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Succession Planning in a Global Electronics Company

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2015

Abstract

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MBA, Walden University, 2009

BS, Millersville University, 2000

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Leaders of U.S. companies are unprepared to address a shortage of qualified leaders caused by changing workforce demographics. Despite organizational leaders realizing the importance of talent management to company strategy, there still exists a gap in knowledge regarding its application in practice. The purpose of this case study was to explore what succession planning organizational leaders use to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders. The findings demonstrated support for Shields' practical ideal type conceptual framework adapted to succession planning, which holds that succession planning requires various elements working together to achieve succession goals. Data were obtained through semistructured interviews of 5 organizational leaders who are responsible for succession planning at a global electronics company. Upon analysis of the semistructured interview data using triangulation with company succession planning matrix documents, 4 primary themes emerged: employee development activities that support effective succession planning; practices and processes critical for effective succession planning; the relationship between succession planning, talent management strategy, and organizational strategy; and barriers and challenges to effective succession planning. Recommendations from the study include developing effective ways to replace departing leaders by succession planning and considering investing in resources that focus on succession planning. The findings may lead to social change by providing employees with goals of achieving higher positions within their organizations, which may motivate employees to excel in their workplaces and contribute to their communities.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to my incredible wife, Carla, who has endured the doctoral study journey, in addition to our crazy life for the past 5 years. Without you, none of this was possible. I also dedicate this to my beautiful children, Jackson and Annalise. I love you guys very much and promise that next summer, I will take you to Hershey Park whenever you want.

Acknowledgments

      I would like to thank my doctoral study chair, Dr. Peter Anthony, for his insight, critique, and encouragement throughout this process. When you took me on as one of your students, I was behind my peers in the doctoral process, but with your help, I am nearing the finish line. I apply the things you have taught me to my own students who, as an extension of me, are also benefitting from your dedication. I would also like to thank my doctoral study committee members, Dr. Michael Ewald and Dr. Russell Strickland. Your guidance and commitment helped me complete this study.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Hiring, retaining, and developing future leaders has become a common challenge for organizational leaders (Masthan Ali & Premchand Babu, 2013). Once viewed as a cost, succession planning has become an important component of organizational strategy and is now treated as an investment that can increase competitive advantage (Fink, 2011). The exercise of leadership development in the form of succession planning takes considerable commitment from executive leaders, but can result in an organizational environment with increased aptitude and ability in its leaders (Jantti & Greenhalgh, 2012). The focus of this case study was to explore succession practices at a large manufacturing company headquartered in the eastern United States. The results of the study may provide valuable insights into how succession planning can be applied in similar organizations.

Background of the Problem

Succession planning is a critical tool used by organizational leaders to prepare for future changes in employee demographics and to ensure employees are developed and ready to assume leadership roles (Beheshtifar & Vazir-Panah, 2012; Calareso, 2013; Fink, 2012). Succession planning is a valuable instrument for supporting organizational strategy and gaining competitive advantage (Moradi, 2014). Organizational leaders must observe employees and determine which knowledge is transferrable, and they must also identify methods for ensuring knowledge retention if a key employee leaves the company (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012).

Knowledge management and its connection to succession planning become particularly pertinent when forecasting future leadership needs (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012; Martins & Meyer, 2012). Gandhi and Kumar (2014) identified succession planning as a critical strategic approach to ensuring essential knowledge and abilities are maintained when employees in vital roles leave the organization. Gandhi and Kumar argued that at the center of successful succession plans exists a commitment to leadership development programs that go beyond development activities and intervention. For succession plans to produce desired outcomes, they must focus on codifying organizational cultural mores amongst employees, empowering employees to follow development paths, and stimulating learning within the organization. The focus of this study was succession planning in a manufacturing environment.

Problem Statement

Leaders of U.S. companies are unprepared to address a shortage of qualified leaders caused by changing workforce demographics (Walker & Forbes, 2014). A survey of 216 human resources (HR) executives conducted in 2006 showed that 44% of respondents had no succession plan in place, 70% stated they could improve their succession initiatives, and 41% were either unprepared or extremely unprepared for leadership succession (Rothwell, 2011). The general business problem is that some organizational leaders are not prepared to replace departing leaders with qualified candidates. The specific business problem is that some organizational leaders in a global electronics manufacturing organization lack an understanding of how to build succession plans for replacing departing leaders.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how organizational leaders have applied succession planning to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders. For the purposes of this study, a leader is anyone with at least one direct report. The targeted population consisted of five leaders responsible for succession planning for a global electronics manufacturing organization headquartered in the eastern United States with greater than 80,000 employees. By researching and reporting on views of succession planning. The study results could be used by talent management professionals in developing a succession framework. As evidenced by research conducted by Schweer et al. (2012), succession planning can have a positive impact on employee engagement. The results of this study could contribute to positive social change by drawing attention to succession planning as a possible solution to a workforce in need of qualified leaders.

Nature of the Study

This study involved a qualitative approach and case study design. Because of the nature of the interview questions being used (opinion research) and the need for comprehensive and detailed answers, I chose a qualitative approach to succession planning research (Crouse, Doyle, & Young, 2011). Sergi and Hallin (2011) defined qualitative research as a research approach that interprets phenomenon by describing, decoding, translating, and understanding it. Methods not used include quantitative and mixed methods because of the narrow scope of this study and because of the difficulty in collecting sufficient proprietary data from a publically traded company. Some researchers

use a mixed methods design, but as my study relies on richness and depth of data, a qualitative approach was chosen (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011). A central theme of the research is how organizational leaders apply succession planning; therefore, I employed a case study research design to analyze anecdotal data and structure the data in a way that summarized how leaders apply succession planning practices (Snyder, 2012).

Crowe et al. (2011) defined case study research as a study approach that provides in-depth understanding of complex issues in a real-life context. Crowe et al. asserted that there are three types of case studies: (a) intrinsic, (b) instrumental, and (c) collective. This study focused on a single organization, and therefore, was an intrinsic case study. Yin (2014) asserted a case study is designed to illuminate decisions, why they were taken, how they were implemented, and what resulted from the decisions. Yin agreed with Crowe et al. and suggested that case studies investigate contemporary phenomena in-depth and within a real-world context. To consider a phenomenology design, I would have had to set aside preconceptions about succession planning and as a HR practitioner, I did not believe I was capable of doing so (Kumar, 2012). For these reasons, I chose a case study design.

Research Question

To accomplish my research of succession planning strategies of a global manufacturing organization in the eastern United States, the central research question was: What succession planning do organizational leaders use to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders? The following additional questions represented the instrument for data collection:

1. How has succession planning been applied in your organization?

2. What strategies have been successful with succession planning at your organization?

3. What challenges do organizational leaders have with implementing succession planning?

4. What barriers exist for leaders in developing succession plans?

5. How effective do you think your company leaders are with succession planning?

6. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being no additional resources needed and 5 being significantly more resources needed, how do you rate your company leaders on dedicating resources to succession planning? Explain.

7. How is your organization's succession planning framework structured?

8. How does succession planning fit into your organization's overall talent management strategy?

9. How does talent management fit into your organization's overall strategy?

10. Describe anything else pertinent to the purpose of this study that was not addressed in the interview questions.

Conceptual Framework

The development and implementation of talent management frameworks differ significantly depending on how different organizational leaders choose to implement their plans. With these intricacies comes struggles and failure to implement talent management (Whelan & Carcary, 2011). Using best practices works when talent

management methodology is aligned with the organizational design and strategy (Stahl et al., 2012). Succession planning is foundational when the ultimate goal of talent management strategy is to create a pipeline of employees capable of developing into future leaders.

Using conceptual thinking in doctoral-level study is paramount to organizing and conveying new and existing knowledge (Berman, 2013). I used and expanded upon the practical ideal type conceptual framework for succession planning developed by Shields (1998). There are seven common elements of the practical ideal type conceptual framework for succession planning. These elements are required for a successful succession planning program and include (a) leadership support, (b) resources dedicated to succession planning, (c) needs-driven assessment, (d) employee development, (e) employee-specific development plans, (f) executive and non-executive roles included in succession plans, and (g) alignment to the organization's strategic plan. The elements mentioned in Shields' research directly relate to this study as a justification for the review of literature.

Definition of Terms

This section includes terms that may not be known to those outside of HR. The following definitions are specific to this study of succession planning.

Career development: Career development is the process of how organizations attract, select, develop, and manage employees in an integrated and strategic way. (Garavan, Carbery, & Rock, 2012).

Human capital: Human capital is the knowledge, skills, and abilities that employees possess (Crook, Todd, Combs, Woehr, & Ketchen, 2011)

Performance management: Performance management is the process organizational leaders use to manage the performance of its employees, in line with organizational strategies and objectives. (Yadav, Sushil, & Sagar, 2013).

Strategic planning: Strategic planning is the process organizational leaders use to choose long-term goals and develop and implement strategies. Long-term objectives that account for critical internal and external variables are important (Ugboro, Obeng, & Spann, 2011).

Succession planning: Succession planning is the process of optimizing the identification, development, and placement of leadership talent (Masthan Ali & Premchand Babu, 2013).

Talent management: Talent management is the anticipation of future organizational employee or staffing needs, career advancement, and internal workforce matters (Garavan, Carbery, & Rock, 2012).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

I made several assumptions for this study. I assumed participating leaders would provide honest and detailed feedback to the interview questions. I assumed the interview questions would elicit responses that would add to the existing research on the topic of succession planning and that these questions would produce not only the decisions made, but also the reasons for making the decisions (Yin, 2011). I made two assumptions

relative to the benefits of succession planning. The first assumption was that a formalized and systematic succession plan is a long-term solution to navigating strategic staffing issues (Darvish & Temelie, 2014). The second was that supplementing talent management initiatives, including employee development planning and promoting employee satisfaction, are key benefits of succession planning (Ahmadi, Ahmadi, & Abbaspalangi, 2012; Elkin, Smith, & Zhang, 2012).

Limitations

Kippist (2013) researched the cost of succession planning and found that it provides a good return on investment by decreasing talent acquisition and orientation costs. However, potential weakness in the study exists when organizational leaders use different methods for determining which roles must have identified successors and different talent acquisition strategies, a practice that was seen in the results of the interviews. The specific topic of succession planning limits the study. The results of the research could show that participants practice a segment of talent management, but not succession planning. A sample size of five participants could have been a limitation if this number failed to create substantial data, but I reduced this limitation by interviewing until responses showed no new information, which indicated data saturation. Data saturation occurred when the data collected from new participants became repetitious (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012).

Delimitations

Four primary traits are present in most succession plans (Moradi, 2014). The primary traits described by Moradi (2014) were training and development programs for

future managers, a major focus on the capabilities and qualifications required for the future needs of the organization's managers, succession planning requires a systematic and organized program, and senior managers must support succession planning initiatives. This study included employee development, retention, and performance as elements of succession. Excluded from this study were recruitment, compensation, and benefits. Interview data came from a publically traded company; excluded from the study were privately held and not-for-profit organizations. The participants selected for interview had responsibility for talent management and succession planning.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Studying succession planning as a management philosophy from a variety of viewpoints, including leadership development, change management, and knowledge retention, is key to understanding succession planning complexities (Gonzalez, 2013). The study of management may have positive implications for career development, employee rights, and organizational change management.

Gray (2014) asserted that succession planning is important to company leaders, yet there are organizational leaders who have not committed to developing and following succession plans. However, Amato (2013) suggested that company leaders are beginning to formalize succession plans more often. This study could expand the current research by illustrating the benefits of succession planning and the positive effects succession planning has on organizational strategy.

Implications for Social Change

The process of succession planning may have implications for strategic vision and employee development. Not only do organizational leaders achieve sustainability by succession planning, but by providing employees with goals of achieving higher positions within the organization, they also satisfy employee aspirations, which can help to attract and retain key talent (Beheshtifar, Nasab, & Moghadam, 2012). An increase in employee satisfaction may contribute to a higher standard of living for employees which could allow them to positively contribute to their communities.

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A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

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The purpose of this qualitative case study was to consider how company leaders are using succession planning as a component of their talent management strategy. Providing a basis for understanding research on succession planning, talent management, and organizational strategy was the purpose of the literature review. Studying previous research on succession planning was helpful in putting the primary research question into focus. The focus of the research was to discuss the experiences of professionals responsible for succession planning. The literature review provided insight into how succession planning is evolving. The literature review included research on topics that included managerial succession, chief executive officer (CEO) succession, knowledge transfer, strategic planning, performance management, and talent management.

