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Increasing Productivity of Retained Employees After a Workforce Reduction

Jason Michael Matyus
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Jason Matyus

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Review Committee

Dr. Denise Land, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Gina Smith, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Peter Anthony, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2015

Abstract

Increasing Productivity of Retained Employees After a Workforce Reduction

by

Jason Michael Matyus

MBA, Waynesburg University, 2011

BS, California University of Pennsylvania, 1997

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2015

Abstract

There is an increased use of downsizing across telecommunications in the northeast United States, and organizational leaders are challenged to motivate the productivity of the retained employees. Guided by systems theory, the purpose of this single case study was to explore successful downsizing strategies of a small group of organizational leaders and managers in the operations of telecommunications in the northeast United States. The study participants, chosen for their motivation success in motivation after downsizing, consisted of 2 purposefully selected business leaders who completed individual, face-to-face interviews and a focus group of 5 managers. The coding of data and word clusters from data obtained from the interviews and focus group led to 4 emergent themes of organizational communication, leadership, employee motivation, and work-life balance. The participant responses showed through topic saturation that communication and work-life balance were the most important major themes. The findings from this study suggest that communication during all phases of downsizing can add to the employees' motivation and employees understanding of what leadership expects from them. When organizational leaders communicate a message of a better work-life balance, positive social change may occur, creating a more productive and loyal employee. When employees have a healthy work-life balance, there are significant benefits to their work organizations, families, and home lives.

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Dedication

All things are possible through Christ, and this study is an example of his works; without him this study would not be possible. I would like to dedicate this study to my wife, Crystal, and my two daughters, Catherine and Elizabeth. Without their steady support, none of this would be possible. I would also like to thank my parents, Joe and JoAnn Matyus, for encouraging me through my life that education is the way to advance and give back. To my mother and father-in-law, Judy and Terry Reckart, thank you for encouraging me and supporting me in this long journal. Special thanks go to my brother and sister for their honesty and feedback; I am truly blessed to have a family filled with love and support. I am also grateful to my grandparents for showing me how to live my life by their examples. I hope this study is an example to my daughters that with hard work and follow-through, anything can be accomplished if you put your mind to it and that nobody can make you feel inferior without your permission.

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I would like to acknowledge Dr. Denise Land, my chair, for your willingness to answer all my phone calls, emails, and questions and your willingness to guide me through my journey. It was your skill and guidance that made my journey possible. You kept me on track and walked with me through it all. Thank you. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Gina Smith, my SCM, for your guidance and expertise in guiding me through the process. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Peter Anthony, my URR, for your wisdom and guidance throughout this process. Acknowledgements also go to Dr. Freda Turner for her tireless efforts to improve the program and make it highly respected. Finally, this process is a journey, and there are some colleagues and fellow students I would like to acknowledge. Dr. Bill Hamersly, Will Williams, Toyin Akindoju, Diane Merla, and Hector-J. Roman-Arroyo: You may never know how your struggles along with mine inspired me to continue on my path. Thank you and may God bless you on your future journeys.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Organizational leaders downsize their employees to escape financial distress, stay competitive, or fend off external threats faced by their organization (Luan, Tien, & Chi, 2013). Financial considerations that are the main factors in leadership's decision to downsizing decisions (Cashen, 2011). However, downsizing events have high failure rates, leading some scholars to shift from studying financial viewpoints to studying leadership and human behaviors of employees (Flint, Maher, & Wielemaker, 2012; Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). Malik, Hussain, and Mhamood's (2011) study on downsizing found that, increasing productivity per employee was the driving force of downsizing outcomes, but employee productivity is low after an organizational changes such as downsizing. Malik and Usman (2011) identified relationships between work overload and job satisfaction, and between overwork with job retention. Leadership is the key to motivating employees to be productive after a downsizing event (Nastase, Giuclea, & Bold, 2012). The objective of this study was to explore strategies business leaders use to motivate retained employees to be productive following a workforce reduction.

Background of the Problem

Past researchers examining downsizing have analyzed the steps in the process to determine what differentiates a successful downsizing event from an unsuccessful one (Gandolfi & Littler, 2012; Kawai, 2011; Luan et al., 2013). Employees play a role in the success of downsizing by exhibiting organizational commitment, yet leaders within telecommunication organizations frequently do not have effective strategies to motivate employees after downsizing (Shin, Taylor, & Seo, 2012). Leaders gain a better

understanding of employee well-being and production by considering their welfare, which assists the leader in gaining a better understanding as it relates to job satisfaction (Albrecht, 2012).

Leadership's goal is to find out what makes employees productive. Successful employee job performance is related to how they feel about doing their job (Robertson, Alex, & Cooper, 2012). Iverson and Zatzick's (2011) study was one of first to focus on quantifying the results of employee performance, but not on what makes the employees productive. Business leaders can examine the level of employee productivity after downsizing, relying on different data sources, and from the analysis develop strategies that lead organizations to positive outcomes (Tsai & Shih, 2013). Research on downsizing from the perspectives of organizational leaders has generated findings of both positive and negative outcomes (Magán-Díaz & Céspedes-Lorente, 2012; Muñoz-Bullón & Sánchez-Bueno, 2011). Leaders who gain a better understanding of their employees and their job satisfaction are better able to consider employee well-being and productivity (Albrecht, 2012). I focused on the effects of downsizing on the employees as it plays a bigger role in overall organizational success.

Problem Statement

Despite the general use of downsizing by organization leadership in telecommunication, downsizing produces the desired outcome organizational leadership hopes for when implementing downsizing events (Muñoz-Bullón & Sánchez-Bueno, 2011). Employee productivity in the majority of downsized firms does not achieve improved levels of efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, and profitability after a

downsizing event (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011). Despite literature showing that downsizing is not generally successful (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011; Muñoz-Bullón & Sánchez-Bueno, 2011), organizational leaders in the United States continue to employ downsizing, with 243 mass layoff events occurring in the utility field in 2013 (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2014). The general business problem is diminished employee productivity after a workforce reduction. The specific business problem is that some business leaders lack strategies to motivate retained employees to be productive following a workforce reduction.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies business leaders use to motivate retained employees to be productive following a workforce reduction. I elected to study a single phenomenon from multiple sources of data to create a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, as suggested by Yin (2014). I used a case study approach because this allowed a researcher to study an event in depth and from multiple perspectives (Thomas, 2011). The primary sources of data collection were semistructured interviews of business leaders and a focus group of five managers who survived a downsizing event within a telecommunications company located in the eastern United States.

This study was designed to generate results to inform business leaders who were considering downsizing their personnel. A change in workforce such as in downsizing creates a lack of balance in employee's personal life leading to a lack of productivity (Gregory, Milner, & Windebank, 2013). Business leaders who do not correctly anticipate

jeopardizing successful organizational outcomes risk losing employees. Improving employee productivity will generate positive social change by facilitating greater organizational success. Ultimately, this study is designed to generate information that can be used for applications that result in a better work-life balance for employees and save organizations from the negative outcomes of employee turnover, thereby resulting in better organizational knowledge retention and performance.

Nature of the Study

A researcher applying a quantitative method relies on the knowledge and understanding of how to build constructs and accurately analyze statistical data (Stafford, 2011; Wester et al., 2013). I considered and rejected a quantitative methodology for this study. Quantitative method encompasses established variables and constructs, but the unknown outcomes of a qualitative method are better suited to study the process of downsizing (Echambadi, Campbell, & Agarwal, 2012). The results garnered from qualitative methods provide can provide insight into organizational practices (Yin, 2014). This study was designed to collect managers' and business leaders' perspectives, which McMullen and Adobor (2011) identified as best serving the study of strategies that motivate employees to be productive. The concept of production following downsizing from a business leader and manager perspective reveals itself through their experiences (Hanson, Balmer, & Giardino, 2011). Allwood (2012) stated that the apex of deciding whether to use a qualitative research method is the study of a phenomenon. For this reason, I used a qualitative method to study the phenomenon of effective strategies business leaders can use to motivate employees toward productivity.

I considered and rejected using several alternative designs for this study. In a narrative design, there is a risk of subjectivity in the storytelling of chronological events (Hansen, 2011); since I wanted to minimize subjectivity, I did not use a narrative design for this study. The smaller sample size and the use of multiple sources of data for this study excluded phenomenological design as an option. Ethnography is an anthropology approach to studying cultural design (Bernard, 2013). Although employee diversity may be part of the business culture (Stout, 2012), the focus of this study is on best strategies for the productivity of retained employees, so I rejected an ethnographic.

A case study allows for the investigation of the incident by reliance on accounts of the experiences of participants, captured through interviews and in-depth exploration of the incident through multiple sources (Yin, 2014). Parts of other designs make up case studies, and the use of diverse instruments allows the interviewer to reach data saturation with a larger sample group (Thomas, 2011). Because of the larger sample group and the use of multiple sources to study a single topic, a single case study was the best design to use for this study.

Research Question

The overarching research question for this study was: “What strategies do business leaders use to motivate retained employees to be productive following a workforce reduction?” Employee performance after a workforce contributes significantly to organizational success or failure (Ko & Yeh, 2013). Keeping good employees who can make an organization thrive after a workforce reduction is essential (Baruah & Barthakur, 2012). Business leaders take steps within their organizations to retain good employees by

recruiting better managers, creating job incentives, and offering different social outlets before and after a workforce reduction (Ratna & Chawla, 2012). Business leaders are also looking for ways to improve and enhance employee productivity before and after a workforce reduction (Jabar et al., 2011). One way business leaders look to enhance employee productivity is through employee empowerment (Zahrani, 2011).

Interview Questions

This study designed used interview questions as one of the data collection instruments. The focus of these questions was identifying the strategies business leaders use to improve productivity of employees after a workforce reduction. The interview questions were part of a semistructured interview process designed to allow openness and reflection on the part of the participants as suggested by Qu and Dumay (2011). Interview questions helped to obtain the experiences and insights of the business leaders. I posed seven open-ended questions and prompts to participating business leaders:

1. What were your experiences with downsizing relating to how your organization executed the process?
2. What type of communication did your organization use after the downsizing event?
3. How did your job functions change after the workforce reduction?
4. What was your work environment like as it relates to asking managers to do more work, stay later, and assuming varying roles after the downsizing event?
5. From your experience, please describe some activities you believe made managers more productive after a workforce reduction?

6. Post downsizing event, how did you see your employees' job changing at work?
7. Please share anything else you would like to add to the discussion that I have not asked.

I posed five open-ended questions and prompts to the managers in the focus group:

1. What were your experiences with downsizing relating to how your organization executed the process?
2. What type of communication occurred between yourself and the business leader over your organization?
3. How did you decide job functions for the employees that reported to you after the workforce reduction?
4. What was your work environment like as it relates to doing more work, staying later, and assuming varying roles after the downsizing event?
5. Please share anything else you would like to add to the discussion that I have not asked.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that I used was systems theory as it evolved from the natural sciences to business (Senge, 1990). Johnson, Kast, and Rosenzweig (1964) adapted systems theory from a scientific framework to one that a business can emulate to be successful. Von Bertalanffy (1972) showed independent parts working as a whole is more valuable than the parts independent of each other. Systems theory defines business organizations in a three-layer structure as systems, program decision process, and

nonprogram decision process (Johnson et al., 1964). Within those structures, business leaders work to have those systems working independently, but toward the organizational goal (Hotho, 2014). Much like the description of systems theory, business leaders layer organizations within structures requiring leadership to work in conjunction with each group of the organization (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011).

During downsizing, leadership oversees those groups within the overall structure of positive results (Guo & Giacobbe-Miller, 2012). According to the systems theory framework, in an organization multiple systems work toward a larger system goal. A focus of this study was to explore the strategies business leaders use to motivate retained employees to be productive following a workforce reduction. Human resources, leadership, employees, and all other subgroups comprise an organization; the success of the organization is dependent on all the parts working together (Yawson, 2013).

Operational Definitions

The following terms are specific to the understanding of the study.

Downsizing: A defined downsizing as a change in internal operations of organizations that leads to a reduction in employees (Sitlington and Marshall, 2011).

Lean managing: A strategy used by organizational leaders, under the advisement of human resources groups, to reduce waste in the form of a reduction in headcount and unused work (Basu & Parveen, 2012).

Long-term: A duration equal to a year or years to denote an interval of time (Scott, Ueng, Ramaswamy, & Chang, 2011).

Short-term: Short-term is a duration equal to months to denote an interval of time

(Iqbal & Haque, 2011).

Survivors: In the context of downsizing, an employee remaining after a downsizing event (Malik et al., 2011).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

A researcher's observations or direct experience with a case study is essential to bring the experience in the research with the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The following assumptions helped ensure an understanding of the possible implications for the participants and me. One assumption was that the participants would be able to articulate their experiences of the downsizing in a truthful and honest manner that best describes their experiences. Another assumption of the study was that I was able to gather, analyze, and understand the responses of the participants that pertained to the study. From those responses, a third assumption was that I had the ability to categorize the responses into patterns and themes. A participant's availability is not a guarantee; for this reason, I established contingency plans for a conflict in schedules, data collection, and analysis.

Limitations

My use of a qualitative method, created specific limitations to the study's transferability, and related to its use of a sample size, single source researcher, and design type (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Although I recognized these limitations, I set out to achieve the highest level of understanding possibly within the population studied. Due to the limited geographic locations and company size, the results of the study are not

transferable to a larger general population; only two business leaders and five participants made up the focus group. The limited number of participants limited the data received by the smaller sample group as noted by Petty, Thomson, and Stew (2012). The data gathered from the interviews and focus group were, however sufficient, to triangulate themes. The final limitation was the use of a single researcher (myself) to collect the data, which limited the depth of the data collected.

Delimitations

The primary intent of this study was to examine productivity behavior in telecommunication companies within a geographic region, as suggested by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2012). The sample for the study included business leaders of an organization in the telecommunications industry in the eastern United States. The sample included two business leaders and five managers. Multiple case studies are common in the social sciences, but researchers can use a single case study to study the downsizing event (Yin, 2014). Using interviews and focus groups as the sole instruments excluded other useful tools for data collection (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). For this reason, I used as many participants as needed to reach data saturation.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Downsizing is still a popular change management option among the leaders of U.S. companies that are struggling financially, but many organizational leaders who implement downsizing do not see the predicted positive outcomes result (Luan et al., 2013). This study is a value to organizational leaders trying to determine how to motivate

employees after a downsizing event. The reviewed literature covers (a) the history of downsizing and the effects on stakeholders; (b) the study of leadership styles and effectiveness of leader styles on employees; (c) organizational knowledge, retention, transfer, and the ways they can affect organizational outcomes; (d) organization systems; and (e) employee motivation. I integrated the three themes from the literature to show how all three play a part in the overall success or failure of a downsizing event.

Implications for Social Change

The goal of lean management is to reduce waste from within an organization by reducing unnecessary staff and work within organizations (Basu & Parveen, 2012). However, eliminating staff requires downsizing that causes stressful and unproductive employees (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011; Karkoulian, Mukaddam, McCarthy, & Messara, 2013). One method of combatting these negative factors is maintaining manager awareness of employee well-being, which increases the productivity of employees by appealing to their needs (Malik et al., 2011). The expansion of leadership knowledge in employee productivity strategies can lead to a better work–life balance that enriches employees’ experiences with their families, coworkers, and society. When an employee perceives layoffs from a strategic standpoint of sustaining organizational knowledge and not from a cost-cutting point of view, the employee is more willing to accept change and is more productive (Zatzick & Iverson, 2006). Employee stress caused by downsizing leads to unproductive employees within organizations; therefore, the goal of business leaders is to maximize employee retention to reduce employee turnover and eliminate unwanted costs associated with employee turnover (Ratna & Chawla, 2012).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies business leaders use to motivate retained employees to be productive following a workforce reduction. Reasons for downsizing include a reduction in costs, competition from competitors, poor management, and failure to keep up with changing technology (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011). Downsizing affects stakeholders, including employees, leadership, and shareholders (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). Effective downsizing requires observation by leadership in every phase of the process in order to be successful. (Flint et al., 2012; Gandolfi & Littler, 2012).

