2016

Small Retail Business Owner Strategies Needed to Succeed Beyond 5 Years

Colonel Jaime Solis
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

COLONEL JAIME SOLIS

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

Review Committee

Dr. Greg Banks, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Peter Anthony, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Neil Mathur, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University

2016

Abstract

Small Retail Business Owner Strategies Needed to Succeed Beyond 5 Years

by

Colonel Jaime Solis

MBA, Bristol, University, 1993

BSBA, Saint Joseph College, 1990

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

June 2016

Abstract

Small businesses accounted for 99% of the firms in private industry, provided 38% of the goods and services sold in the United States, and hired 55% of the labor force each year between 2012 and 2015. From 1993 to 2013, small firms accounted for 63% of new work generated while more than 50% of U.S. small businesses failed inside of 5 years and at least 20% failed during the first year. The purpose of this multiunit case study was to explore the strategies small retail businesses used to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years in a purposefully selected county in Virginia. The conceptual framework combination of entrepreneurship theory and spillover knowledge theory served to focus this case study on the exploration of economic strategies owners used to succeed in business. Purposeful sampling was used to identify 4 small retail business owners who had achieved sustainability beyond 5 years. Methodological triangulation combined company financial records, synthesized transcribed interview data and reflective notes. The Van Manen method was used to perform data analysis using responses from face-to-face open-ended questions. Participants concurred with the transcribed summaries via member checking. Manual coding resulted in six themes related to small retail business sustainability including motivation, management practices, application of active leadership principles, sustaining positive energy, owner dedication and passion, and identifying and understanding employee values. Social change may be affected by the contributions to small firm strategies about profitability, sustainability, and success, and could influence enterprise and employee prosperity, improve family economic health, and strengthen local community markets.

Small Retail Business Owner Strategies Needed to Succeed Beyond 5 Years

by

Colonel Jaime Solis

MBA, Bristol, University, 1993

BSBA, Saint Joseph College, 1990

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

June 2016

Dedication

Una dedicación a mi bella esposa por su apoyo, el aliento y el amor, mientras que estos estudios de doctorado de maratón estaban en marcha en Bolivia y los Estados Unidos. Elvira eres el amor de mi vida ahora y para siempre. Tal vez es el "te amo" beso, el "comer fuera," la llamada "alta Popí," o viernes por la noche, sin ningún plan en absoluto.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, to my chair, thank you, Dr. Gregory Banks. Your support and conscientiousness about the project made the difference. The story needs telling, about what attention to detail, an excellent turnaround of work, outstanding mentoring, friendship, and guidance means to a doctoral student. The relationship between chair and student is a sacred bond that is crucial to the journey, and every step has now become a part of a fond memory. I extend heartfelt thanks to committee members Dr. Peter Anthony and Dr. Neil Mathur for their kind assistance and wisdom. Many thanks to Dr. Bruce Lazar for initial methodological insight. Thanks to faculty members Dr. Rocky Dwyer and Dr. Basil Considine for APA insight and the snares related to APA structural awareness. Thanks, Dr. Sean Stanley and Dr. Julia East for support and organizational development. Thanks to Dr. James Savard for concept and perceptions. Special thanks to Dr. Freda Turner, for astute vision and program direction, by the numbers. Finally, there is staff, who are too numerous to name here who have contributed to the success of this mission. Thank you, one and all.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The president of the United States sought the assistance of small businesses when the 2007–2009 economic crisis caused significant job losses (U.S. Small Business Association [SBA], 2014). President Obama also stated small businesses were the backbone of the American economy (SBA, 2014). Between 2012 and 2015, small businesses accounted for 99% of the firms in private industry, provided 38% of the goods and services sold in the United States, and hired 55% of the entire labor force (Alkali, 2012). From 1993 through the middle of 2013, small enterprises accounted for 63% of all new work generated (SBA, 2014). Arasti, Zandi, and Bahmani (2014) pointed out that more than 50% of U.S. small firms failed inside of 5 years. However, Arasti et al. also revealed that more than 20% failed during the first year. The role small businesses play in the economic growth of the United States is vital. Consequently, businesses should be able to have the greatest possible opportunity to succeed and be profitable.

Background of the Problem

Dahmen and Rodriquez (2014) noted that U.S. small businesses were the economic foundation of the country since its origination. Officials of the SBA (2014) defined a small business as a firm with no more than 500 employees. The number of U.S. small businesses in 2011 equaled 28.2 million, and in 17,700 of the companies considered in the research, workforce staffing was less than 500 employees (SBA, 2014). Almost 20% of all new work generated is due to small firm startups and established U.S. small businesses account for 50% (Criscuolo, Gal, & Menon, 2014). Such dynamism, Criscuolo et al. (2014) stipulated, inspired analysts to describe small firms as the primary stimulus for job expansion. Over the 10-year period, 1993 to mid-2013, about 63.4% of 23 million new U.S. jobs became available due to small businesses (SBA, 2014). However, approximately 64.5% of those enterprises failed to survive for more than 5 years (U.S. Census Bureau [USCB], 2014a). Small business startups create jobs but lack the entrepreneurial strategies needed to succeed in business beyond 5 years (Criscuolo et al., 2014). Further, human capital skills account for a significant aspect of enterprise success (Oberschachtsiek, 2012). There are at least 10 entrepreneurship skills. Namely, (a) planning and goal setting, (b) decision-making and human relations, (c) marketing, (d) venture launch, (e) finance and accounting, (f) growth management, and (g) management control and negotiation (Arasti et al., 2014). Debrulle, Maes, and Sels (2013) explained that certain qualities and abilities are essential to sustain entrepreneurial success. Entrepreneurship theory (ET) is a notion that clarified what entrepreneurial strategies small business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years.

Problem Statement

Within the first year of operation, 20% of U.S. small businesses fail, and half of those that survive are unsustainable for more than 5 years (Arasti et al., 2014). Officials at the SBA (2014) reported that about 544,000 new businesses originate each year; however, more businesses fail than start each year. Between 2012 and 2015, small enterprises accounted for almost 99% of all U.S. companies, their contribution to the GDP was nearly 37.8%, and they contributed about 54.9% of all the employees to the labor force (Alkali, 2012). The general business problem is new business owners establish economic endeavors without strategies or growth tactics, which leads to loss of jobs and business failures (Leitch, McMullan, & Harrison, 2013). The specific business problem is some small retail business owners lack entrepreneurial strategies to succeed beyond 5 years.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive multiunit case study was to determine the entrepreneurial strategies small retail business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years. The study participants consisted of four small business owners in Fairfax County, Virginia, with fewer than 50 employees that were profitable for at least 5 years. As of 2014, about 94% of the 109,117 small firms in the state of Virginia, or 102,941 enterprises, were located in Fairfax County (FCEDA, 2013). Fewer than 50 people worked in each of the 102,941 companies noted (FCEDA, 2013). Also, at least 15,497 of the 102,941 small businesses were in operation for 5 years or more (USCB, 2015a). The county population contained hundreds of potential study participants and was a suitable location for this research. The social change that is possible because of recognization of small business strategies about profitability sustainability and success could influence enterprise and employee prosperity, improve family economic health, and strengthen Fairfax County community markets.

Nature of the Study

In qualitative research studies, the typical designs are ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and case study (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Ethnography involves open or private participation in peoples' daily life while exploring their beliefs, feelings, and meaning of relationships, as the ethnographic subjects interact with the culture (Phakathi, 2013). This study did not include an investigation of cultures or communities; therefore, ethnography research was not an appropriate design. The research did not address or look at individual worldviews or lived experiences through in-depth interviews concerning everyday themes outlined by Dworkin (2012) in a description of phenomenology and grounded theory. Therefore, phenomenological or grounded theory designs were not appropriate for this study either.

Yin (2014) suggested using the descriptive case study with qualitative research method to describe a trend in its real-world context. Case study design involves investigating or analyzing a single-case or multiple-case units bound by time and activity (Yin, 2014). The selection of two or more cases in a multiple-case study expecting to produce similar findings is literal replication (Yin, 2014). Multiple case study, using the original replication model, applies to this research. Descriptive case studies illustrate events and their particular contexts (Yin, 2012). A descriptive, qualitative, multiunit case study design was the most appropriate approach for this study to determine what entrepreneurial strategies small business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years.

Research Question

Yin (2014) claimed using the word how or what, as the first word in a research question indicated that the design was a descriptive case study. The study had an overarching central research inquiry. The question proposed for this study was: What entrepreneurial strategies did small retail business owners use to succeed in business beyond 5 years?

