shared	7	35	P4, P7, P8, P11, P15, P16, P17
Employees are committed to company's goals and success, feel sense of ownership	4	20	P3, P7, P14, P19
Employees are working at a high productivity level	3	15	P1, P6, P16
Employees feel personal motivation and/or enjoyment in the job, separate from compensation	3	15	P1, P2, P7
Employees understand their work duties and have the appropriate background and skills to execute them	2	10	P5, P12
Employees feel appreciated, valued, morale is high	2	10	P12, P16

Participants also indicated factors that kept them fully engaged in their tasks, and responded to this for Interview Question 2 (see Table 2). Fifty-five percent of the participants replied using phrases like: *having new challenges*, *interesting tasks*, *variety of work*, and *learning opportunities*. Thirty percent of participants indicated *feeling that I'm an asset to the company, my work is valued, receiving positive feedback, and recognition for my work*. Twenty-five percent responded similarly to *having the personal drive to succeed*. Further, *interpersonal relationships* emerged as important when 25% of the participants stated such in their responses. The responses from Question 2 emphasized several factors that contribute to an employee's commitment, which ranged from rewards and recognition to active involvement within an interpersonal work environment (Fuller et al., 2009; González & Guillén, 2008; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). The findings from Question 2 were consistent with previous studies that organizations should actively pursue, creating a culture that fosters being valued, interpersonal

relationship accepting and receiving feedback, and developing a robust reward system to

increase employee engagement (e.g., Fuller et al., 2009; González & Guillén, 2008;

Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010).

Table 2

Question 2: In Your Role, What Keeps You Fully Engaged in Your Tasks?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
Having new challenges, interesting tasks, variety of work, and/or learning opportunities	11	55	P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P11, P18, P19, P20
Feeling that I'm an asset to the company, my work is valued, receiving positive feedback and/or recognition for my work	6	30	P1, P4, P7, P9, P18, P19
My personal drive to succeed, ambition, motivation	6	25	P7, P10, P11, P13, P16, P17
Interpersonal relationship with co-workers, effective communication, positive working relationships	5	25	P5, P6, P8, P15, P16
Opportunities for growth, advancement in the company	4	20	P1, P5, P16, P19
Being provided with clear expectations, understanding of my job duties	3	15	P3, P12, P15
Being able to see the end product in use, knowing my work benefits others	3	15	P4, P11, P14
My sense of personal accountability/responsibility	2	10	P6, P11
External motivators (such as supporting my family)	1	5	P13
Keeping the bigger cause in mind	1	5	P17
My role as a teacher/instructor	1	5	P20

Question 3 involved exploring the how and why employees become disengaged in

their task from the perspective of the participant (see Table 3). The groupings from

Question 3 included several reasons why employees become disengaged in their tasks.

Sixty percent of the participants felt that *boredom from repetitive tasks, the job not being*

challenging anymore, and no clear outlook for new opportunities were reasons why they

become disengaged. Thirty-five percent of participants noted the lack of recognition of

performance by management. Twenty-five percent of the respondents responded *poor*

communication, the inability to understand organizational goals, and the lack of

feedback. Keeping employees engaged is the foundation of productivity; therefore,

understanding what causes employees to become disengaged is important. Question 3

provides adverse attributes to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee

motivation (Kahn, 1990; Zigarmi et al., 2009). Zigarmi et al.'s (2009) and Kahn's (1990)

studies were consistent with the findings from Question 3. Organizational leaders who

understand what causes disengagement among their employees will be able to develop

and implement strategies to keep their employee engaged and increase productivity.

Table 3

Question 3: In Your Role, How and Why Do Employees Become Disengaged in Their

Tasks?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
Boredom from repetitive tasks, job is no longer challenging, no opportunities for different work are offered	12	60	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P11, P13, P17, P18, P19
Management does not recognize work well done, treats low-performing employees the same as high performers, employees do not feel valued or appreciated	7	35	P1, P3, P4, P7, P14, P16, P20
Lack of support from management, management does not listen, management does not have employee's best interest at heart	6	30	P2, P5, P10, P11, P12, P15
Poor communication and lack of understanding about tasks/goals, lack of feedback	5	25	P6, P8, P11, P12, P17
Job or task isn't an appropriate fit for employee's skills or background, employee is unable to fulfill duties	4	20	P2, P3, P7, P15
Feeling that no one cares, no one is checking, no accountability for work	3	15	P6, P7, P8
Lack of autonomy in one's own work, employee is not involved in decision-making	3	15	P9, P18, P20
Lack of personal motivation, poor attitude	3	15	P16, P17, P20
Stress in employee's personal life, personal issues	2	10	P3, P7

In response to the first part of Question 4, participants indicated whether the work

in their current role motivated them (see Table 4). When responding to Part 2 of Question

4, participants cited specific examples. During the course of the interviews, 18 out of 20

participants' responses yielded positive comments about their current role. Fifty percent

of respondents answered *my current role motivates me because I am challenged with new*

tasks/problems to solve and learning new things. Twenty-five percent of the participants

noted having *direct responsibility or accountability*. Participants 1 and 17 responded

negatively about being motivated in their current role (Meyer et al., 2011; Richman,

2006). The findings from Question 4 were consistent with the literature that

organizational leadership should provide a work environment where employees feel a

direct sense of responsibility or accountability for their own careers to keep their

employees engaged in their roles (Meyer et al., 2011; Richman, 2006).

Interview Question 5 asked the participants about their perspective on job

satisfaction (see Table 5). Participants answered Question 5 passionately. Thirty percent

of respondents indicated that employees *must enjoy their work or they won't be engaged*.

The second highest response grouping (25%) noted *satisfied employees are more*

engaged, work harder, and are more productive. Thirty percent of participants spoke

about how negative attributes affect their job satisfaction. Fifteen percent of the negative

attributes consisted of disengaged employees who only *work to get a paycheck and will*

only perform minimally. Fifteen percent of participants noted the *lack of appreciation and*

positive feedback for employees' work creates disengagement (Meyer et al., 2011;

Richman, 2006). The responses from Question 5 indicated that job satisfaction has a

significant effect on employee engagement. The findings from Question 5 are consistent

with several studies, which indicated that organizational leaders who understand how to

increase job satisfaction would be able increase employee engagement (Meyer et al.,

2011; Richman, 2006).

Table 4

Question 4: Does the Work in Your Current Role Motivate You? How?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
Positive comments			
My current role motivates me because I am challenged with new tasks/problems to solve, learning new things	10	50	P2, P3, P5, P7, P8, P12, P13, P14, P19, P20
I have direct responsibility/accountability in my role	5	25	P2, P3, P4, P5, P16
Career growth: opportunities for advancement, acquiring marketable skills	4	20	P3, P12, P13, P19
The product I make benefits its end users, I'm making a difference	4	20	P3, P8, P11, P15
Positive, supportive relationship with my co-workers, good working environment	4	20	P5, P7, P15, P20
The reward of being involved from planning to product, seeing end users use the product and getting feedback	3	15	P4, P12, P16
My work makes a positive and valuable contribution to the project, company	2	10	P3, P6
I'm passionate about the work I do	2	10	P9, P15
I have freedom of choice in how to implement my work	1	5	P9
My paycheck, to some extent (not primary motivator)	1	5	P15
Pride	1	5	P18
Fear of failure	1	5	P18
Being part of difference aspects of the job, company	1	5	P19
Being informed of job expectations and requirements	1	5	P3
Negative comments			
I'm not engaged because I'm not challenged in my current role	1	5	P1
It's difficult to stay motivated, I have to seek new tasks and make myself useful to other team members	1	5	P17

Table 5

Question 5: Do You Feel Job Satisfaction Affects Your Engagement Level? How?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
Employees must enjoy their work or they won't be engaged	6	30	P5, P6, P7, P9, P15, P18
Satisfied employees are more engaged, work harder, are more	5	25	P1, P3, P10,

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
productive			P13, P14
Disengaged employees will perform at the minimum level, just for the paycheck	3	15	P4, P11, P15
Lack of appreciation and positive feedback for employee's work creates disengagement	3	15	P7, P16, P19
Being engaged depends upon the individual person	2	10	P7, P17
Working with other satisfied people helps engagement, motivation	2	10	P12, P13
Challenge creates satisfaction, boredom, lack of new opportunities create disengagement	2	10	P2, P13
Employee must get along with supervisor	1	5	P15
I would continue with my job either way because I have to support my family	1	5	P20

When responding to Question 6, participants indicated how their engagement level affected their decision to remain with the company (see Table 6). Thirty percent of the participants indicated that *understanding that being bored, unchallenged, and having few new or different opportunities* would lead to decreasing the motivation to stay with the company. In contrast, 20% of the participants articulated that personal reasons such as *family obligations* affected their decision to stay with the company rather than their engagement level, which is consistent with normative commitment (González & Guillén, 2008; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). Fifteen percent of the respondents indicated that their engagement level affects the decision to remain with the company. An employee's engagement level can either have positive or negative effects on their decision to remain with an organization. The findings from Question 6 were consistent with previous studies on normative commitment; however, the results indicated that many other variables factor into whether an employee decides to remain with an organization (González & Guillén, 2008; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010).

Table 6

Question 6: How Does Your Engagement Level Affect Your Decision to Remain With the

Company?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
Being, bored, unchallenged, having few opportunities for new/different tasks to stay engaged would decrease engagement, motivation to stay with current company	6	30	P2, P5, P6, P7, P9, P13
Having few or no opportunities for promotion/advancement diminishes engagement, would look elsewhere	4	20	P4, P10, P12, P19
Personal reasons, such as family obligations, affect decision to stay more so than engagement	4	20	P7, P8, P16, P17
Engagement level has notable impact on decision to remain with current company (general)	3	15	P3, P6, P15
Compensation is a primary factor in decision to remain with company	3	15	P12, P13, P18
The people, relationships, and work environment create satisfaction and engagement and affect decision to stay	2	10	P6, P15
Having the same values and beliefs as company motivates the decision to stay	2	10	P14, P16
Poor leadership makes it difficult to stay engaged, makes me want to leave	1	5	P14

When responding to Question 7, participants noted the attributes that gave

meaning to the work in their role (see Table 7). Forty-five percent of the participants

noted being able to *see the finished product and pride in accomplishment and success*.