The central research question was as follows: What are the best strategies business leaders can use to motivate employees to be productive following a workforce reduction? A scholarly understanding of the aspects of downsizing events includes the purpose of downsizing, leadership, employee productivity, and motivation (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011). The researched events incorporated relate to the components in the downsizing event (Gandolfi & Littler, 2012). The primary themes and topics examined in this literature review are: (a) employee downsizing, (b) leadership's role, (c) downsizing leadership, (d) organizational communication, (e) employee motivation, and (f) organizational knowledge. The literature includes peer-reviewed articles and books and consists of components of downsizing that have roles in the effectiveness of the process. The topics put together include the literature encompassing downsizing either directly or indirectly. Within the literature review, I discussed topics related to downsizing gathered from literature obtained from Business SourceComplete, IBM INFORM, Sage Premier,

Emerald, and ProQuest Central database with the following key words: *change management, downsizing, leadership, organizational knowledge, and employee satisfaction*. Table 1 contains a summary of documents reviewed.

Table 1

Literature Review Sources

Source	Sources 2011 and later	Sources prior to 2011
Seminal Sources	0	2
Dissertations	1	0
Peer-reviewed articles	128	7
Total	129	7
Percentage of total	100%	7%

The following literature review consisted of contemporary peer-reviewed research studies concerning systems theory. In addition, the literature review included peer-reviewed studies that addressed limitations, weaknesses, and potential for future research in each category. Other sources included statistical reports and scholarly books. The Walden University library databases were the primary resource to obtain the sources and search standards included for articles that were full-text, scholarly, and peer-reviewed. Keywords in the search criteria included *downsizing, leadership, organizational knowledge, productivity, organizational knowledge, and systems theory*. The emphasis was on peer-reviewed studies that were less than five years old at the time of publication.

Literature Review Methods

Systems theory is the theory underpinning this study. All parts of a system work internally with each part of a larger system (Montuori, 2013). The process of downsizing has many parts that have to work together to make it successful (Sanda, 2011). When a

downsizing event occurs, groups within an organization must work to their optimal levels of productivity with the goal being the overall success of the larger group (Johnson et al., 1964).

Systems theory as described by Johnson et al. (1964) defines the business organization in a three-layer structure consisting of leadership at the top, communication within groups, and operations of all groups. Von Bertalanffy (1972) described systems in three broad categories consisting of (1) system science, (2) system technology, and (3) system philosophy. Researchers can apply Von Bertalanffy's (1972) three criteria for studying and labeling a system as well as Johnson et al.'s (1964) three-layer structure to business. Business leaders operate organizations using multiple groups, and the success of the overall organization relies on leadership's ability to communicate with the multiple groups (Kihlström, 2012). Within those structures, management strives to have those systems working independently but towards the organizational goal (Witt & Redding, 2013). Business leaders can use organizational structural norms to transfer knowledge, communicate, and ultimately use the best of each part of the organization towards success (Diez-Roux, 2011).

Much like the description of systems theory, business leaders layer organizations within structures requiring leadership to work in conjunction with each group (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011; Siggelkow, 2011). During downsizing, leadership oversees those groups within the overall structure geared toward positive results (Guo & Giacobbe-Miller, 2012). I applied the systems theory framework of multiple systems working to the goal of the larger system of the best strategies business leaders use after downsizing

events. Systems have boundaries and knowledge by business leaders of where the boundaries are for each part of the systems helps for the transfer of knowledge making the organization successful (Asheim, Smith, & Oughton, 2011). Business leaders can use the knowledge of groups within the systems, and the entire system benefits from the knowledge transferred (Korn, 2011).

Organizations operate in an open system where outside variables can affect the overall outcome of the organization (Mainardes, Alves, & Raposo, 2011). While researchers have explored the use of systems theory in other industries without success, research on business practices can lend itself useful in an open system (Korn, 2012). On a larger scale, Witt and Redding (2013) showed how larger systems such as countries work within a region and how outside variables can affect the system as a whole. Working within the systems allows business leaders to use feedback from each group to improve the whole system (Leveson, 2011). Also, the application of leadership types, such as transformational and transactional leadership styles, tends to motivate leaders to innovate (Vaccaro, Jansen, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, 2012). The structure of an organizational system can determine the success of the overall system (Claver-Cortés, Pertusa-Ortega, & Molina-Azorín, 2012; Csaszar, 2012). It is important in a system for all the groups to work toward the positive value of the entire organization (Kaine & Cowan, 2011; Yawson, 2013).

Organizational leaders have been downsizing since the early 1980s, yet research indicating scholars' understanding of the causes and outcomes of downsizing events is lacking (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011). Business leaders can better understand downsizing

by looking at the phases of downsizing (Gandolfi & Littler, 2012). The three phases of downsizing are *practice*, or the level of employee cuts; *discourse*, or language executives use about downsizing; and *strategizing*, that refers to how well leadership executes the downsizing (Gandolfi & Littler, 2012).

Organization Systems

An organization's leadership is one of the smaller groups that make up the whole (Hannah, Walumba, & Fry, 2011). The goal of this study was to understand what strategies business leaders can use to motivate employees to be productive following a downsizing event, with leadership being the central agent of productivity (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011). There is a significant value in understanding what leadership theory best motivates employees to understand effective leadership (Burns, 1978; O'Toole, 1996; Schneider & George, 2011; Tonkin, 2013). While there are other components of downsizing that focus on a positive outcome, leadership is the motivator and executioner of any plan of change (Warrick, 2011).

Employees represent a critical group within the larger group of an organization (Wells & Peachey, 2011). At a time of uncertainty like downsizing, employees need to understand what leadership expects of them and the goals of the organization (McClellan, 2011). Ideally, the leader is a driving force behind change; through trust and stimulating intellect, leaders enable employees to be productive in positive ways (Chaudhry, Javed, & Sabir, 2012).

One of the goals tasked to leadership during a downsizing event is to capture and retain knowledge (von Krogh, Nonaka, & Rechsteiner, 2012). Leaders' concerns are with

not only retaining employees after downsizing but retaining their knowledge and using knowledge sharing to maintain organizational performance (Tsirikas, Katsaros, & Nicolaidis, 2012). When there are disruptions within organizations, knowledge retention can be low causing poor performance outcomes (Mahmoudsalehi, Moradkhannejad, & Safari, 2012). Leaders can lead employees, human resource, and the leaders themselves involved in organizational success to the organization's desired goals (Warrick, 2011).

Systems theory, as described by Johnson et al. (1964), fits telecommunications organizations in a three-layer structure consisting of leadership at the top, communication within groups, and operations of all groups. Within those structures, management works to have those systems working independently, but towards the organizational goal. Much like the description of systems theory, business leaders layer organizations within structures requiring leadership to work in conjunction with each group (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011). During downsizing, leadership oversees those groups within the overall structure of positive results (Guo, & Giacobbe-Miller, 2012). Within the systems theory framework of multiple systems working to a larger system goal, there will be a focus on the strategies business leaders use after a downsizing event in this study.

The way the employees perceive a downsizing event is as important as the way a company benefits from a downsizing event (Marques, Galende, Cruz, & Ferreira, 2014). Downsizing can have a negative effect on high-performance groups (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). Organizations whose leaders show more attention to employees' well-being show greater levels of success (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). The positive and negative outcomes of downsizing affect employees and companies through financial performance and

retention (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011; Gandolfi & Littler, 2012; Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). Leadership tends to focus on events after downsizing; but throughout the process, leaders prepare to enact a downsizing event successfully (Taborga, 2012). When disruption occurs in the normal routine of an organization, such as in a downsizing event, leadership must ensure the process is successful (Coldwell, Joosub, & Papageorgiou, 2012). Leadership should adapt to a changing environment; however, organizational leaders find it difficult to develop leaders who can handle a downsizing event (Taborga, 2012).

A useful way of describing the separate types of leadership styles employed is dividing them into transformational and transactional leadership styles are suitable for describing leadership (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders consider the greater needs of their followers to make the followers better, whereas transactional leaders work in a trade-off with followers (Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership style often adds to organizational knowledge and stability through appealing to employees' higher needs (Noruzy, Dalfard, Azhdari, Nazari-Shirkouhi, & Rezazadeh, 2013). A third division, servant leadership, closely resembles transformational leadership but further focuses on empowerment (Schneider & George, 2011). The outcome of leadership types is important because employees who find satisfaction with their leaders are less likely to leave their organization (Wells & Peachey, 2011).

It is important to have leaders who can move organizations successfully through a downsizing event (Coldwell et al., 2012; Taborga, 2012). In a time of change for an organization, employees are more likely to feel detached and unproductive because of the

changes (Shin et al., 2012). Employee production is low after a downsizing event because of employees' lack of trust in the organization, lack of communication, and lack of vision for their future (Karkoulian et al., 2013; Kawai, 2011; Malik et al., 2011). Employee satisfaction, which is positively associated with increased performance, is linked with leadership and motivation (Baruah & Barthakur, 2012). Many decisions go into preparing workforce reductions and sometimes the planners do not consider human capital and intellectual capitalizations (Flint et al., 2012). Leaders must identify changes that affect employees and their ability to do their work and find ways to implement the change to get the most from the employees (Shin et al., 2012).

Employee Downsizing

One of the main issues facing organizational leaders is which employees to layoff and how to layoff (Flint et al., 2012). One study that consisted of participants who selected five employees out of 25 to layoff took place in a closed environment (Dwyer & Arbelo, 2012). The findings revealed targeted groups such as minorities and senior employees lose their jobs during times of downsizing, which endangers the ability to retain organizational knowledge within an organization (Dwyer & Arbelo, 2012).

As many as 50% of all organizational changes have failed to deliver expected results from downsizing, and researchers have considered only one-third of organizational changes to be successful (Shin et al., 2012). In times of economic crisis, the leaders of many organizations engage in downsizing to survive, but downsizing is not always the correct strategy (Luan et al., 2013). The failure rates of the calculated change initiatives, defined as organizational leaders not reaching their desired results, might not

be as high as organizational leaders estimate (Hughes, 2011). The 70% failure rate derived from the answers to questions asking whether a downsizing was a failure or success is ambiguous (Hughes, 2011). Even with the claims of high rates of failure, organizational leaders continue to downsize (Kawai, 2011; Kemal & Shahid, 2012).

The trend of downsizing by corporations, which started in the early 1980s, is not a new phenomenon, but the effects of downsizing on workforces continue to be a topic of research (van Dierendonck & Jacobs, 2012). Many executives and researchers in business once considered downsizing to be nonexistent because of the negative connotation associated with the word, but empirical research indicated otherwise (Gandolfi & Littler, 2012). Stakeholders and the public view downsizing negatively, so new terms such as *rightsizing*, *dehiring*, *derecruiting*, and *involuntary separation* all emerged as alternatives to the word downsizing (Mirabela, 2011).

Organizational leaders generally used a three-stage downsizing process between the mid-1970s and 2012; the process of downsizing continued after 2012, but with different terminology (Gandolfi & Littler, 2012). Organizational leaders often downsize for a variety of reasons, but most often to improve financial performance (Tsai & Shih, 2013). A quantitative study of Spanish manufacturing firms showed through downsizing data no change in the productivity for firms that had a downsizing event compared to those that did not have one (Muñoz-Bullón & Sánchez-Bueno, 2011). Muñoz-Bullón and Sánchez-Bueno's (2011) findings revealed no added benefits to company financials or productivity because of downsizing, which is especially significant because Spain has employee-friendly legislation that makes it difficult for organizational leaders to react to

market conditions through downsizing (Pasamar & Cabrera, 2013). Companies forced to downsize had a negative image because it was a signal to employees and the public that the company was in financial trouble (Hajkrová & Pálka, 2011; Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). Organizational leaders might look closely at the cost and strain of downsizing on different work groups within their organization (Boniface & Rashmi, 2012). From an employee's viewpoint, a shift in job duties leads from downsizing to less organizational knowledge and fear of the next job cut therefore, leadership should be aware of employees' viewpoint (Chipunza & Sameul, 2013; Nastase et al., 2012).

Alternative downsizing methods may help to improve companies' financial positions by doing more than downsizing across organizations (Bragger, Kutcher, Menier, Sessa, & Sumner, 2013). Two concepts exist that organizational leaders often overlook but can implement to improve companies' bottom line (Braun & Latham, 2012). Organizational leaders view downsizing from only a cost-saving aspect, yet they can use alternative methods developed through observation and literature in the form of retrenchment (layoffs) and repositioning (innovating) to save capital (Braun & Latham, 2012). When downsizing involves balance, organizational leaders can use resources to make downsizing events more successful (Norman, Butler, & Ranft, 2012). Downsizing is not going away, but the connotation associated with it makes it difficult to improve the process (Phelps, 2013).

Some of the factors of downsizing such as niche technology, cost reducing efforts, failure to adapt to changing technology, and insufficient management skills leaders have attributed to the reasons for downsizing (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011). No researchers

have conclusively shown why downsizing events fail or succeed, yet organizational leaders continue to enact downsizing (Gandolfi & Littler, 2012). The reasons for downsizing vary and ease of downsizing differs depending on location and industry (Muñoz-Bullón & Sánchez-Bueno, 2014). When approaching downsizing, organizational leaders should consider (a) human resources, (b) survivors and not only victims, (c) a long-term plan, (d) communication, and (e) leadership (Gandolfi, 2013). The results of a comprehensive survey design to explore downsizing to determine processes and outcomes of downsizing events revealed the multilayered processes organizational leaders go through during a downsizing event (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011). External factors that can lead to the need for a downsizing event include competition, market conditions, or the landscape of how an organization operates; internal factors include the ways the management team runs the organization and spends money (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011). Training and employee development are effective tools for the success of downsizing (Razzaq, Ayub, Arzu, & Aslam, 2013).

The intended result for a company undergoing downsizing is that it will emerge more competitive and successful than before the downsizing (Luan et al., 2013). In a quantitative study with statistical analysis to show a correlation between job insecurity and powerlessness, employees who believed in a lack of job security had a negative view of their organization, which led to poor performance (Karkoulian et al., 2013).

The findings from Karkoulian et al.'s (2013) study on employees' feelings were similar to the findings from Gandolfi and Hansson's (2011) research on the varying levels involved in a downsizing event. Employees are a factor in downsizing that affects the

overall outcome of a downsizing event (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011; Karkoulian et al., 2013). Employees who undergo and survive downsizing tend to have lower productivity because of a lack of trust in management (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011; Karkoulian et al., 2013; Kawai, 2011; Ko & Yeh, 2013).

Survivors of downsizing exhibit psychological factors that include stress, anxiety, and fear (Modrek & Cullen, 2013). Employees affected by change will lead an organization through downsizing events (Van Dierendonck & Jacobs, 2012). Workforce downsizing has the potential to affect employee production negatively and management needs to understand the effects on employee production (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011).

The loss of productivity in employees after a workforce reduction can involve two factors: overwork and work–life balance (Rehman & Muhammad, 2012; Waraich & Bhardwaj, 2012). A cross-sectional study of layoff survivors that included questionnaires revealed a strong relationship between overload and work–life balance and a negative work–life balance and production (Malik et al., 2011). Results of the correlation between work overload and work–life balance were conclusive in determining the need for strategies to maintain balance (Malik et al., 2011). Organizational leaders need to recognize and understand what employees are going through and consider those factors when downsizing (Puleo, 2011).