Demographic and Selection

The demographic and selection process described the method used to group study participants, before using a protocol like the one contained in Appendix B. The protocol aligned member study boundaries, like the length of time at the location, years operating, company productivity, and the SBA (2014) definition of small business. The descriptive demographic also offers a significant amount of participant privacy. For example, research data did not contain personal information. The human population and decisive eligibility factors were:

- participant research coding with professional software for qualitative and mixed methods research (MAXQDA) established (P1 through P4) codes;
- participant name and address business coding, with MAXQDA, formed (P1 through P4) codes;
- participant gender coding, with MAXQDA, helped develop (M = male, F = female, and U = undisclosed) codes;
- date, time, and location of the interview;
- beginning and ending time of the interview;
- participant small business physical location and profitability years;
- participant position/s in the enterprise, age, and number of firm employees;
- participant overall experience in business and business education;
- the participant business experience in years and months;
- outline of participant financial profitability strategies; and
- name, type, length, and depiction, of strategy plan/s, project/s, and program/s.

Interview Questions

1. What are your overall business experiences and what were the industries?
2. What critical strategies did you lack when you first established this business?
3. What other small firms have you owned or managed before this enterprise?
4. What prior knowledge, skills, and abilities do you believe helped, or prepared, you for the first 5 years of small business ownership?
5. What strategies have you used to become profitable?
6. What are the key strategies you used to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
7. What management and financial strategies have been the most critical to business profitability?
8. What do you believe the profitability of your company has brought to you, your employees, your family, and the community?
9. What else would you like to share concerning your experiences of becoming a profitable and successful small business owner?

Conceptual Framework

During the 1930s and 1940s, Schumpeter (1939) presented ET to businesses as a transformation of economic innovation. In 1940, Cole (1946) a distinguished economist, led the United States to the enactment of this modification during seminars conducted at Harvard University. ET is a conception prototype for this qualitative descriptive multiunit case study designed to determine what entrepreneurial strategies small business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years. Galea (2012) contended the conceptual framework created a lens to understand better the context of the research.

Chikweche and Fletcher (2012) proffered that the area of the research problem faced by scholars provides new insights and advancement of previous studies. The conceptual framework of this study, ET, applies to business endeavors pursued by business owners and managers of large and small firms (Kerr, Nanda, & Rhodes-Kropf, 2014). ET builds its core functions of strategy and innovation upon a solid operational base achieved through the medium of business decisions that produce profitability and success (Cole, 1946). During occasional encounters faced by small business owners, the merging of experiences and strategies, as in a startup attempting to achieve commercial profitability, required decision-making (Chikweche & Fletcher, 2012). Concepts from the literature substantiate and complement the critical elements of ET like leadership, policymaking, motivation, management, sustainability, and profitability. Specifically, ET balances and informs the business related problem and could assist small firm owners in obtaining enterprise profitability.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions of terms helps present a shared view of the framework pertinent to the research:

Business success: Business success refers to a firm or company with sustained profitability for 5 years or more (SBA, 2014).

Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship is the aspect of creating innovative businesses, in the form of startups, manufacturing products, or providing services (Parilla, 2013).

Entrepreneurship theory (ET): The theory is a descriptive element of business efforts pursued by owners and managers of large and small firms. It includes key elements of sustainability, motivation, business education, management skills, and small business linked to entrepreneurship success (Ayala & Manzano, 2014; Schumpeter, 1939).

Human capital: Human capital refers to the possession of specific or previous experiences, such as knowledge, skills, abilities, and education to include family ties that comprise workplace practices, recognized and used by owners and managers (Quan & Huy, 2014).

Knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA): KSA are the business skills, experience, training, education, and abilities that enhance business owner capability to operate enterprises and sustain entrepreneurship (Debrulle et al., 2013).

Profitability: Profitability refers to income, or revenue, and expenses listed on an organization's statement of operations defined as either accounting or economic profits General Services Administration (GSA, 2011a).

Small business: A small business is a firm or company with fewer than 500 employees (SBA, 2014). The research took place in Fairfax County, Virginia, where more than 94% or 102,941 of the small businesses had workforces totaling less than 500 people (FCEDA, 2013).

Small Business Administration (SBA): SBA (2014) refers to a U.S. government agency that supports small businesses and other independent firms with counseling, aid, and other business-related efforts.

Strategy: Entrepreneurship policy is the firm creation, competitive advantages, new opportunities, and significant changes (Berman, 2012), and strategic process and support that affect company products and enterprise capabilities and services (Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

An assumption is an idea that is not personally controllable by the author, but if it does not exist, the study is not necessary (Simon & Goes, 2013). Facts assumed true but that are unverifiable are assumptions (Simon & Goes, 2013). This analysis encompassed a conjecture that data collected from members would prove measurable, withstand validity and reliability testing, and denote the status of the owner of the firm during the conduct of the interview.

There was an assumption that abiding by the selected procedure would enable a complete inductive data collection progression (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). Validity is the exercise of rigor, thoroughness, and consistency that delivers quality and precision to the research design and method (Taylor-Ritzler, Suarez-Balcazar, Garcia-Iriarte, Henry, & Balcazar, 2013). There was an assumption that a qualitative valid, reliable, and transferable criterion validation occurred, as Greenwood and Terry (2012) stated that those circumstances indicated that a comprehensive collection happened.

Brebels, De Cremer, Sedikides, and Van Hiel (2013) reported formless interview questions afford participants an opportunity to become philosophical. They assumed that a semistructured interview process could prompt self-awareness. Brebels et al. posited that self-reflection had a positive effect when empathetic questions inspired perceptive face-to-face communications in the study. There was an assumption that insight gained from interviews was actionable for this doctoral study and the needs of scholarly research critical to small business owners.

Limitations

Limitations relevant to a qualitative study relate to validity and reliability (Simon & Goes, 2013). The case study method involves the behavior of one person, group, or organization and contains restrictions a researcher could find uncontrollable (Simon & Goes, 2013). The number of participant questions may not afford a view of the phenomenon broad enough to obtain data saturation. The study was open to a limitation about the absence of the assurance of full and open interaction by the participants.

A second limitation was the geographical selection of only Fairfax County, Virginia. Other researchers could verify boundary restrictions that prevent study findings from several generalizations. The study limitations extended to method and design, which may have affected conclusions drawn from the results. Limitations could also exist because of lack of access to certain company documents and individual data.

Advances in learning too strongly rooted in what we know limit what we could know (Gioia et al., 2013). Limitations may surface due to lack of a clear understanding that business owners and entrepreneurs are the same. Another limitation was that the study focused only on businesses with 50 or fewer employees, and not medium or large companies with at least 500 employees.

Delimitations

Delimitations are those characteristics and restrictions that reduce the range and define study limitations (Simon & Goes, 2013). Researchers must delimit, combine, and place original contents in context with theoretical frameworks (Lomborg, 2012). The geographical interview area bounded by and limited to Fairfax County, Virginia, contains thousands of small businesses that could provide small business owners capable of becoming viable research participants. Time-based restrictions, created due to unanticipated participant influences or reactions, or prolonged predetermined study completion goals, appeared to be delimiting factors.

Significance of the Study

In the United States, the high small business failure rate is a significant issue. Small firms support the economic health and wellbeing of the economy. Indeed, small business entrepreneurs created a net 62.9% of the starting new jobs produced from 1993 through the middle of 2013 (SBA, 2014). Just as important, small business firms in the 20–499 employee category led employment during the same period (SBA, 2014). In 2012, the number of small enterprises in Fairfax County, Virginia, exceeded 129,636 (USCB, 2013). As of 2014, there were 109,512 small firms in the county (USCB, 2014b). More than 94%, or 102,941, were enterprises with a workforce of fewer than 50 workers (FCEDA, 2013). Fairfax County had 15,497 small businesses in operation for 5 years or more (USCB, 2015b). Therefore, despite the fact that the participant sample size used in this research was small, a significant pool of firms remain that offer opportunity for multiple case studies using an accurate replication model.

Contribution to Business Practice

During 2012 through 2015, enterprise owners produced two-thirds of all free enterprise jobs and generated 50% of the private industry workforce (SBA, 2014). Officials at the Kauffman Institution proclaimed startups less than 5 years old produced the highest U.S. job increases (Fairlie, 2013). The U.S. underwent a pecuniary disturbance between 2007 and 2009 and firms are still suffering from the financial turmoil (Kovacevich, 2014). Representatives at SBA (2014) announced that in 2003 economic instability was evident when more than 40,212 owners filed for personal bankruptcy as an alternative to business bankruptcy. The SBA labeled this process serial entrepreneurship failure. The capacity to perceive reasons and causes of failure could offer knowledge that helps entrepreneurs to succeed. The literature review in this study uncovered a one-sidedness in the research concerning owner profits, achievements, and the importance of management skill and expertise.

Implications for Social Change

Since 1980, net job change had been negative without the growth from small business startups (SBA, 2014). Because of the role small businesses play in the material culture of the United States, it is important that small firms succeed in stimulating U.S. economic growth. Shukla and Skukla (2014) revealed that small businesses are job creators and the economic growth engines of the country. This study contributed to future small business profitability and use of human capital. What is more, the results of this study might be relevant to small businesses’ effect on the economy, impact growth, and improve the gross domestic income.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive multiunit case study was to determine what entrepreneurial strategies small business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years. Statistics reflect the reality of small business unsustainability. In fact, from 2000 to 2004 small business failures were constant at a rate of 51% (Quan & Huy, 2014). The advent of small business failure was not novel; 40 to 60% of U.S. firms with less than 5 years in business filed for bankruptcy between 1950 and 1987 (Quan & Huy, 2014). What is more, 80% of firms faced with economic failure reported a financial worth under $1 million, whereas 88% declared their workforce consisted of less than 20 individuals (Quan & Huy, 2014).