Employees motivated by performing well typically align to the organizational goal and

are consistent with organizational commitment (Hur et al., 2011; Riggio & Lee, 2007).

Twenty-five percent of the participants supported the end user and making a difference.

Other items noted were *the feeling of being a valuable contributor* and *personal*

motivation to succeed, which each received comments from 10% of participants and

aligned with the *pride in accomplishment* attribute. The findings from Question 7 were

consistent with studies on organizational commitment; the employees who found

meaning in their roles found self-actualization in their work, which gave them a sense of

pride to continue to execute their tasks at higher engagement levels (Hur et al., 2011;

Riggio & Lee, 2007).

Table 7

Question 7: What Gives Your Work Meaning in Your Role?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
Being able to see the end product used; pride in accomplishment, success	9	45	P4, P5, P9, P10, P12, P13, P16, P18, P20
The product benefits end users/makes a difference	5	25	P1, P7, P9, P11, P16
Developing new skills, knowledge, career growth	4	20	P3, P9, P11, P17
Feeling of being effective/successful in particular job role	4	20	P4, P7, P8, P19
Having the expertise/being able to train others, provide solutions to the team	3	15	P10, P14, P15
Having direct responsibility/accountability for product quality/outcome	2	10	P5, P18
Relationships with co-workers, working with team	2	10	P3, P5
The feeling of being a valuable contributor	2	10	P3, P20
Personal motivation to succeed	2	10	P2, P6

Participants described the role of leadership in employee engagement in Question

8 and garnered several groupings (see Table 8). Most participants felt passionately about

the role of leadership in employee engagement. Thirty percent of the participants stated

that *leadership is ultimately responsible for the engagement of their employees and if*

employees are not engaged, it reflects poorly on the leader. Twenty-five percent stated

that leadership has a *support role* in the engagement of employees. Another 25% stated

that *employee engagement starts at the top and leadership must exemplify engagement.*

Furthermore, 20% of the participants stated that leaders *should communicate and listen to*

their employees to develop a personal connection with their employees. Leadership's

ability to appropriately map employees to the proper assignment yielded responses from

20% of participants, as did *being valued and appropriately rewarded for good*

performance. The findings from Question 8 aligned with previous studies that indicated

organizational leadership is a fundamental attribute that can either increase or decrease

employee engagement (Mitchell & Shepherd, 2010; Powell, 2007). It is important to

develop organizational leaders to engage employees actively in a proactive manner.

Actively engaging employees creates a connection between leaders and employees.

Table 8

Question 8: How Would You Describe the Role of Leadership in Employee Engagement?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
Leadership is ultimately responsible for employee engagement, if employees aren't engaged it reflects poorly on leaders	6	30	P13, P14, P15, P18, P19, P20
Leadership's role is to provide support, encouragement, resources to employees, back them up	5	25	P1, P2, P6, P13, P20
Engagement starts at the top, leadership must exemplify engagement	5	25	P3, P4, P7, P16, P17
Leadership must communicate with and listen to employees, have a personal connection, know what motivates individuals	4	20	P3, P11, P15, P18
Leadership can engage employees by ensuring that task assignments are appropriately matched to employees' skills and abilities, creating the right team for the job	4	20	P5, P6, P11, P13
Leadership engages employees by making them feel valued, appreciated, rewarded for good work	4	20	P7, P12, P16, P19
Leaders must facilitate communication, teamwork, collaboration among employees to keep them engaged	3	15	P8, P9, P12
Approach should be strategically focused, leadership should have a specific plan for engaging employees	3	15	P11, P14, P18
Giving employees a sense of ownership, empowerment, and responsibility engages them	2	10	P19, P20
Leader must be personable and approachable	2	10	P2, P4
Leadership is the most important aspect of employee engagement	1	5	P2
The role is how leadership thinks of and portrays the company	1	5	P1
Leadership putting themselves in employee's position	1	5	P17
Employees become engaged based on leader's tutelage	1	5	P10
Leadership's ability to see the broader perspective as well as small details	1	5	P10

When answering Question 9, participants indicated how employees could increase

engagement in their roles (see Table 9). Thirty-five percent of the participants responded

that leaders should *involve employees as being part of the solution*. Leaders *should set and monitor goals with their employees once their employees commit to being part of the solution*. Leaders *should also listen to their employees' needs and plan/monitor reengagement process* with them. In contrast, 25% of the participants stated that leaders should find out the reasons for employee disengagement before trying to encourage them to reengage. Exploring new challenging opportunities, appropriately mapping skills to the correct tasks, and training all were attributes 20% of the participants indicated may help employees reengage. The responses from Question 9 indicated that organizational leaders should constantly engage with their employees. The findings from Question 9 were consistent with previous studies that indicated when the engagement between leaders and employees is constant; the leaders will be able to understand what keeps employees engaged (Kahn, 1990). The findings from Question 9 were consistent with Kahn's (1990) personal engagement theory; organizational leaders who understand what keeps their employees engaged will have the ability to identify the engagement level of their employees.

Table 9

Question 9: How Do You Believe Employees Can Be Reengaged?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
Make employees part of the solution, set and monitor goals with employees, listen to their needs and plan/monitor reengagement process with them accordingly	7	35	P6, P8, P13, P14, P16, P17, P18
Leadership should take a personal interest in employee's lives and well-being, show they care, may include events to build camaraderie	5	25	P2, P3, P5, P6, P16
Leadership must first determine why employee is disengaged	5	25	P1, P3, P8, P12, P13
Provide employee with new, more interesting, more challenging work assignments	4	20	P1, P4, P9, P10
Ensure employee's background, interests, skills and abilities are a good fit with task assignments	4	20	P2, P12, P15, P16
Invest in new training opportunities for employees to expand skills, work roles	4	20	P2, P7, P13, P19
Ensure the manager/leader is an appropriate match with employee's needs and for the project at hand	3	15	P5, P11, P20
Take steps to create work environment in which employees feel valued, such as incentives, rewards, recognition	3	15	P5, P7, P11
Allow employees autonomy in their decision-making and process for completing their work	2	10	P9, P10
Strong leadership, don't condone behaviors that induce or encourage disengagement	2	10	P2, P14
Have leader take training course in employee interaction	1	5	P1
Define employee's tasks clearly	1	5	P15
Allow communication with higher/executive level managers to give employees visibility within the company	1	5	P19

Participants' responses to Question 10 indicated what affect and influence disengaged employees have in the organization (see Table 10). Most of the participants indicated that disengaged employees have a negative effect on the organization. Fifty percent of the participants recognized that *disengagement and dissatisfaction had a negative effect on the organization* and disengaged employees' *influence is contagious* to other employees. With respect to cost, 35% of the participants stated that disengaged employees cost the organization through inefficiency and wasted resources. Twenty percent of the participants indicated that highly engaged employees typically have to *pick*

up the slack for disengaged employees, which has a negative effect on the morale of

highly engaged employees. The responses to Question 10 aligned to the concepts outlined

in the literature that behaviors of disengaged employees have negative effects on

productivity (Meyer et al., 2011; Richman, 2006).

Table 10

Question 10: What Effect and Influence Do Disengaged Employees Have in the

Organization?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
Disengagement and dissatisfaction have a negative effect, their influence is contagious to other employees	10	50	P1, P3, P5, P6, P9, P11, P14, P15, P17, P18
Disengaged employees cost the organization by inefficiency and waste of resources	7	35	P4, P8, P7, P10, P11, P13, P19
Negative organizational impact of disengaged employees is significant and/or exponential	4	20	P2, P9, P10, P18
Disengagement results in higher performing employees picking up slack for the disengaged, resulting in low morale	4	20	P2, P6, P14, P20
Disengaged employees have the power to sabotage or destroy the organization if problem is not addressed	2	10	P14, P16
Disengagement causes segregation and conflict among employees	2	10	P11, P12
Disengagement leads to employee attrition and can make recruiting new talent difficult	2	10	P9, P13
Having disengaged employees can negatively affect organization's reputation	2	10	P13, P16
Some disengaged employees are rewarded even though their effort is minimal, makes others feel less valued	1	5	P7
Everyone needs to feel valued, even the lowest ranking team members	1	3	P3
Disengaged employees do not support the organization's mission	1	5	P20

Participants responding to Question 11 explored how trust, respect, and leadership

affect employee engagement (see Table 11). Forty percent of participants indicated *lack*

of trust negatively affects communication, and without trust and respect, employees will

not listen to management or voice concerns. Thirty percent identified trust and respect as

fundamental to employee engagement, leadership, and organizational success. Fifteen

percent of participants noted a lack of trust and respect creates a poor working environment, tension, and conflict in organizations. Another 15% recognized trust and respect must be present and mutual among employees. Question 11 responses highlighted opportunities for leaders to use EI help to reduce tension and motivate disengaged employees (Hong et al., 2011). The findings from Question 11 aligned to previous studies that indicated when leaders who actively use EI to engage their employees would be more successful in overcoming harsh deadlines, aggressive schedules, and labor shortages, which are barriers to increasing employee engagement (Scherrer et al., 2010).

Table 11

Question 11: How Does Trust and Respect in the Organization and Leadership Affect

Employee Engagement?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
Lack of trust negatively affects communication, without trust and respect employees won't listen to management or voice concerns	8	40	P3, P4, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12
Trust and respect are fundamental to employee engagement, leadership, organizational success	6	30	P3, P4, P5, P15, P17, P19
Lack of trust and respect creates a poor working environment, tension and conflict	3	15	P3, P13, P20
Trust and respect must both be present and mutual among employees	3	15	P1, P4, P11
Employees who don't feel management has their best interest in mind won't put forth effort in their work	2	10	P16, P18
Trust and respect are key to employee loyalty, important because younger generation are more likely to switch jobs	1	5	P19
It's the organization's responsibility to develop and maintain respect and trust in the working environment	1	5	P5
Lack of trust creates pressure on those who have to pick up slack for others, creates resentment	1	5	P11
Employee events to improve morale and create relationships among employees and management can help improve trust and respect	1	5	P6
A working environment with trust and respect, allowing employees to take part in decision-making, encourages innovation, problem solving	1	5	P13

When responding to Question 12, participants provided their overall perception of employee engagement (see Table 12). Half of the employees acknowledged that *organizations cannot be successful without employee engagement*. Fifteen percent of the participants also noted there is not one approach that keeps employee engaged, and approaches *should be tailored to the needs of the individual*. Another 15% recognized that the quality of work and effort suffers with employees who lack engagement. The findings from Question 12 aligned with previous studies and gave further credence to the fact that organizations cannot be successful without employee engagement (Macmillan-Kang et al., 2011; Meyer et al., 2011).