The goal of a study with a sample of organizations with 20 or more employees from Dun and Bradstreet's Canadian database was to determine if considering employees' health and welfare while downsizing would increase the employees' productivity (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). Companies whose leaders did not address

employees' morale and health showed lower employee productivity (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). As an essential component of downsizing, employees sometimes resist change, even when the change benefits the organization, because employees view change as a destructive force, which creates a negative return on equity and return on assets (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011; Kawai, 2011; Smollan, 2011).

Organizational leaders measure the success or failure of a downsizing event by failure in the planning stage, in the implementation stage, and after downsizing differently (Day, Armenakis, Feild, & Norris, 2012). Researchers have studied the short-term benefits and the long-term benefits to determine the value in downsizing (Iqbal & Haque, 2011; Scott et al., 2011). Researching the effects of short-term benefits for organizations due to downsizing involved collecting data pertaining to downsizing from the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, as well as data from the Industrial and Capacity Utilization reports of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System to determine production numbers for the same period (Iqbal & Haque, 2011). The findings revealed a strong negative correlation did not exist between short-term gains associated with downsizing, but certain areas of production showed a negative affect (Iqbal & Haque, 2011). One of the limitations of the research was a lack of financial reports, although Iqbal and Haque (2011) indicated they did not want to use financial reports for a short-term study; instead, they wanted to focus on the production output.

Research on the outcomes of downsizing that involved a different approach than Iqbal and Haque's (2011) study of short-term benefits included an exploration into how

downsizing affected long-term success based on an organization's stock price at the time of the announcement (Scott et al., 2011). Using data from 1990 to 1992 from companies that were part of the S&P 500 helped to avoid survival bias that could exist in short-term market conditions (Scott et al., 2011). The effect on organizations' stock prices at the time of layoff announcements was negative (Scott et al., 2011). One limitation of the study was that daily returns might not have been a reliable indicator for interpreting long-term events (Scott et al., 2011).

Financials are not the only means to determine the long-term viability of a downsizing event (Flint et al., 2012; Gong & Greenwood, 2012). A study on the long-term effects of reorganization and downsizing of small entrepreneurial organizations in Finland included a structural equation model applied to survey data to determine organizational results (Laitinen, 2011). Reorganization in the study applied to both business decisions and financial decisions; the data came from organizations that participated in the Finnish Company Reorganization Act (Laitinen, 2011). The findings indicated organizational change alone could not contribute to the long-term success of small entrepreneurial organizations and organizations need controls to ensure success (Laitinen, 2011). The results resembled Braun and Latham's (2012) study on retrenching and repositioning that required more than one action in a downsizing event for success.

Casualties to downsizing events other than employees, organizational productivity, and organizational financials include customers (Homburg, Klarmann, & Staritz, 2012). Short-term results (Iqbal & Haque, 2011) and long-term effects (Scott et al., 2011) of downsizing are only two aspects of measuring downsizing success or failure.

The primary purpose of downsizing by business leaders is for the reduction in cost, not always organizational change (Gandolfi & Hansson, 2011). Organizational leaders are the center of organizations and must set the vision and direction for organizations during a downsizing event (Birasnav, Rangnekar, & Dalpati, 2011). Employee performance declines following a downsizing event because of the decrease in employee morale, which increases the likelihood that those employees will leave due to a negative work environment (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011; Karkoulian et al., 2013). Organizational leaders must ensure employee morale and retention remain positive (Collinson, 2012).

Leadership's Role

Employees are the mechanism that drives progress within organizations; leaders are the influence on the employees (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bhat, Verma, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2012; Kool & van Dierendonck, 2012; O'Toole, 1996). Top executives seek leaders who can adapt to change quickly, but researchers found only a 55% success rate in developing successful leaders (Taborga, 2012). Leadership qualities, particularly behavioral qualities of leaders, can be determinants of positive or negative turnover (Wells & Peachey, 2011). Two types of leaders defined by opposite characteristics are transactional and transformational leaders (Burns, 1978). Transactional leaders approach leadership in a trade-off scenario, whereas transformational leaders attempt to engage followers and satisfy their needs (Burns, 1978).

Managers strive to be transformational leaders but researchers have shown transactional leadership is effective (Abdul & Javed, 2012; Bhat et al., 2012; Chaudhry et al., 2012). Bhat et al. (2012) completed a study of executives in an Indian manufacturing

group with a desire to show individualism and rewards systems contributed to the practice of transactional leadership. Positive correlation can exist in overall organizational knowledge with the use of transactional leadership (Bhat et al., 2012).

Large amounts of literature exist on transformational leadership; however, not many leaders know how to be a transformational leader (Warrick, 2011). Brown and May's (2012) study on the use of transformational leadership training over the course of one year showed increased productivity on an organizational scale was a result of transformational leadership training. The intent of the study was to determine if transformational leadership styles worked better than reward systems commonly attributed to transactional leadership. The findings showed organizational success increased through transformational leadership with the introduction of a reward system (Brown & May, 2012). Transformational leadership styles can be effective on an organizational scale by enhancing the trust with followers that leads to greater productivity (Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2013).

For transformational leaders to inspire groups of people and not just individuals to achieve their best, a transformational leader must show the followers their efforts are beneficial to others (Grant, 2012). Although transformational leadership inspires both individual and group followers to do their best, followers can begin to rely on transformational leaders for guidance (Eisenbeiß & Boerner, 2013). Despite a breakdown between individuals and group followers, a positive relationship can exist between transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and performance; a strong correlation can exist between trust and employee performance (Braun et al., 2013).

Burns (1978) defined transformational and transactional as two behavioral leadership styles effective in leading organizational success. Organizational leaders can use a Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire to show how transformational leadership works at all organizational levels whereas transactional is only effective at lower levels of organizations (Edwards & Gill, 2012). Transformational leaders inspire and energize creativity among employees and when leaders inspire employees, the leaders sustain goals (Cheung & Wong, 2011).

Transformational leadership and certain qualities of transactional leadership are not the only effective measures of leadership (Schneider & George, 2011; Tonkin, 2013). Authentic leadership is a leadership style that influences, motivates, and empowers followers (Nichols & Erakovich, 2013). A close relationship exists between authentic leadership and transformational leadership (Tonkin, 2013). Authentic leadership is a mixture of ethical leadership and transformational leadership that arose after the ethical crises of the early 2000s that followed the Enron scandal (Tonkin, 2013). Change can serve to disillusion employees and authentic leadership introduces ethics and morals to the characteristics of transformational leadership (Tonkin, 2013).

Servant leadership is a style of leadership well studied by scholars on the subject of change management (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Servant leadership shows a high correlation with motivated employees leading to positive organizational progress (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). The focus of servant leadership is on communicating what leadership needs from the employee, and in turn, the employee moves in the positive direction of the change (Kool & van Dierendonck, 2012). The eight

characteristics of servant leadership defined by van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) are empowerment, accountability, standing back, humility, authenticity, courage, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship. Kool and van Dierendonck's (2012) six characteristics of servant leadership are empowering and developing employees, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, providing direction, and stewardship. Either group of characteristics reflects an outward flow from the leader (Kool & van Dierendonck, 2012; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Servant leadership can be effective when transitioning during times of change and downsizing (Kool & van Dierendonck, 2012).

Leadership's Role in Downsizing

Downsizing can have a negative effect on workforce production and organizational performance (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011; Ko & Yeh, 2013; Luan et al., 2013). Organizational changes such as downsizing can have long-term effects on organizational performance; however, sustainable leadership can help guide organizations through those times (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011). Leadership that gives attention to the human side of downsizing through compassion for human capital tends to be more successful in times of disruption such as during downsizing (Cameron, 2011b).

Servant leadership can lead to positive outcomes in employee productivity during times of organizational change (Kool & van Dierendonck, 2012). Servant leadership is an effective leadership style during downsizing due to empowerment, authenticity, and stewardship traits (Schneider & George, 2011; van Dierendonck, & Nuijten, 2011). Building on prior research on transformational leadership by Burns (1978), Howell and

Avolio (1993) showed a positive correlation between employees' productivity levels and transformational leadership styles. The transformational leadership style appeals to the higher needs of followers; however, the higher needs could be those of the individual and not of the group (Cherian & Jacob, 2013; Grant, 2012).

Communication and the lack of activity influence employees' perceptions of a downsizing event (McDevitt, Giapponi, & Houston, 2013). Overuse of positive language can turn followers off to the message the leader is trying to relay to them (Collinson, 2012). The ability to relay clear communication, especially during times of uncertainty, is a vital requirement to meet leadership goals of maintaining and achieving organizational success (Conrad & Newberry, 2012).

Organizational Communication

Regardless of leadership style, leaders need to engage employees (Smollan, 2011), exhibit effective communication (McClellan, Burris, & Detert, 2013), and influence followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bhat et al., 2012; Kool & van Dierendonck, 2012; O'Toole, 1996). Leadership responses to employees' voices and the effectiveness of communications with leadership have led to mixed results (McClellan et al., 2013). Open communication works as long as leaders are able and willing to act on the feedback from employees; otherwise, there is a risk of employees losing motivation (McClellan et al., 2013). Employees' voices and organizational communications are necessities in business (Hsiung, 2012). The use of open communication in leader and member exchanges when feedback is positive leads to heightened employee engagement and success (Hsiung, 2012; Nastase et al., 2012).

Open communication with employees has a well-established paradigm within literature (Homburg et al., 2012; Hynes, 2012; Linke & Zerfass, 2011; Rosenberg & Mosca, 2011). Leadership can use communication to relay to employees how change affects the employee during a downsizing event (McDevitt et al., 2013). Employees often feel resistance to change because they feel work fatigue from constant change initiatives and lack of communication (Buell-Hirsch, 2014). A survey study of 246 entry-level or mid-level managers from universities in New Jersey and Washington included questions pertaining to the participants' experiences associated with organizational change (Rosenberg & Mosca, 2011). The results of the study with regard to the following reports of experiences were negative: (a) if there was an explanation of the change, (b) if employees felt there was consideration of their needs, (c) if the change had a schedule, (d) if employees witnessed the change as it took place, and (e) if employees felt empowered to help change (Rosenberg & Mosca, 2011). Employees want to have changes communicated to them; leadership can take the needed steps to communicate the process (Linke & Zerfass, 2011).

Leadership must follow up communication with action (Hynes, 2012). Eighty-four percent of graduate students at two business schools responded to a questionnaire by indicating that they went through a change initiative but only 47% thought leaders considered their needs (Rosenberg & Mosca, 2011). Leaders in a constantly changing work environment must engrave into all levels an organization's culture including consideration of employees who embrace change (Pirjol & Maxim, 2012).

Researchers have recognized the importance of interpersonal communication

within an organization between leadership and employees (Hynes, 2012; Linke & Zerfass, 2011). Employees' productivity is a reflection of their feelings toward managers, coworkers, and the organization (Hynes, 2012). Communication leads to innovation that indirectly leads to productivity (Linke & Zerfass, 2011). Downsizing is a reflection of an organization's performance that could change the way suppliers react to the downsizing event (Homburg et al., 2012). Downsizing can affect the relationship between an organization and its customers, even if the downsizing does not affect a customer directly (Homburg et al., 2012).

Communication is an integral tool to achieve success within organizations (Hynes, 2012; Linke & Zerfass, 2011); how leaders use communication is important to the success. Bridging leadership is the act of leaders using collaboration between organizations (McMullen & Adobor, 2011). Leaders' lack of abilities to recognize the value in employees can cause a failure in collaboration (Westley & Mintzberg, 1989). The three-step process of active leadership includes the (a) vision of the leader, (b) communication by leadership, and (c) empowerment or action given to employees to act (Westley & Mintzberg, 1989). Leaders have a higher need to communicate with and empower the employees (Westley & Mintzberg, 1989).

Communication also helps minimize the loss of production during times of downsizing (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). Communication and overall employee welfare contribute to high-performance work groups' overall successes when using labor productivity as a measurement for successes (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). High-performance teams need open communication (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). Organizational

leaders can provide clear and consistent messages during downsizing events to show transparency and trust (Hynes, 2012; Iverson & Zatzick, 2011; Linke & Zerfass, 2011). Leadership qualities are important in times of downsizing (Wells & Peachey, 2011) and communication with employees is essential for positive outcomes (Hynes, 2012; Linke & Zerfass, 2011).

Employee Motivation

Employees have undergone employment transformations from long-term regular employment to short-term casual employment (Ko & Yeh, 2013). Employees willing to change jobs regularly pose additional retention challenges for organizational leaders, especially during stressful times of downsizing (Prottas, 2013). When downsizing occurs, employees go through a psychological breakdown because the mental contract the employee had with the company breaks (Waraich & Bhardwaj, 2012). The mental contract exists with an employee's leader; when the relationship is good between the employee and the leader, productivity has a positive outcome (Baruah & Barthakur, 2012).

Organizations are changing from a preconceived organizational structure of standard alignment to a more fluent structure to accommodate a new generation of employees (Ramendran, Raman, Moona Haji Mohamed, Beleya, & Nodeson, 2013). Organizational flexibility is a way for organizational leaders to accommodate a changing workforce to strike a work-family balance and in return generate greater productivity from employees (Kossek, Kalliath, & Kalliath, 2012). Increases in pay, job security, and work environment motivate employees to produce; however, there is a new workforce

motivator that involves time outside of work (Aisha & Hardjomidjojo, 2013).

Employees find different methods for motivating themselves that lead to positive results (Achim, Dragolea, & Balan, 2013). Research on the self-efficacy theory and the ways self-efficacy motivates employees to be productive revealed that employees with high self-efficacy or confidence in their abilities had more positive experiences with job performance (Cherian & Jacob, 2013). When employees set high goals and motivate themselves to reach the goals, employees enrich their overall experiences and generate high success rates of productivity (Cherian & Jacob, 2013).

Organizational Knowledge

Employees have lower productivity after a workforce reduction (Karkoulian et al., 2013; Kawai, 2011) and organizational success is dependent on finding the cause of the low production. Organizational leaders need to keep knowledge within their organizations to stay competitive in the marketplace (Singh & Sharma, 2011). Organizational knowledge sharing is a key practice to employee satisfaction that leads to employee productivity (Tsirikas et al., 2012). Study of the problem led to conclusive relationships among factors pertaining to the problem, with limited suggestions for finding out how to fix the problem (Malik et al., 2011).

A study on the effects of change exhaustion on employees involved a six-item measurement scale on the relationship between employees fatigued from constant change with bad outcomes due to constant change (Bernerth, Walker, & Harris, 2011). The finding was a positive relationship between employee fatigue and constant change (Bernerth et al., 2011). A limitation of the study was the decision to use only one group to

make a determination for when work fatigue starts (Bernerth et al., 2011).

Overworked employees tend to have lower levels of job satisfaction that leads to the inability of leaders to retain the employees (Malik & Usman, 2011). Factors can contribute directly to low productivity and directly relate to the effects of downsizing (Ko & Yeh, 2013). A quantitative study of more than 9,000 people across 12 organizations indicated employers should focus on the overall aspect of employee well-being (Robertson et al., 2012). Analysis of survey data revealed the effects of employee productivity based on their job and work attitudes (Robertson et al., 2012). The results showed that leaders needed to understand more aspects than just the attitudes of the employees (Robertson et al., 2012). Employees are an essential part of any organizational turnaround; employees' feelings and well-being are part of what makes employees productive (Bernerth et al., 2011; Robertson et al., 2012).