During 2012 and 2015, small businesses accounted for 99% of all public enterprises, provided 38% of the goods and services sold in the United States, and hired 55% of the entire labor force (Alkali, 2012). Also, Arasti et al. (2014) pointed out, over 50% of small businesses fail within the first 5 years, and more than 20% of that total collapse during the first year. The percentage of new U.S. jobs created by small businesses during 2014 was 68% (SBA, 2014). During the same year, small businesses employed 37% of all workers in U.S. technological fields (SBA, 2014).

The reason for this review of the professional and academic literature was to assess, analyze, and encapsulate current references related to the research topic. Wolcott (2014) suggested that the literature review enabled researchers to connect research to theory and method that complement and augment a study. Moreover, Rowley (2012) reported that the literature review helps scholars avoid chance replication of existing references and identifies significant contributions to available research. The literature review supports the topic and develops an understanding that contributes to the research (Rowley, 2012). The conceptual framework links well with the bibliography of sources, while offering more opportunities for evaluation of the study. The review also serves to embrace the subject field and identify future research questions (Rowley, 2012). The literature review, governed by the descriptive multiunit case study, was intended to explore entrepreneurial strategies small business owners used to become profitable in business beyond 5 years in Fairfax County, Virginia. Small business owners were interviewed using face-to-face, open-ended questions during semistructured interviews and subsequently provided company records to support study triangulation.

A literature review serves various purposes; however, some actions are very significant to the functionality of the literature review (Guarnieri, Sobreiro, Nagano, & Serrano, 2015). From a technical standpoint, literature reviews fit into one of two separate categories, traditional or systematic (Jolley et al., 2012). The traditional literature review consists of emerging issues geared to impending theoretical details, shorter yet suitable to new theoretical underpinnings (Guarnieri et al., 2015).

The systematic literature review (SLR) of established topics is a fully developed research report that requires careful analysis, which evolves into a conceptual, summarized finding (Guarnieri et al., 2015). Furthermore, the SLR is an involved process linked to a rigorous and transparent evaluation with stringent procedures for searching and analyzing sources (Guarnieri et al., 2015). Despite the SLR’s previous confinement to medical research, the fields of social sciences, economics, and goods and services now benefit from SLRs (Jolley et al., 2012). Moreover, the Science Direct database had leading journals in multiple disciplines that exhibit SLR values.

As an example, SLR evaluates journals in management, economics, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship theory, leadership, profitability, and so on (Guarnieri et al., 2015). Literature reviews also create significant new literature contributions (Hassini, Surti, & Searcy, 2012) and consolidate the topic areas in support of future research inquiries (Rowley, 2012). The process of evaluating, searching, and analyzing existing literature spanned numerous databases, and studied research literature related to the central research topic among relevant specialties; an SLR was appropriate for this study.

Search Strategy

The bulk of the resource data for this study came from business science and management databases available from the Walden University Online Library. The literature review contains more than 162 peer-reviewed articles, and 100% of the items are less than 5 years old. Simon and Goes (2013) offered that the overwhelming number of articles should be current and published within the past 5 years in scholarly journals. The all-encompassing academic document search started with the creation and use of several automated search strategies.

That process removed the need for constant individual attention to a particular searching procedure. In support of the data mining effort, a scheme collection included search systems and databases offered by the Walden Library. The databases searched included Google Scholar, Zotero, ProQuest, Sage Journals, Business Source Complete, and Emerald Management Journals. There were also browsing efforts confined to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, SBA, and the USCB. Also, scholarly seminal books and websites were of tremendous help in the hunt for reference materials. The peer review status of the sources was confirmed using the Ulrich Periodicals Directory. A variety of relevant resources searched within the conceptual framework and themes of the study paired well with Boolean identifier operators.

The phrases used were *small business, perceived business success strategies, small business strategy, small business profitability,* and *perceived business failure factors*. The search involved a broad array of primary reference materials for the years 2012 to 2015. The objective was to harvest substantive references that met scholarship rigor, depth, content relevancy, and peer review criteria. The winnowing of more than 3,000 documents from an inexact consortium of primary reference materials netted about 1,950 relevant articles, many qualifying peer-reviewed articles matched rigor standards but were of little use because of their earlier publication dates. Nevertheless, the opportunity to read and digest the contents of the numerous journals produced research benefits. For example, tracking reference lists helped create a rich repository from which extensive searching could further guide the hunt with a constant connectivity to my central research question.

Furthermore, extrapolating all of the new reference sources expanded the subject content and led the way to the thoughts and positions of scholars who had thoroughly researched essential elements attendant to the study question. The ability to study the related but unusable documents offered many prospects about significant, contextual topic-centric data, for additional learning, investigating, and researching. Keywords used in the search included *entrepreneur, entrepreneurship theory, Fairfax County, Virginia small business, entrepreneurship, small business strategy, and small business profitability*. Search terms included *business profitability*, *business success, business failure, small business experience, small business education, small business strategy, small business innovation,* and *Small Business Administration*. There was also a chance to draw parallels between the theories of small business owner strategy, profitability, sustainability, success, growth development, and failure.

Table 1.

Source Accountability

Reference type	Reference counts	Percentage of total references
Entire study		
Books	8	4%
Dissertations	4	2%
Peer-reviewed journals published within 5 years	162	87%
Peer-reviewed journals published before 2012	2	1%
Nonpeer reviewed journals published w/in 5 years	1	0%
Government websites/data	6	3%
Websites	2	1%
White papers	3	2%
Total references (books, journals, dissertations)	186	100%
Literature Review		Percentage of Lit Review
Peer-reviewed references percentage	98	100%
Total documents in literature review	98	60%
Percentage of total within the last 5 years	98	100%

Note. Peer-reviewed journals articles published within 5 years equal 162 of 186 sources (87%).

The review reflects a category structure search strategy with groups labeled as the merchant adventurer, entrepreneurship policies, and ET. Within the merchant adventurer group, there are eight subsections labeled ET, small business, perceived business success factors, the business effect on the economy, entrepreneurship strategies, Fairfax County, Virginia small business, and small business association.

Merchant Adventurer, Entrepreneurship Strategies, and Entrepreneurship Theory

Commercialized business transactions have occurred throughout the ages. Entrepreneurship theory brings together new principles and other elements of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs that matter significantly to the economy and the society (Acs, Audretsch, & Lehmann, 2013). The elements and notions of ET are substitutable when exhibited throughout this study as they replicate the roles and purposes of for-profit small business owners, managers, and operators. As an illustration, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the United Kingdom's (2012) guidelines defined ET as entrepreneurial concepts of originalities under real-world conditions, tendered by imaginative ideas. Hisrich (2014) advised that ET is a product or service creation requiring time and effort; an assumption of financial, emotional, and social risks leading to monetary rewards, independence; and personal satisfaction.

Elmuti, Khoury, and Omran (2012) called ET a compilation of enterprise developments representing business activities ranging from firms at the microbusiness level, up to and including, large corporate conglomerates such as Time Warner; leading to an understanding that some of ET's unified theories are leadership, management, and profitability. Parilla (2013) defined ET as accurate entrepreneurship critical theory applied by business owners while creating and growing organizations and opportunities. Alstete (2014) opined that small business owners in startups had not realized how significant practical planning is or what effect strategic ET had on growth and survival. Moreover, some of the reasons business owners present as the cause of failure to employ strategic ET planning are a lack of time, skills, knowledge, experience, trust, or openness, and a perception of high cost (Alstete, 2014).

These acknowledged excuses apply despite business owner opportunities to obtain critical ET planning information via countless books, websites, networking, college courses, and educational support systems (Alstete, 2014). A similar view, stated by Lechner and Gudmundsson (2014), is that ET performance must connect directly with an enterprise’s mission and values, with an emphasis on organizational and functional strategies involving firm characteristics and behavior. Further still, Elmuti et al. (2012) described ET in terms used by Peter Drucker, suggesting that ET is nothing more than a discipline, learned like any specialty. Moreover, lastly, Kerr et al. (2014) defined ET as the combined application of interest and elements of business-related trade and industry.

In this study, the chronological presentation of the literature is designed to portray a distinct outline of the evolution of ET from some of the oldest perspectives forward. Key elements include strategies, profitability, skills, business education, training, management, sustainability, success, or failure. More specifically, analysis of the academic literature provides explorative methodology learning to assist with the evaluation of the central study question about entrepreneurial strategies small business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years.

Merchant Adventurer

The earliest period. Marco Polo, who created a trade route to the Far East, is an example of an early entrepreneur. As an antecedent of today's venture capitalist, Shandrow (2015) believed that the adventurer brokered contracts to sell supplies and contracted with wholesalers for about 22% of the profits, including insurance. The entrepreneur assumed all emotional and physical risks, sold the products delivering 75% of the profits to the capitalist and retaining 25% for labor (Shandrow, 2015).