Table 12

Question 12: What Is Your Overall Perception of Employee Engagement?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
The company cannot be successful without employee engagement	10	50	P3, P5, P8, P10, P11, P14, P15, P16, P18, P20
There is no one solution, the work environment must meet various needs of the employees	3	15	P1, P7, P18
Quality of work, effort level suffers if employees aren't engaged	3	15	P11, P12, P18
Employees must feel part of a team have good relationships with co-workers	2	10	P16, P20
Engagement is employees' satisfaction level	2	10	P6, P11
Most employees aren't self-motivated, need support from leadership and resources to motivate them	1	5	P7
Some employees will not respond to any effort to engage them	1	5	P4
Leadership/management must make intentional specific efforts to engage employees	1	5	P3
Employees must be able to communicate freely with management about difficult matters/concerns	1	5	P3
Engagement is synonymous with perception of worth, feeling valued	1	5	P11
Employee engagement shouldn't be difficult to achieve if leadership cares and is competent	1	5	P14
Companies must provide a path of progression for younger employees fresh out of school who want to use their education and learn skills	1	5	P19

Participants responding to Question 13 explored the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance (see Table 13). Eighty percent of participants felt employee engagement had *a direct effect on organizational performance*. Fifteen percent noted employees who feel like *valued contributors would perform better*. Another 15% felt motivation to execute tasks came from understanding organizational goals and their roles help achieve them. Fifteen percent noted *communication through the organization would enhance performance* by role. The responses from Question 13 indicated the performance of an organization relies on productivity and engagement level (M. Clarke, 2008; Tremblay et al., 2009). The findings are consistent with other studies, which indicated leaders must understand and monitor employee engagement to maintain and increase productivity (M. Clarke, 2008; Tremblay et al., 2009).

Table 13

Question 13: How Would You Describe the Relationship Between Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
It's a direct relationship, employee engagement and performance go hand-in-hand; as one increases so does the other and vice versa—organizational performance suffers if employees aren't engaged	16	80	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13, P15, P16, P18, P19, P20
Employees who feel like valued contributors will perform better	3	15	P3, P12, P14
Employee motivation and engagement comes from understanding organizational goals and their role in achieving them	3	15	P3, P4, P17
Employee engagement is contingent on communication between management and lower level employees so that managers can focus on running the business and know that operational performance details are being taken care of by engaged employees who will communicate about concerns	3	15	P4, P8, P13
Attrition from having to fire disengaged employees creates training issues, inefficiencies	1	5	P11
It all goes back to leadership's dedication level	1	5	P12

Question 14 was the final question and participants indicated the effect that

employee engagement has on productivity (see Table 14). Sixty percent of the

participants recognized employee engagement has a *positive, direct correlation on*

productivity, and 15% of the participants shared that employees must remain in the

communication loop to have engagement. Moreover, 10% stated that *the more employees*

are engaged, the more productive they will be. Another 10% stated that engaged

employees *produce a higher quality of work and are more creative and efficient.* The

findings from Question 14 indicate that productivity relies heavily on employee

engagement, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee motivation

(Zigarmi et al., 2009). Organizations that understand a close relationship exists between

employee engagement and productivity will be successful.

Table 14

Question 14: What Effect Does Employee Engagement Have on Productivity?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants	% of participants	Participants
Positive, direct correlation; productivity is the outcome of engagement level, disengagement negatively affects productivity	12	60	P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P15, P17, P19, P20
Employees must be involved with the rest of the team and in the loop to be fully engaged	3	15	P4, P8, P16
More engaged employees are usually more productive, but less engaged employees can still get the work done; it's the difference between being good and great	2	10	P14, P18
Engaged employees produce higher quality work, more creative, more efficient processes, fewer errors	2	10	P13, P20
Most of the time employees just do what it takes to get by, but those who work with engaged employees become more engaged themselves	1	5	P3
Employees won't be productive if they don't feel valued	1	5	P16
Individual work ethic is also important, some engaged employees still have problems getting work done	1	5	P12

The development of the invariant constituents in Tables 1 through 14 involved the modified Van Kaam method and led to the framework to construct individual textural descriptions of the participants' experience using verbatim examples from the interviews to validate the emerging themes (Moustakas, 1994). The problem addressed in the study was that disengaged employees cause companies $300 billion in lost productivity annually. The study involved collecting the lived experiences of the participants using recorded and transcribed open-ended interview questions. Finding from the themes were consistent with Kahn's (1990) personal engagement theory, and the engagement was evident in the emerging themes. In addition, the 20 participants' behaviors were consistent with cognitive self-regulation, which is the foundation of TPB (Ajzen, 1991) The participants' took ownership of their careers, and their responses provided data that created invariant constituents that gave deeper insight into the phenomenon of employee engagement and produced the emergent themes. The emergent themes that developed from the study were:

1. Factors influencing employee engagement

2. Factors influencing organizational commitment

3. Leadership's influence on employee engagement

4. Influence of employee engagement on employee performance and organizational performance

The first step involved creating individual textural descriptions by assigning recurring phrases, ideas, or statements into attributes. The next step involved labeling and coding the attributes so participants could see a snapshot of their experience to construct

a contextual or structural description of that experience. The third step involved examining, sorting, and comparing the contextual descriptions to search for common experiences. I outlined the themes in a composite description of meanings and essences of the group. The themes from the invariant constituent table consisted of the following.

Participants' Definition of Employee Engagement

Participants typically described employee engagement in terms of active, productive, committed involvement to work duties, teams, and company objectives. The role of communication among team members and leadership or management, including decision-making and understanding goals and job duties, was an important aspect. The affective dimensions of engagement were not typical, but the few who mentioned them noted their enjoyment of work and feeling appreciated. When describing what engaged employees look like, participants frequently described engagement in terms of the level of effort put forth in completing job duties. Engaged employees had buy-in to the larger goals of the organization and worked harder as a result of engagement, whereas participants described disengaged employees as performing the minimal amount of work to collect a paycheck.

Factors Influencing Employee Engagement

Interesting work and new opportunities. Participants typically described the quality of their work tasks as being the key factor to their engagement level. A motivating factor was having challenging and interesting work duties that reflected the appropriate use of employees' skills. A number of participants maintained their engagement level by seeking opportunities to expand their skill sets and by learning new aspects of their jobs.

Conversely, having repetitive or boring work duties was the leading factor contributing to becoming disengaged. The attributes of interesting work opportunities were consistent with Kahn's (1990) personal engagement theory.

Appropriate assignment and clear understanding of job duties. The participants expressed disengagement among employees is likely to increase when their job tasks are inappropriate to their education, professional skills, or natural abilities. Disengagement is also a likely result when management or leadership fails to ensure employees have a clear understanding of the tasks or objectives or when employees do not receive feedback on their individual performance. Participants described such situations as frustrating and discouraging, noting they could cause disengagement to increase, which is consistent with cognitive self-regulation found in TPB (Ajzen, 1991).

Feeling like valued contributors motivates employees and makes their work meaningful. Continuance commitment helped the employees to feel satisfaction in their job and add value to their organizations (Gong et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2010). Participants described feeling like valued contributors at their jobs as being in two dimensions: the sense of personal success and accomplishment derived from contributing to the team or end product and demonstrations of recognition or appreciation from management through compensation or communication. Several participants stated when management or leadership does not recognize the difference in performance between high-performing and low-performing employees, the high performers' work effort decreases. Some participants noted that verbal or formal recognition is perceived as

sufficient to maintain motivation by most; others specifically noted a simple mention of gratitude by managers or leaders or a pay raise.

Many participants attributed their motivation levels to their drive to succeed, their personal ambition, and self-motivation. In addition, participants noted that doing their personal best came from internal motivation as much as from their specific job duties or organization. Those participants were also more likely to feel that certain employees will not feel motivated regardless of their situation or the attempts to engage them. They are not internally driven because engagement is a personal decision (Kahn, 1990).

Enjoying and finding meaning in work. The satisfaction of many participants who enjoyed their work or had a passion for their current role came from their personal commitment level, although they differed in terms of the importance of enjoying their work relative to other factors. Most participants felt engaged, satisfied employees must enjoy their work and said that enjoying the work performed in their role was more important than compensation. Some felt that those employees who were working just for the paycheck would not put forth their best effort in their jobs tasks. Others felt that enjoying their work was important but not necessarily more so than compensation and advancement, which was not consistent with normative commitment.

Normative pressures that did not motivate the participants to complete the tasks included within their job description emerged from the study (González & Guillén, 2008; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). Participants noted the most meaningful aspect of their work was the ability to see the final product successfully integrated and knowing that their work product benefitted the warfighters who used the product to save lives in combat.

Accountability and responsibility for decision making. Participants noted that they felt motivated by a sense of accountability, having direct responsibility in their job duties, and being able to complete their work duties with autonomy, which was consistent with TPB (Ajzen, 1991). Other participants noted that being involved in the decision-making processes regarding how to perform their job tasks motivated them. Participants described feeling trusted and respected by management who gave them autonomy at work and having a sense of ownership when they have responsibility for the process and outcome of their work.

Relationships with coworkers. Social identity was the basis of an employee's interaction within the work group (Fuller et al., 2009). The employees' social identities influenced their attitudes and values and the behaviors of the group (Blader & Tyler, 2009). Having positive and fruitful relationships with coworkers and leaders contributes to employee satisfaction at work. Participants noted feeling supported by coworkers; feeling like part of an effective, communicative team; and having a manager who takes a personal interest in employees' well-being helped to keep them engaged in their tasks. Interpersonal relationships in the workplace led to a level of transparency and allowed several participants to overcome problems that arose in the workplace.