Leaders in larger international companies adjust workforces to avoid downsizing because those leaders change salary restrictions to ease the burden created during bad economic times (Hajkrová & Pálka, 2011). Organizational leaders are making efforts to augment their workforce, making adjustments to preserve company success (Tsai & Shih, 2013). People affected by downsizing decisions want company leaders to focus less on short-term gains and more on long-term viability and employee well-being (Eccles, Perkins, & Serafeim, 2012).

Not all employees find work conditions to be considerations in levels of job satisfaction (Bakotic & Babic, 2013). A study of the working conditions of 60 workers of a Croatian shipbuilding company indicated no relationship existed between work

conditions and job satisfaction (Bakotic & Babic, 2013). However, splitting the administrative jobs from the jobs with difficult conditions led to job satisfaction becoming a consideration for jobs with more difficult work conditions (Bakotic & Babic, 2013). Work conditions can play a positive part in employee job satisfaction but can also be a determinant of whether an employee stays (Bakotic & Babic, 2013; Eccles et al., 2012).

Employees are important components of organizational turnarounds in times of financial difficulties (Karkoulian et al., 2013; Kawai, 2011); the factors that affect employees internally (at work) and externally (away from work) are important for organizational outcomes (Bakotic & Babic, 2013; Eccles et al., 2012). A study on the relationship between employee satisfaction and customer service satisfaction about employee productivity revealed no correlation (Baruah & Barthakur, 2012). Despite the lack of a relationship between employee and customer satisfaction, a risk of not retaining employees existed due to low organizational satisfaction (Baruah & Barthakur, 2012).

In an empirical study of a manufacturing sector of India, surviving employees worked harder in fear of losing their jobs if they did not put in more efforts (Waraich & Bhardwaj, 2012). Despite the research that showed a high rate of failure for downsizing (Hughes, 2011; Luan et al., 2013; Shin et al., 2012), organizational leaders continue to look toward employees for answers regarding how to make downsizing successful. Employees' resiliencies to change and abilities to operate under high stress are attractive qualities for organizational leaders looking to overcome high failure rates (Mayton, 2011; Smollan, 2011).

Employees are important parts of organizations but organizational leaders should be able to make changes in line with the demand of the business (Ramendran et al., 2013). Organizational leaders who show flexibility keep up with changing environments and retain employees with higher levels of satisfaction (Ramendran et al., 2013). Organizational leaders need to introduce employees to different work duties gradually to avoid stress and employee burnout (Ramendran et al., 2013). Organizational flexibility can include flexibility in wages, flexibility in work time, and headcount flexibility; for employees who experience work overloads, time flexibility can help to make work less stressful (Ramendran et al., 2013).

Two opposite but related areas concerning employee flexibility at work are an employee's ability to work flexible hours and support from supervisors when adjustments in scheduling need to be made (Wickramasinghe, 2012). The stressors employees face at work, including job security, added workload, and threats to the employee's future influence the well-being of employees (Wickramasinghe, 2012). Questionnaire responses from a random sample of 232 employees of a software firm revealed the effect of flex scheduling and supervisor intervention on stressed employees (Wickramasinghe, 2012). The findings indicated that when supervisor support was available, employees had positive feelings; as the level of supervisory support decreased, the level of employee motivation also decreased (Wickramasinghe, 2012).

The introduction of the Internet at work led to the risk for abuse by employees (Heydari, Danesh, Jamehshooran, & Teimouri, 2011). The lack of recognition by organization leaders of employees can lead to abuses and employee confidence may

decline; abuses and lack of recognition by leaders can lead to low production (Heywood, Siebert, & Wei, 2011). Scholars have widely accepted that employees play a vital role in success within organizations when guided by direction and recognition (Baruah & Barthakur, 2012).

The definition of organizational knowledge is general, without a widely accepted definition (Alrawi, Hamdan, Al-Taie, & Ibrahim, 2013). Employees' values and perceptions are significant factors in their willingness to share knowledge (Casimir, Lee, & Loon, 2012). Leaders of organizations trying to establish knowledge within their organizations should learn how to move forward with the employees' values in mind (Alrawi et al., 2013). Organizational knowledge is important to an organization's success, yet leaders often overlook organizational knowledge when downsizing (Schmitt, Borzillo, & Probst, 2012). A key prerequisite for an effective downsizing event is identifying organizational knowledge in the planning stages (Sitlington & Marshall, 2011). The focus of prior literature was on recycling information from one downsizing event to another (Sitlington & Marshall, 2011) with a suggestion to not create new knowledge and instead retain existing knowledge (Levy, 2011; Sitlington & Marshall, 2011).

Organizational leaders have determined organizational knowledge is important in the planning stage of a downsizing event when planning begins (Von Krogh et al., 2012). When knowledge sharing does not exist within an organization, surviving employees from a layoff can become discouraged and show adverse reactions to production (Casimir et al., 2012). Employee openness and trust toward an organizational culture facilitate

knowledge sharing (Casimir et al., 2012; Wiewiora, Trigunarsyah, Murphy, & Coffey, 2013). Hotel managers received surveys as part of a research study to determine how employee empowerment led to greater team performance (Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006). Empowerment of employees within an organization leads to greater sharing of knowledge that ultimately leads to greater organizational performance (Srivastava et al., 2006).

Human resources are integral in acknowledging, retaining, and sharing organizational knowledge (Kuo, 2011). An employee's commitment to an organization with continuous support for an organization's success can contribute to open communication and to how an organization supports the employee (Syed & Lin Xiao, 2012). Human resource leadership can manage employee burnout and encourage employee production by fostering engagement and communication with employees at all levels of an organization (Basu & Parveen, 2012). A study on the role of human resources and the ability to use managed practices by human resources revealed a gap between executive decisions on downsizing and the consideration given to employees (Marks & Mirvis, 2011). Cultural differences among employees during times of downsizing formed obstacles that led to change failures (Marks & Mirvis, 2011). The four employee involvement elements that foster employee engagement leading to increased employee productivity and engagement are power, information, knowledge and skills, and rewards (Phipps, Prieto, & Ndinguri, 2013). Phipps et al. (2013) explained the elements provided employees with an outlet for employees to be more productive. Employees engaged in the organizational change processes become more motivated

toward increased productivity (Basu & Parveen, 2012; Srivastava et al., 2006; Syed & Lin Xiao, 2012).

Narrative knowledge sharing is an area shown to be an effective tool for sharing knowledge (Geiger & Schreyögg, 2012). The findings on effective narrative knowledge sharing indicated narrative knowledge sharing methods alone were not sufficient due to the use of generalization and storytelling (Geiger & Schreyögg, 2012). If methods of knowledge sharing are not effective, then organizational leaders must find ways to share knowledge to ensure success (Alrawi et al., 2013).

The use of downsizing and the terminology referring to it may change; however the act of downsizing and resulting organizational outcomes remain the same (Gandolfi & Littler, 2012). Debate is ongoing about the overall effectiveness of a downsizing event and whether or not a downsizing event benefits an organization (Hughes, 2011). A top priority of organizational leadership is to find leaders who can lead organizations through turbulent times such as downsizing and motivate employees to be productive (Warrick, 2011). Organizational leaders must identify the value of employees and their competencies as well as what makes employees productive (Jabar et al., 2011). A qualitative case study allows participants to tell their stories; combined with other sources of data, one can understand better the defined topic (Thomas, 2011), leading to strategies for motivating employees to be productive (Yawson, 2013).

Transition

This study involved an attempt to reveal what strategies best motivate employees to be productive after a downsizing event. The results contribute to strategies

organizational leaders can use to motivate employees to be productive. In addition to employee productivity, the results provide insight into how employee motivation affects overall organizational performance.

A case study is the in depth study of a subject from multiple data sources from within the natural environment (Crowe et al., 2011; Thomas, 2011). The reason for interviewing business leaders and managers who participated in a downsizing event was to understand their experiences with downsizing. The goal was to find strategies business leaders can use to motivate retained employees to be productive after a workforce reduction.

Section 2: The Project

This section contains information specific to the study on downsizing, including details on my role as an inside researcher, the role of the business leaders and managers, the details of the data, and the analysis of the data collected. This section contains an in-depth discussion on the validity and reliability of data gathering and analysis to show an understanding of the trustworthy components of the data gathering and analysis processes. This study was designed to produce results whose application will produce positive change by informing the way organizational leaders view employee productivity, empowering them to greater organizational success.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that business leaders use to motivate retained employees to be productive following a workforce reduction. Use of a case study allowed for the in-depth study of a downsizing event from multiple perspectives (Thomas, 2011). A unique characteristic of a case study is the use of multiple sources (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) referred to using multiple sources of evidence, creating a database, and maintaining a chain of evidence as three principles of trustworthy data collection. Six sources of information for data discovery include (a) documentation, (b) archival records, (c) interviews, (d) direct observations, (e) participant-observations, and (f) physical artifacts (Yin, 2014). The primary source of data collection was a semistructured interview process performed with two business leaders and a focus group of five managers who survived a downsizing event within telecommunications companies located in the eastern United States. In addition to the

interviews, I used documentation on the history of downsizing within the telecom industry, including data on the number of downsizes and how organizational leaders executed the downsizing.

This study encompassed the ways business leaders viewed the productivity of employees and how this led to strategies to improve productivity that could affect social change stemming from greater organizational successes. Business leaders who do not take action risk losing employees they did not anticipate losing and the downsizing could affect customer service; however, the outcomes of the research showed a better work-life balance for employees whose business leaders exercised an informed approach. Using this approach is expected to assist organizations in reducing employee turnover, resulting in better organizational knowledge retention and performance.

Role of the Researcher

I was the data collection instrument for this qualitative study. My role as the researcher was to establish a research design, obtain approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and then perform the participant identification, data collection, and data analysis. To ensure the privacy of participants and ethical research, I upheld the validity of the study by ensuring participants' privacies were maintained. I upheld the three factors of ethical treatment of participants by ensuring the participants entered the research willingly and understood what I expected from them. I was guided on participant treatment by the work done in the Belmont Report (Dubois et al., 2012). Participants have to feel respected, there has to be an understanding of what is expected through consent forms, and the procedures need to be administered fairly (Davidson &

Page, 2012; DuBois et al., 2012). This was accomplished by having the participants gain access to the study by signing a consent form (Appendix A) prior to participating in the study, acknowledging they understood the expectations of participation in the study. At any time, any participant could have stopped the interview, asked questions, or left the study.

I Solicited potential participants occurred through the cooperation of my organization from participants not directly working with me. I conducted the interviews with participants were over the phone and also conducted the focus group interview in person. I used a phone interview with business leaders in place of a face-to-face interview due to scheduling difficulties. There could be some loss of personal feel in the interview but due availability of participants phone interviews were preferred. I used an interview protocol and within it I identified the interviewee, interviewer, and an outline of the questions posed to the business leaders (see Appendix A). In addition to the interview protocol for business leaders, there was a focus group protocol for the managers outlining questions for the focus group and identification of participants (see Appendix B).

Data collection occurred through interviews that followed ethical guidelines. To maintain participants' privacy, I stored the data in a locked safe and maintained the data on a password-protected personal computer. This observance of integrity, ethics, and participants' privacies helped to ensure the validity of the study, in alignment with the guidelines of Keller and Casadevall-Keller (2010). I took steps to minimize my bias in the interviews with participants so to keep focus on myself as the researcher away from my prior experience in the industry. I did this by ensuring participants' responses were

not guided by me, the researcher, by using a written protocol to allow the participants to answer questions without biased inputs.

My work on this study was informed by my active career as an operations manager in the telecommunications industry. I have been a part of 10 downsizing events that affected coworkers or me in a 16-year career in telephony. These first hand experiences with downsizing in the telecommunications industry led to my developing a desire to study the effects of employee productivity after the downsizing of employees transpired. The participants in the focus group or in one-on-one interviews were not people who reported to me or who were below my level of authority, avoiding potential ethical issues and conflicts of interest. I minimized my bias and beliefs as a manager within the industry and focused my questions on the participants and their responses. This study of employee productivity was designed to promote social change by informing how organizational leaders view downsizing and strategies that benefit employees, the organization, and consumers.

Participants

There were two groups of participants for this study. The first group consisted of two business leaders who participated in individual open-ended interviews. Business leaders had to be director level or higher for inclusion as a business leader participant. The participation criterion for this element of the study was that the participants be business leaders who were direct supervisors to managers and who had a role in decision making during downsizing.

The second group consisted of five managers who had direct reports and did not have a role in decision making during downsizing. There was no restriction on the group within the organization from which the managers came from, but they had to occupy an operational manager-level or higher position. Because I worked at the organization containing the potential participants, I gained access to the participants by obtaining their phone numbers through department leaders and making contacts with the participants through phone conversations or emails. I solicited participants myself through acquaintances of different organizations using an organizational consent form, ensuring participants knew me as a researcher and not as a peer or coworker (see Appendix D). By soliciting participants through me as a researcher and not as a peer or coworker, I minimized perceived coercion or bias. I emailed a letter of consent to business leaders and managers to obtain their consent to participate in the study (see Appendix C & Appendix D).

Due to the nature of the telephony business and the parameters of the requirements to participate, there were not any participants under the age of 21 in the sample. There were no vulnerable groups targeted to be in the study. In telephony, as with any other profession, employees may have disabilities but no discrimination occurred through inclusion or exclusion criteria pertaining to disabilities.

It is important to choose participants with a direct interest in the research (Draper & Swift, 2011). The use of purposeful sampling was designed to bring participants into the research that could offer data that could help answer the research question, a process recommended by qualitative research experts (Poulis, Poulis, & Plakoyiannaki, 2013).

This section aligned with Fraher's (2013) In a study of downsizing of commercial airline pilots and the effects of downsizing on their morale, in which chose pilots who had experienced a downsizing event to ensure the participants comprised the target audience. The study recruitment method also aligned with Lund et al.'s (2014) use of purposeful sampling to maximize variations by choosing participants by age, ethnicity, and other social and economic status. In a similar way, Pisarski and Ashworth (2013) used purposeful selection of participants for their views and experience of environmental emissions for a study on energy climate and technology. Levack, Dean, Siegert, and McPherson (2011) and Patton (1990) contended purposeful sampling is the best and most accurate method of enlisting valid participants for a study.

I used purposeful sampling for my study. The selection of managers came from within the telecommunications industry to ensure that I had participants with direct experiences in the downsizing process. Each of the participating telecommunication managers had direct reports and were responsible for the successful outcomes of organizations. The participants included business leaders and managers in telecommunications directly affected by downsizing.

I took many considerations for compliance with ethical research guidelines when recruiting participants, per Barbour (2010) and Frances et al., (2010). I explained my role as the researcher and communicated that they were not obligated to answer any question. I had knowledge of the participants through mutual coworkers, but I did not have a direct working relationship with any of the participants. The knowledge and experiences of each participant with the telecommunications industry and downsizing, which made them

ideal contributors to the study and made their knowledge, add value to the study. When working with the participants in the study, communication of the ethical standards and expectations of the participants occurred with the promise to uphold the confidentiality of the participants and identifying information, in accordance with recommendations by research experts (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; Moustakas, 1994).

The participants were aware of what they needed to do in the interviews. I will keep participant data and records for 5 years on a thumb drive and folder in a password-protected safe, after which time destruction of participants' data records will occur by shredding the data records with a shredder and permanently deleting data from the drive. After initially making contact with the participants via a phone call, I sent a follow-up email that included the consent form (see Appendix C & Appendix D) for participants. The participants had the opportunity to review the consent form and ask questions about what their expectations were for the study. Once the participants reviewed the consent form and I answered any questions they had and each business leader signed a consent form acknowledging their understanding. Participants received a summary of the results of the study for review and feedback, thereby adding trustworthiness to the research process.

Research Method and Design

The methods researchers use to conduct research include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Doz, 2011; Hanson et al., 2011). Researchers may face quandaries regarding which method to use; however, the research question should be the central guide to determine the method (Bredmar, 2013; Wester, Borders, Boul, & Horton, 2013).