The research included three categories: (a) leadership succession, (b) talent management, and (c) organizational strategy. By managing the research in this way, I was able to thematically present the extant literature. The study included 136 documents from

102 journals written between 1998 and 2015. Per the Walden University rubric, 86% are from peer-reviewed journals. Research focused on succession planning, and the following databases were the primary sources: Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM, and ProQuest. *Succession*, *talent*, *performance management, planning, organizational succession, managerial succession,* and *organizational development* were the keywords used for searching.

Practical Ideal Type Conceptual Framework for Succession Planning

Succession plans can differ significantly between organizations and as a result, can be difficult to study. Shields (1998) introduced the practical ideal type conceptual framework. The practical ideal type was an appropriate choice for the study due to its focus on understanding reality (e.g. succession planning). Shields described this framework as perceiving phenomenon as being vast and containing considerable variety. For this reason and the fact that this framework has been used for succession planning studies previously, I chose this framework as the basis for the research.

According to Ley (2002), there are seven common elements of the practical ideal type conceptual framework for succession planning. These elements are required for a successful succession planning program and include (a) executive support, (b) dedicated responsibility, (c) results of a needs-driven analysis, (d) employee development programs, (e) employee-specific attention, (f) extension to all levels of the organization, and (g) inclusion in the strategic plan (Ley, 2002). The elements mentioned in Ley's research directly relate to the study as a justification for the review of literature.

Leadership Succession Planning

Leaders of U.S. companies are unprepared to address a shortage of qualified leaders caused by changing workforce demographics (Walker & Forbes, 2014). For example, Walker and Forbes (2014) stated that by 2014, the oldest baby boomers will turn age 68 and begin to retire, causing a gap in qualified leaders. Performed as part of the strategic HR function, executing succession plans is the responsibility of talent management professionals and involves succession by an internal candidate or external candidate (Balsmeier, Buchwald, & Zimmerman, 2013; Church, Rotolo, Ginther, & Levine, 2015; Keebler, 2013). Managerial succession, or succession planning, is a concept that extends beyond hiring executive level managers. Succession planning includes several processes, including (a) identifying key roles, (b) developing job competencies, (c) accessing current talent, (d) identifying potential talent, and (e) actively developing key talent (Gray, 2014).

Hamid (2013) argued that above capital and technology, talent is the key competitive advantage for organizations. Managerial succession includes collaboration with HR and all functional departments within the organization (Galbraith, Smith, & Walker, 2012; Walker, 2014). Galbraith et al. (2012) asserted that succession planning extends beyond protecting leadership roles. Succession planning provides employees with opportunities for developing leadership skills and also implies that organizational leaders intend to hire internally to fill leadership roles, whenever possible. Another benefit of succession planning is that having successors ready when the need arises leads to a smooth transition with minimal disruption to business operations (Klein & Salk,

2013). Succession planning can be disruptive when occurring at the managerial level (Valentine, 2012). Therefore, in the planning and implementation of managerial succession, organizational leaders should consider the possibility that changes in leadership may affect a company's culture (Valentine, 2012).

While the authors of the articles used for this research seemed to agree that succession planning is important, their opinions differed in how succession planning programs are developed, implemented, and maintained. Cairns (2011) conducted a study that showed how company leaders view succession planning and their reasons for choosing whether or not to engage in succession planning. Cairns argued that there are reasons for choosing not to develop succession plans which include organizational leaders avoiding disruption or paranoia in existing leaders. Cairns asserted that organizational leaders might not have the succession strength to engage in effective succession planning even if they intended to do so. Cairns concluded that the need for succession planning is clear and that organizational leaders should be better prepared for key leadership transitions.

Ballinger and Marcel (2010) agreed that a well-planned and thought out succession plan is critical to company success. Ballinger and Marcel researched CEO succession processes by looking at firm performance during and following a period in which an interim CEO serves. Ballinger and Marcel asserted that there are two types of CEO succession. The first is a well-planned and thought out succession plan whereby outgoing CEOs may groom their successors and transition the role, and the second is the scenario in which the CEO leaves immediately and the position is filled with the best

person available (Ballinger and Marcel, 2010). The study conducted by Ballinger and Marcel supported the hypothesis that firm performance will be negatively impacted during the duration of the interim CEO. Ballinger and Marcel also concluded that reducing negative company performance results is possible if the interim CEO is also the board chair.

When considering the replacement of the CEO, company leaders may make a conscious decision between an internal or external successor. Like Cairns (2011) and Ballinger and Marcel (2010), Perry, Yao, and Chandler (2011) conducted a study on the impact of leadership succession but focused on internal and external successors and how it pertained to the continued involvement of the outgoing CEO. Perry et al. found that there exists a direct correlation between long-term performance and the degree that the outgoing CEOs continue to have involvement. Perry et al. discussed the types of leadership power that remain post succession that could influence performance. Each type can impact performance and include: (a) structural, (b) ownership, (c) expert, and (d) prestige. Perry et al. concluded that while it is difficult for past and present CEOs to coexist at one organization, it did positively impact company performance and provided a way to manage CEO succession.

Like Perry et al. (2011), Quigley and Hambrick (2012) agreed that succession planning is an important component of organizational strategy. However, Quigley and Hambrick examined whether outgoing CEOs who stay on as a board chair negatively impact the effectiveness of the successor and adversely impact the successor's ability to make strategic decisions or deliver improved results. Quigley and Hambrick researched

this phenomenon at 181 technology companies that had CEO succession. Quigley and Hambrick found that there is a lack of open-mindedness at the CEO level and that CEOs believe that their past conditions still exist and their strategies to address them are still relevant. Quigley and Hambrick found that a correlation existed between CEOs remaining on the board and the inability of the successor to drive strategic change. Moreover, long-term performance suffered because the outgoing CEOs remained as the board chair (Quigley & Hambrick, 2012).

Performance is the topic of a study conducted by Garg and Van Weele (2012). The authors undertook a study focused on the importance of succession planning in the context of sustainability and performance (Garg and Van Weele, 2012). Garg and Van Weele argued that the turnover of key stakeholders within a business can make it vulnerable and decrease the value of the business. *Failing to prepare is preparing to fail* was a central theme discussed by the authors as they focused on the primary reasons succession planning is essential to organizational sustainability (Garg & Van Weele, 2012).

There are two truths when it comes to succession planning. One truth, which is evident in the research conducted for this study, is that a well-planned and executed succession plan makes all employees valuable and the second is that change always occurs (Fibuch & Van Way, 2012). Fibuch and Van Way (2012) studied the various roles of succession planning in the healthcare industry. Fibuch and Van Way argued that there are components that are fundamental to all succession planning activities. These components are (a) career paths for individuals, (b) development and training plans, (c)

individual job moves, (d) communication between all levels of the organization, and (e) the development of comprehensive HR capabilities (Fibuch & Van Way, 2012). However, developing the fundamental components of succession planning is not enough. Organizational leaders must also ensure there is a shared understanding of the mission, values, and management style of organizational leaders (Crews & Richard, 2013). Fibuch and Van Way addressed the importance of understanding values by studying leaders of healthcare organizations. The authors asserted that leaders of healthcare organizations do not put emphasis on developing leadership competencies and abilities, but rather on technical knowledge. To increase the level of managerial development in the industry, Fibuch and Van Way stated that leaders of healthcare organizations should develop and embrace a culture that teaches leadership organization-wide in order to create critical thinkers, reinforce core values, and ensure transfer of knowledge.

Similar to the Fibuch and Van Way (2012) study, Barzoki, Esfahani, and Ahmad (2012) conducted a study on succession planning that focused on the impact of succession plan characteristics on a specific industry. Barzoki et al. addressed the problem of the need for skilled managers and the need for managerial development programs in the banking industry. Barzoki et al. used a descriptive survey given to 60 middle-level managers within the bank and included components based on manager commitment, culture, organizational readiness, strategic planning capabilities, and HR factors. The results of the study indicated that although organizational leaders understand the value of succession planning, that leaders did not have the infrastructure in place to support it (Barzoki et al., 2012). Requirements such as (a) adherence to succession plans,

(b) internal promotions, (c) behaviors needed to perform managerial roles, and (d) support of successor employees are nonexistent or not well enough defined to support succession planning (Barzoki et al., 2012).

Leadership succession is a discussed and debated process from which no company leader is immune (Grosu & Coretchi, 2011). Grosu and Coretchi (2011) asserted that change in the business environment is inevitable and impacts succession activity during times of mergers or acquisitions and asserted that these circumstances present a unique set of problems. Grosu and Coretchi make a similar argument to Barzoki et al. in that companies are not focused on developing leadership candidates which are required to increase performance and deliver expected succession planning outcomes. Moreover, Grosu and Coretchi found that less than one third of organizational leaders surveyed believed that their organization's leaders were committed to leadership development or seeking the funding to do so and 90% felt that their leaders were incapable of effectively identifying high potential talent. Grosu and Coretchi concluded that it was difficult to navigate the changing global business landscape.

However, developing high potential successors for leadership roles can lessen the impact to the company during times of change. Additional studies have been conducted on the link between succession planning and improvement in firm performance during CEO succession and similar studies have become more abundant in business literature (Liang, Liu, Wu, & Zhang, 2012). In one such study, Liang et al. (2012) studied the potential gap in the literature on the topic of interim CEO succession practices. In some cases of CEO succession, it is not immediately known who the permanent successor is,

and therefore, it is necessary to appoint an interim CEO (Liang et al., 2012). Liang et al.

cited several studies that support their theory that placing an interim CEO at the

organization neutralizes the potential negative impact. According to the authors, negative

impact can happen for two reasons: (a) information from the interim CEO can be

leveraged by the board to continue operations, and (b) the sudden dismissal of a CEO can

cause the sudden need for reorganization within the organization. An interim CEO fills a

critical void in the structure of the organization and can neutralize the need for the board

of directors to manage the organization. Liang et al. concluded the study by reviewing the

factors that make an interim CEO successful including the length of the interim period,

the performance of the organization at the time of succession, and if the interim CEO is

part of the board of directors or a senior leader within the organization. The authors

further concluded that given the shorter tenures CEOs are experiencing, the use of interim

CEOs is not as disruptive to the organization's operations as it once was (Liang et al.,

2012).

Zepeda, Bengtson, and Parylo (2012) studied succession planning from the

viewpoint of a specific industry, school systems. Similar to other industries studied by

Barzoki et al. (2012) and Fibuch and Van Way (2012), school systems experience the

need for more leaders because of the addition of new schools and the need to replace

retiring baby boomers. Zepeda et al. asserted that leadership succession planning has

been a topic for concern in the public and private sectors since the 1980s. However,

Zepeda et al. asserted, having a succession plan alone is not enough and that ongoing

controls within the system as well as placing a high priority on succession related issues

are critical to successful succession planning programs. In addition to systemically replacing scheduled retirements, succession planning also limits the chance of catastrophe stemming from a sudden loss of a key leader (Zepeda et al., 2012).

Another theme discussed by Garg and Van Weele (2012) was the need to diminish the skills gap that some companies' leadership experience when leaders leave the organization. The authors argued that succession planning will assist organizational leaders in being proactive with changing conditions in their environment. Garg and Van Weele observed that in small- and mid-sized organizations, the lack of a succession plan can cause significant damage if a key member of the company leaves unexpectedly. The basis for the Garg and Van Weele study was to determine if succession planning is applied amongst the subject organizations and the impact of succession planning on the subject organizations' performance.

Nieh and McLean (2011) explored the relationships between succession planning, leadership development, and ethics. The authors argued that succession planning serves many purposes including serving as a mechanism for identifying, selecting, and developing employees, increasing employee motivation, and as a way to develop and retain talented employees (Nieh & McLean, 2011). Selecting the right managers through a comprehensive succession plan is not enough argued the authors (Nieh & McLean, 2011). Organizational leaders must also select ethical leaders given the effect that ethics has on the culture of organizations (Nieh & McLean, 2011). The study conducted by Nieh and McLean focused on the relationship between succession planning, management development, and ethics because there existed a gap in business literature. The

researchers found that there exists a significant link between the three factors studied and proposed that succession planning may be the catalyst by which organizational leaders identify, select, develop, and retain ethical leaders (Nieh & McLean, 2011). Garg and Van Weele (2012) reached a similar conclusion that there exists a significant deficiency in the amount of succession planning taking place in organizations. Moreover, the authors concluded that having a comprehensive succession plan in place shielded the organization from the negative effects of unplanned changes to leadership structures.