Leadership Influence

Uncommunicative leadership. Participants described communication between management and employees as crucial to maintaining employee engagement and motivation. Leaders who fail to communicate organizational goals, objectives, and strategies or who give feedback on employee performance will have employees who feel

disconnected from other team members and who will not grasp the importance of their work, thereby becoming disengaged and isolated. A number of participants identified uncommunicative leadership as a barrier to organizational productivity as well. Communication involves key leaders and managers exuding emotional resonance and establishing an environment that promotes an organization where their employees feel the effects of organization barriers. Organizations' barriers stifle communication (Hur et al., 2011; Riggio & Lee, 2007).

Trust and respect between leadership and employees. Participants also considered communication and compliance to be a function of mutual respect between managers and lower level employees. Several participants indicated that employees who do not trust or respect management do not feel comfortable voicing their concerns, will not follow procedures that management has set forth, and will not listen to management. Participants stated that trust and respect could be the foundation of employee engagement. Participants who trusted and respected their leader were more apt to adhere to procedures and policies set forth as well as feel comfortable voicing their concerns. It is imperative for leaders to display emotional intelligence to establish a trusted rapport with their employees to facilitate trust and respect (Hur et al., 2011; Riggio & Lee, 2007).

Leadership must have a specific plan for engaging employees. Participants clearly agreed that efforts to engage employees must be institutional policy. Most participants identified leadership as being responsible for making specific efforts to develop and maintain employee engagement. In addition, participants noted various ways that employees find motivation as well as different reasons for employees to become

disengaged. Leadership must understand that the plans for developing, maintaining, and reengaging employees must be flexible and tailored to individuals rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Employees will align to leaders who are knowledgeable in EI because of its foundation in treating each employee as an individual (Hong et al., 2011).

Organizational Commitment

Compensation level and opportunities for advancement. Opportunities for advancement and compensation are important in employees' engagement and decisions to remain with an organization. As time progressed in a particular role, career progression can become more important than engagement level. Consequently, even those who described enjoying their work as important to their engagement level identified career growth as the bottom line in their decision to remain with their current organization. These employees would leave their organization if they knew they could obtain a higher salary or better opportunities for promotion in a similar or slightly different role at another company, even if satisfied with their current role. Organizational commitment is a key attribute of employee engagement in a professional setting because three psychological components: a desire or affective commitment, a need or continuance commitment, and an obligation or normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Understanding of organizational goals. Employees who have a breadth of understanding of an organization's goals as well as the strategic plans and processes for achieving them will have higher engagement, have a greater sense of ownership over their work, and create buy-in to the company's objectives. Participants who described having a view of the organization's bigger picture and who noted the company's values

aligned with their personal beliefs or values felt motivated to ensure the company's success as well as their own. A clear understating of the organizational goals and objectives created ownership and led to increasing motivation for some participants, which aligned to organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Influence of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance and Organizational Performance

Impact of disengaged employees. Participants were mostly in collective agreement that disengaged employees have a contagious and negative influence on their coworkers. At their most benign, disengaged employees create a negative work environment. Disengaged employees at their worst can become destructive and toxic to the organization. Several participants described disengaged employees who create tension and conflict because others have to pick up the slack from their work or because they involve other employees in their problems with the workplace, which can then become a structural problem that creates attrition and problems attracting new employees. Highly engaged employees contribute to a company's competitiveness (Attridge, 2009).

Employee satisfaction and engagement directly related to performance. Most participants described the relationship between employee satisfaction and engagement as proportional to their productivity levels and in turn directly affecting organizational performance. Several participants articulated that a workforce of satisfied and engaged employees could have an exponential effect on productivity, although they noted disengaged employees would work less efficiently and cost the organization resources. Several participants noted that employee engagement is critical to organizational success.

Managing the attributes that cause employees to become disengaged promotes higher engagement levels in the workplace (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008).

Applications to Professional Practice

This study added to the academic body of knowledge by identifying how to increase productivity through employee engagement in the aerospace defense industry. Productivity is a key attribute to the success and profitability of any company. The current financial climate in the United States will affect the aerospace defense industry. The findings from this study may lead to developing strategies to address how to increase productivity in aerospace defense companies and may limit the amount of lost productivity caused by disengaged employees. In the past, organizational leaders have used technology, Six Sigma, best practices, skilled labor, and education to streamline, create, and capture opportunities to increase efficiencies in the aerospace defense industry. Organizational leaders lack the same robust undertakings to address the lowered productivity caused by disengaged employees, which has affected the financial performance of many aerospace defense companies (Heger, 2007).

The symptoms of disengaged employees include an exponential rise in rework, excessive waste, growing cycle times, and a reduction in productivity due to missed deadlines, budget overruns, and defect increases. If the leaders of companies choose to develop practices based on the findings of this study, they will experience an increase in productivity and overall financial performance. An opportunity for companies is to increase productivity to remain financially competitive and will help maintain the longevity of an organization (Bottazzi et al., 2008).

The findings from this study create opportunities to develop highly engaged workforces, increase productivity in a more efficient manner, and retain talent effectively (Shucka et al., 2011; Villara & Albertína, 2010; Zigarmi et al., 2009). The following themes are recommendations for future studies to increase employee engagement: (a) factors influencing employee engagement, (b) factors influencing organizational commitment, (c) leadership's influence on employee engagement, and (d) the influence of employee engagement on employee performance and organizational performance.

Implications for Social Change

This study helped determine how to increase employee engagement through productivity. The emergent themes that lead to social change are (a) factors influencing employee engagement, (b) factors influencing organizational commitment, (c) leadership's influence on employee engagement, and (d) the influence of employee engagement on employee performance and organizational performance and provide insight into how organizational leadership can influence the outcome of increasing productivity through understanding employee engagement. The increased productivity will create positive social change because it has a direct effect on an organization's financial performance. Increasing the amount of productivity in a difficult economy will help organizational leaders limit the loss profit attributed to disengaged employees. Increasing the probability of profitability will create a stable workforce and increase the longevity of organizations. The result from this study enhances the academic body of knowledge and could help individuals matriculating through various courses of study that support execution in the aerospace industry. Academic institutions, business

organizations, and communities would be the stakeholders in a study conducted to push forward the findings from this study.

Recommendations for Action

Aerospace defense companies need the information presented in this study to offset the effects of the Sequestration Transparency Act of 2012. The act was derived from the Budget Control Act of 2011 and requires a 9.4% cut in nonexempt defense discretionary spending (Office of Management and Budget, 2012). Disengaged employees are a liability to productivity. Fifty percent of employees in the United States do not have full engagement in their work roles, 23% of employees have total disengagement from their roles, and 27% of employees have full engagement (Kennedy & Daim, 2010). Aerospace defense companies that increase productivity by 20 to 25% can offset the impact of a 9.4% reduction in spending called out by the Sequestration Transparency Act and remain financially competitive (Office of Management and Budget, 2012).

I will present the results from the research to an aerospace defense company located in the southwest region of the United States and publish in ProQuest. Results from the research may help develop professional applications to overcome the challenges presented by the Sequestration Transparency Act. In addition, I will submit the findings from this study to (a) *Journal of International Business Management*, (b) *Business Process Management Journal*, (c) *Human Resource Management Review*, and (d) *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*. The applications

from the research may give similar companies a basis to protect the core of their business while remaining profitable.

Recommendations for Further Study

Exploring the phenomenon of increasing productivity through employee engagement led to identifying several emerging themes that scholars should study in greater detail. Future studies for each of the presented themes could be helpful: (a) factors influencing employee engagement, (b) factors influencing organizational commitment, (c) leadership's influence on employee engagement, and (d) the influence of employee engagement on employee performance and organizational performance.

Employee engagement is a phenomenon that affects multiple industries. As a result, future studies of the themes presented will add to the academic body of knowledge and professional application. The new themes identified may help industry leaders develop strategies to overcome the negative effects of disengaged employees and maintain a competitive workforce.

Reflections

The rigorous matriculation through the Walden Doctorate in Business Administration Program has been a rewarding and challenging experience. The beginning of the program was overwhelming and discouraging; however, as time progressed, the excitement and encouragement of colleagues helped me to remain engaged in my studies. Breaking the doctorate in business administration process down into small steps helped me to overcome the feeling of being overwhelmed. The first step was to choose a topic that was a true business problem, which led me to choose employee engagement.

Several years ago, many of my colleagues were forced to take on roles within the organization that did not align their skill-set due to business reasons. As result, the employees became highly disengaged because of a skill-set mismatch. We began to feel the effects of forcing someone into a role in which he or she did not have a natural ability to function and found it to be a big business problem. The phenomenon of EI began to emerge through research that tied closely to employee productivity. The original topic was increasing productivity through EI; however, employee engagement became clearer through a narrower research approach. I changed the title of my research to *Exploring Increased Productivity Through Employee Engagement*.

Leaders in the aerospace defense industry typically focus on process improvement initiatives such as Six Sigma and lean manufacturing to decrease lowered productivity. Learning that most initiatives did not yield sustained results revealed the opportunity to look at replacing the focus on process improvements to increase productivity through employee engagement. During the course of research, the topic became narrower and employee engagement became the obvious choice. During the course of the research, I found that productivity was a key attribute to the profitability of an organization and disengaged employees presented a huge liability to companies.

I chose the phenomenological method to understand how to increase productivity through employee engagement (Giorgi, 2008; van Manen, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). The lived experiences of the participants provided key insight into increasing productivity through employee engagement and answered my personal and professional questions.

Summary and Study Conclusions

Leaders of aerospace defense companies need to reevaluate how to increase productivity. Employee engagement is a product of human behavior, and the research showed that productivity is a function of human behavior. This study indicated how to increase productivity through employee engagement in the aerospace defense industry. Companies that continue to experience declines in productivity will not remain profitable and will have to cut back on labor. A decreased workforce will reduce the competitive edge of an organization because its employees will not be able to take on more work through new business pursuits. The Sequestration Transparency Act will have a direct effect on the aerospace defense industry because of the dynamic budget cuts that require these companies to do even more with less (Office of Management and Budget, 2012).

Leaders of aerospace defense companies must develop robust strategies to stimulate employee engagement to overcome the amount of lost productivity that disengaged employees cause (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). Organizational leaders must align the pursuit of increasing employee engagement with seeking low-cost technology solutions, process improvement, benchmarking, and talent retention to remain competitive.