The Middle Ages. The term, *entrepreneur*, defined both the actor and the person managing large production projects. Handlers took no risks; they managed projects using resources provided by the country's government (Shandrow, 2015). Typically, entrepreneurs in the Middle Ages were members of the clergy who brokered transactions using valuable assets belonging to their country (Shandrow, 2015).

The 17th century. Merchant adventurers, in the combined roles of entrepreneur, risk-taker, and actor continued during the 17th century with the silver merchant Barthelemy de Laffemas (Hisrich, 2014). Entrepreneurs entered into fixed price contractual arrangements with governments to perform services or to supply products and assumed the profits or losses (Hisrich, 2014). Another example is John Law, an economist, and entrepreneur, who created a public bank to support a Mississippi Company merger in the New World (Hisrich, 2014). The monopoly crashed when Law raised coalition stock prices higher than the value of the banks' assets (Hisrich, 2014). Richard Cantillon, another economist, avoided such an error using an entrepreneurial theory of value that established merchants as actors who bought at a set price and sold at an uncertain price (Shandrow, 2015).

The 18th century. Capital providers and entrepreneurs performed separate and distinct tasks, an adaptation that mirrored the changing times (Hisrich, 2014). Eli Whitney in 18th and 19th centuries was unable to finance new technologies because an ongoing worldwide industrial revolution affected inventions (Shandrow, 2015). Finally, Whitney managed to fund development of the cotton gin by seizing British-owned property located in the United States (Shandrow, 2015).

The 19th century. Several significant events reflected entrepreneurial evolution early in the century. Entrepreneurs became a part of franchising sparked by the rise of Martha Matilda Harper, a former indentured servant and businessperson (Shandrow, 2015). Using a *franchise,* a French word meaning to free from servitude, Harper started a beauty shop empire in 1891 and ultimately produced 500 global franchises that changed the face of enterprise and coupled entrepreneurs with entrepreneurship (Shandrow, 2015).

Late in the 19th century and halfway through the 20th century, Thomas Edison, facing technology-funding difficulties, resorted to the use of private financing and borrowed from entrepreneurs instead of seeking the help of venture capitalists to finance research laboratories (Shandrow, 2015). Still later in the 19th century, economists eliminated any real distinction between owners, stock-owning managers, and nonstockholding silent partners (Kerr et al., 2014). At that point, entrepreneurs entered into for-profit enterprises, bought goods, provided services, and facilitated capital growth (Kerr et al., 2014). Moreover, the new opportunities to invest, and realize losses and profits, associated with capitalism, created a theory that all revenue, less expense, belonged to the entrepreneur (Kerr et al., 2014).

The 20th century. Early in the 20th century, Andrew Carnegie's 19th century exploits gained maturity and notice. He had drawn and adapted new technology, in the form of vital economic production aligned with ET transformation in the 19th century. He sold out to John P. Morgan in 1899 and gave his money away (Cole, 1946). The renowned industrialist was an American magnate in steel through incessant effectiveness and creative use of ET, and a working example of a real entrepreneur, generally responsible for the expansion of entrepreneurship in the 20th century (Cole, 1946). Further, the interchangeability and use of entrepreneur and innovator became familiar about the middle of the 20th century. The entrepreneurship principle helped promote innovative inventions, new expertise, and the creation of new industry products (Schumpeter, 1939). Private enterprise became an integral element of the capitalist process of creativity and expansion of ET (Schumpeter, 1939).

Industry innovator Edward Harriman worked tirelessly during the 19th century to restructure the railroad industry (Cole, 1946). His success also became evident in the 20th century with the advent of nationwide rail shipping. In a similar manner, John P. Morgan increased his wealth via the transformation and development of earlier 19th century acquisitions. He labored over the process of reformation of the New York financial district, and the nation banking trade. That success came about in the first quarter of the 20th century (Cole, 1946). There were many notable scientific, technological triumphs in the 20th century, like analog science by Vannevar Bush and computer science with Alan Turing (Cole, 1946).

The 21st century. Around 2005, the introduction of changes in functional processes, responsibilities, and definitions of company owners, managers, and agents, as relates to retail services, were revolutionary (Hisrich, 2014). The distinctions related to the roles of actor and change agent, became a significant aspect of the trend (Hisrich, 2014). The prevailing opinion became that actions of business owners, managers, agents, and contractors were all the same, type of performances (Hisrich, 2014).

Economic advancements tied to free enterprise activities, by owners and managers were consistent with the growth stages of ET (Hisrich, 2014). Entrepreneurs generated new industries and commerce that changed money values, adjudication, and receipt by ventures and consumers (Cole, 1946). Moreover, Cole (1946) theorized that there is a need for devotion, time, effort, and an assumption of critical risks that match a variety of entrepreneurship financial, emotional, and social constructs. Cole noted that personal self-satisfaction was a motivation, in addition to monetary reward, for becoming an independent businessperson.

Entrepreneurship Strategies

Free enterprise values related to affluence, financial progress, job establishment, and origination were recognized many years ago as being integral to entrepreneurship, and they evolved expeditiously over time (Ucbasaran et al., 2013). Conversely, economists acknowledged the work of Schumpeter (1939), yet entrepreneurship had not been the subject of substantial research and is mostly absent from standard textbooks

(Kerr et al., 2014). There were, however, researchers who advocated business owners seeking to prosper or gain a competitive edge should embrace strategies that expand entrepreneurship abilities (Farashah, 2013).

ET is a procedure used to explore small business strategies, initiatives, operations, and production (Nasr & Boujelbene, 2014). The focus of the study is profitability built on a contextual theory called ET. The researched literature centered on seven business-related activities value, strategy, experience, finance, achievement, management, and sustainability. Entrepreneurship strategy used during human asset management required searching as a part of the process of accumulating knowledge and skills needed to induce higher monetary gains and improvements in company plans (Jayawarna, Jones, & Macpherson, 2014). Further Jayawarna et al. (2014) suggested examining the entrepreneurial literature for capabilities related to KSAs. Many qualities small business owners need in support of new ventures hinge on early planning, learning, business experience, and competencies (Bae, Qian, Miao, & Fiet, 2014; Duval-Couetil, 2013; Elmuti et al., 2012).

Other scholars defined the process in a different way, which included an emphasis on business schools. However, their approach advised that commercial schooling is merely an organized way of knowing aspects of concrete operations (Arasti, Fakhrisadat, & Narges, 2014; Nasr & Boujelbene, 2014). Frankish et al. (2012) disagreed, stating that the direct role of the education aspect of human capital is managing banking, trading, financial resources, and possibly credit. Amirbekova, Tayauova, and Chowdhury (2014) reported that the majority of essential business issues influencing enterprises are the establishment of financial knowledge, its management, and impact on small business funding.

Acs et al. (2013) said that all available knowledge sets the stage for small business owners to develop entrepreneurship skills through a spillover knowledge theory. This realistic model displays a mixture of small business owner initiates and government legislative activities that merge, and thereby create a spillover knowledge concept. ET benefits from a variety of economic, industrial causes, all of which generate changes in independent enterprise productions.

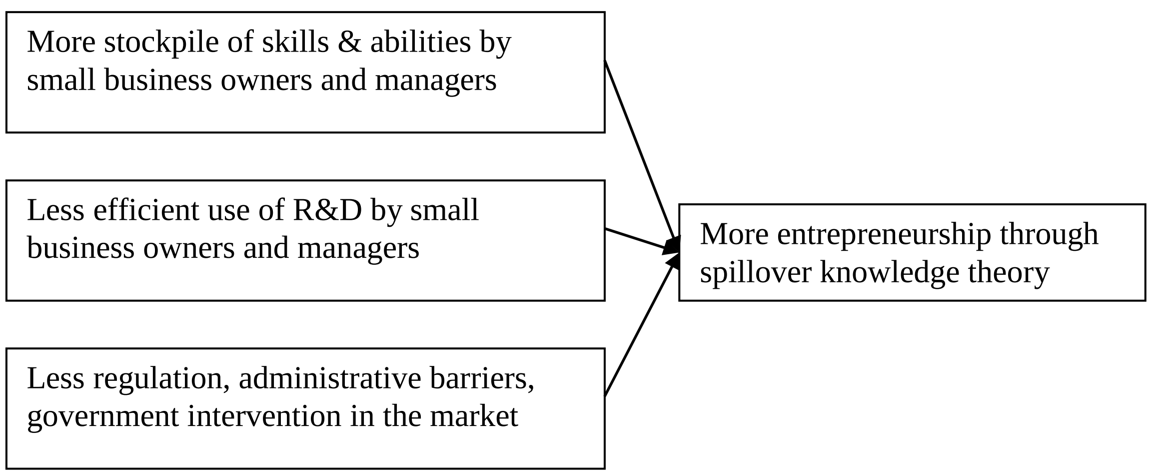

Figure 1. *Outline of spillover knowledge leading to more entrepreneurship. Adapted from "The Spillover Knowledge Theory of Entrepreneurship," by Z. J. Acs, D. B. Audretsch, and E. E. & Lehmann, 2013, Small Business Economics, 41, p. 758. Copyright September 16, 2013 by Inderscience Enterprises Ltd.*

Spillover knowledge is a component of firm productivity and is essential to the creation of strategic processes that influence company actions (Arasti, Fakhrisadat et al., 2014). A slightly contrasting view of this theory expressed by Ghobadi and D'Ambra (2012) conjectured that skills and abilities, related to managers and owners, are a principle element entrepreneurs need to comprehend the operational aspects of spillover theory fully. Moreover, Amel and Akkari (2012) reported that expertise, or implied propositions, created barriers to spillover knowledge during the exchange of information between small business owners and their employees. Thus, the compilation of small business spillover skills, knowledge, and performance directly influence economic growth, entrepreneurship, and profitability (Amirbekova et al., 2014).