The study conducted by Kim (2012) echoed the assertions made by Garg and Van Weele (2012) and Nieh and McLean (2011) in that having comprehensive succession plans in place in hospitals is becoming a requirement for reaching sustainability and productivity goals (Kim, 2012). Kim studied the effects of succession planning on hospital performance and asserted that having a succession plan in place may decrease turbulence associated with a change in leadership, it provides on the job training for potential successors, and that the risk of having a decrease in performance due to a change in leadership is diminished. The ultimate goal of succession planning is to improve operational performance whether it takes place in the healthcare industry or elsewhere (Kim, 2012). The author found that there are many differences in the results of leadership development in hospitals with and without succession plans in place. The quantitative study results showed that hospitals with succession plans in place experienced higher revenues and higher profits than hospitals that had no succession plans (Kim, 2012).

Planning for the future is a key driver of succession planning (Simoneux &
Stroud, 2014). More than preparing for the replacement of a key leader, succession
planning involves leadership development programs as well as planning for the risk
associated with the replacement of a leader (Simoneux & Stroud, 2014). Regardless of
the reason for succession, business leaders must first identify the goals of planning for
succession and the prioritization of these goals. In order to perform a successful
succession action, company leaders must assemble the right team of attorneys,
accountants, and consultants as well as internal company functional experts (Simoneux &
Stroud, 2014). Simoneux and Stroud (2014) asserted that even if the need for succession
never comes, having a succession plan in place can protect the organization from the
negative consequences of replacing a key leader. Simoneux and Stroud concluded that
succession planning is a key strategic initiative that all organizational planners should
undertake. Within the context of executive succession planning, much has been written
on the merits of internal versus external succession.

Santora, Sarros, Kalugina, and Esposito (2013) studied the result of executive
succession when the incoming executive was promoted from within the organization or
from the outside. Like the study conducted by Nieh and McLean (2011), in which a gap
was identified in business literature on the topic of succession, management
development, and ethics; Santora et al. theorized that there exists a gap in business
literature on the topic of internal versus external executive succession. The study
conducted by Santora et al. focused on succession planning from the point of view of
nonprofit organizations. The authors asserted that there exists a plethora of literature

predicting a dire situation for nonprofits due their inability to plan for executive succession (Santora et al., 2013).

Santora et al. (2013)cited several United States and international surveys that showed a strong preference (study results ranged from between 62% and 100% favoring external succession) of organizational leaders to identify executive successors from outside the organization rather than inside the organization. One reason for the preference to hire externally for executive replacements is company size as well as *bench strength,* which is the existence of capable internal candidates for executive positions (Santora et al., 2013). Santora et al. concluded that while the survey respondents view succession planning as important to organizational sustainability, they did not have succession plans in place, had not identified successors for key roles, and will overwhelmingly appoint outsiders rather than insiders to key roles.

Themes emerged in business literature that view succession planning in the context of nonprofit and government executive succession (Davenport, 2012). Santora, Sarros, and Cooper (2011) asserted that the current literature centered on succession planning in nonprofit organizations tend to be dominated by three themes: (a) most nonprofit organizations fail to have adequate succession plans, (b) most are ill-prepared for succession, and (c) nonprofit organizations have a serious gap in available leaders ready to take on executive roles. Santora et al. conducted a study of several countries to understand the attitudes toward governance, operating strategies, and leadership development strategies. The results of the study confirmed the assertions made by Santora et al. and showed only a 25% chance that an internal candidate would be chosen

as a successor. The study results also showed that an executive successor was more successful long-term if the board of directors made a selection independent of input provided by a deputy director or managing director (Santora et al., 2011). These results contradict the general belief that employees perform better when they can see others within their organizations being developed into future leaders (Santora et al., 2011). According to Santora et al. there is still work to be done in nonprofit organizations to develop comprehensive succession plans.

The literature reviewed for the study suggests that succession planning is a universal process that can be applied in various ways and include components including diversity, company culture, and employee development (Virick & Greer, 2012). Rothwell (2011) studied and reported on the act of *replacement planning,* which is different from succession planning in that employees can be prepared to the point where they are able to assimilate into leadership roles on a short- or long-term basis. While replacement planning does not constitute a succession plan, it does help to identify promotable employees if organizational leaders choose to engage in succession planning (Rothwell, 2011). Rothwell concluded that replacement planning can be a starting point for organizational leaders who have not previously engaged in succession planning or talent management.

Cultural leadership is a term used to describe the extent to which leaders influence organizational behaviors and ideology (Valentine, 2012). Valentine's (2012) study focused on how leaders can maintain cultural continuity through their behaviors and actions. The phenomenon described by Valentine is important during times of leadership

succession. Valentine argued that a change in leadership could have an impact on the organization. Valentine concluded that there are traits within the organization's culture that should be maintained during a leadership succession.

Effective succession plans and employee development programs often hinge on the organization's leader's ability to utilize lower level and middle level personnel (Masthan Ali & Premchand Babu, 2013). Masthan Ali and Premchand Babu (2013) tested this assertion on software organizations and provided a best practice approach to developing a leadership pipeline, as well as recommended steps that can be taken by leaders of software companies. The research explored leadership development and addressed topics such as (a) executive and management development, (b) diversity and inclusion, and (c) developing a long-term approach to talent management as being critical to success in leadership development. Masthan Ali and Premchand Babu concluded that there were effective tools for leadership development, including (a) formal development programs, (b) 360 degree feedback, and (c) executive coaching and mentoring form the basis of effective leadership development systems. Masthan Ali and Premchand Babu offered a template that builds on practices critical to successfully building future leaders such as (a) building an internal mentor network, (b) ensuring manager participation, (c) ensuring flexible and fluid succession plans, and (d) fostering a supportive organizational culture. There are many reasons why building a succession plan is advantageous to organizational leaders.

Chambers (2013) echoed the Masthan Ali and Premchand Babu study by researching succession planning in the context of employee development programs.

Chambers asserted there are several reasons why succession planning and leadership development programs are important. Among these are (a) rapid, radical, and discontinuous change; (b) increasingly complex challenges; (c) greater leadership responsibility at lower levels; and (d) recruitment and retention of the best talent. Other reasons why succession planning and leadership development are increasingly important is that retention and transfer of organizational knowledge can be a competitive advantage (Chambers, 2013). Chambers concluded that all leadership development plans must be grounded in succession planning in order to create the most value.

Talent Management

Talent management is a strategy that includes succession planning. Executive decision makers should assess and follow the progress of employees to effectively implement a successful succession plan (Stahl et al., 2012). Leadership development and succession planning are key components to talent management (Beheshtifar & Vazir-Panah, 2012). Succession planning is part of six governing principles of talent management proposed by Stahl et al. (2012). The six governing principles discussed by Stahl et al. included (a) alignment with strategy, (b) consistent structure, (c) environmental consistency, (d) leadership sponsorship, (e) external needs analysis, and (f) company branding.

Ahmadi et al. (2012) conducted a study on the competitive advantage of talent management and the definition of high-potential employees. The findings of the study succeeded in defining talent management and performance management channels as well as an analysis of succession planning (Ahmadi et al., 2012). Ahmadi et al. suggested

promoting a framework for strategically managing succession as well as talent

management by giving rewards and promoting open communication between employees

and senior managers. Schweer et al. (2012), Kehinde (2012), and Hoekstra (2011)

researched and reported on the facets of talent management and like Ahmadi, et al.,

argued that well-developed and executed talent management strategies can have positive

impacts on the organization. Impacts may include the potential for higher earnings as

well as making organizations likely to be high-performing (Khator, 2012). Schweer et al.

examined talent management in terms of collaboration across the organization while

utilizing intercompany networking. Schweer et al. concluded that using traditional

methods of talent management could cause company leaders to overlook talented

employees who may have the necessary skills to advance. In a similar study, Whelan and

Carcary (2011) focused on the fusion of talent management and knowledge management

and found that principles such as (a) key roles, (b) intellectual property management, (c)

intellectual property sharing, (d) creating intellectual property competencies, and (e)

intellectual property retention can be used to advance talent management initiatives.

Stahl et al. (2012) studied 18 multinational companies' experience with their

talent management strategies and if their leaders believed their practices were effective

and valuable. Stahl et al. argued that best practices are useful to organizational leaders if

they align to other organizational philosophies. Stahl et al. focused on six principles,

which include alignment with strategy, consistent structure, environmental consistency,

leadership sponsorship, external needs analysis, and company branding. Stahl et al.

concluded that there existed a common set of talent management principles and that there

is a great deal of parity between organizations in the development and implementation of talent management. Research focusing on the importance of well-planned and executed talent management strategies is common, yet the topic still lacks definitions, goals, and comprehensive models (Burkus & Osula, 2011). Burkus and Osula (2011) researched and reported on the *war for talent* that exists, and the inability of organizational leaders to look beyond traditional HR means for developing talent and building succession capabilities. Burkus and Osula referred to a study performed in 1997 by McKinsey & Company who, through an interview process, declared that most successful companies had leaders who were focused on talent. McKinsey & Company called this *The War on Talent*. McKinsey & Company asserted that the way to gain competitive advantage and increase company performance was through relying on developing high-performing talent as a means to outperform competitors. However, Burkus and Osula found that since the McKinsey & Company study was made public, little has improved in the organizational leader's ability to manage high-performing talent effectively. Burkus and Osula concluded that talent is effectively grown through development plans and actions rather than buying talented individuals from competitors.

Along with sophisticated talent management programs, comes the need for comprehensive and capable talent management computer systems. Ensley, Carland, Ensley, and Carland (2011) conducted research on a program titled the *ExecuSmart Talent Management System.* This talent management system relies on cognitive measures as a predictor of performance (Ensley et al., 2011). However, Ensley et al. asserted that talent management programs are only successful if a robust and unified model is in place. The

ExecuSmart system included components that are common to talent management systems like (a) leadership profiles, (b) 360 degree feedback capabilities, and (c) proprietary components including leadership capability indicators (Ensley et al., 2011). The tool provides a comprehensive view into the organization's executive recruitment, development, and evaluation processes (Ensley et al., 2011). Ensley et al. concluded that this system and others like it are powerful in assisting organizational leaders in meeting their talent management programs and strategies.

Developing and empowering the core competencies and attributes to develop employees is key to a successful talent management strategy (Kirkland, 2009). Kirkland (2009) conducted case study research of a healthcare company called CaridianBCT. CaridianBCT has a leadership team that prides itself on its ability to foster an environment where developing exceptional talent is an imperative to success (Kirkland, 2009). CaridianBCT's talent management system is comprised of fundamental principles that govern it, including (a) competency models, (b) leadership commitment, (c) identifying and developing talent, (d) identification and management to talent management areas, and (e) evaluating results through scorecards. Kirkland concluded that without a culture of continuous improvement and continuing education, realizing an effective talent management strategy would be impossible to achieve. Core competencies are also the topic of a Pick and Uhles (2012) study. Pick and Uhles formulated their findings in terms of competency libraries, which are centralized repositories for the talent management system. Characteristics of competency libraries include alignment to strategic goals, standard definitions of terms, growth as a means of employee

development, ratings methodologies of each measurement, and ways for employees to improve their development. From a structural standpoint, competency libraries are broken down into three levels: (a) individual contributor, (b) manager, and (c) executive, each with its specific focus. The focus areas include talent acquisition, development, engagement, and others that contribute to well-defined talent management capabilities. Pick and Uhles concluded that it is critical that organizational leaders implement competency-based talent management to positively impact and develop their employee base.

While the research conducted for this study suggested a comprehensive plan is necessary for succession talent management, several authors have conducted studied focused on the challenges of implementing talent management strategies (Maltais, 2012). One of the challenges to developing and implementing talent management systems is coordinating the interaction of the parts. Maltais (2012) reported on the recognition of organizational leaders that talent management is paramount to the success of talent management. Maltais viewed talent management from a systems lens, and the ability to conduct talent management activities as well as conduct analysis of the results using accurate data. Maltais argued that decisions must be predicated on the information collected from these activities, the system should have predetermined goals, strategy maps, and well-defined business needs. Maltais concluded that organizational leaders wishing to use a talent management system should optimize the workforce through recruiting, evaluating, developing, and retaining top talent. Another challenge to

developing talent management programs is that organizational development strategy and talent management strategy may become intertwined.

Organization development can be defined as a planned process by which large-system change and improvement are made through action research, behavioral evaluation, and technical and feedback techniques (Church, 2013). However, Church (2013) defined talent management as processes and programs designed to recruit, develop, and retain talent to achieve organizational goals. Church studied and reported on the connection and differences between organization development and talent management. Church asserted that there are two differences between the two. Organization development concerns *many,* while talent management focused on a *few* (Church, 2013). Church argued that each has its merits and that they can and should co-exist and that neither could replace the other and each serves a necessary and essential purpose in overall company strategy.