The recommendations that I presented for furthering the understanding of employee engagement and productivity will create opportunities to develop highly engaged workforces, increase productivity in a more efficient manner, and retain talent effectively (Shucka et al., 2011; Villara & Albertína, 2010; Zigarmi et al., 2009). My recommendations for future studies to determine ways increase employee engagement

are, but are not limited to, understanding (a) factors influencing employee engagement, (b) factors influencing organizational commitment, (c) leadership's influence on employee engagement, and (d) the influence of employee engagement on employee performance and organizational performance.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

The interview questions for this study were modeled from Swinton-Douglas (2010) and

will be as follows:

Q1. How do you define employee engagement?

Q2. In your role, what keeps you fully engaged in your tasks?

Q3. In your role, how and why do employees become disengaged in their task?

Q4. Does the work in your current role motivate you? How?

Q5. Do you feel job satisfaction affect your engagement level? How?

Q6. How does your engagement level affect your decision to remain with the company?

Q7. What gives your work meaning in your role?

Q8. How would you describe the role of leadership in employee engagement?

Q9. How do you believe employees can be reengaged?

Q10. What affect and influence do disengaged employees have in the organization?

Q11. How does trust and respect in the organization and leadership affect employee

engagement?

Q12. What is your overall, perception of employee engagement?

Q13. How would you describe the relationship between employee engagement and

organizational performance?

Q14. What affect does employee engagement have on productivity?

Appendix B: Informed Consent

You are invited to take part in a research study of Increasing Productivity through Employee Engagement. The researcher is inviting salaried employee that work a global aerospace defense company in the southwest region of the United States comprised of entry-level to midgrade employees responsible for performing daily tactical and strategic operations with 1 year or greater tenure with the company.

The selected employees will have experience working in a project management environment in which cost and schedule are primary contributing factors to complete the targeted objectives of a project. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

A researcher named Wayne Richards Jr, who is a doctoral student at Walden University, is conducting this study. You may already know the researcher as a Program Manager, but this study is separate from that role.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and personal experiences of employees affect productivity and the financial performance of an organization.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

· Participate in one 30-minute face-to-face interview

· Allow the researcher to record the interview for transcribing the results

· Answer 14 interview questions to the best of your ability

Verify the written transcript for accuracy and respond via email   Here are some sample questions: Q1: How do you define employee engagement?   Q2: In your role, w keeps you fully engaged in your tasks?   Q3: In your role, become disengaged in their task?

   Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress or becoming upset. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.   Understanding how employee engagement could lead to an in increase the performance of day-to- day tasks. Increasing employee engagement increases productivity has positive impact on the financial performance of a company.

Payment:

Participants will receive a $10 gift card as a thank you gift for participating in this study. The thank you gift is a notion of good jester for taking the time out of your busy schedule to participate in a 30-minute interview. You will receive the gift card upon completion or withdrawal during the face-to-face interview.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Every participant will be assigned a participant code P1-P20 to protect his or her identity. The audio and written data will be kept secure on an encrypted thumb drive for 5 years after the study is complete. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. The thumb drive will be destroyed after the 5-year period.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via cell phone ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or email ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮, extension ▮▮▮. Walden University's approval number for this study is **10-26-12-0165871** and it expires on **October 25, 2013.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep for your records via a scanned email within 24hrs of signing the consent form. The consent form will be kept in a fireproof lock for a period of 5 years.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent   _____

Participant's Signature   _____

Researcher's Signature   _____

                                                       _____

Appendix C: Invariant Constituent Tables

Table 1
Q1. How do you define employee engagement?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
Continuing, active involvement in and commitment to job duties	8	40	P1, P8, P9, P11, P12, P15, P17, P18
Employee involvement and participation in decision-making processes, management giving and receiving feedback from employees on work processes and environment	5	25	P3, P10, P13, P19, P20
Employees are actively part of a team, communication is facilitated at all levels, goals are shared	7	35	P4, P7, P8, P11, P15, P16, P17
Employees are committed to company's goals and success, feel sense of ownership	4	20	P3, P7, P14, P19
Employees are working at a high productivity level	3	15	P1, P6, P16
Employees feel personal motivation and/or enjoyment in the job, separate from compensation	3	15	P1, P2, P7
Employees understand their work duties and have the appropriate background and skills to execute them	2	10	P5, P12
Employees feel appreciated, valued, morale is high	2	10	P12, P16

Table 2

Q2. In your role, what keeps you fully engaged in your tasks?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
Having new challenges, interesting tasks, variety of work, and/or learning opportunities	11	55	P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P11, P18, P19, P20
Feeling that I'm an asset to the company, my work is valued, receiving positive feedback and/or recognition for my work	6	30	P1, P4, P7, P9, P18, P19
My personal drive to succeed, ambition, motivation	6	25	P7, P10, P11, P13, P16, P17
Interpersonal relationship with co-workers, effective communication, positive working relationships	5	25	P5, P6, P8, P15, P16
Opportunities for growth, advancement in the company	4	20	P1, P5, P16, P19
Being provided with clear expectations, understanding of my job duties	3	15	P3, P12, P15
Being able to see the end product in use, knowing my work benefits others	3	15	P4, P11, P14
My sense of personal accountability/responsibility	2	10	P6, P11
External motivators (such as supporting my family)	1	5	P13
Keeping the bigger cause in mind	1	5	P17
My role as a teacher/instructor	1	5	P20

Table 3

Q3. In your role, how and why do employees become disengaged in their tasks?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
Boredom from repetitive tasks, job is no longer challenging, no opportunities for different work are offered	12	60	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P11, P13, P17, P18, P19
Management does not recognize work well done, treats low-performing employees the same as high performers, employees do not feel valued or appreciated	7	35	P1, P3, P4, P7, P14, P16, P20
Lack of support from management, management does not listen, management does not have employee's best interest at heart	6	30	P2, P5, P10, P11, P12, P15
Poor communication and lack of understanding about tasks/goals, lack of feedback	5	25	P6, P8, P11, P12, P17
Job or task isn't an appropriate fit for employee's skills or background, employee is unable to fulfill duties	4	20	P2, P3, P7, P15
Feeling that no one cares, no one is checking, no accountability for work	3	15	P6, P7, P8
Lack of autonomy in one's own work, employee is not involved in decision-making	3	15	P9, P18, P20
Lack of personal motivation, poor attitude	3	15	P16, P17, P20
Stress in employee's personal life, personal issues	2	10	P3, P7

Table 4

Q4. Does the work in your current role motivate you? How?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
POSITIVE COMMENTS			
My current role motivates me because I am challenged with new tasks/problems to solve, learning new things	10	50	P2, P3, P5, P7, P8, P12, P13, P14, P19, P20
I have direct responsibility/ accountability in my role	5	25	P2, P3, P4, P5, P16
Career growth: opportunities for advancement, acquiring marketable skills	4	20	P3, P12, P13, P19
The product I make benefits its end users, I'm making a difference	4	20	P3, P8, P11, P15
Positive, supportive relationship with my co-workers, good working environment	4	20	P5, P7, P15, P20
The reward of being involved from planning to product, seeing end users use the product and getting feedback	3	15	P4, P12, P16
My work makes a positive and valuable contribution to the project, company	2	10	P3, P6
I'm passionate about the work I do	2	10	P9, P15
I have freedom of choice in how to implement my work	1	5	P9
My paycheck, to some extent (not primary motivator)	1	5	P15
Pride	1	5	P18
Fear of failure	1	5	P18
Being part of difference aspects of the job, company	1	5	P19

Being informed of job expectations and requirements	1	5	P3
NEGATIVE COMMENTS			
I'm not engaged because I'm not challenged in my current role	1	5	P1
It's difficult to stay motivated, I have to seek new tasks and make myself useful to other team members	1	5	P17

Table 5

Q5. Do you feel job satisfaction affects your engagement level? How?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
Employees must enjoy their work or they won't be engaged	6	30	P5, P6, P7, P9, P15, P18
Satisfied employees are more engaged, work harder, are more productive	5	25	P1, P3, P10, P13, P14
Disengaged employees will perform at the minimum level, just for the paycheck	3	15	P4, P11, P15
Lack of appreciation and positive feedback for employee's work creates disengagement	3	15	P7, P16, P19
Being engaged depends upon the individual person	2	10	P7, P17
Working with other satisfied people helps engagement, motivation	2	10	P12, P13
Challenge creates satisfaction, boredom, lack of new opportunities create disengagement	2	10	P2, P13
Employee must get along with supervisor	1	5	P15

I would continue with my job either way because I have to support my family	1	5	P20

Table 6

Q6. How does your engagement level affect your decision to remain with the company?

Invariant constituent	Number of participants describing this experience	Percent of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
Being, bored, unchallenged, having few opportunities for new/different tasks to stay engaged would decrease engagement, motivation to stay with current company	6	30	P2, P5, P6, P7, P9, P13
Having few or no opportunities for promotion/advancement diminishes engagement, would look elsewhere	4	20	P4, P10, P12, P19
Personal reasons, such as family obligations, affect decision to stay more so than engagement	4	20	P7, P8, P16, P17
Engagement level has significant impact on decision to remain with current company (general)	3	15	P3, P6, P15
Compensation is a primary factor in decision to remain with company	3	15	P12, P13, P18
The people, relationships, and work environment create satisfaction and engagement and affect decision to stay	2	10	P6, P15
Having the same values and beliefs as company motivates the decision to stay	2	10	P14, P16
Poor leadership makes it	1	5	P14

difficult to stay engaged,
makes me want to leave

Table 7

Q7. What gives your work meaning in your role?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
Being able to see the end product used; pride in accomplishment, success	9	45	P4, P5, P9, P10, P12, P13, P16, P18, P20
The product benefits end users/Makes a difference	5	25	P1, P7, P9, P11, P16
Developing new skills, knowledge, career growth	4	20	P3, P9, P11, P17
Feeling of being effective/successful in particular job role	4	20	P4, P7, P8, P19
Having the expertise/being able to train others, provide solutions to the team	3	15	P10, P14, P15
Having direct responsibility/accountability for product quality/outcome	2	10	P5, P18
Relationships with co-workers, working with team	2	10	P3, P5
The feeling of being a valuable contributor	2	10	P3, P20
Personal motivation to succeed	2	10	P2, P6