Qualitative research is the study of an unknown topic such as employee productivity and allows participants to tell their thoughts, opinions, and feelings (Hoflund, 2013). A case study design allows for the study of a topic in the natural setting and leads to answers to research questions using multiple sources (Crowe et al., 2011). The lack of knowledge on the subject of employee productivity from the managers' perspectives leading to a need to interview participants supported the single case approach of a case study design (Radley & Chamberlain, 2012).

Research Method

The goal of this study was to explore strategies that motivate employees to be productive after a downsizing event. Business leaders views of the after-downsizing topic of productivity of retained employees were central to the research question (Allwood, 2012). Prior research on downsizing and the ways it affected employees involved was sparse, leading to the identification of a gap in knowledge about downsizing outcomes (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011; Kemal & Shahid, 2012; Muñoz-Bullón & Sánchez-Bueno, 2011). The purpose of using a qualitative method was to explore the lack of knowledge and to add a deeper understanding of downsizing events (Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014).

Topics of empirical studies on downsizing included organizational results, employee productivity, and organizational advantages through the lens of quantitative designs (Güth & Paul, 2011; Magán-Díaz & Céspedes-Lorente, 2012). There is a concern with quantitative studies and the thoroughness of findings due to the limitation of investigations to few well-known variables (Wester et al., 2013). The research associated with downsizing has established variables and constructs with known facts to test a

hypothesis with statistical comparisons (Bendassolli, 2013; Corner, 2002). Iverson and Zatzick (2011) used established variables (employees) and constructs (downsizing) to determine how high performance teams remained motivated and productive. A similar study by Muñoz-Bullón and Sánchez-Bueno (2011) with established variables (employees) and constructs (downsizing) involved employees without regard to involvement in high performance teams. Although these attempts revealed limited information about downsizing events and productivity, they did not illuminate the possibility of unknown factors that could stem from managers' perceptions and experiences. The researcher determined the research method by the research question and the research question pertained to strategies that motivate employees to be productive after a workforce reduction (Bredmar, 2013). The exploration took place using a qualitative method to avoid the restriction of findings from a narrow set of previously defined variables involving constructs of prior quantitative research efforts.

Researchers may learn unknown information about employee productivity motivation after downsizing from the business leaders' perspectives; therefore, the qualitative method that involves the capture of those in-depth experiences is an appropriate method for studying the phenomenon (Doz, 2011). An opportunity for participants to share their experiences through interviews allows open communication and candor on issues valuable to a more comprehensive understanding of the study topic (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Qualitative methods involve an interview process requiring the interviewer to know and understand the familiar aspects of the topic (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Interviewing participants allowed me to obtain their experiences that led to insight

about how they motivate employees to be productive. The qualitative approach allowed themes to develop about common concepts of how managers motivate employees (Turner, 2010). Qualitative methodology has limitations due to researcher bias; a researcher who has beliefs regarding how participants should answer interview questions can bring bias into qualitative methodology (Woodard, 2012). Constructing interview questions prior to engaging the first participant helped to minimize bias.

Mixed methods research requires proficiency and competency in both quantitative and qualitative research (Venkatesh et al., 2013). The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods provides a better understanding of research associated with a research problem (Cameron, 2011a). However, even with the double validation of the research problem that mixed-methods research often offers, time and financial constraints can limit its use (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). The researcher considered a mixed method study using quantitative methods and tools associated with a larger size and qualitative methods and tools for in-depth discussions with a smaller sample (Metcalf, Hess, Danes, & Singh, 2012; Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). Mixed methods research would involve spending equal time on both qualitative and quantitative components (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013); therefore, it was not appropriate due to time constraints for this research

Research Design

The results of a study about the productivity of employees on high-performance teams revealed an explanation for low productivity; however, the perspectives of the managers were not a part of the study (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). The purpose of this

study was to use a case study design to explore strategies business leaders use to motivate employees toward productivity after a downsizing event. The person who exhibited the experience within a specific case best provides the fullness of the experience (Olausson et al., 2013). Although researchers used case studies outside of business, use of multiple sources of data make case studies appropriate for business research (Zivkovic, 2012). A case study can encompass interview data, archived data, photographs, audio recordings, observations, and focus groups as the means for data collection (Amerson, 2011). Narrative design and grounded theory received consideration for this study. The following reasons form an explanation for why narrative design and grounded theory were not suitable.

A case study involves using multiple sources to understand a topic (Yin, 2014). Crowe et al. (2011) described three types of case studies as (a) intrinsic, (b) instrumental, and (c) collective. The instrumental case study, as described by Crowe et al. (2011) focused on a particular topic. The instrumental case study is useful in examining the strategies that motivate employees to be productive after a workforce reduction. The single points of the experiences expressed by participants were paramount and surfaced in interviews and focus group interactions. The advantage of an insider researcher in a case study is the researcher understands what the participants are saying (Unluer, 2102). With my experience in the telecommunications industry, I am an insider researcher. The interviews included business leaders and managers to extract their experiences that may contribute to the creation of strategies to improve productivity after a workforce reduction. Interview settings were comfortable to allow conversations free of anxieties

and tensions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Based on limited information related to the subject, narrative design is similar to phenomenological design in that it involves asking the participants open-ended questions (Hansen, 2011). Downsizing typically takes place in organizations experiencing poor economic times; researchers cannot easily chronicle downsizing, as the narrative design requires (Hansen, 2011; Saeed, Arshad, Fareed, Shahzad, & Lodhi, 2013). Narrative design allows for the shared responsibility of data analysis between the interviewer and the interviewee resulting in subjective interpretations (Uprichard, 2011). The intent of this study was to learn about the single event of downsizing through participants' experiences without any external factors injecting bias into the analysis process.

Grounded theory received consideration so I could observe the participants in their settings as the participants experience different phenomena (Reiter, Stewart, & Bruce, 2011). Grounded theory began in the field of sociology; researchers extended it to other fields of study to understand how a phenomenon happens naturally (Goulding, 2002). An association exists between downsizing and loss of employment; observing employees in their situations could lead to bias if participants acted in particular ways with decision makers in their work environments (Shedlin, 2011). Although grounded theory was enticing because observations of how participants interact within their environment would be beneficial, the risk of participant bias would be present (Goulding, 2002; Hoflund, 2013). In addition, grounded theory involves developing theory (Hoflund, 2013). This method is the reverse of traditional methods in which researchers choose a theoretical framework prior to beginning research (Hoflund, 2013). For these reasons, I

did not select grounded theory as the research design.

Population and Sampling

The telecommunications industry experienced downsizing as well as low employee retention rates (Ratna & Chawla, 2012). Two different sources of data consisting of business leaders and managers enabled triangulation (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). Walsh and Bartunek (2011) interviewed small sets of participants in a multiple case study pertaining to former employees of defunct organizations. Walsh and Barunek (2011) designed the interview questions to be probing and extract information from the participants. Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested one or two participants should participate per case for interviews. Participants consisted of business leaders and managers of a telecommunications company in the eastern United States. I used purposeful sampling to ensure the selection of two business leaders and five managers from operations, engineering, and human resources.

The focus of this study was to determine what makes employees productive after a workforce reduction and to choose business leaders and managers who survived a downsizing event. Access to prospective participants occurred through permission of the divisional vice presidents to contact those workers who fit the criteria but had not worked with me. Prospects had access to the criteria for the study and could contact me by email or phone for further inquiry. When a prospect did not participate in the initial inquiry, another worker with similar job functions from another region received an invitation to participate in the study. A researcher should choose the method based on whether the participants can help answer the research question (Draper & Swift, 2011); therefore, the

participants for this study included downsized employees in the telecommunications industry.

In a study of communication overload on librarians, the researchers specifically chose candidates related to the study topic and ensured the candidates met certain criteria, such as age, gender mixture, and years of service (Burns & Bossaller, 2012). In their settings, participants need to feel comfortable and relaxed to encourage interaction (Qu & Dumay, 2011). I conducted my interviews in person to ensure the participants felt engaged and a part of the process. The participants indicated by marking the consent forms (see Appendix C & Appendix D) they had been a part of a downsizing event as a condition for involvement. The total number of participants needed for the study was two business leaders and a focus group of five to seven managers. If data saturation did not occur, then I would have selected groups of three additional participants at a time until I achieved saturation. To ensure I met the requirement for saturation, I confirmed that no data emerged from subsequent inquiries and that enough participants offered data that became repetitive, as an indication of data saturation (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013).

Sample Size

A case study uses multiple sources for data gathering to reach saturation and then triangulation of the data to ensure the analysis is complete (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). Multiple sources for gathering data are necessary to perform triangulation, achieve data saturation, and meet the minimum requirement for Walden University (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). The use of multiple sources, such as interviews and focus groups, allowed for openness and flexibility in the qualitative study, according to research experts (Tong,

Chapman, Israni, Gordon & Craig, 2013). The inclusion of data from multiple sources enhanced the depth and richness of the study (Denzin, 2012). To achieve understanding of the studied subject, multiple means to collect data were necessary and consistent with recommendations for rigorous qualitative research (Goulding, 2002).

I used member checking and triangulation of multiple data sources, inspecting themes to minimize subjectivity in the research and bring credibility through trustworthy research tactics (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). According to Goulding (2002), feedback from participants adds credibility to qualitative research. In this study, I used multiple sources for member checking to triangulate themes from the interviews. I added additional sources of data, such as documentation on downsizing, to triangulate data and reach appropriate themes (Flick, Garms-Homolová, Herrmann, Kuck, & Röhnsch, 2012).

The participants came from different organizations within a telecommunications company in the eastern United States, forming a sample consisting of business leaders and managers. Participants did not need to belong to any specific work group within an organization. They only needed to fit the criteria of having survived downsizing in the telecommunications industry. I notified the potential participants by e-mail or phone from a list provided by an organizational leader to request their participation in the study. I email the consent forms to the participants or mailed the consent form if email was not available. I allocated 2 weeks to conduct the interviews and 1 week to transcribe the interviews and analyze the data. The consent form contained my phone number to allow the prospects and participants an opportunity to call me with questions or concerns.

Sample Criteria

Qualitative research experts suggested choosing participants with varying roles to obtain more exposure to the phenomenon (Draper & Swift, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Stewart et al., 2007). I used participants from the telecommunications industry with varying roles. The inclusion criteria for the participants were experiences in the following areas: (a) working in the telecommunications industry, (b) functioning in a supervisory role as part of a downsizing event within the telecommunications industry, and (c) working as a business leader. The value in qualitative methodology is gaining an understanding of the phenomenon (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011); for this reason, it was necessary to have participants who have survived a downsizing event.

Prior to the interviews, the business leaders and the focus group participants received an introduction to the study including the purpose of the study, the potential impact on business practices, and the implications for social change. The participants from both groups asked questions pertaining to the study. The interviews for the business leaders included seven open-ended interview questions and lasted approximately one hour. The focus group interviews consisted of five open-ended questions for managers in the focus group so participants could share their experiences. The interview settings were quiet locations to minimize interruptions. The interviews took place in the evening after work to ensure enough time was available to answer all the interview questions and to allow for follow-up questions and responses.

Ethical Research

I maintained the confidentiality of participants to ensure no participant

experienced any actual or perceived retaliation by their employer for their role in the study. One method for strengthening the ethics of the research was to ensure safety for the participants (Keller & Casadevall-Keller, 2010). Although qualitative studies cannot be completely objective due to the subjective nature of the methodology, I upheld the integrity of the research by consideration of the well-being of the participants as recommended by Kapoulas and Mitic (2012). To maintain an honest and open relationship with the participants, it is important to communicate potential ethical concerns to the participants through the consent forms and ensure the privacy of the participants (Xie, Wu, Luo, & Hu, 2012). Within the proposed qualitative study, I considered the tendency of participants to stretch the truth, as suggested by Wengraf (2001). Although some could hold back on telling details of unhappy events, researchers need all data to determine if the data are factual (Wengraf, 2001). The informed consent letter (see Appendix C & Appendix D) shows the steps taken to ensure the ethical integrity of this study. I initiated the process of obtaining a signed consent form using an email from the prospective participants. If there was no contact with the participant after I received permission from the company, I made follow-up phone calls to the prospective participants. After I receive a signed consent form, a discussion about the schedule for the interviews occurred.

Each participant was be able to withdraw at any time for any reason by contacting me by phone, email, or in a written letter stating he or she no longer wished to participate, a process recommended by research experts (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). If a participant wished to withdraw from the study, the final analysis would not have included that

participant's data and in no way would the participant be negatively affected in any way. Participation was voluntary. There was no compensation to the participants for taking part in the process. The data transcripts will remain on a thumb drive stored in a password-protected safe for 5 years. After 5 years, I will permanently delete the data by erasing the memory on the thumb drive and physically destroying the device.

Data Collection Instruments

Instrument

I was the primary data collection instrument (Wengraf, 2001). Methods for data collection included semistructured interviews, open-ended questions, and documentation on downsizing (Turner, 2010). The data collection tool consisted of seven open-ended semistructured interview questions (see Appendices A & B) presented to business leaders regarding the topic of surviving a downsizing event. In addition to the seven interview questions for business leaders, there were five interview questions for a focus group of five managers related to the downsizing event. The documentation was the third method of data and obtained from various public records on downsizing. Retrieval of the public records occurred by using internet searchers and company website searches. The number of participants, dependent on the purpose of the study, included two business leaders and five managers (Kyale, 2007). The in-depth, semistructured interviews had open-ended questions that enabled the participants to provide descriptive answers (and not interpretive answers) that allowed the participants to share their experiences, in accordance with recommendations for rigorous research (Cachia & Millward, 2011; Giorgi, 2012). Using open-ended questions is sometimes difficult due to the challenge of

grouping data into common themes (Turner, 2010). Open-ended interview questions may minimize researcher bias by allowing participants to freely describe their experiences (Nirupama & Etkin, 2012). The use of qualitative questioning helped me explore downsizing from the perspectives of the participants. The abilities for participants to share their experiences led me to choose open-ended questions and semistructured interviews (see Appendices A & B). Scholars use member checking to heighten the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings based on interview data (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). After the interviews and before final publication, I used transcript checking and member checking by asking the participants to both review and clarify responses and assess the findings established through related coding during analysis. Some scholars believe there could be interpretation problems with member checking; however, most research experts agree that the process heightens the trustworthiness of findings (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011).

The purpose of a case study is to explore a phenomenon through multiple methods (Thomas, 2011). The study of an organization's downsizing survivors can be effective by analyzing responses from a small sample instead of collecting data from a large group of participants common in quantitative methods (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Data collection for qualitative studies is not dependent on statistically constructed models based on large numbers; instead, data collection involves saturation achieved by in-depth inquiries of smaller groups and multiple sources of data (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011; Yin, 2014). For this study, there were two business leaders interviewed and five participants in the focus group.

In my role as the researcher, my experience with the topic of downsizing established a shared experience with the participants, as acknowledged by Reiter et al. (2011). Uncovering the experiences of the participants indicated the productivity of survivors of downsizing events (Giorgi, 2012). It is important to have empirical literature on downsizing; however, the strength of this study came from how the participants interpreted and expressed their experiences through interviews and focus groups.

Semistructured interviews and a focus group were the sources of data that allowed the participants to share their experiences. The long interview is a shared experience between the researcher and the participant with predetermined questions the researcher may or may not use (Moustakas, 1994). I extracted the answers to the main interview questions from participants by using probing questions for depth and richness, as suggested by Moustakas (1994) and Rubin and Rubin (2012). Researchers reach data saturation when no new information stems from additional data collection (Guest et al., 2006; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). The interviews with business leaders and the focus group of managers were sufficient to gather enough data to achieve the data saturation recommended by research experts (Amerson, 2011; Mason, 2010).