The gap that can develop between organizational strategy and talent management strategy was also studied by Morgan and Jardin (2010). Morgan and Jardin researched the differences between HR and organization development practitioners and made the assertion that where the two functions meet, integrated talent management exists. Morgan and Jardin defined the HR role as responsible for acquiring, deploying, developing, and retaining talent, while organization development practitioners are responsible for getting employees to engage and perform at a high level to meet organizational objectives. Morgan and Jardin asserted that it remains a vague and undefined subject that needs to have links between strategy, organization, and talent. Morgan and Jardin defined a

standard set of practices required for talent management initiatives. The standard

principles are (a) the ability to measure capability gaps, (b) alignment of strategy, (c)

organizational structure and talent, (d) proper deployment of talent, and (e) expansion of

capabilities (Morgan & Jardin, 2010). The combination of these principles is required for

talent management systems to function properly. Morgan and Jardin concluded that a lack

of understanding roles and definitions, outcomes, and measurement are impeding the

ability of HR and organization development to evolve into a profession like those of

finance, legal, and technology.

Researchers suggest that human capital is one problem facing HR departments,

organizational leaders, and managers (Shaw, Park & Kim, 2013). Singh, Jones, and Hall

(2012) argued that human capital rather than financial capital is a major constraint facing

many businesses. Singh et al. asserted that understanding the challenges to the public

sector, pressure on pay, opportunities for nationals to fill the employment gap, rising

expectations of young people and woman, reward and recognition, and total rewards are

key to developing effective; talent management programs in the region. Singh et al.

concluded by stating that organizations that achieve higher levels of employee

engagement through talent management programs are associated with perks that included

better performance and an increased level of customer service, which can result in long-

term value to employees and shareholders.

Despite organizational leaders realizing the importance of talent management to

company strategy, there still exists a gap in knowledge regarding its application in

practice (Collins, Anthony, & Scullion, 2009). Collins et al. (2009) studied and reported

on concepts of talent management, and how pivotal roles within the organization can be the difference in its ability to gain competitive advantage through talent development. Collins et al. continued by referencing *the war for talent* and other assertions that talent management is the challenge that HR faces. However, there is not a standard body of knowledge around the goals, scope, and application of talent management techniques. Collins et al. asserted that talent management is a greater challenge for multinational organizations because there is a lack of internationally competent managers, recruiting globally is difficult, and the cost of failure on a global scale is more impactful than a local issue. Collins et al. explored several talent management concepts like the *law of the few* and *mavens,* which states that global business operations can benefit from the collective experience of its leader, both personally and professionally.

Effective and efficient deployment of employees is known as human capital management (Nagra, 2011). Nagra (2011) researched human capital and talent management strategies in the Army Nurse Corp. Like other organizations, the Army Nurse Corp identified talent management as a mission critical process that ensures the group has leaders in place to meet current and future mission needs. Nagra focused on selection, development, and succession and performance management as components of an Army Nurse's life cycle. The deployment of talent management activity in the Army Nurses Corp centered on core tools including capability-based assessment, leader capability analysis, performance-by-potential matrix, leader assessment, and executive evaluation analysis. Nagra concluded that the core tools, when part of a comprehensive talent management system, can help to alleviate stress on the organizational structure,

assist in operating at full effectiveness during missions, can help to build the organization

of trust, and assist in developing key leaders. Along with evaluating how talent

management programs are constructed, it is equally important to consider how talent is

categorized.

Srinivasan (2011) researched and reported on the concepts of manifested and

unmanifested talent. Srinivasan defined manifest talent as existing talent, for example, a

highly sought-after talented manager and unmanifested talent are those individuals who

may be an underperformer, but who have hidden talents. Srinivasan asserted that the

focus of talent management is to retain top talent and that this is achievable by defining

top talent through the use of a profile. Characteristics of talented workers within the

profile include creative thinkers, dynamic executives, and those who have a desire to

contribute to society. Srinivasan concluded that there are two aspects of talent

management. The two aspects are retaining talent identified as having high potential and

those average employees who with the right amount of support could contribute to the

organization. Srinivasan concluded by asserting that being able to discover hidden talent

is an evolutionary process that requires higher ranges of consciousness to achieve.

Egerova (2013) agreed that identifying talent is key to successful talent

management programs and did so by asking two important questions regarding who and

what is talent. In this context, Egerova defined talent as high-performing or high

potentiaval individuals within the organization who can add value. Egerova argued that

many talent management methodologies are obsolete and should be made more flexible

and adaptable to the global business climate. Egerova discussed integrated talent

management, which is the connection between organizational strategy and talent management strategy. When combined, organizational strategy and talent management strategy become a tool to remain competitive (Egerova, 2013). Other key factors discussed by Egerova were employee engagement and organizational commitment to talent management practice. Egerova concluded that not only do HR departments follow a set of processes, but also a way of thinking and behaving that results in an increase in competitive advantage.

Santhoshkumar and Rajasekar (2012) researched talent from a practical and definitive standpoint and focused on the *fit* of individuals and how individuals could help organizational leaders meet their goals. Santhoshkumar and Rajasekar focused on attraction, retention, motivation and engagement, development, and succession planning as the roles of talent management. Santhoshkumar and Rajasekar conducted a study that explored concepts within each general theme, but the central problem identified was retaining present talent. The study consisted of the results of a questionnaire given to 100 managerial employees at the upper, middle, and lower levels of companies in the automotive industry and consisted of questions related to employee skill, teamwork, and leadership. Santhoshkumar and Rajasekar concluded that there are quantitative methods for identifying talent and that anything that can be measured can also be managed.

A question facing talent management is, once developed, how are talent management systems maintained (Cober, 2012)? Cober (2012) reported on maintaining talent management systems in an essay about the challenges of sustaining a talent management process. Cober asserted that it takes collaboration between multiple

functions or centers of expertise (COEs) and that coordination with vendors and third party outsource providers is critical to program maintenance. Cober discussed talent management programs from a strategy of project launch to business as usual. The project phases include key components that relate to proactive planning, anticipated levels of support, follow-up training, and communications and mechanisms to collect feedback (Cober, 2012). Business as usual has its set of standard components including a strategy for training in times of turnover, measuring and reporting, and long-term budgeting considerations. Cober concluded by stating that science and technology available to organization development practitioners has never been better. Cober asserted that the talent management profession should be measured not only by what it has delivered, but how it can support and maintain what it delivers long-term.

The medical profession utilized neuroscience for many years to provide insight into cognitive and behavioral processes. Vorhauser-Smith (2011) used this medical technology to study talent management and explored how neurology drives motivation, satisfaction, and performance. Vorhauser-Smith studied and reported on neuroscience and its applications to talent management. How individuals generate creative thought, process complex processes, react to stress, and develop relationships are subjects of neuroscience and are themes in talent management (Vorhauser-Smith, 2011). Vorhauser-Smith emphasized that one of the functions of leaders is attracting and developing key talent. Attracting and developing talent requires both physical and cognitive ability to exist simultaneously and without either is very difficult to achieve. Vorhauser-Smith explored talent management components relative to talent management in the forms of talent

acquisition, talent performance, talent development, and talent succession. Vorhauser-Smith concluded that the future of talent management and its success requires talent managers and organizational leadership's ability to manage the risk of staffing their organizations with individuals who can assist in meeting organizational goals and objectives. Vorhauser-Smith concluded that neuroscience can assist organizational leaders in leveraging new information resulting from organizational change and use it to optimize their workforce.

Yaqub and Khan (2011) studied employment programs viewed as best in class or *employer of choice*. Organizations wishing to brand themselves as an employer of choice must commit to talent management practices that attract and retain talented individuals that are key components to succession planning. Yaqub and Khan researched the role of talent management and employer branding in creating organizational attractiveness. Yaqub and Khan delivered a questionnaire to 100 students and asked them their perceptions of employer attractiveness and what characteristics constitute positive employer attractiveness. Yaqub and Khan identified characteristics necessary for employer attractiveness such as learning opportunities and enhancement of skills for better opportunities. Yaqub and Khan concluded that there is a link between employer branding and talent management, specifically when it pertains to attracting employees from universities.

Swapna and Raja (2012) argued that business transformation and talent management are intertwined in the minds of managers and talent management practitioners. Swapna and Raja reported on the concept of business transformation and its

components which included organizational development/learning. Swapna and Raja argued that the talent component of business transformation is where competitive gains occur. Finding, acquiring, and retaining top talent is a necessary part of business transformation and part of the strategic role HR. Swapna and Raja discussed the strategies for talent management and included preparation, recruitment, induction, compensation, performance management, and business benefits. Swapna and Raja concluded that although managers know they need the right people in all positions, they are uncertain as to how to align organizational strategy with talent strategy. The need for HR practices to continually evolve and mature is a popular topic in business research. Areiqat, Tawfiq, and, Al-Tarawneh (2010) discussed the shift of HR from traditional responsibilities to strategic ones. Areiqat et al. reported on how to identify talented people and their characteristics, and also how talented people need to be managed differently in order to succeed. Areiqat et al. argued that a key component to effective talent management is identifying outstanding individuals within the organization, figuring out what they want, and giving it to them. Areiqat et al. discussed the talent management loop, which consists of four primary activities. The first activity was attracting talent, the second was developing talent, the third managing talent, and the last tracking and evaluating talent. Areiqat et al. concluded that there is research needed pertaining to whether talent is inherited or learned. Areiqat et al. devised recommendations for organizational leaders and their talent management strategy such as (a) integrating organizational goals with talent strategy, (b) commitment to encouraging talented employees, and (c) the need to develop a formal method for identifying top talent.

Organizational Strategy

In addition to internal factors affecting organizational leadership's ability to succession plan, there exists external factors that can be helpful in supporting the succession strategy. For succession planning and all other aspects of talent management to align with business goals, processes must be flexible enough to adapt especially in uncertain market conditions (Driouchi & Bennett, 2012). In addition to well-established business goals, it is necessary for high-performing companies to structure themselves in a way that makes organizational strategy possible (Tiller, 2012). In 2014, a study was conducted by Darvish and Temelie (2014) that highlighted the link between succession planning and organizational strategy. Darvish and Temelie (2014) argued that there exists a strong correlation between succession planning and strategic planning. Darvish and Temelie found that succession planning cannot exist as a standalone process and that succession planning must be closely aligned to strategic planning. Ployhart (2012) agreed and asserted that operational design and execution are often discussed as components of organizational strategy. Ployhart researched organizational strategy from the viewpoint of organizational psychology and how psychology can impact organizational strategy and help to sustain competitive advantage. Ployhart argued that industrial psychologists ignore strategy, strategy implementation, and competitive advantage. Ployhart added that the principles of strategic management are somewhat viewing competitive advantage and organizational strategy from a psychological perspective.

Along with executing planned organizational strategy, organizational agility has been a popular topic for several decades in both academic and industrial settings (Attafar,

Ghandehari, & Momeni, 2012). Attafar et al. (2012) conducted a study of the methods organizational leaders can use to navigate unpredictable and unforeseen changes in organizational dynamics. Manufacturing environments have been the focus of organizational agility studies, but Attafar et al. suggested that organizational agility can be applied to all parts of the organization and contended that the method simply means focusing on people, being communication-oriented, and being flexible.

Driouchi and Bennett (2012) agreed with Attafar et al. that flexibility is key to successful talent strategies. Driouchi and Bennett researched the notion of real options which focus on achieving competitive advantage by being flexible, resourceful, and benefitting from the uncertainty in the corporate environment. Driouchi and Bennett argued that through recognition of real options, managers can equip themselves with tools that provide flexibility in mitigating risk by taking advantage of uncertain business climates. In essence, real options work by taking advantage of changing business climates by changing, abandoning or expanding existing strategic initiatives (Driouchi & Bennett, 2012). Driouchi and Bennett concluded the study by asserting that there exists behavioral and practical considerations that must be made in order for real options to benefit organizations. These considerations take on the form of the balance between being committed to the current strategy and having the flexibility to change it. As the debate on real options continues, and more data were collected, organizational leaders can make informed decisions about how to utilize real options methodology (Driouchi & Bennett, 2012).

Wanto & Suryasaputra (2012) contended that internal and external factors effect competitive strategy. Wanto and Suryasaputra studied organizational learning and asserted that without a commitment from executives and top managers, a learning culture is very difficult to achieve. Wanto and Suryasaputra examined the organizational environment, organizational knowledge, competitive strategy, and organizational strategy of 615 small and mid-sized companies. Wanto and Suryasaputra posed several research questions concentrating on organizational strategy and competitive advantage and competitive strategy and performance. Some studies show a correlation between organizational culture and competitive strategy (Wanto & Suryasaputra, 2012). However, Wanto and Suryasaputra found no such link. The second variable tested by Wanto and Suryasaputra was whether organizational culture directly impacts organizational performance. Several studies have found the existence of a direct link between these variables.