Table 8

Q8. How would you describe the role of leadership in employee engagement?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience

Leadership is ultimately responsible for employee engagement, if employees aren't engaged it reflects poorly on leaders	6	30	P13, P14, P15, P18, P19, P20
Leadership's role is to provide support, encouragement, resources to employees, back them up	5	25	P1, P2, P6, P13, P20
Engagement starts at the top, leadership must exemplify engagement	5	25	P3, P4, P7, P16, P17
Leadership must communicate with and listen to employees, have a personal connection, know what motivates individuals	4	20	P3, P11, P15, P18
Leadership can engage employees by ensuring that task assignments are appropriately matched to employees' skills and abilities, creating the right team for the job	4	20	P5, P6, P11, P13
Leadership engages employees by making them feel valued, appreciated, rewarded for good work	4	20	P7, P12, P16, P19
Leaders must facilitate communication, teamwork, collaboration among employees to keep them engaged	3	15	P8, P9, P12
Approach should be strategically focused, leadership should have a specific plan for engaging employees	3	15	P11, P14, P18
Giving employees a sense of ownership, empowerment, and responsibility engages them	2	10	P19, P20
Leader must be personable and approachable	2	10	P2, P4

Leadership is the most important aspect of employee engagement	1	5	P2
The role is how leadership thinks of and portrays the company	1	5	P1
Leadership putting themselves in employee's position	1	5	P17
Employees become engaged based on leader's tutelage	1	5	P10
Leadership's ability to see the broader perspective as well as small details	1	5	P10

Table 9

Q9. How do you believe employees can be reengaged?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
Make employees part of the solution, set and monitor goals with employees, listen to their needs and plan/monitor reengagement process with them accordingly	7	35	P6, P8, P13, P14, P16, P17, P18
Leadership should take a personal interest in employee's lives and well-being, show they care, may include events to build camaraderie	5	25	P2, P3, P5, P6, P16
Leadership must first determine why employee is disengaged	5	25	P1, P3, P8, P12, P13
Provide employee with new, more interesting, more challenging work assignments	4	20	P1, P4, P9, P10

	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
Ensure employee's background, interests, skills and abilities are a good fit with task assignments	4	20	P2, P12, P15, P16
Invest in new training opportunities for employees to expand skills, work roles	4	20	P2, P7, P13, P19
Ensure the manager/leader is an appropriate match with employee's needs and for the project at hand	3	15	P5, P11, P20
Take steps to create work environment in which employees feel valued, such as incentives, rewards, recognition	3	15	P5, P7, P11
Allow employees autonomy in their decision-making and process for completing their work	2	10	P9, P10
Strong leadership, don't condone behaviors that induce or encourage disengagement	2	10	P2, P14
Have leader take training course in employee interaction	1	5	P1
Define employee's tasks clearly	1	5	P15
Allow communication with higher/executive level managers to give employees visibility within the company	1	5	P19

Table 10

Q10. What effect and influence do disengaged employees have in the organization?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
Disengagement and	10	50	P1, P3, P5, P6, P9,

dissatisfaction have a negative effect, their influence is contagious to other employees			P11, P14, P15, P17, P18
Disengaged employees cost the organization by inefficiency and waste of resources	7	35	P4, P8, P7, P10, P11, P13, P19
Negative organizational impact of disengaged employees is significant and/or exponential	4	20	P2, P9, P10, P18
Disengagement results in higher performing employees picking up slack for the disengaged, resulting in low morale	4	20	P2, P6, P14, P20
Disengaged employees have the power to sabotage or destroy the organization if problem is not addressed	2	10	P14, P16
Disengagement causes segregation and conflict among employees	2	10	P11, P12
Disengagement leads to employee attrition and can make recruiting new talent difficult	2	10	P9, P13
Having disengaged employees can negatively affect organization's reputation	2	10	P13, P16
Some disengaged employees are rewarded even though their effort is minimal, makes others feel less valued	1	5	P7
Everyone needs to feel valued, even the lowest ranking team members	1	3	P3
Disengaged employees do not support the organization's mission	1	5	P20

Table 11

Q11. How does trust and respect in the organization and leadership affect employee engagement?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
Lack of trust negatively affects communication, without trust and respect employees won't listen to management or voice concerns	8	40	P3, P4, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12
Trust and respect are fundamental to employee engagement, leadership, organizational success	6	30	P3, P4, P5, P15, P17, P19
Lack of trust and respect creates a poor working environment, tension and conflict	3	15	P3, P13, P20
Trust and respect must both be present and mutual among employees	3	15	P1, P4, P111
Employees who don't feel management has their best interest in mind won't put forth effort in their work	2	10	P16, P18
Trust and respect are key to employee loyalty, 1important because younger generation are more likely to switch jobs	1	5	P19
It's the organization's responsibility to develop and maintain respect and trust in the working environment	1	5	P5
Lack of trust creates pressure on those who have to pick up slack for others, creates resentment	1	5	P11
Employee events to improve morale and create	1	5	P6

relationships among employees and management can help improve trust and respect			
A working environment with trust and respect, allowing employees to take part in decision-making, encourages innovation, problem solving	1	5	P13

Table 12

Q12. What is your overall perception of employee engagement?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
The company cannot be successful without employee engagement	10	50	P3, P5, P8, P10, P11, P14, P15, P16, P18, P20
There is no one solution, the work environment must meet various needs of the employees	3	15	P1, P7, P18
Quality of work, effort level suffers if employees aren't engaged	3	15	P11, P12, P18
Employees must feel part of a team have good relationships with co-workers	2	10	P16, P20
Engagement is employees' satisfaction level	2	10	P6, P11
Most employees aren't self-motivated, need support from leadership and resources to motivate them	1	5	P7
Some employees will not respond to any effort to engage them	1	5	P4
Leadership/management must make intentional specific efforts to engage employees	1	5	P3

Employees must be able to communicate freely with management about difficult matters/concerns	1	5	P3
Engagement is synonymous with perception of worth, feeling valued	1	5	P11
Employee engagement shouldn't be difficult to achieve if leadership cares and is competent	1	5	P14
Companies must provide a path of progression for younger employees fresh out of school who want to use their education and learn skills	1	5	P19

Table 13

Q13. How would you describe the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
It's a direct relationship, employee engagement and performance go hand-in-hand; as one increases so does the other and vice versa—organizational performance suffers if employees aren't engaged	16	80	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13, P15, P16, P18, P19, P20
Employees who feel like valued contributors will perform better	3	15	P3, P12, P14
Employee motivation and engagement comes from understanding organizational goals and their role in achieving them	3	15	P3, P4, P17

	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
Employee engagement is contingent on communication between management and lower level employees so that managers can focus on running the business and know that operational performance details are being taken care of by engaged employees who will communicate about concerns	3	15	P4, P8, P13
Attrition from having to fire disengaged employees creates training issues, inefficiencies	1	5	P11
It all goes back to leadership's dedication level	1	5	P12

Table 14

Q14. What affect does employee engagement have on productivity?

Invariant constituent	No. of participants describing this experience	% of participants describing this experience	Participants describing this experience
Positive, direct correlation; productivity is the outcome of engagement level, disengagement negatively affects productivity	12	60	P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P15, P17, P19, P20
Employees must be involved with the rest of the team and in the loop to be fully engaged	3	15	P4, P8, P16
More engaged employees are usually more productive, but less engaged employees can still get the work done; it's the difference between being good and great	2	10	P14, P18
Engaged employees produce higher quality work, more creative, more efficient processes, fewer errors	2	10	P13, P20
Most of the time employees just do what it takes to get by, but those who work with engaged employees become more engaged themselves	1	5	P3
Employees won't be productive if they don't feel valued	1	5	P16
Individual work ethic is also	1	5	P12

important, some engaged
employees still have problems
getting work done

Appendix D: Emerging Themes

Factors influencing employee engagement

Theme	Participants' Supporting Statements
1. Employees are most likely to be fully engaged in their work when they are assigned interesting, challenging, and varietal tasks. Repetition and boredom are primary factors leading to employee disengagement. Reassigning job duties to disengaged employees can help reengage them.	"I was in this comfort zone… I wasn't motivated to come into work because it more of the same, same-old-same-old….I was getting a little disengaged because of that …it wasn't fun for me to go to work anymore." "I was sitting in a position where I didn't feel that I was being challenged, I probably or obviously wouldn't be fully engaged in whatever I was doing. So the constant challenges and opportunities that are presented will also keep me engaged. Employees become disengaged when they are doing repetitive tasks." "I feel that employees become disengaged when a person feels that they are not growing…you don't see any opportunities to grow outside of your role you start to become disengaged just because it's a redundant tasks." "You can look at employees becoming reengaged by giving them something that is outside of their comfort zone. Something outside of their box or just shifting them around throughout the organization whether it be in a new program levels, or new technical areas, or even new leadership areas."
2. Job duties assigned to employees must be appropriate given their levels of education, experience, and abilities; if tasks are too difficult, or the employee does not understand the tasks, or if the employee does not have clear expectations or understanding of	"If you have strong leadership, if you match an employee with their background and skills with the task at hand by providing them the training to do the job that they really want to do." "Employee engagement to me is engaging an employee with the right experience, the right education, and work experience so that we are successful in executing our project." "[Employees] become disengaged due to frustration…either because they're in a task that they're overwhelmed with and don't have the background for it or they might not have a clear definition of what they're doing." "When I get an assignment and I really don't know what I am really supposed to do it's hard for me to be engaged. So for me what keeps me fully engaged is lots of information, a schedule

the their job duties, the employee will become disengaged.	of what's coming, what required of me, and also what's happening next."
3. Feeling successful in their assigned work roles, good at their job, and/or directly responsible for work quality motivates and engages employees.	"I report now to a vice president, and it definitely motivates me to do a go job because I want to provide a good impression." "I know if I don't get the things done, then stuff doesn't get delivered and that keeps me motivated at work." "By working closely with your coworkers you have a sense of accountability…if somebody is relying on you to have a certain part done and you are relying on someone else to have a certain part done and that accountability plays a key role into accomplishing those tasks." "Knowing your job thoroughly; with me knowing my job thoroughly and the respect of others that work with me; not necessarily for me, but with me in the capacity that give my work meaning because it means that I am getting through and they are doing it correctly as well. So it makes you proud."
4. Feeling that their work benefits others makes employees' work meaningful.	"To be able to put out quality product in my industry that will be beneficial to the warfighter and know that I am making a difference in the whole scope of things when you talk about freedom in the United States." "The ultimate meaning is through the customer, it's through the end users, through the projection provided, the security provided." "For me being married to the military, my brother's in the Air Force too so knowing that I can do tasks that can directly benefit the warfighters, that what motivates me the most." "The sense of pride in knowing what I do helps bring people safely home to their families. Even on the days that I don't want to be there or, days that I'm assigned a task that I really don't want to do I know in the bigger scheme of things…what I'm doing contributes to somebody seeing their family one more time."
5. Employees who enjoy their work or are passionate about what they do	"[Engaged employees] are not doing it just for a paycheck, they actually enjoy what they are doing and since they enjoy what they are doing they are fully engaged in whatever the occupation may be."