Coding is a process of analysis that involves organizing answers from transcribed interview questions to create themes based on major topics that emerge from the data (Da Mota-Pedrosa, Näslund, & Jasmand, 2012). I transcribed the data that emerged from the interviews and used coding to ascertain themes, as directed by Closs, Speier, and Meacham (2011). Microsoft Excel was a suitable way to organize data and bring order to the concepts. I brought credibility to the study by transcribing and coding the data in a

search for themes from participants' responses about their experiences related to a downsizing event. To ensure consistency through the transcription process, I maintained the original transcripts of the interviews for the purposes of transcript checking, as recommended by Barusch (2011).

The qualitative interview is an in-depth tool used to gather participants' experiences with downsizing. Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) completed qualitative research in nursing and they suggested a process called transcript checking to be done after transcripts and before analysis. Houghton et al. (2013) argued that member checking after synthesis of the interview transcripts would be unrecognizable to the participants but that members of the sample could participate in member checking following analysis. In a similar way, Walker and McNamara (2013) suggested transcript checking and member checking to improve the accuracy and relevance of what the participants were trying to say. After interviewing and before final analysis I had participants check their transcripts and review results from coding of responses to help improve the trustworthiness of the research process.

Participants received an interview guide and a list of expectations (see Appendix C & Appendix D). Due to the expansive geographic area for attaining the business leader participants, I interviewed the business leaders on the phone. I conducted the focus group interview in person and at the convenience of the participants to encourage participants to share their feelings on downsizing. I maintained continuity throughout the interview process by asking the same open-ended questions to each participant to ensure reliability and to allow the participants to answer freely.

I recorded the participants' answers to the open-ended questions on a Livescribe Echo Smartpen digital recording device and used my smart phone's audio recorder for backup. Each participant received a number for identification purposes and I transcribed participants' answers and organized them in an Excel spreadsheet that aided in the development of themes. I protected the data in a password-protected safe until the completion of the study, at which time I placed the entire collection of data into storage that will remain for 5 years. At the conclusion of 5 years, I will delete the information from the thumb drive and physically destroy the thumb drive.

I organized my interview notes, data, and questions into categories before coding for clarity, as suggested by Moustakas (1994). The qualitative methodology involves extracting data from participants using interviews to gather purposeful data to answer research questions. Section 3 includes the findings supported by and compared to the results from prior peer-reviewed literature.

Data Collection Technique

The participants consisted of two business leaders working for a telecommunications company in the eastern United States. In addition to the interviews with business leaders, I conducted a focus group interview session consisting of five managers. I used a case study design to extract data from multiple sources. Purposive sampling helped to ensure the candidates chosen to participate in interviews and focus groups experienced a downsizing event.

I determined the eligibility of candidates. After receiving IRB approval, I contacted participants via email or telephone to begin recruitment efforts, obtain signed

informed consent forms, and schedule interviews and focus group participation. I audio recorded the interviews using the Livescribe Echo Smartpen digital recording device; my smart phone recording device served as a backup, consistent with recommended approaches by qualitative research experts (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Participants responded to seven interview questions in the business leaders' interviews and five interview questions in the focus group session of managers. Questions pertained to their experiences.

Interview success depends on the ability of the interviewer to obtain knowledge through the interview process (Turner, 2010). Interviewers obtain knowledge by building trust with participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Through establishing confidentiality with participants, understanding when to ask for more information regarding the answer to a question, respecting participants' time, and ensuring open communication, an interviewer can build trust and knowledge (Giorgi, 2012). Considering the participant and the role of the researcher in the interview allows for the generation of data leading to an understanding of the participant's experience (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Researchers use pilot studies, in part, to validate interview questions and test new data collection methods (Kim, 2011). Because of the use of a qualitative method and a design that did not involve any new methods for gathering data, a pilot study was not necessary.

Data Organization Technique

The interview questions (see Appendices A & B) formed the foundation for the data collection. The participants expressed knowledge of the terms of the consent form and the confidentiality of the entire data collection process. The business leader

interviews were held via phone calls and the focus group of managers occurred in person. The participants were able to contact me by phone or email if the participants had any questions. The participants signed a consent form indicating they understood the study and their roles in the study. Prior to the interviews, the participants knew I would record the conversations that occurred during the interviews. Recording participants' interviews ensured accuracy in the data collection component of the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I recorded the interviews to ensure the accuracy of the data collected.

To protect the privacy of the participants, I coded the participants' identities using an alphanumeric system (for example, Management Participant 1 was M1). Coding information from different sources heightened the trustworthiness of the research process (Krippendorff, 2011). I coded the interpretive data as well as the participant and I used thematic data analysis by breaking down the information from the transcripts into patterns that led to themes. I coded the data from a multiple perspective approach to ensure I did not bring a preconceived outcome of the data analysis to the study. I discarded any information not related to the interview questions and conducted follow-up interviews as necessary to achieve saturation. I transcribed the data from the audio recordings and notes written on a tablet to an Excel spreadsheet. The storage for the data is a thumb drive and my password-protected personal computer is the backup data storage device. The data will remain stored for a period of 5 years and then destroyed.

Data Analysis

The interview questions comprised the data collection tool. Interview questions helped to obtain the experiences and insight of the business leaders and managers. A

qualitative method is suitable for the study of human behavioral interactions and a case study researcher uses multiple sources of data such as interviews and focus groups to study a phenomenon (Da Mota-Pedrosa et al., 2012). The interview questions for business leaders included the following:

1. What were your experiences with downsizing relating to how your organization executed the process?
2. What type of communication did your organization use after the downsizing event?
3. How did your job functions change after the workforce reduction?
4. What was your work environment like as it relates to asking managers to do more work, stay later, and assuming varying roles after the downsizing event?
5. From your experience, please describe some activities you believe made managers more productive after a workforce reduction?
6. Post downsizing event how did you see your employees' job changing at work?
7. Please share anything else you would like to add to the discussion that I have not asked.

The questions for the focus group of managers included the following:

1. What were your experiences with downsizing relating to how your organization executed the process?
2. What type of communication occurred between yourself and the business leader over your organization?

3. How did you decide job functions for the employees that reported to you after the workforce reduction?
4. What was your work environment like as it relates to doing more work, stay later, and assuming varying roles after the downsizing event?
5. Please share anything else you would like to add to the discussion that I have not asked.

I transcribed the data into an Excel spreadsheet after completing the interviews and extracted data leading to themes from saturated concepts using thematic method of analysis for case study data (Boyatzis, 1998). I used open-ended with business leaders and managers of varying groups within telecommunication organizations. Different groups in an organization work together for the better good of the organization in the same way systems theory explains how open systems work towards collective strategies for the overall success of the organization (Mainardes et al., 2011).

Yin (2014) suggested using a theoretical propositions strategy to data analysis since the proposition of the case shapes the data collection. I focused all sources of data collection around the coding of key words and phrases into themes related to the problem of motivating retained employees (Krippendorff, 2011). After I coded relevant responses properly into themes related to the specific business problems of strategies to motivate employees, I triangulated all sources back to the single case of downsizing.

Researchers distinguish thematic analysis from other data analysis techniques because of the qualitative approach to the analysis compared to statistical analysis that considers quantitative variables (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). I used a

thematic method of data analysis, an effective tool for summarizing information from multiple sources (Boyatzis, 1998). I used thematic coding to organize data into themes that linked data from multiple sources. Following the data analysis, I ensured the inclusion of only relevant data.

The analysis of the data helped me to organize the information into themes for a characterization of participants' responses and an understanding of the downsizing event. I assigned an alphanumeric code to each participant. To find common themes among the participants' responses, I transcribed the responses to each interview question, organized on an Excel spreadsheet.

The focus of the systems theory is how the different parts of a system interact for the good of the entire system (Johnson et al., 1964). This study involved exploring the experiences of employees as the employees experienced downsizing through in-depth discussions with the participants. The parts of the system included in this study may be business leaders and managers of the organization and the data of these system parts contribute to the understanding of the whole system.

A researcher uses a case study to study a phenomenon using multiple methods in a natural environment (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). The goal is to obtain the perspectives of business leaders and managers and not just an objective record of their accounts (Harris, Collinson, & das Nair, 2012). Scholars use case study design to look at a single phenomenon from different sources (Yin, 2014). The sources for this study included interviews with business leaders, a focus group, and organizational documentation. The documentation retrieval occurred prior to interviews of business leaders and the focus

group of managers. The archival records included how many downsizing events the organization reported and how the company downsized, to contribute to the themes created by the analysis of data. Yin (2014) inferred one method of analysis in a single case is converging data to a single fact or theme. Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, and Robertson (2013) used both convergence and divergence to triangulate the information in their study. To triangulate data in this study, the analyst followed Yin's (2009) converging method.

Reliability and Validity

Obtaining the permission of the participants prior to beginning the interviews is vital in a qualitative study and elicits validity (Morales & Ladhari, 2011). Consistently repeating information throughout questioning to all participants brings reliability to qualitative research (Branthwaite & Patterson, 2011). Aligning the interview questions with the concept of employee productivity added validity to the study (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011).

Reliability

On a paper about qualitative studies, Ali and Yusof (2011) discussed the importance of reliability and the ability of scholars to duplicate the results of a study. In order to maintain reliability researchers should be honest and open about the results and should reveal any possible bias that exists (Goldblatt, Karnieli-Miller, & Neumann, 2011). Keller and Casadevall-Keller (2010) suggested minimizing bias when conducting research. Participants sometimes agree to be in a study to gain favor with the researcher, assuming there could be an advantage (Goldblatt et al., 2011). For the purpose of this

study, I informed the participants of the requirements to participate in the study and informed them that they would not receive any compensation. Interviews with business leaders were via phone calls; interviews with the focus group took place in person.

Transcript checking involved having participants check their responses to interview questions to ensure the accuracy of the participants' responses (Goldblatt et al., 2011). Jonsen and Jehn (2009) suggested using member checking as a form of triangulation by participant feedback. There were two significant steps within the member checking process the participants completed; I kept the original transcripts and ask for clarity of answers from the participants to ascertain the meaning of the responses and I allowed participants to offer input into the findings from the analysis of data.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified four components of qualitative research that builds trustworthiness: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) demonstrated in their study of nursing that qualitative research depends on researchers bringing personal experience to the research process by mitigating bias using Lincoln and Guba's four components.

Due to my experience with downsizing, I instituted several methods to ensure trustworthiness in the study. I used multiple sources of data to triangulate, as recommended by Lohle and Terrell (2014). Houghton et al. (2013) emphasized confirmability and dependability by ensuring data accurately stemmed from multiple, independent sources. I ensured confirmability and dependability in my study by triangulating the sources leading to themes.

A case study uses multiple methods for understanding a phenomenon in its natural

setting (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). A single case study is a typical case and meant to lead to understanding based on information about the experience (Radley & Chamberlain, 2012; Yin, 2014). Acquiring as much information about the experience as the researcher can reveal is necessary for saturation (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Zucker (2009) defined three stages of progressing with a case study that will help with the analysis. The three steps defined by Zucker (2009) include (a) describing the experience; (b) describing meaning; and (c) focusing of the analysis. After data saturation occurred analysis through the application of the three steps led to themes brought about from the data.

Interviews continued until the participants' responses yielded no new data; at that point, saturation occurred (Conran, 2011). Denzin (1970) defined triangulation as using multiple qualitative methods in an effort to understand a phenomenon better. Denzin (2012) expanded the definition of triangulation to apply to both qualitative and quantitative methods encompassing multiple sources of data. As themes emerge, I triangulated the data to derive what made employees productive after a downsizing event, in accordance with recommendations by research experts (Conran, 2011; Denzin, 2012).

Validity

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated believability and value of data within the study bring itself to credibility of the study. To ensure credibility, I used purposeful sampling to find participants who worked in telecommunications and had been part of a downsizing event. The standards of the IRB for protecting the participants offered a component of peer scrutiny to the research, with guidance by the dissertation committee, to heighten credibility, confirmability, and dependability. Peer scrutiny including judgments about if

the purpose of the study aligned with the interview questions (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). I ensured credibility and dependability by transcribing interviews leading to themes following data saturation. I reviewed the data from the audio recordings from the interviews to ensure accuracy.

It is difficult to determine the absolute meaning of validity due to its use by different methodologists (Rennie, 2012); however, it is important for qualitative researchers to consider transferability (Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie, & Green, 2012). Transferability is for the reader to decide (Goldblatt et al., 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Lincoln and Guba (1985) included transferability as a component of the trustworthiness in qualitative studies; the application of findings to differing groups is at the discretion of the reader but thick descriptions aid in judging those applications (Morales & Ladhari, 2011). Thick descriptions enable other researchers to be able to duplicate the study, show a relationship between the topics studied, and transfer the findings appropriately to other populations and settings (Branthwaite & Patterson, 2011; Oleinik, 2011).

A researcher's use of an informed consent brings credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to research (Houghton et al., 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In conducting research about business leaders and managers of downsizing events, my search for answers to employee productivity cannot violate the terms of participants' confidentiality in the research. Studies that include confidentiality may help business leaders and managers feel confident in answering freely, which added to the trustworthiness of the study (Keller & Casadevall-Keller, 2010).

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this single case study was to determine strategies business leaders can use to enable retained employees to be productive following a workforce reduction. In-depth, open-ended interviews afforded participants the opportunity to open up about their experience with downsizing. Data collection consisted of face-to-face interviews with business leaders, a focus group of managers, and documentation on downsizing. Analysis of data occurred using thematic coding in Microsoft Excel.

The interview questions aligned with the research question, member checking occurred, triangulation of data with the use of multiple sources of data, purposeful sampling, peer scrutiny, and thick descriptions added trustworthiness to the research process.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

Despite negative results, US leaders continue to use downsizing with an adverse impact on the retained employees (Lakshman, Ramaswami, Alas, Kabongo, & Pandian, 2014). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies business leaders use to motivate retained employees to be productive following a workforce reduction. The participants in this study identified strategies leadership used to motivate employees to be productive after a downsizing event in their organization. The four emergent themes from the body of data pertained to organizational communication, leadership, employee motivation, and work-life balance.

Presentation of the Findings

The data collection consisted of a set of interviews with two business leaders and a focus group of five managers. The data from in-depth, semistructured interviews involving questions about the topic led to the process of answering the overarching research question: “What strategies do business leaders use to motivate retained employees to be productive following a workforce reduction?” The participants spoke freely about their experiences with downsizing and were allowed to excuse themselves at any point, even after the conclusion of the member checking, to withdraw from the study. No participant withdrew. The multiple sources of data contributed equally to findings of the study. All participants answered each interview question and data collection continued until data saturation occurred. I subsequently entered the transcribed data from the individual interviews and focus group onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The

spreadsheet enabled me to organize, group, and code clusters of words and phrases. From those clusters, themes emerged from the data.

The clustering of phrases and words from the data led to four main themes pertaining to:

- organizational communication
- leadership
- employee motivation
- work-life balance

The first theme from the data was about how leadership in organizations carried out their communication. The second theme that emerged from the data pertained to the role leadership plays in downsizing. The third theme to develop from the data was about how leadership viewed the motivation of employees compared to how the employees viewed self-motivation. The fourth and final theme that emerged from the data pertained to the lack of a work and life balance for leadership and the employees.

Theme 1: Organizational Communication

The first theme that developed from the data pertained to organizational communication. This aligned with Gandolfi's (2013) statement that open and honest communication by leadership in organizations is vital to the overall success of a downsizing. All of the focus group participants and the two business leaders had a negative view about the concept of how their leaders communicated about downsizing. When probed further to explain their responses, there was a clear recollection of communication occurring; however, their answers were neutral in regards to how those

communications were either positive or negative. For example, BL2 stated only “We had a separate set of instructions and training on how to address those employees so they would not feel that they were hanging out.” The response by BL2 indicates that their leader said something but it was impersonally delivered when directed at the person they were talking to about the downsizing.