Lam and Lao (2010) agreed that the formation of structure can impact business strategy. Lam and Lao viewed strategic integration from a vertical and horizontal viewpoint. Vertical integration refers to organizational leader's control of business activities, increasing or decreasing distribution of products (Lam & Lao, 2010). Horizontal integration refers to the expansion of the organization resulting in a better product offering (Lam & Lao, 2010). Lam and Lao viewed their study from a horizontal integration perspective and specifically how acquisition activity can impact IT organizations. By surveying 25 individuals in IT functions, Lam and Lao found that one of the most prevalent issues with IT integrations was a lack of role clarity which

contributed to a lack of communication between business units and executive leaders. Lam and Lao concluded that effective leadership was essential to successful horizontal integration.

Fairholm (2009) studied and reported on strategic planning and argued that the topic is broadly defined and that an integrated approach is needed to be successful. The integration includes theory of leadership ideas, strategic thinking, and traditional planning activities (Fairholm, 2009). Fairholm studied strategic planning from the context of employee development and included topics of strategic or *big picture* thinking, setting priorities, organizational goals, and linking daily activities to organizational goals. Fairholm developed four categories of planning: (a) the how approach, (b) the what-how approach, (c) the what-why-how approach, and (d) the why-what-how approach. Each approach is more complex and comprehensive and the most complex, the why-what-how approach provides current and future views of organizational life while bounding individuals to a certain set of current duties (Fairholm, 2009). Fairholm concluded that the means for viewing organizational effectiveness was by focusing on both quantitative and qualitative measures of success. Organizational effectiveness is measured when organizational goals, as well as the organization's sense of values and purpose are linked.

Managing change in the context of organizational strategy is a dynamic and misunderstood process. Westover (2010) researched change management from the point of view of organizational change managers. Westover discussed the history of change management, as well as strategies change managers can use to navigate changing organizations. Historically, change management existed in both internal and external

environments and required organizational leaders to examine questions that govern organizational strategy. Westover provided change agent strategies and techniques for effectively managing change. The strategies included clearly defining the role of change agent, implication of change agent and organizational stability, anticipating how employees are affected by change, implements for change agents, and particulars on being a change agent (Westover, 2010). Westover concluded that change is frightening to people and can have an impact on culture but that change agents have a prospect to prepare the organization for change and to decrease commotion.

Dealing with and managing continuous change is a central issue of strategic managers (Kjaergaard, 2009). Kjaergaard (2009) studied and reported on empirical findings of research conducted on the topic of the strategy-making process. Kjaergaard asserted that company identity is not an unchanging set of paradigm behaviors as once believed, but rather changing and evolving. Kjaergaard based the study on defining organizational identity as the identities that impact how employees interpret problems and act on them. Kjaergaard asserted that an identity is based on social constructs and employees must have stability in their environment in order to implement a strategy. The analysis of data showed that there are two periods of the strategy making process: creating and negotiating. Innovation created ideas and events in the creating period and in the negotiating period, ideas and activities were shaped into proposals (Kjaergaard, 2009). Kjaergaard showed that ambiguity and uncertainty in organizational strategy can negatively impact employees' strategy-making actions. Kjaergaard concluded that having a strong organizational identity can be enabling as well as prohibiting to organizational

change in that employees are heavily influenced by the cognitive construct of the organization.

The topic of the relationship between organizational culture and strategy implementation is a common topic in business literature (Akbar, Salamzadeh, Daraei, & Akbari, 2012; Goldman, 2012). Akbar et al. (2012) researched how the relationship between culture and strategy can impact the success or failure of strategic implementation. Akbar et al. asserted that managers recognize the underlying dimensions of corporate culture and its impact on employee satisfaction, commitment, cohesion, and performance. Akbar et al. argued that many organizational leaders fail to manage change effectively due to a lack of complete implementation and not due to a lack of formulation. Further, Akbar et al. divided change implementation into five main categories: (a) policy formation, (b) policy implementation, (c) resources, (d) motivation, and (e) structural factors. The hypothesis tested in the study were that culture has a significant relationship to strategy implementation, adhocracy culture will have a significant relationship to strategy implementation, market culture will have a relationship to strategy implementation, and hierarchy will have a relationship to strategy implementation (Akbar et al., 2012). Akbar et al. concluded that a correlation exists between the organization's culture and its performance. Like the link between culture and strategy, a link between HR strategy and organizational strategy are closely linked (Hai-Ming and Shu-Tzu, 2010). Hai-Ming and Shu-Tzu (2010) used the context of organizational lifecycle to examine training targets, training methods, and training outcomes that can improve efficiency and effectiveness of workers. Hai-Ming and Shu-Tzu argued that when

training strategy is part of organizational strategy, the workforce can become socialized, integrated, and committed to firm strategy. Hai-Ming and Shu-Tzu defined training design in three stages: (a) inception, (b) growth, and (c) maturity. The Hai-Ming and Shu-Tzu study resulted in the following deductions: organizational leaders who make links between HR strategy, training strategy, and organizational strategy, have superior *human advantage* to those organizations that do not make these links; specific strategic orientations are employed at different phases of the organizational lifecycle. Hai-Ming and Shu-Tzu concluded that being multifaceted in operations is critical to sustaining competitive advantage. By closely aligning training practices to organizational strategy whereby creating competencies and competitiveness, advantage is possible (Hai-Ming & Shu-Tzu, 2010).

Operationalizing the Practical Ideal Type Conceptual Framework

While reviewing the literature for the study, certain themes evolved that aligned with the chosen conceptual framework. Ley's (2002) application of the practical ideal type conceptual framework contained seven elements that included (a) executive support, (b) dedicated responsibility, (c) results of a needs-driven analysis, (d) employee development programs, (e) employee-specific attention, (f) extension to all levels of the organization, and (g) inclusion in the strategic plan. The most prevalent theme from the literature review is the need for professional development programs as a method for implementing succession planning. Other themes that emerged included the need for dedicated responsibility for succession planning, leadership support, and focusing on individuals.

Transition and Summary

Several compelling research studies explored various constructs of succession plans (Calareso, 2013; Galbraith et al., 2013; Garg & Van Weele, 2012). However, the research surrounding this study involved the impact of succession planning specifically on a manufacturing organization. This case study focused on a manufacturing company and its succession planning activities. There was no expected outcome from the research, but rather I was looking for a deeper understanding of why company leaders plan for succession. The literature review was a mechanism for viewing previous research conducted in this area and also served as a basis for understanding the factors that contribute to successful or ineffective succession plans. The study supported the conceptual framework by identifying underlying attitudes of why some organizational leaders choose to implement a talent management framework that includes succession planning. Specific elements of the project exist in Section 2, where I further discuss the framework of the study. Section 3 includes details of the completed research and conclusions based on findings.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how leaders can apply succession planning to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders. The targeted population consisted of five leaders responsible for succession planning for a global electronics manufacturing organization headquartered in the eastern United States with greater than 80,000 employees. By researching and reporting on views of succession planning, the study results could be used by talent management professionals in developing a succession framework. As evidenced by research conducted by Schweer et al. (2012), succession planning can have a positive impact on employee engagement. The results of the study could contribute to positive social change by drawing attention to succession planning as a possible solution to a workforce in need of qualified leaders.

Role of the Researcher

Data collection included previous research articles and live face-to-face interviews of five leaders responsible for developing and implementing succession planning. In an effort to thoroughly understand the case, interviews were selected as the primary data collection tool (Crowe et al., 2011). Objectivity and good listening skills helped ensure an understanding of the responses from participants. The role of the researcher was also to examine problems of significance in a field of study and to assess others' work to understand the important ideas in their field of study (Roulston, Preissle, & Freeman, 2013).

As a senior HR operations analyst with 7 years of experience at two large multinational organizations, I understand the concept of succession planning and measuring the effectiveness of succession plans. The experience and perceptions I have in regard to succession planning is that HR organizations view succession planning as essential, but lack the discipline to use it fully. Although I have not been responsible for the succession planning strategy or execution, I have analyzed data that indicated that performing succession planning activities add value to the organization.

The Belmont Report of 1979 is a guide that identifies the basic principles when conducting behavioral research involving human subjects (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The application section (Part C) of The Belmont Report contains guidelines for providing informed consent, assessment of risks and benefits, and selection of research subjects (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The consent form of this study was consistent with the guidelines for informed consent contained in The Belmont Report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979).

Bias in research is difficult to recognize and, in some cases, impossible to avoid (Malone, Nicholl, & Tracey, 2014). Selection bias occurs when the research subjects are not representative of the population being studied (Malone et al., 2014). Because of the small sample size of this case study, I made an effort to avoid selection bias in the study by ensuring research subjects reported only on the experiences the subjects have had at their current organization and that the research questions were closely followed.

Participants

In this qualitative case study, the sample consisted of five leaders at one manufacturing organization who were notified via e-mail and asked to participate in an interview. I have a working relationship with the intended participants and, as a result, did not have to establish one. I interviewed five participants, but was prepared to interview more than five until no new information was presented, which indicated that data was saturated. The identified leaders received an initial e-mail asking for participation. I scheduled interviews once the individuals decided to participate. A sample size of five constitutes a small to mid-sized study and because the focus of the research is on a single company, helped to generalize the results (Thomas, Suresh, & Suresh, 2013). I chose a sample size of five in order to ensure a more diverse sampling, which ensured a more generalized and unbiased outcome. In order for valid consent, I ensured the interview participants understood the nature of the study, its risks, benefits, and research alternatives (Wendler & Grady, 2008).

In order to establish a good working relationship with the study participants, I began by explaining the ethical concerns in regard to confidentiality and had the participants sign a consent form (Appendix A). A key measure to ensuring data anonymity was the use of a coding system. Coding systems can be used to protect the identity of subjects participating in a study (Heffetz & Ligett, 2014). Coding of P1-P5 ensured the confidentiality of participants. I stored all information gathered on an external hard drive and locked in a filing cabinet that only I have access. Five years after completion of the study, I will shred all documents and erase stored electronic files.

Research Method and Design

The central problem studied was the perceived importance and lack of implementation of succession planning (Kowalewski, Moretti, & McGee, 2011). Qualitative research works well as a method for analyzing and disseminating information pertaining to social phenomenon and processes that involve people from a variety of perspectives (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). Succession planning from the perspective of the employee is a human phenomenon, and therefore, I conducted the research using a qualitative approach. Because of the anecdotal context of the interview questions (opinion research), a quantitative approach to succession planning research is much less effective. In order to achieve the research, I referenced prior research as well as study organizations that currently engage in succession strategy.

Research Method

I undertook a qualitative study mainly because succession planning methods tend to be less scientific, and therefore, difficult to quantify. Qualitative research promotes a more diverse sampling of data as opposed to quantitative research methods which tend to ask very narrow questions (Farrelly, 2012). Also, while qualitative and quantitative research methods both attempt to describe reality, qualitative research accomplishes this by analyzing the experiences of subject participants rather than the quantitative calculations of the data set (Allwood, 2012). Using open-ended questions for the interview allowed participants to elaborate on situations specific to them while also ensuring important study topics were covered (Gysels, Shipman, & Higginston, 2008).

Allowing participants to express issues specific to their experience led to new ways of looking at succession planning.

Research Design

Given the research focus on the experiences and opinions of leaders in regard to succession planning, I used a case study research design which allowed the use of anecdotal information to understand the phenomenon being researched (Snyder, 2012). A central theme of this research was an understanding of the succession planning phenomenon through data gathered from participant interviews as well as contemporary research, and this is why I chose a case study design (Kumar, 2012). Succession planning is a concept and process unique to each participant. As a result, each participant's experience was equally important, but not the only consideration. Using a case study design was appropriate in this study because case studies use *how* and *why* questions to understand the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Grounded theory design relies heavily on interviewing as does case study design. However, grounded theory was not chosen due to its reliance on formulating theory based on data. Given the randomness of the selection of the study's participants, an ethnographical design was not chosen (Hays & Wood, 2011).

<center>**Population and Sampling**</center>

The data collection method of this study was through live face-to-face interviews. I invited organizational leaders from the participating organization via e-mail. Interviewing began once the Walden Institutional Review board (IRB) approved the study. Electronic recordings of each interview served as material for transcription.

Participants took between 30 and 45 minutes to respond to interview questions.

Additional interview time was allowed if participants choose to elaborate on research

topics or to challenge the research questions (Roulston, 2014). I interviewed five leaders

in the manufacturing industry, which represented saturation of the data (Marshall,

Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). A sample size of at least five participants meets

Walden University DBA requirements for a qualitative case study with additional

interviews as needed to achieve data saturation, which is adequate to represent the

purpose of the study. Based upon transcriptions of the research interviews, I summarized

the findings.