and find meaning in their work describe this as being a primary motivator, more important than compensation. Conversely, disengaged employees are described as doing the bare minimum to collect their paychecks.	"Job satisfaction affects your engagement level because if you're not satisfied you will just sit there…and just do the bare minimum and…next week to do the same thing and it will just perpetuate." "You have to be satisfied and happy regardless of the task in which you doing. The passion is not going behind…you know you're not going to be going to be fully engaged if you're not passionate in what you do." "Yes, because if you don't like your job, you're pretty much not going to reach out and you're probably going to just stay little hermit and stay at your desk/cube just hating life…you don't have no drive to solve or find the solution, unless you know if you're just doing it for the money and that's a two week drive." "If you're not satisfied in your job A. you don't want to come and B. you don't want to be there, C. When you're there you're kind of counting down the hours until you leave and you're really not interested in ensuring that whatever your role is…that you're succeeding…you're just coming to work for a paycheck. You will do the minimal amount of work to ensure that you keep that paycheck." "If you're fully engaged and you're fully satisfied in your position and in your current role…to a lot of people satisfaction comes in many forms other than money…You won't be as eager to leave your current situation to shop yourself around just for a few more dollars…if you have a passion and [are] fully engaged in what you do."
6. A work environment that promotes positive interpersonal relationships among co-workers, at all levels including management, contributes to employee satisfaction and	"I like maintaining relationships, good positive relationships with my coworker…the interpersonal working relationships between coworkers is one that keeps me fully engaged…having that positive cohesive working environment is a positive motivator for me." "The first thing that keeps me engaged are the people who I work with; my coworkers…good involvement…having open communication as far as what's going on and what are our goals are…what tasks needs to be accomplished." "Employees can become reengaged…by having employee

motivation. Social events to promote camaraderie can facilitate these relationships.	morale events…to build that relationship between employees. That way you can build that interpersonal relationship; find out what's going on with that employee. Some coworkers might not know that their fellow peers are feeling disengaged…they may forget about their fellow employees that feel disconnected."
	"That face-to-face time from your boss or supervisor shows me that they really care to take sometime out vs. just dictating, they want to personally get to know me."
	"I believe that engagement starts at the top…if you've got a leader; that leader can be very smart, very bright, but if they don't personally know their people that work for them and have some type of rapport and if they're not talking to them; its not always just talking to them about work, its just being able to call that employee by their first name and not just by their last name and ask about how their kids or doing or "hey how is your wife doing, I herd she was sick."
	"I think that in that good leader…taking and interest in the individual themselves."
7. Employees who feel they are valued contributors to the organization and who are recognized for their contributions are more likely to be satisfied and find meaning in their work.	"Personally what gives [my work] meaning is being able to contribute."
	"What keeps me fully engaged in my tasks is really feeling like I am contributing to the overall goal of the team or the end result of whatever we're working on. Employees become disengaged when they feel like they are not contributing …they feel like what they are doing the overall goal can be achieved even if they are not there."
	"Employees can be reengaged when they're working in an environment where they feel their contributions are valued…. recognizing the value and contributions that that employee brings to the table and communicating that and making it known whether its through a pat-on-the-back, or gift certificate."
	"Some people need to have that constant validation that says, 'Hey you're doing a great job,' to keep them engaged."
8. Pride in the sense of accomplishment, in particular being involved	"The work in my current role motivates me because I'm a part of what I do from the beginning to the ending in my particular position at work… I actually get to see the fruits of my labor."
	"What gives my work meaning in my role is actually seeing

throughout the process and seeing the end product of their work, contributes to employee engagement and satisfaction.	success at the end." "The success in positive performance…gives me a sense of accomplishment and that success gives me meaning." "When you do flight-testing and you go out and actually go from planning to execution that's rewarding. Its always fun to go out and actually see your product work, I think that it motivates me and that I actually get to go out and I planned all of this back at the office but then I get to go see something actually executed in real time."
9. A sense of personal responsibility, work ethic, and self-motivation are described as factors contributing to employee engagement. Certain employees will not be engaged even when leadership is taking steps to engage them because they are not self-motivated; it's ultimately up to the individual.	"I am extremely self-motivated because I have something to prove…that's what actually gives my work meaning because I am going to be the best at what I do." "This could be a two-fold thing is because the employees themselves can go out there and reengage themselves by going out and looking for these opportunities to jump or go into a different function, different roles, different technical areas and being more proactive about getting themselves reengaged with the overall organization and I find those employees to turn out to be the innovators, the captivators, the ones that really companies going because they don't get complacent." "What keeps me fully engaged are the challenges of the job, my own personal drive and ambition to want to be the best in anything that I do. I am motivated by my own ambition, my own drive to succeed and be accomplished to progress." "I guess it's probably up to the person to change their attitude but a lot of people don't think that's what it is, but I think that its your attitude and sometimes you have to take every experience as a positive." "What keeps me fully engaged is personal beliefs as far a drive and passion." "Some people just don't have that drive to want to do better. Some people just want to get their paycheck and stay above water as long as possible."

Factors influencing organizational commitment

Theme	Participants' Supporting Statements
1. Opportunities for advancement and compensation are important in employees' engagement and decision to remain with an organization, and can become more important than engagement level.	"If you feel like you're at this ceiling already and there's nowhere up that you can go…if you're looking for more of a management role or to be higher person on the technical level…you're probably going to look to go outside of the company." "If I didn't get those opportunities that would negatively impact my engagement level…knowing that I can those opportunities in other places …" "When you don't see the growth I guess that's when you really realize that I am engaged and I kind of like what I'm doing, but maybe it's time to go somewhere my skill set will be valued…sometimes you have to leave and then come back and get what's owed to you…to be in the right pay grade." "Engagement level…affects my decision to stay with the company because if I was board or if I was not a part of coming up with new solutions and doing thing different and growing, I would start looking at other opportunities because I don't see any path for progression but … you want to look at the financial aspect of it, that I don't go to work to work, I go to work to make a living. So a lot engagement is around financial also." "It's more so how fast I am accelerating in monetary concerns ...if I found a job that would like that would pay me more I wouldn't have an issue with leaving. So [engagement level affects my decision] to some extent but its not my engagement level that's keeping me at the company."
2. Satisfaction is an important motivator in the decision to stay with a company, but often external obligations are the driving factor.	"Well for me I guess I am here because of the family obligations, but the engagement level causes me to tolerate the fact I'm going to be here for a long time." "At the end of the day I go to work to provide for my family, so as long as I go to work and perform and stay engaged and accomplish the tasks that's going to allow me to satisfy my personal goals and objectives." "As long as they are pulling me with the right assignments

	and I'm working with good teams, I would probably remain with the company. Regardless of if I like my job or not, I'll probably remain with the company only because of the family purposes."
3. Employees who have a breadth of understanding of the organization's goals, as well as strategic plans and processes for achieving them, will be more engaged and have a greater sense of ownership over their work, more buy-in to company's objectives.	"When an employee is engaged you know, they want to make for sure that not only are they out for the own personal success, they also want to make sure that the company is successful. So it's a win-win situation." "[Motivated employees] understand what's going on in the company and, they understand what their role is they are going to grow personally, but in their view personally the company is going to be successful, the you are also going to build trust, not only with the employee but you are also going to build that environment for engagement." "If the employees don't know what the overall organization is trying to achieve they're going to be lost and even when they are trying to just do positive things, if they don't know what the end result should be in the organization … Sometimes these employees need more data, more information behind that… how do we get here, how do this so that we can make the next quarter and even the next year more productive, more effective…"

Leadership's influence on employee engagement

Theme	Participants' Supporting Statements
1. Leadership is responsible for communicating goals and processes to employees as well as providing feedback.	"One reason that they may become disengaged is the lack of urgency or the lack of communication as far what going on in the current task or the current responsibilities of the project…it could be communication from the project manager…the lack of will make the employee start to fill disconnected from the project or disconnected from any type of responsibility and that can become hazardous to the project. Or the project might see some decline as far as productivity because of disengagement of this sort." "Another way [to keep employees engaged] is at the leadership or management level; managers can constantly stay in communication with all of their employees/engineers and make sure that everybody is connected with the project and

	find out what's going on, maybe doing weekly status reports, monthly status reports to see what's going on." "Communication from program management…makes it a lot easier kind of knowing what the overall goal is from program management when your just doing your little tasks; so if it's on the critical chain or if it's lower priorities, I at least know…what is important about what I'm doing and that keeps me engaged because I understand what the overall goal is from the program as a whole."
2. Employees who trust and respect company leadership and feel supported by responsive leadership will be more likely to follow procedures and communicate concerns.	"Trust and respect are two main pillars that affect employee engagement…if a person does not feel that they can trust you then they will not communicate to you so you not going to really figure out what going on with them. If people are not engaged, if they don't have ways to communicate openly and freely about hard matters, the organization just will not thrive." "If employees do not trust their leaders, they would be scared to communicate good things or bad things… somebody [may be] scared to step in because they are finding something wrong in a process or that a person is [doing] something unethical or borderline illegal, they may be scared of retaliation because they don't trust the people above them." "With leadership, you have to know that this person has your interest or the company's best interest in mind and that they are doing the right thing at the end of the day. If there is somebody that you can't trust or respect, that will completely disengage an employee." "There is almost a direct correlation [between employee engagement] with respect and trust. With your leaders you can go to talk to them, let them know your concerns, if you need to be put on new challenging assignments or if you need a change of scenery. Being able to share that with your organizational leaders and know that they have your best interest in mind is a positive." "Respect plays a huge role because if you do not have the respect of leadership you essentially wouldn't listen to them. You wouldn't want to do the things that they have set for you."