Both BL1 and BL2 emphasized that it was important to have communications from leadership to explain something was happening. This aligns with early recommendations that positive communication in organizations by leadership can offset negative events such as downsizing (Jiang & Probst, 2014). Leaders can miss the side effects of what they perceive as positive messages from business leaders when they are carrying out downsizing. L4 stated an awareness of this difference in discussing the value of the communication, stating:

I was involved in a downsizing that I did not think was handled very well, and that was you know working in an office and one day going to work and getting the severance letter and somebody saying we don't have a job for you anymore. (L4, personal communication, July 9, 2015)

From the standpoint of BL1 and BL2, simply communicating a message on downsizing was enough; however, when speaking to the focus group, 3 out of 5 participants described negative perceptions of scripted directives related to downsizing. A scripted method of delivery for downsizing news was seen by the focus group participants as insincere and perceived by the remaining employees as causing low morale. This aligns with previous research identifying a need for leadership to start communication at the top

and cascade it down continuously to deliver the message for a positive outcome (Buell-Hirsch, 2014).

When business leaders and participants of the focus group received communication about downsizing, the responses from all participants indicated that they received the downsizing message in a negative manner. However, when the topic changed to how they delivered the message, the responses indicated a positive response. BL1 emphasized their efforts with communication were to unite the remaining employees:

I had to stand in front of these folks and say I hope we made the right decision. We may not have, but with your help, we will get over it, we'll adjust, add here take away there, we'll get the combination right. (BL1, personal communication, June 19, 2015)

L1 recounted similar efforts to create positive communications:

I wasn't really shocked; you know I kind of had that feeling. I was asked whether I wanted to stay in the room when they talked to the employee, and I said yes I do - they read it right off a piece of paper, no humanity involved in it. That is why I wanted to be there and when they got to that point, I had my arms around her so she would know there was some humanity there. (L1, personal communication, July 9, 2015)

These actions are significant because negative leadership behavior tends to lead to poor cohesiveness within work groups (Smith, Arthur, Hardy, Callow, & Williams,

2013). There were examples from participants that indicated they were attempting positive communication. BL2 remarked on the communication of downsizing, sayin,

It is always better to me personally if you can attempt those cases face-to-face rather than over the phone. I had to release some folks over the phone. So, that was not a pleasant experience but as far as the process itself, it was, it seemed to be well developed and well executed. (BL2, personal communication, June 22, 2015)

The responses from the leadership in the study indicated there is a conscientious effort to have positive communications, despite the negative outcomes. L3 from the focus group stated “I could see the hurt and the pain on their face too - it wasn’t easy for them when leadership delivered the downsizing news.” This positive communication between two parties is important because it increases the likeliness of accomplishing goals (Kuhn, 2012).

This positive communication was the prevailing consensus from the majority of participants’ answers. Positive communication between employees and within organizations often leads to personal and organizational growth (Hynes, 2012). The participating business leaders stated that they used positive speech in their responses to deliver the negative news. Matovic, Koch, and Forgas (2014) support positive communication in their study by showing the mood at the time of the communication delivery impacts the message. Table 2 shows the breakdown of the number of occurrences of negative communication and the number of positive communications from

business leaders. The tabulations were done by me after the data was transcribed and analyzed from all the interviews.

Table 2

Occurrences of Negative and Positive Communication

Participant	Positive Communications	Negative Communications
BL1	18	8
BL2	8	3

In the first theme, the business leader participants indicated that their organizational communication was positive. In contrast, the focus group participants expressed their opinion that this same communication from their business leader was impersonal and not direct enough. Successful communication within an organization can open up ideas and lead to organizational and personal growth (Conrad & Newberry, 2012). This theme reinforces earlier research showing that leadership's communication at a time of downsizing is important. This theme aligns with Claeys and Cauberghe's (2014) study about crisis communication, which showed that if there is participation in the communication, then employees are more likely to see the organization in a positive way. This evidence suggests that business leaders should include employees in all phases of communication when communicating downsizing initiatives.

Theme 2: Leadership

Findings pertaining to the second theme showed that both the business leaders and focus group of managers described leadership as a crucial component. Leadership works

to develop missions and high-performance teams within organizations (Bolton, Brunnermeier, & Veldkamp, 2013). When talking about downsizing, the challenge can be even greater for leaders to accomplish those goals compared to if downsizing did not occur. McDevitt et al.'s (2013) study showed on downsizing victims and survivors management's responsiveness to the needs of the survivors and victims. McDevitt et al.'s results showed leadership tended to aid survivors more than victims after downsizing. While leadership has to make the right decision on who to keep and who to downsize, that does not always happen. BL1 explained "You know this is not getting done and the guy or girl that used to do that - we let them go - and we did not know that it was not part of the plan."

Managers tasked with making an organization successful after a downsizing believed the same as the business leaders. For example, L2 remarked about being on both sides of a downsizing event, commenting, "I think being on that side, I had a lot of sympathy - not sympathy, but respect for how we did the process." Regardless of how downsizing occurs, leadership has to make a success out of what is left. BL2 thought it was important to work as a team. BL2 stated "A little sense of pride, like we did on the last go around with the cultural beliefs, is the ownership piece that is the most important." BL2 continued to explain by saying, "so I drew quite a bit of the ownership of and the teamwork of the people that I worked with."

Leadership trying to get the most out of employees by appealing to their higher needs is a component of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978). Leadership's actions are important; however, the way leaders communicate are as important. In a time of

turmoil within organizations personal touch by their leaders, such as an in-person meeting, touches employees (Jiang & Probst, 2014). BL1 referred to reaching out directly to employees when BL1 stated “We tried to get feedback - we broke it up into different groups to get feedback loops built in to take the temperature, if you will, of the folks that were left.” The empowerment of employees, even on the simplest level during conversational feedback, is beneficial to employees (Vaccaro et al., 2012). Leadership’s focus on positive organizational attributes prior to a downsizing event could lead to surviving employee support after a downsizing event (French & Holden, 2012). Leadership’s attention to organizational strengths and weaknesses prior to a downsizing event can help leadership guide an organization to be successful after a downsizing event.

The focus group participants viewed leadership positively in terms of how they thought they affected the overall outcome. Even in an instance during which L4 thought leadership poorly handled the announcement of downsizing, L4 indicated the leader’s poor handling was due to lack of experience in downsizing. L3 indicated it was the corporation (not the business) that handled the downsizing. L2 communicated to the family that decisions were not personal, but were business decisions. Of the five participants in the focus group, three responded with a positive view of management although they viewed management as detached from the organization. Assisting employees to be ready for changes and an uncertain future is what leaders can do to maximize employees’ levels of productivity (Rego, Sousa, Marques, & Cunha, 2014). The thoughts expressed by the majority of the focus group indicated leadership showed strong, authentic leadership traits by preparing the employees for contingencies,

consistent with reports by others (Černe, Jaklič, & Škerlavaj, 2013). With respect to this theme, participants spoke of the necessity for qualified and prepared leaders during a time of downsizing to guide them through the downsizing event. Table 3 includes how managers in the focus group viewed leaders that made decisions on downsizing.

Table 3

Views on Leadership by Focus Group

Participant Answers	n	% Total
Favored Leaderships Role	0	0.0%
Neutral on Leadership Role	1	25.0%
Negative on Leadership Role	3	75.0%

Leadership's ability to deliver a positive message in a time of crisis can lead to positive organizational outcomes (French & Holden, 2012). The leaders in the focus group expressed a negative view of their leaders during the downsizing event. According to the participants, the negative views of leadership were due to a lack of experience in downsizing. As a counter to that, BL2 expressed the experience exhibited in prior downsizing helped in the transition of the downsizing event. There is a difference in how business leaders who make downsizing decisions act and how managers perceive their actions.

In a study of physiological contracts, McDermott et al. (2013) stressed the need for leadership to relate to employees. As a strategy for motivating employees, business leaders can consider the relationship they have with the employees equal to or greater

than what they have with the organization. The results could be a better relationship between employees and leadership post downsizing, leading to better employee productivity.

Theme 3: Employee Motivation

Study results reported by Aisha and Hardjomidjojo (2013) were employees' motivation came from the perceptions of fairness and job security. Similar sentiments were prevalent in the data of this study, as many of the participants indicated they did not think they had job security or experienced fairness. L4, even after being rehired, left the company. L4 stated, "Even though they came back later and said that they had positions for us, I left the company at that time because I thought we were spiraling downward." L2, who had been a part of downsizing from both the decision-making part and the receiving part, indicated doubt in job security. L2 discussed in detail the thought of job insecurity, saying, "I can think of key people that I watched with this box, all their stuff in a box while they worked every day waiting to find out what was going to happen to them." L2's explanation of what they endured prior to and during the downsizing indicated there was a lack of confidence in job security.

Similarly, L3 stated thoughts about employees having done something wrong leading to downsizing. While there may have been a lack of confidence in job security, the answers by the participants did not indicate there was a problem with self-efficiency. Incentives lead to higher motivation among employees; motivated employees lead to increased productivity (Aisha & Hardjomidjojo, 2013). Even with the uncertainty of employment, all participants in the focus group were motivated to continue to do their

jobs and even other job functions to stay busy. Motivation and efficiency relate to each other but not all employees are motivated by financial incentives (Achim et al., 2013). L1 asked if there was more work to do, L4 worked as a receptionist when there was no other work. The motivation stemming from self-efficiency can be a strong indication the employees are aware of their value (Cherian & Jacob, 2013). Four of the five participants indicated that, despite their uncertain future with the organization, they had a strong work ethic and felt compelled to work until the end.

The business leaders answered favorably on the subject of self-efficiency. BL2 indicated that there was no resistance to increased roles after downsizing, a characteristic of self-efficiency. BL1 spoke of letting employees in traditional positions run their businesses with little guidance so leadership could focus on new areas of the business. It is confidence in employees by leaders that facilitates the type of self-efficiency that Achim et al. (2013) determined is motivating; in the study about motivation, nurturing personal skills such as self-management related to successful leaders. The responses by the business leaders in Achim et al.'s (2013) study indicated employees motivated by the idea of running their own business, who remained after the downsizing, kept their jobs. BL2 addressed the question of how employees were receptive to more work with a statement of "I think it was still a relief in most cases to have a job even though knowing that job there were expanded responsibilities." BL1 indicated self-efficient leaders needed to be picked to run the operations going forward. BL1 answered the question pertaining to increased workloads for employees; part of the response to the question included "We didn't keep all the leaders, but the ones we did keep, we felt were very

strong leaders and had a lot of influence over the group - had a lot of technical skills to run that company.”

There is an apparent difference in perceptions between the participants of the focus group who were managers of retained employees and those business leaders who made the decisions during downsizing. The perceived differences between the two groups were that participants of the focus group believed their self-efficiency stemmed from their upbringing and the business leaders believed it came from their loyalty to the organization. The responses by the participants would indicate support for the literature that developing self-supportive employees empowers and encourages those employees to be productive. Positive reinforcement can be a predictor of organizational success (Santos, Hayward, & Ramos, 2012). In Table 4, I illustrate what motivates employees to be productive.

Table 4

Motivating Factors for Productivity within the Focus Group

Participant Answers	n	% Total
Motivated by Job Security	0	0.0%
Motivated by Work Ethics	3	75.0%
Not Motivated by Either	1	25.0%

A result of this study is the discovery of a gap between what motivates employees after a downsizing event and what leadership perceives to be motivating factors. The leaders in the focus group did not view motivation as job security but as work ethics. The

business leaders perceived motivation as job security. Study findings by Cherian and Jacob (2013) indicated employees with self-efficiency excelled personally and within their organizations. A strategy by business leaders could be to understand employees are self-motivated but need outside support to excel.

Theme 4: Work-Life Balance

Murthy and Guthrie (2012) conducted a narrative study on the benefits of work-life balance of employees of an Australian bank and emphasized work-life balance as an incentive provided by organizations. The telephony industry experienced fluctuations leading to pressure on business leaders to offer better work-life balance. According to a study by Pasamar and Cabrera (2013), market conditions and not organizational leaders dictate what leaders can do in offering work-life balances. Both business leaders in the study indicated that a work-life balance is an issue they have addressed. The difference is how each participant perceived a work-life balance. For example, BL1 stated:

They were not used to a 24/7 type. Their expectations were different in a lot of ways. They weren't used to working a lot, especially the area managers and managers. Some of the technicians, yes - they were used to working later hours, but the managers were not used to owning the operation. (BL1, personal communication, June 19, 2015)

BL1 added to the topic of working longer or different hours:

If you can't get it done 8-5, 5-8 we'll have to work so they understand that they also understand that it will always be like that and to keep giving them that vision

of hang in there it will get better, and it always did - it got better. (BL1, personal communication, June 19, 2015)

The response from BL1 indicated there is a clear message that working a standard shift or even having a work-life balance is probably not possible. There is an incentive to work towards such, but the work-life balance is not the norm. BL2 was more expressive about the existence of a work-life balance problem. BL2 said, “they feel like their work-life balance have gotten completely out of kilter, and I am working with them on how to address that.”

Both business leaders indicated there is a problem with work-life balance; however, there was a difference in agreement about whether this is a permanent or temporary problem. BL2 indicated there was a problem and there were efforts to fix it. By comparison, BL1 described new ways of doing business for many survivors of downsizing and they will have to realize they need to do what needs to be done. Business managers alone cannot enforce work-life balance initiatives; it takes action by human resource specialists and organizational leaders (McCarthy, Cleveland, Hunter, Darcy, & Grady, 2013). A study by Todd and Binns (2013) revealed that work-life balance initiatives in Australia often failed because decisions by one group (such as human resources) were made to implement initiatives but remained unsupported. Employees who have a work-life balance show a greater level of organizational commitment (Caillier, 2013). An effective strategy by leadership would be to understand employees’ organizational commitment, post-downsizing, to try and make them more productive employees (Cording, Harrison, Hoskisson, & Jonsen, 2014).

The focus group participants were in complete agreement about the existence of a negative work-life balance. In the focus group, L3 described working from home but being downsized for the second time to a downgraded job in which work stayed in the office. About a work-life balance as a manager, L4 said, “I was a manager for seven years, and my work-life balance was terrible and being a single person I didn’t have any life outside of work. It was taking work home all the time.” L1 emphasized there were other possibilities for not having a negative work and life balance:

I walk out the door, I don’t know if it was the health scare or the generation or whatever, I leave it at the door. And very rarely, when I am driving home some things will go through my mind and questions I couldn’t answer and I will go ‘oh, why didn’t I try that or I am going to go in and ask that tomorrow.’ But really I’ve gotten to the point where very very few times do I feel that anymore. I just don’t. I think it’s part of the RIF, the health scare, I think it’s part of where I am in my life. (L1, personal communication, July 9, 2015)

Both groups of participants recognized there is an imbalance with work and life schedules; it is apparent the business leaders see the lack of work and life balance as a necessity of doing business. The managers see the opposite, and L1 and L4 have taken steps to bring balance back. L2 described experiences of taking work home on the weekends and in the evenings to work from home. L2 indicated doing work for employees to ensure their work and life balance, saying, “I do my people’s jobs - whatever it takes, we do it.” There are strong indications employees may be moving to this imbalance in work and life as a way of doing business and not as an exception. After

the great recession of 2008, many companies reduced practices that led to a work-life balance (Gregory et al., 2013). Table 5 includes a summary of how participants responded to questions about a work-life balance. While there is agreement about not having a work-life balance, there does not seem to be any indication the trend will change in telecommunications.