I am employed by the organization from which the sample was chosen. By

engaging individuals in this way, the sampling method followed purposeful sampling

(Karadag, 2013). These considerations made building trust and gathering substantive

information from participants more likely.

Ethical Research

According to the research conducted by Frechtling and Boo (2012), there has

been significant research undertaken on the ethics of research, but empirical evidence is

lacking when discussing management research. My study was from the viewpoint of a

management researcher. Based on the approval of the study by the Walden University

IRB, the research questions conform to Walden University ethical research standards.

The approval number for this study is 08-13-15-0129815.

No interviews occurred until a signed consent form was received from the

participant. During the data collection phase of the study, a letter was sent to each

participant that outlined the reasons for the contact as well as an introduction to me. The consent form included a commitment that all data will be held in the strictest confidence and that participants are allowed to withdraw at any point from the study. Participants received no monetary incentive for their participation in the study even though research suggests participation increases with the addition of monetary incentives (Matheson, Forrester, Brazil, Doherty, & Affleck, 2012). In addition, no names of individuals or organizations were stored as the information is confidential and does not contribute to the study. For at least 5 years, any information collected will be stored on physical devices that only I have access to. Data collected will also be held in hardcopy for later reference and destroyed after 5 years. The consent form is listed in Appendix A.

Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instrument chosen for this study was live face-to-face interviews. I chose live interviews as the data collection medium because of the format of the research questions. Anyan (2013) stated that interviewing for qualitative research data collection can enabling for interviewees by allowing them the opportunity to think about and verbalize their experiences, thoughts, and perspectives on a phenomenon. The questions I asked were intentionally open-ended to solicit detailed and substantive responses. Using open-ended questions for the interview allowed participants to elaborate on situations specific to them while also ensuring important study topics are covered (Gysels et al., 2008). To ensure consistency and reliability in the information gathered, all interviews occurred in a similar manner and in similar environments.

I began the process of analyzing the data by reducing it into a manageable subset with an inductive, rather than a deductive mindset (Seidman, 2013). Data assimilation occurred by uncovering themes in the data. I categorized the themes according to the content of excerpts from the interviews. I identified connections between the themes expressed by the interviewees and any connection to literature on the subject.

To gain further insight into the collection of data, I used NVivo v.10 via a student license for a period of 12 months following data collection. The use of this type of software allowed easier categorizing and grouping of the demographic information of interview participants. To validate the data set, I included details such as position, level within the organization, years of experience in succession planning, etc.

I ensured validity and reliability during the interview process and during data analysis by minimizing the effect of preconceptions and previous experience I have with the research topic (Seidman, 2013). I did not conduct a pilot study. However, during interviews, I noted and addressed comments from interviewees about deficiencies in the interview questions. Interview questions are available for review in Appendix B.

Data Collection Technique

Upon approval from the Walden University IRB, I began the following process to conduct the study. I requested and received permission to conduct interviews during company time and on company premises. Once approval was received from a key leader in the organization being studied, I gathered contact information for each target participant. I made initial contact via e-mail with each participant to introduce the nature

of the study, their role as a participant, and the informed consent form. I retrieved an e-mail response from each participant stating their consent prior to scheduling interviews.

The data collection technique chosen for this study was live face-to-face interviews. I scheduled each interview for a date and time convenient for both the participant and me. All meetings were conducted at our place of business in each of the participants' offices. Each interview lasted 30-45 minutes. In addition to taking notes related directly to the research questions during the interviews, I also took notes of other concepts that arose during each interview. I used these notes to ask additional probing questions related to the topic. In order to remain focused on each interviewee, during the interviews I took notes only when appropriate and populated reflective journals postinterview. During each interview, I frequently reviewed the electronic device recording the interviews. I used an app on my Apple iOS device called iTalk that made recording and downloading interview content effective. The recording device also served as a method for checking the duration of each interview. This assisted me in maintaining control of the cadence of the interviews in order to make sure all important topics were covered.

The interview questions were intentionally open-ended to solicit detailed and substantive responses. Using open-ended questions for the interview allowed participants to elaborate on situations specific to them while also ensuring important study topics were covered (Gysels et al., 2008). As with all data collection methods, interviewing has drawbacks including difficulty in defining the roles of interview participants (Rossetto, 2014). When the role of the researcher evolves from listener and observer to counselor

and therapist, data integrity can be compromised. All interviews occurred in a similar

manner to ensure consistency and reliability in the information gathered. If interview

participants are shown verbatim transcripts or their interviews, they will be able to

acknowledge and respond to their own words (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, Murphy, 2013).

Upon completion of data collection, I e-mailed all participants a transcript of their

responses and allowed each to have 5 days to review to ensure the accuracy of the

transcription. Ten interview questions were the primary source for gathering the

experiences of leaders responsible for succession planning. The interview questions are

available for review in Appendix A.

Data Organization Technique

Confidentiality of research interview information is concerned with the secure

storage of research data, so anonymizing data and destroying them after the analysis is

complete eliminates the potential for inadvertent disclosure (Mealer & Jones, 2014). I

organized each interview participant in their folder identified only by the participant's

alphanumeric code (P1-P5). Coding the identities of interviewees ensured confidentiality

of participants' identities (Yin, 2011). I requested and received permission to audio

record the interview via the consent form. I used NVivo 10 to compile the audio

recordings as well as the transcribed text of each interview. The use of a computer-

assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) is an efficient way of arranging

narrative and quantitative data (Yin, 2014). I backed up one audio file and one text file

for each participant on an external hard drive. I stored all information gathered on an

external hard drive and locked it in a filing cabinet that only I have access. Five years

after completion of the study, I will shred all documents and erase stored electronic files.

Data Analysis

I asked each participant the interview questions available in Appendix B. Upon

completing all semistructured and open-ended interview questions and collecting all data,

I had each interview audio recording transcribed via a transcription service then imported

audio files and text transcriptions into NVivo v.10. Data were then disassembled,

organized, and categorized the results by theme first, followed by the theme's connection

to each other, and to literature reviewed (Yin, 2011). Interviews were chosen as the

primary data collection technique mainly because interviews provide an in-depth

understanding of the lived experiences of the participants (Seidman, 2013). I compiled

field notes and personal reflections captured during the interviews. The themes, field

notes, and interview transcripts were analyzed to discern generalities that can be

compared to existing research in this field of study (Mertens, 2005). The interview

questions developed assisted in answering the central question: What are the experiences

of leaders responsible for succession planning? The interview questions mentioned

previously provided an adequate amount of information through the experiences of the

interviewees.

Triangulation is the process by which several data collection methods are used in

the study of one phenomenon (Houghton et al., 2013). For the study, methodological

triangulation was used. Data collected from interviews were compared to company

succession planning matrix documents which are used to track employees' competencies

and compare them to the competencies required for higher-level roles in order to confirm the findings of the research (Yin, 2014).

According to Yin (2014), there are three primary functions of computer-assisted data analysis software. They are (a) compiling data, (b) disassembling data, and (c) reassembling data. I used NVivo v.10 to assist in these tasks in addition to crafting themes and profiles of each interview. NVivo assisted in data analysis by recognizing themes or commonalities in the data that may be unobvious via manual analysis. By isolating keywords and phrases that occurred in the interview transcripts, themes were drawn. Using an inductive coding system assisted in applying themes and profiles in order to organize them and report findings. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) defined inductive coding as deriving themes directly out of the data allowing the researcher to analyze anecdotal information. The analysis of themes and the relationship to the context of existing literature provided insights into the reasons why organizational leaders choose to engage in succession planning.

Reliability and Validity

Yin (2014), described four tests for judging the quality of research design and included (a) construct validity, (b) internal validity, (c) external validity, and (d) reliability. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are used by qualitative researchers to ensure reliability and validity. I addressed reliability and validity in the study in the following ways.

Reliability

In general terms, reliability is the reassurance that another researcher investigating the same issue or using the same data would arrive at the same findings (Ali & Yusof, 2012). A close attention to detail when recording participant answers and a focus on keeping researcher bias from the findings are key to ensuring that the study can be duplicated by another researcher and arrive at similar results. By keeping a detailed and complete journal of the process for collecting data, I ensured the possibility of future research and increased confirmability (Ali & Yusof, 2012). Yin (2014) stated that being adaptive when collecting data is important to ensuring an unbiased perspective. However, deviating too much from the central phenomenon can have negative effects on the outcome of the study; therefore, a balance between being adaptable and being rigorous is ideal (Yin, 2014).

Validity

From the viewpoint of qualitative research, validity refers to the extent to which the research investigates and concludes what it intended to (Farrelly, 2013). By designing research questions that intended to answer the central research phenomenon, validity existed. The information gathered included the points of view of the participants only and not those of the researcher to ensure internal validity. In addition, I conducted interviews in a controlled and consistent environment throughout the study. Conducting interviews in a controlled environment minimized changes in the context of the research, increasing the dependability of the study (Farrelly, 2013). I ensured credibility in the study by providing transcripts of each interview to participants which ensured that they answered

each question the way they intended to. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research transferred to other settings (Farrelly, 2013). By thoroughly describing the research context and the assumptions central to the research, I enhanced transferability.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the attitudes of leaders on the topic of succession planning. The topic of succession planning is important in business because organizational leaders are responsible for managing global workforces and planning for future organizational climate changes. Organizational leaders may find tactics important to sustaining a stable and engaged workforce by researching and reporting on opinions of succession planning.

Section 2 included discussions of the methodologies, data gathering techniques, and sampling techniques used in the study. Section 2 also included discussion of ethical research considerations, reliability, and validity techniques. Section 3 includes the presentation of the study findings, applications to professional practice, and implications for social change.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section 3 provides the findings of the study. Section 3 also includes (a) an overview of the study, (b) a presentation of the findings, (c) applications to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommendations for actions, (f) recommendations for further study, (g) reflections, and (h) a summary and study conclusions.

Overview of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how leaders can apply succession planning to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders. I conducted semistructured interviews with five leaders responsible for succession planning for a global electronics manufacturing organization headquartered in the eastern United States with greater than 80,000 employees. The goal for the study was to obtain data that helped to answer the central research question: What succession planning do organizational leaders use to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders? I chose each participant based on their roles within the target organization. Participants with at least one direct report were chosen. To ensure consistency and reliability in the information gathered, all interviews occurred in a similar manner and in similar environments. The participants responded to 10 semistructured interview questions (see Appendix B) and discussed strategies for effective succession planning. A review of contemporary literature, data from interviews, and company documents was performed.

Presentation of the Findings

I used semistructured interviews as a means to answer the central research question, "What succession planning do organizational leaders use to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders?" In addition to semistructured interviews, I reviewed several documents related to succession planning within the target organization. Once data were collected via semistructured interviews, I grouped the data into themes. Upon review of the semistructured interview data, 15 themes emerged, which I combined to form four primary themes: (a) employee development activities that support effective succession planning, (b) practices and processes critical for effective succession planning, (c) the relationship between succession planning, talent management strategy, and organizational strategy, and (d) barriers and challenges to effective succession planning.

The practical ideal type conceptual framework was used in this research project. The practical ideal type conceptual framework was developed to use as a method for organizing research findings into categories that can assist in envisioning and understanding the ideal state of a phenomenon (Shields, 1998). In my study, the practical ideal type conceptual framework applied to succession planning. The practical ideal type requires the following elements for a successful succession planning program: (a) executive support, (b) dedicated responsibility, (c) results of a needs-driven analysis, (d) employee development programs, (e) employee-specific attention, (f) extension to all levels of the organization, and (g) inclusion in the strategic plan. As I analyzed the data for this study, I identified correlations between the data, the practical ideal type framework used for succession planning, and contemporary literature. By doing so, I was

able to gain a better understanding of succession planning and how organizational leaders can use succession planning to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders.

A primary goal of succession planning is having successors ready when the need arises, leading to a smooth transition with minimal disruption to business operations (Klein & Salk, 2013). Ballinger and Marcel (2010) agreed that a well-planned and thought out succession plan is critical to company success. A case study was chosen as the research design because case study research focuses on specific situations. In using case study research, I was able to investigate specific details of how one organization plans succession (Cronin, 2014).

As Table 1 shows, the occurrence of primary themes confirmed that there are fundamental requirements for effective succession planning in the target organization. Upon analyzing participant responses, reviewing company documents, and reviewing current literature, the emergent themes confirmed that organizational leaders require succession planning processes to be in place to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders.