3. Leadership is responsible for setting forth clear, intentional strategies to develop and maintain employee engagement; failure to do so is perceived as a failure of leadership.	"If you want to have an organization that is thriving and growing you got to have total employee engagement and you have to have methods and processes in place to be assured that people have that opportunity to be engaged. I mean that you have to be intentional about it." "If you don't have support from a leadership staff a lot of people are going to take it as lip service and believe that change is going to come where they can actually be involved and it gives a false sense of perception that employees actually matter. A lot of companies out there will say people are their number one asset but when it comes down to it, they don't involve the people, they don't train the people…it all starts from leadership… if you have weak leadership you're not going to have a sound employee engagement." "If an employee becomes disengaged I think its all on leadership. Leaders have the teams they deserve…they should be focusing on is how to keep their employees engaged. If a team is dysfunctional, no one wants to be engaged, people are distracted, people are out on their own agendas, people are just coming to work and doing what they got to do to go home, not willing to think outside the box or expand their horizons. That's a direct reflection of their leaders and that's a hard pill to swallow for a lot of leaders. You want to change the culture, you want people to be engaged and active, you have to put a plan in place." "I would think that the role of leadership in employee engagement is huge. These are the individuals that are setting forth or laying down the policies that we are to use. So to me leadership's job is to find ways or methods to have their employees kind of what to do the job that they're in. So if they fail to do that then to me they are the primary source for employees becoming disengaged."
4. Allowing employees autonomy in their work and involvement in decision-making process is seen as	"[Disengaged employees] don't really have control over what they do…don't have a voice to define how you do your task…a lack of control." "When management doesn't respect their answers or respect their input then people tend to get disengaged…they fall short of being engaged because of leadership not allowing them to

an indicator of trust and respect, and promotes employee engagement.	be heard or allowing them to impact their own work." "A boss or a peer that trusts you to make the decisions and will stand and back you on those decisions. That allows you to come to work in a better environment and perform at a higher standard because you were rewarded not only by taking chances but also being able to make those decision whether right or wrong as long as they're well thought out that somebody will support your initiative and allow you to grow."
5. Initiating individual strategies and processes to reengage employees, and involving them in the solution, is perceived as more efficacious than applying a one-size-fits-all strategy.	"Reengagement sometimes takes a lot of effort… you have to understand first of all what has the employee disengaged. You have to understand is it personally, is it financially, is it spiritually... What is the root of the evil?" "Employees can be reengaged by…looking at what's going to help this employee to see what can I do to help put them in a position that they're going to be happy in." "Employee engagement takes work…not all employees are the same, so the tools, whether it's a new leadership group, whether it's new forms of study, whether it's causing people to be able to work in multiple roles, all of those things are needed for a large group of employees. There is not one solution." "Find out why they became disengaged in the first place and removing that road block and then you can work on finding out what are their personal needs to keep them engaged …establish a process to [give] some type of meaning in work and helping them to stay involved." "As leader you need to know your employees and what type of people they are, what motivates them…you can't lead everyone the same. Some employees you do have to take a different route with to ensure that they stay engaged."
6. Trust and respect between leaders and their employees must be mutual; leaders perceived as being self-interested are not conducive to	"Trust and respect should be demonstrated at the leadership level, that way it will filter down to the employees. And typically when employees have a leader that they trust and respect also, they are more likely to be more productive and engaged. Not only a leader that they trust but a leader that trusts and respects them (employee) also. When the leader respects the employee it makes for a better relationship and a

employee engagement.	better working environment." "Employees become disengaged when they work for a leader that does not have their best interest at heart and they recognize that and because of that they have some malcontent for that leader." "Leadership is the biggest factor in employee engagement. If you have someone that you enjoy working for, if you have someone that you they have your best interest at heart all the time you will be fully engaged in whatever you are doing." "If you just become transparent with your employees that they see that you aren't doing stuff to not to make your (leader) paycheck fatter, but for their (employee) benefit. Which basically boils down to the selflessness vs. selfishness. And just to be genuine; if someone knows that you're genuine I think that would help that individual to become fully engaged in a task."
7. Engaged leaders who facilitate cohesiveness among team members are essential to employee engagement; disengaged leaders make employees feel isolated.	"[Engagement is] driven from the top down standpoint. If you see that …. someone in a leadership role on the team that you are on, that they are actually committed to the efforts, they would influence you, make you also be interested in a positive outcome and efforts. Having an apathetic leader is very poisoning." "I would say the lack of cohesiveness within the team, no one talking to each other, probably employees becoming frustrated because they feel like they're stuck in a rut and they feel they don't have anyone to talk to kind of get them out of that rut. If you don't have like a lead whose constantly or at least periodically checking in on you so you kind of feel like you're out there by yourself on your own; so you kind of feel like the weight of the world in on your shoulders with this task." "I think leadership is essential for employee engagement, they are like the facilitators of employee engagement, making sure that everyone is communicating and getting along and working together as a team so I think leadership is very important in that aspect."

Influence of employee engagement on employee performance and organizational performance

Theme	Participants' Supporting Statements
1. Employee disengagement has a negative and contagious impact on employee satisfaction, motivation and morale.	"We work in a team environment, so if you have an employee that is dissatisfied or disengaged… kind of spills over to other team members." "Every person needs to feel that they are valued and feel like they are a part of the team and if they are not…that person can kind of spread that disengagement like the plague." Big influence, they have a big influence it could spread to other people pretty quickly if somebody is disengaged. They can talk to other employees and kind of resonate. Some employee might have something kind of small but it can kind of get amplified. I have seen it, we've lost quite a bit of people this year in my department close to at least 20%. So I seen the role of influence as far as spreading; it can lead to attrition. "Oh my God! They're negative, and the negativity spreads like wildfire…it brings everyone's morale down. So you either need to reengage them or encourage them to go somewhere else."
2. Employee disengagement causes conflict, tension and resentment among employees, resulting in lower morale, motivation, and employee attrition.	"It becomes a demoralizing factor when you have disengaged employees…when a high performing employee sees someone disengaged and then they have to pick up the slack for that employee, you would get to a point where that high performing employee, you can't pay that person enough--they will be like 'Why am I even doing this?'" "A disengaged employee in my opinion is not a satisfied employee…the unsatisfied employee goes one of two ways. They just start coasting through the rest of the time, which does affect the entire team, because other people are going to start picking up their slack or see that the disengaged employee, using my own functional, is allowed to get away with whatever they want to do. Therefore other people are unmotivated to do any better." "Within that team or organization…there will be a very

	distinct separation…you're going to have some people who side with that disgruntled employee…other people who don't agree with that disgruntled employee so now you're going to have a segregated workforce…not an efficient workforce. So your level of productivity is going to decrease."
3. Employee satisfaction and engagement are described as directly related to employee performance. Satisfied, engaged employees produce higher quality work more efficiently, in turn improving organizational performance. Conversely, disengaged employees are less productive than their engaged counterparts, thereby causing organizational inefficiencies.	"It goes hand and hand, if an employee is not engaged, most likely their performance level will decrease. One drives the other. Or their level of effort will decrease… it determines the level of productivity." "If you have extremely engaged employees, you're going to have extremely high performance. Conversely if you have employees that are disengaged, you will have low organizational performance. So they're directly proportional..[if] you have a mass of employees that are fully engaged you could have exponential output in performance...if you have a bunch of employees that aren't engaged they you will get that extremely exponential decrease in organizational performance." "Well, if your employee isn't engaged in his work then the organization isn't running at full strength and if the organization isn't running at full strength then the performance isn't the best it could be. So employee engagement and organizational performance are directly proportional to each other. If an employee is engaged in his job, he'll perform at a level that's very high. His contributions to the company will create a very high organizational performance." "As employees become more engaged the come up with better solutions on how to do things which increases your output which you know if an employee develops a solution that on how to do things better they will reduce the amount of time that it takes to reduce the errors; that's going to increase the quality of the product which is going to increase the output also." "If employees are engaged appropriately, I think that is going to have a positive affect on productivity. But if leadership; if they're not engaging employees accordingly or appropriately or if the employee themselves are disengaged then that's going to have a negative impact or influence on the

	company's productivity."
	"The effect and influence that they have is that they will drive down productivity. When and employee is disengaged they take longer to perform a normal task they don't do it to a higher standard and it becomes more of a situation where they do the bare minimum just to keep their job and in turn, that lowers the actual productivity and profitability of a company because you are going to use more resources to complete the same tasks that shouldn't take as long to do."
	"My perception of employee engagement is that it is absolutely critical. You can not function; I mean, you can't maintain effectively engaging employees, you business is going to suffer and aren't going to be able to remain competitive in today's market place."

Curriculum Vitae

Wayne K. Richards Jr.

Matriculated through various education levels of educations while a working challenging professional assignment responsible for execution and performance, and integration of influential leadership.

Education and Training:

Doctor of Business Administration- Self Designed

Walden University

Proposal: Increasing Productivity Through Employee Engagement

Executive Masters of Business Administration

Troy State University: Fall 2007

Applied Study- non-thesis Market Analysis of Starbucks and Crispy Kreme: Determining the differences between successful and failing companies.

Bachelor of Science- Business Administration

University of Maryland University College

Spring 2005

Associate of Applied Science- Logistics Management

Community College of the Air Force - Maxwell AFB, Alabama

Fall-2003

Special Training / Continuing Education:

Raytheon 6sigma Specialist Certification, Earned Value Certification

Program Management Level 6 Certification, Leadership Fundamentals

Principals of Integrated Product Team Leadership, 6 Sigma Black Belt

Training, Facilitation Training, and Change Model Training

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY:

Program Manager *Aug 2008-present*

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE - World Wide Assignments

(May 2000 – May 2008)

Delivered positive results throughout a successful 8 year career and

promoted into increasingly challenging supply project management,

quality assurance, and aerospace management positions.