There are multiple definitions of entrepreneurship. However, Arasti, Fakhrisadat et al. (2014) declared the most functional definition of entrepreneurship was bringing creative and innovative ideas together with management and organization talent to link money people and resources to create wealth. Much earlier, in 1927, Knight defined entrepreneurship as merely an investment under risk and known decisions about return distributions (Astebro, Holger, Ramana, & Weber, 2014).

Considering all elements of the free enterprise, Kerr et al. (2014) remarked that entrepreneurship, as a part of ET, is both essential components of transformation and experimentation, which encompassed small business economic development and business education, in addition to the enterprise experience. Wright and Wallis (2015) traced the definition of entrepreneurship and raised questions about how business schools struggled to teach entrepreneurship, and scholarly business publication definitions proved to be inexact and uncertain. For example, Wright and Wallis noted the definition of entrepreneurship as a pursuit of chance with no concern for resources currently under control. Continuing with the complexity discovered during the research Wright and Wallis (2015) referenced an article defining entrepreneurs as those who identified a need, any need, and filled it. Bae et al. (2014) advanced a parallel notion of ET as organizing, managing, and assuming business risks. Alternatively, in a succinct definition Smith and Chimucheka (2014) described an entrepreneur as someone seeing a marketplace opening, collecting resources, establishing, and growing an enterprise to suit that condition. This debate in the literature about early and current definitions of ET, entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurs required additional studies to evaluate the character, utilization and influence of ET.

Despite the multiplicity of definitions, entrepreneurship and management theory complement and are both elements of the variety of managerial skills needed to administer a small enterprise successfully (Arasti, Fakhrisadat et al., 2014). There is the need for considerable skill to successfully launch a business, whereas the skill of negotiation had the lowest impact (Arasti, Fakhrisadat et al., 2014). When the level of expertise and abilities is high at business startup, the chances of a promising entrepreneurship are highest (Arasti, Fakhrisadat et al., 2014).

Multiple entrepreneurship components support the new business development process. For example, education, prior management experience in economic activities, role models, government knowledge, and finances linked to business startup (Bae et al., 2014). Some of the reviewed literature highlighted firm owners collecting and linking information to develop opportunities, around strategies needed to become successful in entrepreneurship commerce (Bae et al., 2014; Duval-Couetil, 2013). Then, skills that are integrated routines, combining knowledge and abilities with perceived environment and interesting use (Arasti, Fakhrisadat et al., 2014).

Granted that evidence indicates strategies necessary to succeed are clearly identified, the business knowledge required to operate a small business is vast. For instance, there is the relationship to entrepreneurship return on investment (ROI) which is critical to profitability (Smith & Chimucheka, 2014). Indeed, ROI fluctuates between small and medium and at times with very high variance (Smith & Chimucheka, 2014). The knowledge requirement is paramount because Smith and Chimucheka (2014) stated few ventures were very successful, and many failed, as a result of the failure to understand ROI.

On many occasions, firms suffer practical consequences due to the difficulties in obtaining adequate financing from external sources that Ibe, Moemena, Alozie, and Mbaeri (2015) described as an endless struggle to get sufficient funding from official external sources. The condition exists despite different institution and policy initiatives introduced by the federal government to address small business funding problems (Talbot, Mac, Bhaird, & Whittam, 2015). Moreover, studies noted that data irregularity is a primary cause of the growing firm finance gap. Federal credit unions function in set geographic regions (Talbot et al., 2015).

Figure 2 is a graphic display of the success and failure patterns of U.S. small business retail sales startups during from 2007 through 2012; the reference, was tailored to the sales shares of some small firms, measured over a span of 6 years. The notable finding was evident that micro enterprises and very new businesses are different regarding retail sales strategies, analysis, strategic content, handling of resources, and planning processes. Evaluating components of strategic management regarding such concerns presented sales imbalances for solo entrepreneurs and complications for new or subtle business owners.

For example, the numerical results indicated several facts when using a statistical pointer of sales. While most startups fail to succeed beyond 5 years, in the case of small retail sales enterprises, of 543,000 startup ventures during the period mentioned, most firms failed to reach 50% of sales; only one company reached 20% of sales, but all businesses were unable to sustain sales operations beyond 6 years.

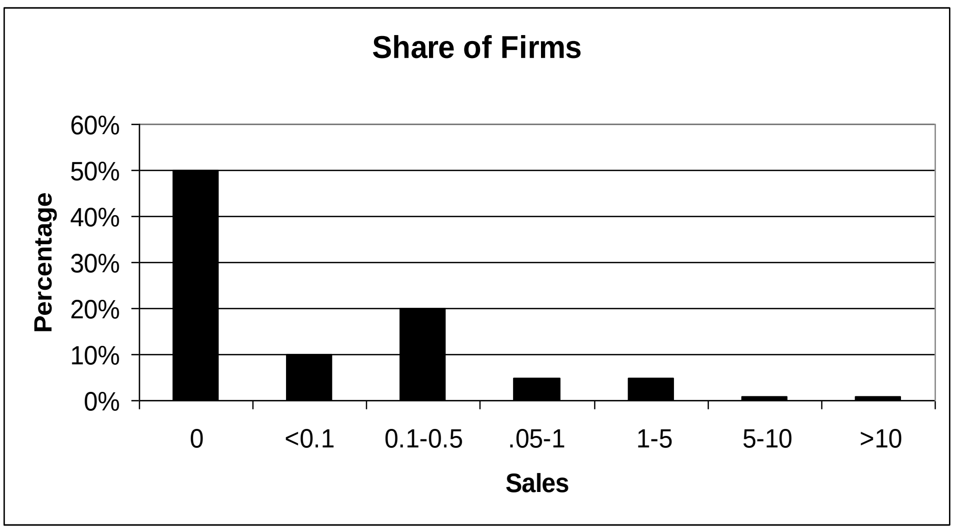

Figure 2. *Display of entrepreneurship success and failure. Sales after the sixth year (in millions) with the share of 543,000 startup firms in 2007 that either failed or achieved a certain level of sales by 2012. Adapted from The Statistical Abstract by the U.S. Census Bureau, 2013. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov. In the public domain.*

Entrepreneurship Theory (ET)

Schumpeter (1939) introduced ET as an innovation revolution into the United States small firm economics in 1934. Soon after in 1934, ET evolved as Schumpeter combined innovation, industrial undersupplied work design with ET (see Figure 3), and changed the commerce trade. Fiscal theorist knew little financial history in 1934 and paid slight attention to monetary theory (Schumpeter, 1939). This situation prevailed in 1934 despite evidence of the progress of economic conversion, which demonstrated that a combination of entrepreneurial elements, such as management, strategy, attribution, concept, and profitability flowed into ET. For example, commercial elements of the spillover knowledge theory contributed to economic growth resulting from technological change affecting shifts in the costs and benefits of contextual factors related to new venture creation (Acs et al., 2013).

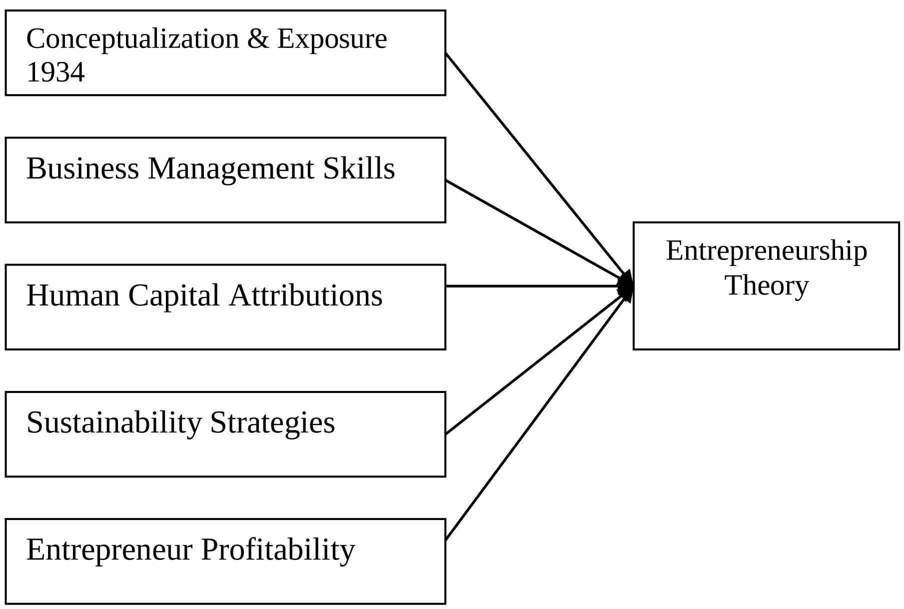

Figure 3. ET as the premise applies to business creation and profitability.