Table 5

Views on Work-Life Balance From Focus Group and Business Leaders

Participant Answers	n	% of Total
Positive work life balance	0	0.0%
Negative work-life balance	8	100.0%

There is a difference between how upper management and first line managers view the challenge of implementing a work-life balance (Todd & Binns, 2013). In a study about implementing work-life balance policies, Todd and Binns (2013) presented evidence of an implementation problem for first line management due to deadlines and a tighter schedule. They found that upper management saw a benefit in work-life balance but did have the challenge of implementing it, causing a gap in creating policies. Leadership's willingness to consider the work-life balance of employees can foster innovation and increases organizational proficiency (Grawitch, Maloney, Barber, & Mooshegian, 2013). Leaders can use strategies from understanding how a positive work-life balance leads to a productive employee at work.

Business Systems

After analyzing the data from the focus group and the individual business leader interviews, I triangulated the two data sources and four themes emerged from the data. The four themes pertained to (a) organizational communication, (b) leadership, (c) employee motivation, and (d) work life balance. Mirroring the conceptual framework of systems theory, the majority of participants emphasized the need for all parts to work together for success, similarly to how the themes revealed work together toward motivating employees after downsizing events. The emerging theme of work-life balance received stemmed from data offered by the focus group and the business leaders. Grawitch et al. (2013) emphasized the relationship between a negative work-life balance and a negative effect on organizations.

Organizational leaders are tasked with implementing and succeeding in work-life balance initiatives (Todd & Binns, 2013). Business leaders in this study unanimously agreed a work-life balance issue exists, but were not sure how to correct it. A possible issue with employee feedback to business leaders could be fear of backlash. Groves and Larocca (2011) discussed the need for employees to make business leaders aware of their feelings through feedback . Meaningful communications during a time of change strengthens, not weakens, the bond formed by communication (McClellan, 2011).

There is a distinct relationship between the themes of this study and how they pertain to each other. Systems theory, as described by Johnson et al. (1964), is a series of smaller systems that make-up the whole system. The process of downsizing and

subsequently leading employees to be productive are dependent on all parts of the system, and with respect to the findings of the study, the themes working together.

Applications to Professional Practice

There is value in the findings of this study for business leaders in telecommunications companies in the northeast United States who are facing downsizing initiatives. The four emergent themes from this study pertained to organizational communication, leadership, employee motivation, and work-life balance. Researchers looked upon downsizing as being a success or a failure, based on short-term and long-term financial outcomes (Iqbal & Haque, 2011; Laitinen, 2011; Scott et al., 2011). The conceptual framework of systems theory encompasses the use of smaller systems working together for the success of the larger system (Johnson et al., 1964). The themes found in this study mirror the same practical application; integrating the themes (smaller systems) may lead to the success of the whole system (organizations).

Understanding how all the different components within an organization work together strengthens the ability to optimize employee productivity; however, business leaders need to be able to use knowledge about employee productivity to create effective strategies (Cording et al., 2014). Business leaders can use the results of this study to add to their understanding of how the different parts of an organization work together.

How a message is delivered and received within an organization has a huge impact on the outcome of the organization's success (Neves & Eisenberger, 2012). Leadership's ability to deliver a clear message and sensitivity to employees' well-being are strategies that can foster successful survivor productivity (Kinder, 2014). Data

forming the themes of this study revealed the possibility that policy changes by leadership might lead to improved survivor productivity.

Implications for Social Change

Downsizing can have a negative effect on employee commitment leading to a reduction in employee productivity (Razzaq et al., 2013). Downsizing can affect organizations, employees, and families in a negative way. There were 243 mass layoffs in the public utility field in 2014 contributing to lower living standards, health issues, and lack of employment (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2014). Results of this study (a) contribute to the understanding of how employees think after a downsizing, (b) how information is communicated from leadership down to employees, and (c) the work-life balance of employees tasked with more work after downsizing. The findings in this study indicate a better work-life balance for employees can lead to greater organizational commitment by the employees. Organizations, employees, and communities may benefit from the results of this study on the productivity of retained employees after a workforce reduction. Employees who experience downsizing are concerned about unfairness and lack of commitment from leadership when viewed from a CSR standpoint (Lakshman et al., 2014). A lack of commitment by employees towards their job could relate to a negative work-life balance (Caillier, 2013).

The results of the study, stemming from responses by the participants on downsizing from the in-depth interviews, can aid leadership in the understanding of the human behavior aspects of employees. Happy employees are productive employees, leading to organizational success; communities benefit from having successful

organizations. The responses from the business leaders interviewed and a focus group of managers indicated how an understanding of downsizing affects organizational outcomes and possibly leads to policy changes. The feedback from the focus group and business leaders added to the knowledge about strategies to direct retained employees. As indicated by the focus group, there is a strong need for work-life balance.

Recommendations for Action

There is an increasing amount of downsizing occurring in the telecommunications industry; the burdens to succeed as a result of downsizing on organizations, organizational leaders, and survivors are stressful, damaging to health, and often have negative effects on productivity (Phelps, 2013). It is important for business leaders to understand the negative effects of downsizing and the impact it has on their employees. As an insider researcher in the telecommunications industry, I feel it is imperative the message of strategies that motivate employees to be productive reach those business leaders tasked with making downsizing decisions.

Business leaders are encouraged to pay attention to the work-life balance of the surviving employees. As business leaders reduce workforces through downsizing, a greater amount of work and responsibility could be put on existing workers. The results of increased work could contribute to those surviving employees leaving for jobs with better work conditions (Malik et al., 2011). Business leaders can communicate with employees on all levels, prior to downsizing, to impart an understanding of the stresses employees have in their lives and work towards reducing the stressors.

The communication by business leaders can be used to bridge a better relationship

with employees before and after a downsizing (Grawitch et al., 2013). Open communication between leadership and employees can create understanding of what motivates employees to be productive. Organizational leadership and academics can disperse the results of this study through business literature such as peer-reviewed journals, conferences, and through classroom training within academia.

Recommendations for Further Research

In this qualitative single case study, the two main limitations were the location of the business in the northeast United States and the number of data sources used for analysis. Future research could be expanded to include other geographic locations. Additionally, there may be difficulty in relating findings from participants in this study to different organizations. The two primary sources of data for this study included interviews with two business leaders and a focus group of managers.

The use of multiple sources of data adds to the in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Denzin, 2012). Triangulation occurred using the two sources of data; however, additional sources such as other company documents and personal records of employees could have added more to the results of the research. A study by Iverson and Zatzick (2011) focused on the effects of downsizing on high performance teams. Even though they focused on organizations outside telecommunications and on high performance teams, they showed that attention to employee morale contributed to their productivity. Future researchers can focus on the morale of telecommunications employees and the effects on their productivity.

Reflections

My experience in the Doctorate of Business Administration program has allowed me to grow through a fuller understanding of downsizing and as a researcher. As an insider researcher, I did all I could to avoid researcher bias and conduct interviews with the proper protocol. I did know the participants, but had not worked with them at the time of the study.

I have been part of a downsizing, involved directly and indirectly. Through these experiences, I gained insight into how many employees may be personally affected by planning, executing, and following through with downsizing. I am now more aware of the importance of knowing how employees who survived a downsizing think about their jobs, leadership, and the employees around them. Understanding what employees go through during the process of downsizing can lead to a richer understanding of employee behavior and ultimately their productivity.

Summary and Study Conclusions

Implementing a downsizing event in telecommunications requires consideration of the victims of downsizing and the survivors. While communication developed as a theme in this study, there was a varying interpretation of the communication. Business leaders can focus more on how their communication is received instead of how they perceive their message to be received.

The business leaders and the managers from the focus group offered responses that indicated all four themes were important, but how they perceived the topics that emerged as thematic findings were different. For instance, the business leaders saw a loss

of work-life balance as a new way of doing business, while managers from the focus group took steps to bring more balance in their lives. When beginning a downsizing event, strategic business leaders can consider ways to bring about a work-life balance for the surviving employees.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Business Leaders

Interview Protocol: Productivity of retained employees after a workforce reduction.

Time of Interview:

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

I will use a qualitative case study to research the phenomenon of downsizing, particularly the productivity of retained employees after a workforce reduction. The interviewees will consist of business leaders and managers that are responsible for making overall decisions on downsizing. The intent of the study is to create strategies business leaders can use to enable employees to be productive following a downsizing event.

Questions:

1. What were your experiences with downsizing relating to how your organization executed the process?
2. What type of communication did your organization use after the downsizing event?
3. How did your job functions change after the workforce reduction?
4. What was your work environment like as it relates to asking managers to do more work, stay later, and assuming varying roles after the downsizing event?
5. From your experience, please describe some activities you believe made managers more productive after a workforce reduction?

6. Post downsizing event how did you see your employees' job changing at work?
7. Please share anything else you would like to add to the discussion that I have not asked.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Managers

Interview Protocol: Productivity of retained employees after a workforce reduction.

Time of Interview:

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

I will use a qualitative case study to research the phenomenon of downsizing, particularly the productivity of retained employees after a workforce reduction. The interviewees will consist of business leaders and managers that are responsible for making decisions on downsizing. The intent of the study is to create strategies business leaders can use to enable employees to be productive following a downsizing event.

Questions:

1. What were your experiences with downsizing relating to how your organization executed the process?
2. What type of communication occurred between yourself and the business leader over your organization?
3. How did you decide job functions for the employees that reported to you after the workforce reduction?
4. What was your work environment like as it relates to doing more work, stay later, and assuming varying roles after the downsizing event?
5. Please share anything else you would like to add to the discussion that I have

not asked.

Appendix C: Consent Form for Business Leaders

Dear [Participants name],

Thank you for your interest in this study. The purpose of this study is to examine what makes employees productive after surviving a downsizing event. My name is Jason Matyus and I am currently a graduate student at Walden University in pursuit of a Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA), and I will also be the person conducting this research. The criteria for participating in this study are:

must have been employed in the telecom industry at the time of a downsizing event,
must have survived the downsizing event and stayed employed with the telecom.

I will meet with you in person or on the phone to ensure you understand the study and so I can address any questions you may have pertaining to what is expected from you as the participant or from myself as the researcher. Prior to the interview I will provide the consent form as well as the interview questions in preparation for the interviews.

I will conduct an interview with you from the previously provided interview questions. I will be using a recording device to record the interviews. If a follow interview is required it will be agreed upon by both parties a reasonable time and place to conduct the follow up interviews.

At the end of the analysis of the interviews I will return the results to you for you viewing to determine accuracy of the interviews. The following information will provide information into how I will conduct the study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. At any time if you would like to withdraw you can do so without recourse. In addition, if during the interview you do not want to answer a question or feel uncomfortable you are not obliged to answer the question.

I am an operations manager with Windstream Communications. My role in the study is as the researcher and is separate from my role as operations manager.

I will be using leadership positions at area manager level and higher to obtain participants for the case study. Soliciting participants outside of my work group will ensure I will minimize perceived coercion or bias.

The interview will be approximately an hour to two hours.

At any point you the participant can withdraw from the study and all data you as the participant provided will not be used in the final analysis. In addition, at no point will any answer you give hinder or stop any relationship professional or otherwise due to an answering or your participation in the study.

I will organize my interview notes, data, and questions into categories before coding them. To protect your privacy, I will code your identity using an alphanumeric system to ensure your privacy as a participant.

There are potential risks or discomforts to your participation in this study. The risks include the time needed to participate in the interview and possible answering of uneasy questions.

The possible benefits associated with your participation in the study include giving your experience on downsizing and how you were affected by downsizing. The sharing of your experience on downsizing can allow for a better understanding of work-life balance and the effects of downsizing on productivity. There will be no compensation for participation in this study.

Any questions or information needed related to this study can be obtained by reaching me at Jason.matyus@waldenu.edu. If you have any questions pertaining to how the study was conducted or concerns with any part of the study please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University by email at irb@waldenu.edu or by phone at (621) 312-1210.

If you need to reach me for comment or a copy of the study you can reach me at Jason.matyus@waldenu.edu

I will provide you with a 1-2 page summary of the study.

Please save or print a copy of this consent form for you records.

Consent to Participate:

I have read the above information and understand the expectations of me for the study and I understand the study well enough to participate freely. By replying by email with the words 'I consent' you are agreeing to participate and to the terms detailed above.

Appendix D: Organizational Consent Form for Focus Group

Dear [Participants name],

Thank you for your interest in this study. The purpose of this study is to examine what makes employees productive after surviving a downsizing event. My name is Jason Matyus and I am currently a graduate student at Walden University in pursuit of a Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA), and I will also be the person conducting this research. The criteria for participating in this study are:

- must have been employed in the telecom industry at the time of a downsizing event,
- must have survived the downsizing event and stayed employed with the telecom.

I will meet with you in person along with the other members of the agreed upon focus group to ensure you understand the study and so I can address any questions you may have pertaining to what is expected from you as the participant in the focus group or from myself as the researcher. Prior to the interview I will provide the consent form as well as the interview questions in preparation for the interviews.

I will conduct an interview with you from the previously provided interview questions. I will be using a recording device to record the focus group interviews. If a follow up interview for the focus group is required it will be agreed upon by both parties a reasonable time and place to conduct the follow up focus group interviews.

At the end of the analysis of the interviews I will return the results to you for you viewing to determine accuracy of the interviews. The following information will provide information into how I will conduct the study:

- Participation in this study is voluntary. At any time if you would like to withdraw you can do so without recourse. In addition, if during the interview you do not want to answer a question or feel uncomfortable you are not obliged to answer the question.

- I am an operations manager with Windstream Communications. My role in the study is as the researcher and is separate from my role as operations manager.

- I will be using manager level with employees that report to them to obtain participants for the case study. Soliciting participants outside of my work group will ensure I will minimize perceived coercion or bias.

- The focus group interview will take approximately one to two hours.

There is an expectation of privacy. I cannot control if somebody in the focus group discloses things that were said but it is my expectation that what is said in the focus group remains private.

At any point you the participant can withdraw from the study and all data you as the participant provided will not be used in the final analysis. In addition, at no point will any answer you give hinder or stop any relationship professional or otherwise due to an answering or your participation in the study.

I will organize my focus group interview notes, data, and questions into categories before coding them. To protect your privacy, I will code your identity using an alphanumeric system to ensure your privacy as a participant.

There are potential risks or discomforts to your participation in this study. The risks include the time needed to participate in the focus group interview and possible answering of uneasy questions.

The possible benefits associated with your participation in the study include giving your experience on downsizing and how you was affected by downsizing. The sharing of your experience on downsizing can allow for a better understanding of work-life balance and the effects of downsizing on productivity.

There will be no compensation for participation in this study.

Any questions or information needed related to this study can be obtained by reaching me at Jason.matyus@waldenu.edu. If you have any questions pertaining to how the study was conducted or concerns with any part of the study please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University by email at irb@waldenu.edu or by phone at (621) 312-1210.

If you need to reach me for comment or a copy of the study you can reach me at Jason.matyus@waldenu.edu

I will provide you with a 1-2 page summary of the study.

Please save or print a copy of this consent form for you records.

Consent to Participate

I have read the above information and understand the expectations of me for the study and I understand the study well enough to participate freely. By replying by email with the words 'I consent' you are agreeing to participate and to the terms detailed above.

Appendix E: Organizational Letter of Cooperation

Letter of Cooperation

Contact Information

Date: 10/29/2014

Dear Jason Matyus,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Productivity of Retained Employees after a Workforce Reduction within the telecommunication industry. As part of this study, I authorize you to solicit business leaders and managers for participation, data collection through interviews, member checking activities. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: The time to participate in the study. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University's Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).