Table 1

Frequency of Primary Themes from Data Collected from Semistructured Interviews

Theme	*n*	% of frequency of occurrence
Employee development activities that support effective succession planning	30	20.83%
Practices and processes critical for effective succession planning	45	31.25%
The relationship between succession planning and talent management strategy and organizational strategy	22	15.28%
Barriers and challenges to effective succession planning	47	32.64%

Note. n = frequency

Emergent Theme 1: Employee Development Activities That Support Effective Succession Planning

The first primary theme that emerged from the interview data was employee development activities that support effective succession planning. Participant answers to interview questions 1, 2, and 7 indicated that employee development was a primary factor in developing succession planning. Employee development was also a central theme in the literature reviewed for this study. Within the employee development theme, there were several subthemes identified by participants and verified via company documents and current research including coaching, employee performance, development plans, and competency development. Development activities important to succession planning included continuous individualized employee development plans, leadership development programs, analysis of competencies, strengths, development needs, and differentiated

learning plans. Gray (2014) confirmed the research findings by suggesting that

succession planning includes several processes, including (a) identifying key roles, (b)

developing job competencies, (c) accessing current talent, (d) identifying potential talent,

and (e) actively developing key talent. Galbraith et al. (2012) asserted that succession

planning extends beyond protecting leadership roles. Succession planning provides

employees with opportunities for developing leadership skills and also implies that

organizational leaders intend to hire internally to fill leadership roles, whenever possible

(Galbraith et al., 2012).

Development plans and competency planning. Findings of this study confirmed

that having employee development programs and processes in place are required for

effective succession planning. Employee development has become a primary activity of

organizations in order to develop a pool of candidates ready to assume leadership roles.

Employee development systems employ a mixture of career development practices that

include succession planning (Dara & MeghaRaj, 2014). Study participants indicated that

employee development programs should be a continuous process that occurs throughout

the year rather than a singular event between the employee and the manager where yearly

performance and development goals are discussed. Participants also indicated that

employee development and succession planning must not be seen as an administrative

task, but rather as a core responsibility of every manager. These findings were consistent

with research conducted by Kuo, Chang, and Chang (2014), who contended that

managers must have certain characteristics that foster employee development. These

employee developmental characteristics include (a) working as a team to accomplish

tasks, (b) valuing employees over tasks, and (c) identifying routine chances to improve their employees' performance and take full advantage of their potential.

Furthermore, a review of company documents was used to track employee development, employee performance, and succession activities. Review of these documents supported the assertion by Gray (2014) who stated that succession planning must include processes for accessing current talent and identifying potential talent. Both processes are evolving at the target organization, but are seen as critical to improving succession planning.

Emergent Theme 2: Practices and Processes Critical for Effective Succession Planning

Practices and processes critical for effective succession planning was the second primary theme that emerged from the interview data. Participant answers to interview questions 1, 2, and 7 indicated that there were several practices that are critical to effective succession planning. Succession planning best practices were also a central theme in the literature reviewed for this study. Within the succession planning practices and processes theme, there were several subthemes identified by participants and verified via company documents and current research including leadership support for succession planning, succession planning at all levels within the organization, talent pool development and accessibility, identification of role competencies, and a continual process that includes employee development and performance management. These findings are supported by the practical ideal type conceptual framework applied to succession planning which states that the following elements are required for a successful

succession planning program and include (a) executive support, (b) dedicated

responsibility, (c) results of a needs-driven analysis, (d) employee development

programs, (e) employee-specific attention, (f) extension to all levels of the organization,

and (g) inclusion in the strategic plan (Shields, 1998).

Competency development and leadership support. Gandhi and Kumar (2014)

studied the components of effective succession planning and reported that identifying

critical roles, identifying role competencies, identifying succession planning strategies

that align with company strategies, documenting succession plans, and systematic

monitoring of succession plans are required processes for succession planning.

Participant responses also uncovered the need for leader support for effective succession

planning. P2 noted that leader support is improving at the target organization and that this

is having a dramatic impact on the effectiveness of succession planning and leadership

development. P4 stated that succession planning and leadership development is a key

initiative with very clear expectations set by the operating committee of the organization.

P4 continued by stating that leadership support and involvement in succession planning

has increased participation at varying rates in each business vertical, and in general, has

greatly improved the enterprise's commitment to succession planning and leadership

development. Using General Electric as a case study subject, Onatula (2013) discussed

the necessity of organizations to view succession planning from the top of the

organization to the bottom. Onatula found that if succession planning was a goal of the

board of directors and the CEO, succession planning can be used to replace departing

leaders with qualified new leaders.

Emergent Theme 3: The Relationship Between Succession Planning, Talent Management Strategy, and Organizational Strategy

The relationship between succession planning, talent management strategy, and organizational strategy was the third primary theme that emerged from the interview data. Participant answers to interview questions 7, 8, and 9 indicated that there were several relationships between succession planning, talent management strategy, and organizational strategy. Talent management and organizational strategy was also a central theme in the literature reviewed for this study. Within the relationship between succession planning, talent management strategy, and the organizational strategy theme, there were several subthemes identified by participants and verified via company documents and current research including succession planning, performance management, employee development discussions, and leadership training programs. The standard principles for effective talent management include (a) the ability to measure capability gaps, (b) alignment of strategy, (c) organizational structure and talent, (d) proper deployment of talent, and (e) expansion of capabilities (Morgan & Jardin, 2010).

Succession planning and employee development. P3 asserted that the target organization includes succession discussions in its talent management strategy. However, P3 described the approach to succession planning as traditional, whereby high potential individuals are labeled as "ready now," "ready in 1 to 3 years," or "ready in 3 to 5 years" during a yearly performance management exercise. However, all respondents indicated that as long as the target organization was planning for succession that the process by which they planned was less important. Marvin (2015) echoed these remarks by adding

that succession planning should not be an autocratic process for executives only, but an agile and opportunistic process capable of responding quickly to changing circumstances. P4 agreed by stating that talent management is in the process of taking a variety of disjointed annual processes and moving to a program of continuous engagement in discussions around talent. P4 continued by asserting that the target organization must demonstrate the value of engaging in talent management to the customer. P4 concluded by suggesting succession planning should begin with the end in mind and to build talent management programs that support the ultimate goal of building capable leaders who are able to assume leadership roles.

Performance management. The findings also highlighted the relationship between performance management, succession planning, and talent management. P4 described the performance management process as a yearly event where a performance rating is given, followed by rewards in the form of a merit pay increase, discretionary bonus, and/or long-term incentive award. P5 echoed these remarks and added that all employees are required to have a performance review and rating, but not all employees are required to have individualized development plans. P5 continued by stating that each manager may manage the performance and development discussions with employees differently. This process for performance management is not uncommon and the findings agree with Maley (2014), who stated that performance management processes are typically focused on short-term financial goals and ignored longer-term goals such as human and social results like skill-enhancing, motivation-enhancing, and opportunity-enhancing abilities which can lead to better employee engagement and performance. A

review of company documents confirmed that the performance management process is carried out annually and each employee is given a rating of *below*, *meets*, or *exceeds* for behavioral and business goals.

   Leadership development training. Leadership development training was a common subtheme that emerged when participants were asked about succession planning and the talent management process. P5 discussed leadership training in a performance management context by stating that leaders are taught to have comprehensive performance and development discussions with their employees. However, a complete transformation of behaviors will have to be championed by senior executives in order for leadership development training programs to succeed. The target organization has leadership training in place as a method for developing future leaders and fortifying behaviors of existing leaders. A study by Solansky (2014) confirmed these findings by stating that benefits of managerial education are improved managerial skills through managerial confidence, improved communication tactics, and expanded viewpoints. Church, Rotolo, Ginther, and Levine (2015) agreed and stated that the evaluation and development of existing and future leaders in companies is one of the most critical elements of effective talent management. The authors continued by asserting that leadership learning should be differentiated for employees who have been identified as having leadership potential (Church et al., 2015). P5 also mentioned differentiated learning as a primary focus of the talent management process at the target organization, which is required for a training program focused on aspiring leaders. These findings are also supported by the practical ideal type conceptual framework applied to success

planning, which says results of a needs-driven analysis, employee development

opportunities, and employee-specific development plans are required.

Emergent Theme 4: Barriers and Challenges to Effective Succession Planning

Barriers and challenges to effective succession planning was the fourth primary

theme that emerged from the interview data. Participant answers to interview questions 3

and 4 indicated that there were several barriers and challenges to effective succession

planning. Barriers and challenges to effective succession planning was also a central

theme in the literature reviewed for this study. Within the barriers and challenges to

effective succession planning theme, there were several themes identified by participants

and verified via company documents and current research including a lack of discipline

by managers, lack of role definition, lack of succession-ready candidates, and a lack of

visibility into enterprise-wide talent pool.

The practical ideal type conceptual framework used for succession planning is

significant in the findings of Emergent Theme 4. The research findings presented in this

theme showed that a disciplined approach, role clarity, succession-ready candidates, and

talent pool visibility are all required to effectively plan for succession. The practical ideal

type conceptual framework used for succession planning requires various elements

working together to achieve succession goals (Shields, 1998).

Lack of discipline. All study participants eluded to the need for executive support

for effective succession planning, but stated that the target organization continues to

struggle to implement succession planning below the executive levels. P2 cited the

importance of succession planning, development planning, and new role assignments as

critical components of a talent management system, but that the organization is too lean
in some roles to be able to identify potential successors. Other respondents commented
that some leaders in the target organization have not fully embraced succession planning
and treat it as an administrative task that is required and that not all leaders are convinced
succession planning is critical to business success. P4 commented that if the HR
organization can develop a thoughtful approach that is not overly complicated,
experiential in nature, and helps to build a pipeline of leaders, they [managers] will be
able to identify not only employees with potential, but employees who also have goals of
being in a leadership role. P2 also mentioned a lack of discipline in the form of trust
between leaders of different businesses. Because no visibility exists between businesses
in terms of talent pools, leaders are reluctant to market their talent to other parts of the
organization. A study conducted by Al-Dmour and Al-Zu'bi (2014) confirmed these
findings and stated that a lack of time commitment, lack of financial investment, and lack
of executive support are common reasons that programs like succession planning
eventually fail or never begin.

Lack of role definition. At the target organization, defining roles and role
competencies has become a key initiative of organizational leaders. P2 stated that role
clarity is a key enabler of succession planning, but that the target organization has not
done this well enough to leverage it. P4 echoed this sentiment by saying that the
organization does not have a clear sense of what it takes to be in a particular role and
therefore, it is difficult to plan succession. P1 asserted that there must be an employee-
involved process for identifying core and functional responsibilities. By assessing

employee competencies versus the role competencies, development plans can be built and this can lead to an increase in employee performance. Georgel Tudor, Gheorghe, Oancea, and Sova (2014) supported this by asserting that role competencies are defined by three factors: (a) knowledge, (b) attitudes, and (c) skills. The authors found that role competencies must be managed effectively and in a manner consistent with organizational strategies so that they can lead to an increase in employee performance (Georgel et al., 2014). Role definition and identifying competencies are practices that support professional development opportunities and focused individual attention components of the practical ideal type conceptual framework for succession planning.

Lack of succession-ready candidates. Participants P2, P3, and P4 commented that a lack of succession-ready candidates has limited the ability of organizational leaders to use succession planning to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders. A lack of extension of succession planning to all levels of the organization can have a negative impact on organizational leaders' ability to plan for succession for non-executive level roles. Moskwa (2015) cited several methods for building a pool of succession-ready candidates who can assume the roles of departing employees. These include: (a) clearly defined roles, (b) employee development programs, (c) core competencies, and (d) top-down support (Moskwa, 2015). Moskwa supported the assertion that core processes are required to build succession-ready candidates for departing leaders.

Lack of visibility into enterprise-wide talent pool. Lack of visibility into the enterprise-wide talent pool was the most frequently mentioned barrier to effective

succession planning at the target organizations. Nearly all respondents cited this as the primary focus for improving succession planning at the target organization. P1 stated that "talent hording" within businesses or within functions was a common practice in the target organization and contributes to the lack of succession-ready candidates for leadership roles. P4 asserted that there exists a high level of autonomy at the business unit level and at times, there was an unwillingness to share great talent in the organization with another part of the company. P5 stated that there is a feeling that some businesses plan for succession and develop their employees well and others do not, and those that do develop their employees, intend to keep their employees. Schulz and Enslin (2014) reported that employing strategies to increasing visibility into employee skills, interests, and career aspirations for the purposes of matching employees to growth and advancement opportunities assist organizational leaders in identifying future leaders.