Still, scholars paid hardly any attention to ET, even though the confluence of small business strategy, leadership, management, innovation and economic history grew (Cole, 1946). In the early 1940s, small business commercial enterprises began focusing directly on ET (Hisrich, 2014). The center of U.S. trade gravity at that time rested with, and among, social networks of small family-owned firms. During the economic growth period that started in 1945, entrepreneurship and small firm ownership increased (Cole, 1946). The new entrepreneurs consisted of a growing college-educated pool of World War II veterans (Hisrich, 2014). The character of the majority of small businesses changed dramatically starting in the middle of the 20th century (Hisrich, 2014). Small business entrepreneurs became skilled craftsmen, accountants, doctors, retailers, store clerks, cobblers, sales agents, plumbers, electricians, and many other types of professionals (Cole, 1946).

ET had broad applicability and expanded through a variety of connecting specialties in many congruent disciplines (Frankish, Roberts, Coad, Spears, & Storey, 2012). However, Roberts, Galluch, Dinger, and Grover (2012) believed that knowledge flowed through the organization and facilitated appropriate structures and process. On the other hand, Hewege (2012) argued that leadership style, applied through a general management control theory, known as the classical theory, a hybrid leadership style facilitated productive entrepreneurship.

Bergsteiner and Avery (2012) concluded that sustainability, including the aspect of poor leadership practices, was the essential factor in business success and profitability. They noted that ET with stakeholder-first as a primary objective enhanced sustainability practices via the creation of a performance standard for business improvement (Bergsteiner & Avery, 2012). In opposition to that position, Elmuti et al. (2012) announced that U.S. entrepreneurship leadership and management often proved that few entrepreneurs knew what to do, and many lacked methodology and strategies while also violating well-known fundamental rules. Further, they stipulated, that to improve this condition, entrepreneurial training programs in the United States and Europe offer a practical application of ET. Thus, Elmuti et al. emphasized ET analysis have become a vehicle that exposes small business owner deficiencies. Equally important, Kuratko (2013) observed that scholars debated the nature of the entrepreneur, the definition of entrepreneurship, and the theory and environmental conditions that give rise to success and much more. Besides, Bublak (2013) proposed an infusion of ideas and suggested that leadership theory was mainly consistent in cases of progressive organization profiles, and productivity.

More so, Bublak (2013) explored obstacles to small business and participation in federal contracting that supported international commerce and found entrepreneurs routinely face internal barriers when competing for federal contracts due to an absence of proper training and poor leadership. The lack of strategies and persuasiveness on the part of individual business owners is the critical missing element in international entrepreneurship development (Bublak, 2013). In sharp contrast to Bublak, Holloway, and Wheeler (2013) proposed many owners often possess strong leadership work ethics and demonstrate an innate capability to improve and expand business on an international basis. Fernandez, Malatesta, and Smith (2013) opined that small business diversification is an important link to entrepreneurial development.

Fernandez et al. (2013) insisted that the objective of inclusion of minority senior executives, with leadership strengths, be necessary to the acquisition of small business federal contract set-asides. Then, Parilla (2013) noted that no exceptional efficiency had to be present to implement management theory during new business startups or the execution of entrepreneurship strategies for development of new products and services. Similarly, Pellegrino, Piva, and Vivarelli (2013) advised that management theory enabled small business startups to survive the introduction of new products and establish a leading position at the core of emerging industrial sectors. In contrast, Christensen (2013) emphasized that the best firms thrive by listening to customers and investing aggressively in the products that satisfied the needs of next-generation clients.

Kuechle (2013) proposed that business owners be overconfident and well-calibrated decision-makers, who could survive and succeed. What is more, Chen (2013) suggested that voluntary exiting was sometimes the method businesspeople used to sell past enterprises and launch new firms. In effect, researchers disagreed with the view that studies covering relevant businesses topics during the past 20 years neglected to discover and document small business successes. In fact, Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013) explained that because small business success is an observant phenomenon, profitability is a concrete measure of entrepreneurial success. Indeed, Ritchie et al. emphasized that environmental and social forms of prosperity, along with traditional economic affluence, align theoretically with the concept of entrepreneurial profitability theory. Also, Sarasvathy, Menon, and Kuechle (2013) contended that small business owners used entrepreneurship practices to increase the probability of commercial success. Moreover, Ritchie et al. showed that leadership and small business profitability are significant elements of entrepreneurship. Specifically, Aldrich and Yang (2014) maintained a position that the value of entrepreneurship on a large-scale compares well with self-employment. Taking a different view, Jennings, Edwards, Jennings, and Delbridge (2014) declared business owners displayed a subjective feeling of pleasure because of ownership. Alternately, Khan and Adnan (2014) approached leadership theory from the perspective of executive performance and dependence on set goals and objectives. However, Tourish (2014) maintained a somewhat altered view, focusing on transformational leadership theory and arguing that leaders happen to be the center of stable enterprises where greater activity comes from the leaders, not the followers. Still, Pellegrino et al. (2014) questioned whether startups could be research and experimentation (R&E) based and capable of leading a science-based reorientation of the industry management structure. Extending that perception they opined that startups are weaker than management incumbents and, therefore, depend on external R&E knowledge provided by large mature firms and research institutions. More importantly, Pellegrino et al. reported that ET is consistent with the Schumpeterian concept of creative destruction.

Besides, ET integrates research and development and also supports prototype material accumulations required for innovation by established firms. Then again, Tiftik, Kılıc, and Saglam (2015) declared leadership varied according to individual environments and unspecified times. As an example, they offered, business leaders flourished despite periods of nonproductivity and government contracting difficulties. Those scholars and others referred to ET as the research of opportunities, their origins, nature, and evolution.

Leadership, as well as many of the other theories extended, does not serve the conceptual framework of this study as well as ET. Neither do some classical theories that microbusinesses better serve, which contain a workforce of 50 employees or fewer. However, with the profitability theory, there is a precise alignment of performance, productivity, success, and small business owner viability. In summary, a literature gap exists about small business performance, sustainability, and success beyond 5 years, that needs additional clarification and resolution.

Small Business

The SBA (2014) defined a small business as a firm or company with fewer than 500 employees. A small enterprise or entrepreneurship effort referred to in this study matches the SBA definition, which is also explained, and expanded in Elmuti et al. (2012). Moreover, the small business definition varies, and in some instances, it could be 10 workers or less (Elmuti et al., 2012). Further, the study definition is consistent with small business employee descriptions in comprehensive sources such as Mantzos, Capros, Kouvaritakis, and Zeka-Paschou (2003) and World Bank (2016).

Explanations of size and classification of company employees vary. They are enormous over 500 and large between 200 and 500 (Elmuti et al., 2012). Also, there are medium between 50 and 200, small between 10 and 50, and micro fewer than 10 (Kreiser, Marino, Kuratko, & Weaver, 2013). Companies with 20–499 employees lead in job creation (SBA, 2014). Small businesses contribute substantially to the U.S. economy, but some are unable to sustain operations beyond 5 years, and firm death is very high (Albliwi, Antony, Halim, & van der Wiele, 2014). Only half of all startup ventures survive more than 5 years (Lueg, Malinauskaite, & Marinova, 2014). Many small firm owners fail to choose the proper time and circumstance to focus on growth or make sustainable strategy achievement a top priority (McManus & Floyd, 2013). However, since 1953, when Congress established the SBA, small businesses participated in the goal of public contracting. Indeed, entrepreneurs are aware that entrepreneurship and new innovative strategies are hard to secure without financing (McManus & Floyd, 2013). Thus, ownership resiliency is essential and required during business downturns, particularly when banking and other agreements impact business operations and potential profitability (McManus & Floyd, 2013).

In an attempt to assist small businesses, the federal government established clear policy emphasis on small business promotion and development (GSA, 2011b). However, small firm owners had little success using government contracting programs (Snider, Kidalov, & Rendon, 2013). The principal hurdle was that there were unspecified goals, set-asides, and preferences that benefit various special interest groups (Snider et al., 2013). Since 1984, the U.S. government, as the primary procurer of U.S. commodities and services, established new yearly contracting dollar goals (GSA, 2011a). However, the program is still not successful in meeting acquisition objectives for small business assets set at 23%, for women-owned companies and at 5%, for other minority-owned firms, of 5% of the yearly federal procurement dollars (GSA, 2011a)

In short, Snider et al. (2013) suggested that increases in opportunities remain unobtainable, due to program requirements established and regulated by the SBA. More specifically, federal procurement personnel workloads and shortages prevent effective program enforcement (Snider et al., 2013). The disparity, McManus and Floyd (2013) proposed, is that some of the small business problems that prevent sustainability are cheap credit, angel capital, and rapid growth. Kreiser et al. (2013) emphasized that small business must form strategically for contingencies and focus on maximizing growth in the short term.

Perceived Business Success Strategies

Starting a business and becoming profitable is uncertainty; thus, the percentage of firms failing to reach the end of the first 5 years had been consistently high (SBA, 2014). Small business management challenges are greater now than in times past (Jenkins, Wiklund, & Brundin, 2014). For example, representatives at SBA (2014) noted that the maturity of a firm enhances and adds to the likelihood of a perpetual business existence. Further, statistically, it appears that the longer a company had been in operation, the better the survival rate (Amel & Akkari, 2012). More importantly, Kim (2014) stated that entrepreneurs who lack supervisory talents are the greatest obstacle to robust growth and profitability.

Then, Marom and Lussier (2014) argued, that to increase their chances of success and profitability, small businesses must, at least, have adequate capital, and maintain records of finances, to prevent failure. Heinze (2013) concluded that inconsistent business performance, lack of purposeful strategies and minimal entrepreneur knowledge, caused financial failure. Often, a roadblock to small business success, and a major contributor to firm failure is the insufficiency of readily available capital (Gartner, Frid, & Alexander, 2012). Hamrouni and Akkari (2012) offered that there are distinct causes of small business failure prompted by owner inactions, and at other times actions. Such evidence appears in the form of the absence of strategy, weak interactions, and an inability to develop teamwork, attain and sustain cooperation (Hamrouni & Akkari, 2012). Several types of performance failures occur with more frequency than others, like the incapacity to meet scheduled production timeframes, inability to meet or match firm expectations, and, most often, budget depletion (Garg & Garg, 2013). Small business failures are common business risks that peak at different enterprise ages (Amel & Akkari, 2012). More so, Leroy, Manigart, Meuleman, and Collewaert (2015) acknowledged, that whether precipitated by financial collapse or total abandonment, cessation of enterprise operations are usually final. Ucbasaran, Shepherd, Lockett, and Lyon (2013) offered that bankruptcy could be the result of business instability, influenced by poor performance, and an absence of profitability. A description of such companies, reported by Arasti et al. (2014) revealed the business failure profile majority as small, unincorporated, nonemployer, new firms, engaged in fresh starts after bankruptcy proceedings.

In the United States, there were 33,212 business bankruptcies during 2013, about 7,000 liquidations less than the prior year (SBA, 2014). Leroy et al. (2015) surmised that companies that understood their potencies and flaws prevented bankruptcy, but various inadequacies led to business liquidation and collapse. Leroy et al. submitted that small business clear-cut failure activity almost always produced bankruptcy. In other instances, Kovacevich (2014) reminded, bankruptcies are creditor induced, and Leroy et al. added that court action could be the result of the failure of a firm to repay a debt. Also, Ucbasaran et al. (2013) conveyed that a limited form of financial disruption, and firm dissolution, came from small business economic discontinuity or failure. Leroy et al. added that in many cases, where owners experienced financial difficulties, and filed for bankruptcy, a classification of hybrid, serial, or portfolio, entrepreneurship applied. Garg and Garg (2013) defined a portfolio entrepreneur as a business owner with additional backup work roles, available as an emotional reward if the enterprise dissolves. Parker (2013) identified successive, repeated initiation of failing ventures, as serial entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, small business exits sometimes involve independent, secure closure pending pursuit of new entrepreneurial ventures, or retirement (Leroy et al., 2015; Meyer, 2014). Consequently, Ucbasaran et al. (2013) contended liquidation is not always a wide-ranging dissolution of ownership rights. Thus, a court ordered closure judgment, initiated by an owner or stockholders, is sometimes a method of firm exit and survival (Burdin, 2014). In opposition, Byrd, Ross, and Glackin (2013) declared, the absence of business credit is vital, and small businesses survive, or fail, based on credit accessibility. However, identifying the financial weaknesses of small businesses is a regulatory responsibility Fadahunsi (2012) described as necessary for activities needing a recommendation for appropriate accounting practices before exit is compulsory.

Other scholars such as Debrulle et al. (2013) believed that new firms, unlike established enterprises, suffer from a liability of newness, thereby increasing their propensity to fail. In disagreement, Byrd et al. (2013) noted that small business owners nationwide concurred that their primary obstacle to growth was insufficient access to capital. In agreement, Byrd et al. expressed that small business finances were necessary for long-term acquisitions, and working capital to cover fixed-asset purchases. The restrictive nature of financial barriers was also studied by scholars (Byrd et al., 2013;

Cumming & Li, 2013; Gartner et al., 2012). What is more, the complexities of regulatory compliance are more problematic for small businesses than for larger firms (Hamrouni & Akkari, 2012). To punctuate that point, Jenkins et al. (2014) hypothesized small business owners, with leadership, performance, and regulatory issues, make a transition from self-employment into unemployment, as a means of personal survival.

Hamrouni and Akkari (2012) specified that there are many reasons for owner exit from self-employment, most related to poor small business leadership performance. Namely, absent leadership, bad communication skills, lack of trust, infrequent planning preparation, and no personnel and employer alliances (Hamrouni & Akkari, 2012). Another aspect of small business instability Bisel, Messersmith, and Kelley (2012) contended, is that industry leadership suffers when superiors rely on core chiefs, which destabilize governance with a graded taciturn pretentiousness. That is to say, Bergsteiner and Avery (2012) declared, key managers are self-motivated and manage to avoid certain leader qualities that produce negative feelings or damage to manager-owner business relationships, thereby creating business advisors that are not always reliable.

Behrens and Ernst (2014) identified leadership strategy as a critical influence on firm performance; however, Ames (2012) signaled that deficiencies of technical skills are the most pressing matters attended to small business dysfunction and an early exit. By way of contrast, Amankwah-Amoah (2014) noted that absence of leadership strategies, such as empowerment, inclusiveness, principles, and project direction, hastened enterprise failure. Bergsteiner and Avery (2012) proclaimed that business leaders should be innovative, proactive, strategic, and risk adverse, while Mirocha, Bents, LaBrosse, and

Rietow (2013) asserted successful leadership programs, systems, and processes are often beyond the resources of small firms. In some cases, Burdin (2014) imparted, studies contained data reflecting how small owners functioned as structural obstacles, due to internal inefficiencies that impeded performance, and led to higher exit rates than most traditional firms. Further, Burdin advised, firm survival is frequently dependent upon the company size, and often analysis reflected elapsed time between firm entry and exit.

Other researchers, Blavin, Blumberg, Buettgens, Holahan, and McMorrow (2012) insisted that small business performance and leadership affect profitability, and the attainment of wealth, but for many owners salary and health insurance expenses are substantial critical challenges. Byrd et al. (2013) introduced similar study results showing significant small business health loss encounters. For instance, in 2011, small business entrepreneurs agreed health insurance costs accounted for almost 65% of earnings and remained their underlying profitability hurdle (Blavin et al., 2012).

Equally as important, Heinze (2013) labeled absence of small business education as leadership, and performance, impediment that caused profitability deficiency, and entity failure. Singh, Corner, and Pavlovich (2014) proposed that constant provocation is an absolute, in the event a small business owner needed and lacked business studies while facing the imminent prospect of failure. Elmuti et al. (2012) extended a theory that business owners with a high level of education perform better than entrepreneurs with little education. Researchers like Teck-Hong and Yong-Kean (2012) and Williams (2014) agreed that owners involved in continuing education had a lower risk of failure. Rideout and Gray (2013) believed education was critical to startup success, and schooling supported strategies needed during startup. However, Rideout and Gray (2013) emphasized that education requirements are different for various purposes, and stages of growth, development, and innovation. Jones, Matlay, and Maritz (2012) noted that to help reduce operating failures; business owners should take into consideration the need for comprehensive licensed training, and other necessary programs up to and including graduate education.

Still, Singh et al. (2014) argued that trained small business owners often find failure sometimes unavoidable. However, the experience is pervasive and painful for ventures, and the shock is the footnote of shame. Singh et al. described small business failure stigma as a potentially painful, and distressful experience. At the onset, the advent of negative media coverage prompts criticism leveled at unsuccessful owners. The result altered or deterred the desire to initiate future venture startups (Heinze, 2013; Singh et al., 2014). Marom and Lussier (2014) noted that compared to research about entrepreneurship, the study of business failure only started to receive serious attention beginning in the year 2000.