Summary

Overall, the research findings were consistent with the purpose of the study and correlated with practical ideal type conceptual framework applied to succession planning. The primary themes and subthemes that emerged played a critical role in understanding how organizational leaders use succession planning to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders. This study has contributed to the understanding of how the target organization can prepare for replacement of departing leaders. Galbraith et al. (2012) suggested that succession planning extends beyond protecting leadership roles. Succession planning provides employees with opportunities for developing leadership skills and also implies that organizational leaders intend to hire internally to fill

leadership roles, whenever possible. Ballinger and Marcel (2010) agreed that a well-planned and thought-out succession plan is critical to company success. Therefore, if no succession strategy is in place, business leaders may not be able to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders.

Applications to Professional Practice

This research is meaningful to business practice in several ways. The focus of the research was to understand how organizational leaders use succession planning to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders. Leaders of U.S. companies are unprepared to address a shortage of qualified leaders caused by changing workforce demographics (Walker & Forbes, 2014). The findings of this study support the practical ideal type conceptual framework used for succession planning which states that succession planning requires various elements working together to achieve succession goals (Shields, 1998).

Executive decision makers should assess and follow the progress of employees to effectively implement a successful succession plan (Stahl et al., 2012). Leadership development and succession planning are key components to talent management (Beheshtifar & Vazir-Panah, 2012). Therefore, it is in the best interests of organizational leaders to develop talent management and succession planning strategies that support sustainability and performance goals. Leadership support, role clarity, discipline, and visibility into company-wide talent pools were elements discussed by the research participants. Research participants also alluded to the need for continuous and interconnected processes for succession planning to be effective. Succession planning

includes several processes, including (a) identifying key roles, (b) developing job competencies, (c) accessing current talent, (d) identifying potential talent, and (e) actively developing key talent (Gray, 2014). Hamid (2013) argued that above capital and technology, talent is the key competitive advantage for organizations. Managerial succession includes collaboration with HR and all functional departments within the organization (Galbraith, Smith, & Walker, 2012). Having effective succession planning processes in place may assist organizational leaders in realizing gains in employee engagement, employee performance, company performance, and competitive advantage. Employee development strategies shared by P2, P3, P4, and P5 in the first theme such as continuous individualized employee development plans, leadership development programs, analysis of competencies, strengths, and development needs, and differentiated learning plans are talent management strategies that may enable organizational leaders to recruit, develop, and retain talented employees. These strategies support the findings of Attafar et al. (2012) who conducted a study of the methods organizational leaders can use to navigate unpredictable and unforeseen changes in organizational dynamics.

Implications for Social Change

Succession planning not only positively impacts operational measures, it may also have a positive impact on individuals and communities. As previously mentioned, the process of succession planning may have implications for employee development and engagement. Succession planning provides employees with goals of achieving higher positions within the organization, which may satisfy employee aspirations, which can help enrich employees personally and professionally (Beheshtifar, Nasab, & Moghadam,

2012). An increase in employee satisfaction may contribute to a higher standard of living for employees whereby strengthening communities. Several respondents discussed the role employee development plays in employee engagement. Ehrhardt, Miller, Freeman, and Hom (2011) studied the relationship between the organization and employee in terms of a social interaction. The authors opined that employee development in the form of training may be perceived by the employee as a commitment to them by their organization, whereby increasing employee satisfaction which may lead to a better quality of life for employees (Ehrhardt et al., 2011).

As previously discussed, having effective succession planning processes in place may assist organizational leaders in realizing gains in employee engagement, employee performance, and employee satisfaction. By socializing employees into organizations, employee development opportunities can play an important role in the adjustment and learning process of employees (Chakrabarti & Banerjee, 2014). One study participant commented that if an employee is identified as a key talent, they should know that. It is important for employees to know that the organization in committed to their development which may lead to higher performing employees becoming contributing members of society.

Recommendations for Action

Leaders of U.S. companies are unprepared to address a shortage of qualified leaders caused by changing workforce demographics (Walker & Forbes, 2014). For succession plans to produce desired outcomes, they must focus on codifying organizational cultural mores amongst employees, empowering employees to follow

development paths, and stimulating learning within the organization (Gandhi & Kumar, 2014). If succession planning is not a focus of an organization, leaders should develop the most effective ways to replace departing leaders by succession planning. Organizational leaders should consider researching current succession planning processes and comparing them against commonly known effective succession planning elements. Organizational leaders should also consider investing in resources that focus on succession planning. Participants P2, P3, P4, and P5 discussed the need for additional resources at the target organization for implementing effective succession plans. When asked how well the organization was positioned to effectively plan succession, the respondents suggested that the organization lacked sufficient resources in technology systems, employees who focus on succession planning, and the time to fully develop and implement succession planning.

Findings from this study are important for organizational leaders, talent management leaders, and business leaders. If implemented correctly, succession planning can be used as a tool to increase employee engagement and sustain organizational profitability. The results will particularly benefit executive leaders, human resources leaders, and business leaders within the participating organization. I will disseminate the results of this study throughout the participating organization and through professional conferences. Furthermore, I may use this study as a topic for discussion when teaching human resources management and organizational behavior courses.

Recommendations for Further Study

The focus of this study was a single global organization in the electronics manufacturing industry. Therefore, the findings from this study warrant additional research of succession planning processes organizational leaders could use to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders. This study included employee development, retention, and performance as elements of succession. Excluded from this study were recruitment, compensation, and benefits. Therefore, researchers should consider exploring how succession planning impacts external hiring and how organizations can compensate employees for pursuing new skills and roles. Interview data came from a publically traded company; excluded from the study were privately held and not-for-profit organizations.

There has not been extensive research done on how succession planning differs in not-for-profit organizations versus publically-traded organizations. Researching the differences in succession planning in different business types may help leaders in each type of organization apply best practices for succession planning. The findings of this study warrant additional exploration of succession planning processes in all businesses. The participants selected for interview had responsibility for talent management and succession planning which could be expanded to others within the organization in future research. I recommend other researchers explore succession strategies from the viewpoint of other employees.

In addition to the impact on employee engagement and knowledge retention, succession planning may have an impact on organizational profitability. Therefore, I

recommend research be conducted on the financial impact of succession planning on organizations. Organizational leaders who are reluctant to make the investment in succession planning may reconsider if a positive financial impact can be realized.

Reflections

My perspective and understanding of the doctoral process changed because of this study. Writing in a detailed but concise way and in a scholarly tone were not skills that I had mastered prior to embarking on this study. The detail and alignment of the concepts of the study challenged me for the duration of the study. Once the proposal was complete and the data from semistructured interviews were collected, the job of dissecting responses began and was more difficult and intimidating than I expected. Another challenge I experienced was the change of my doctoral study chair which took time to adjust to, but eventually became one of the primary reasons I was able to move my study forward to completion.

The doctoral study process helped me grow academically, professionally, and made me more inquisitive which has made me more confident. As I worked through the doctoral study process, I became a better student and a better teacher. I found that as I learned new research and writing skills, I shared them openly with my students which helped them evolve into better learners and writers. Completing the doctoral study process also helped me adapt more easily to different learning styles exhibited by my students. This has given me the confidence to begin teaching business writing which I did in the summer of 2015.

Finally, the insights I gained from my colleagues at the target organization made me proud to work for an organization with such profound thinkers. I have a professional relationship with each of them which made the process of data collection more efficient and the results more applicable to their jobs. All of the participants were pleased that I focused on a subject that they see as important to the success of the organization.

Summary and Study Conclusions

Gray (2014) asserted that succession planning is important to company leaders, yet there are organizational leaders who have not committed to developing and following succession plans. Organizational leaders must understand the links between succession planning, employee engagement, employee performance, knowledge management, and sustainability. Even though resource constraints are cited as a primary reason for the lack of effective succession planning, organizational leaders must find a way to implement processes that support succession planning and provide a view into the value added by succession planning.

Findings from this study indicate that organizational leaders have the desire to build and implement effective succession plans, but that they lack the expertise and resources to do so. Study participants asserted that if discipline improved, roles were defined via competency identification, a pool of succession-ready candidates was developed, and a sightline to the company-wide talent pool was made available, organizational leaders could be well prepared to replace departing leaders with qualified internal candidates through succession planning. Based on the results of this study, I conclude that organizational leaders must understand how succession planning helps to

motivate a workforce, ensures organizational knowledge stays within the organizations,

and leads to gains in competitive advantage.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of succession planning. The researcher is inviting organizational leaders who are responsible for developing succession planning programs and/or carrying out succession plans for their subordinates to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Andrew Cook, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You may already have knowledge of the researcher as a member of the participating organization, but that role is not as a participant role for this study. Participation is completely voluntary and does not present any conflict of interest between the participants and the researcher.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to explore how organizational leaders have applied succession planning to adequately replace departing leaders with qualified new leaders.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Participate in a single face-to-face or video-based interview that will consist of 10 open-ended questions.
- Your participation will require one hour.

Here are some sample questions:
- What strategies have been successful with succession planning at your organization?
- How effective do you think your company leaders are with succession planning?
- How does succession planning fit into your organization's overall talent management strategy?

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

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

A potential benefit of participating in the study could be documenting the current state of succession planning in your organization. This may lead to additional discussion within your organization and possibly a change in succession strategy.

Payment:
No payments will be made for your participation.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept on a secure hard drive locked in a filing cabinet at the researcher's home. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@gmail.com. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number 612-312-1210 (for US based participants). Walden University's approval number for this study is 08-13-15-0129815 and it expires on August 12, 2016.

Insert the phrase that matches the format of the study:
Please print or save this consent form for your records. (For online research)

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By replying to this email with the words, "I consent", I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

This appendix is a list of the interview questions I used for the study. The results of the interview questions were analyzed and included in Section 3 of the study.

1. How has succession planning been applied in your organization?

2. What strategies have been successful with succession planning at your organization?

3. What challenges do organizational leaders have with implementing succession planning?

4. What barriers exist for leaders in developing succession plans?

5. How effective do you think your company leaders are with succession planning?

6. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being no additional resources needed and 5 being significantly more resources needed, how do you rate your company leaders on dedicating resources to succession planning? Explain.

7. How is your organization's succession planning framework structured?

8. How does succession planning fit into your organization's overall talent management strategy?

9. How does talent management fit into your organization's overall strategy?

10. Describe anything else pertinent to the purpose of this study that was not addressed in the interview questions.

Appendix C: Organizational Permission Email

This appendix is the written permission to conduct research interviews on company time and at a company location.

Yes, that helps. I support.

From: Cook, Andrew

Sent: Tuesday, July 14, 2015 8:14 AM

To: XXXX

Subject: RE: Request for Research Interviews

Hi XXXX,

Did this answer your question?

Thanks much, Andy

Andrew Cook, PHR
Senior HR Analyst

From: Cook, Andrew

Sent: Sunday, July 12, 2015 7:24 PM

To: XXXX

Subject: RE: Request for Research Interviews

Hi Melissa,

I am conducting an exploratory study that will compare XX's succession planning process to succession trends from contemporary literature. I will also compare my research findings with a model that has been used in other succession planning studies called the practical ideal type conceptual framework. It states that successful succession plans have key components including top management support, professional development opportunities, focused individual attention, and others.

To accomplish this, I'll ask broad, open-ended questions about how succession planning is applied, what has worked, what challenges exist, how succession fits into the overall talent management strategy, etc. The research questions are attached if you'd like to see exactly what will be asked.

The data collection and findings will be strictly confidential. The company name, participant names, and all identifying characteristics of the company and participants will be excluded from the study. Participants will be identified using a coding system (E.g. P01-P05).

I hope this helps. Thank you again for your consideration.

Andy

Andrew Cook, PHR
Senior HR Analyst

From: XXXX

Sent: Sunday, July 12, 2015 5:24 PM

To: Cook, Andrew

Subject: Re: Request for Research Interviews

Andy,

What is your premise?

M.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 11, 2015, at 9:22 AM, Cook, Andrew wrote:

Hello XXXX,

I am pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration degree at Walden University and have chosen to research a case study focused on succession planning practices at XX. I will use face-to-face or video based interviews to collect data to complete the study. I have spoken informally to several members of your team including XXXX and XXXX who have expressed interest in participating in the interviews. With your permission, I will solicit other members of your team including XXXX and XXXX to participate. Participants will total at least 5, but could be more depending on how long it takes to achieve data saturation. In an effort to make interviewing as convenient as possible for participants, I would like to conduct interviews during the workday and on premises. Please respond to this email if you approve.

I'm happy to discuss this in more detail if you would like. Upon completion of my study,

I will provide a summary of the research findings to all participants.

Thank you for your consideration,

Andy

Andrew Cook, PHR
Senior HR Analyst