Failing small business owners make genuine efforts Hamrouni and Akkari (2012) explained, to slow down or stop new startup failure; using innovation, new product management, and exacting regulatory compliance. More so, when failure is evident, new orders or higher company stock returns, are not enough to change an exit viewed as a badge of honor (Haltiwanger, Jarmin, & Miranda, 2013). Entrepreneur research literature about business collapse now show that small business failure is valuable, but a painful learning experience (Byrd et al., 2013; Gartner et al., 2012; Jenkins et al., 2014). Hence, a combination of failure, and stigmatization, sometimes generates personal insights that transform some owners' view of business from a positive to a negative position (Arasti & Zandi et al., 2014; Ejrnces & Hochguertel, 2013; Li & Sun, 2013).

The failure experience causes an entrepreneur to lose self-confidence and creates monetary anxiety (Jenkins et al., 2014). The pain suffered by failing entrepreneurs relates to loss of self-worth, which promotes personal disappointment and damage to dignity (Marom & Lussier, 2014). Consequently, many scholars avoid acknowledging failure, as does the society as a whole (Marom & Lussier, 2014). Again, studies contain uncertainty about business failure causality, and failure precursors, as opposed to consequence failure investigation (Marom & Lussier, 2014). However, Abatecola (2013) stipulated that failing business owners could still succeed, become profitable, and survive; Ryanair, Zalando, Gucci, and Google, and many others are examples.

However, owners beginning to fail in business are grief-stricken, and an introduction to self-evaluation forms, as the grief belief grows, along with an honest appraisal of the traumatic happening that guides an individual's response to the encounter (Jenkins et al., 2014). Self-assessment of personal injury, or loss, elevates pain due to loss of assets and ultimately grief reaction ensues (Marom & Lussier, 2014). Before and after failing, extreme pain and humiliation distress business owners in their activities, judgment, and performance (Fadahunsi, 2012). Meanwhile, there is little research on the effects of entrepreneurial disgrace and confusion fills that vacuum (Fadahunsi, 2012). Alternatively, Jenkins et al. (2014) suggested there are studies related to stigmatization, but none directly related to initial grief. In most cases, Fadahunsi (2012) noted, pain progression begins in advance of and not after failure while contributing to project death. Burdin (2014) stated the need for critical survival factors about failures, based on the evolutionary stages of a small firm's life cycle.

There are significant issues relevant to the enterprise failure and owner grief debate with little notice of the special status of the worker-managed firm (WMF) and nonemployer enterprise (Burdin, 2014). In most instances, WMF and nonemployer peculiarities are not compared to traditional companies by measuring their various business operations, but instead, are accounted for in firm opening and closing statistics (Burdin, 2014). Consequently, Fadahunsi (2012) conveyed the need for WMF and small firm nonemployer, financial health assessments before and after failure. The body of literature on the psychological aspects of bankruptcy loss, and resultant failure-grief is sparse and inconsistent (Hutchison-Krupat & Chao, 2014; Yang & Aldrich, 2012).

Business Effect on the Economy

In the United States, a small firm is defined by its number of employees, a single company with no more than 500 workers, is considered a small business (SBA, 2014). Also, small firms represent an ever-expanding population of enterprises in the U.S. economy (SBA, 2012). Consequently, this emergent sector had gained a reputation as the primary economic engine for U.S. job growth and innovation (Gale & Brown, 2013). Small businesses now more than before, seek to take advantage of federal contracting opportunities offered by the federal government as the SBA consistently raises its support focus. Just to be clear, Mirocha et al. (2013) decreed, resource ideas, and the various framework required to develop successful leadership programs, systems, and processes, are usually not what most small businesses accomplished. Nevertheless, there is evidence that federal contracting is flowing to small businesses, as the firms leverage their efforts in certain industries and seek the support of critical economic assets (Mirocha et al., 2013). In that regard, due to the increased contracting activity between SBA and small business enterprises, administrators at the SBA (2014) pointed out that the bulk of federal government sales to small firms came from the Department of Defense.

Meanwhile, SBA (2014) officials published statistical data to demonstrate the success of the government's small business federal contracting initiative. Results showed that in 2012, approximately 21% of small conventional enterprises, of which 7% were nonprofits, obtained government contracts (SBA, 2014). The small business effect on the U.S. economy in 2013, attributed to SBA counseling, aid, and contract assistance, is reflected by increased federal revenue from taxes on nonemployer firms operating as sole proprietors, subchapter corporations, and partnerships, all taxed at individual rates (SBA, 2014). However, SBA officials also indicated that their advice and other business-related efforts did not address critical financial concerns plaguing startups and other small enterprises.

Clearly, the small business community had financing problems that available federal programs or SBA assistance cannot solve. Indeed, owners must gain access to short-and long-term capital financing themselves. However, private sector loan programs, designed to provide financial support for founders, and other small businesses owners, offer loans containing excessive interest rates (Chandler, 2012). A principle understanding lenders factor into financing decisions is a thorough understanding of a small business's growth potential, which according to statistics is about 70% of all startups, categorized as the lifestyle and created to earn income only to survive (Chandler, 2012). Therefore, the result is that many potential owners seeking commercial loans, equity loans, angel loans, or other financial arrangements resort to personal savings to finance their small entities, and others borrow from family and friends (Brau, Cardell, & Woodworth, 2015).

No matter the method used to launch a small business venture, there is an effect on the economy. An additional example of the small firm's value to the economy comes from patent production. Representatives at SBA (2014) explained that since 2010, U.S. small businesses created over 15 patents each year, or a rate of production of 16 patents more per employee, than enterprises with more than 500 workers. Also, total enterprise value, a measure of total firm worth, expands with small business growth in equity market capital, and increases economic worth (GSA, 2011b). Further, firms substantially strengthen company proceeds and value and reduce market capital and minority debt interest (GSA, 2011b). The effect on the economy is significant given the noted importance of these small business community initiatives.

The level of small business profitability and its impact on the economy are two components unswervingly associated with small business strategy and execution. Therefore, an examination of the type of profitable strategies that small businesses used that contributed to firm sustainment and success is critical, especially considering the high percentage of business failures. For this study business success is deemed to be profitability extending more than 5 years of operations. To be sure, the effect of small business on the economy is understandable considering that in 2012, large companies employed 51.6%, small firms 17.6%, microbusinesses 16.7%, and medium enterprises 14.0%, of the workforce (USCB, 2015a). More so, from 2003 to 2012, there were 49.6 million enterprises each with fewer than 500 employees (USCB, 2015a). In fact, during 2012, 5,707,941 million firms operated 6,232,434 businesses and employed 56,062,893 million workers (USCB, 2015a). Furthermore, the majority of companies represented were small business-nonemployer firms with growth throughout the last decade (SBA, 2014). However, total employment and company size favors large companies by a sizeable percentage (see Figure 4). Thus, the critical performance marker here is an indication that large entities operate at slightly over 50% of total employment.

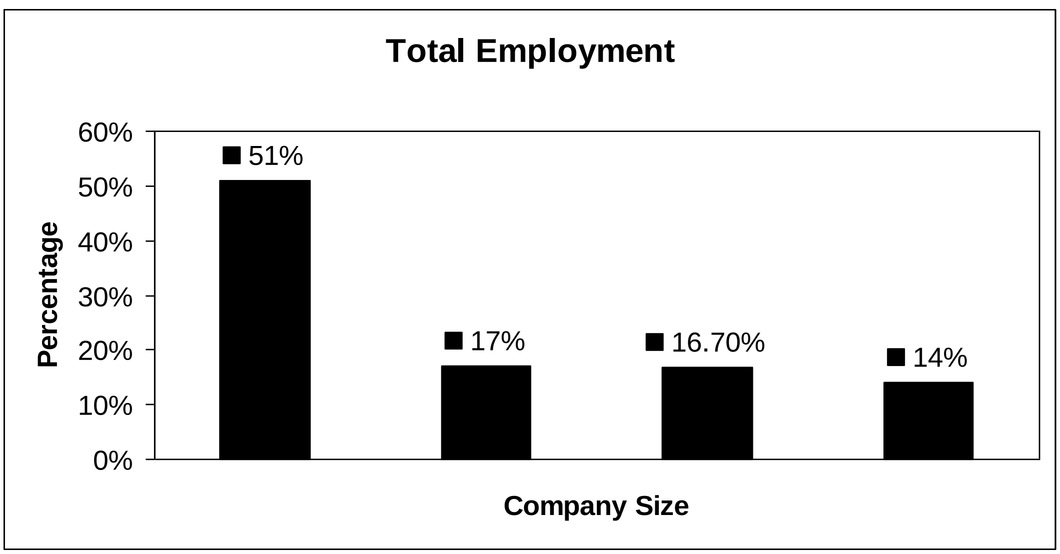

Figure 4. Model of total employment percentages in 2012. Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding. Adapted from *Statistics of United States Businesses*, by the United States Census Bureau, 2012. http://www.census.gov/econ/susb/. In the public domain.

Of significant relevance to the small business effect on the economy is the growth trend in jobs, which continually expands despite the fact that nonemployer entities rejuvenate twice as frequently as employer enterprises because of size and composition (SBA, 2014). Officials at the SBA (2014) confirmed that during 2013, small U.S. firms with workforces, comprised 99% of all entities and furnished about 63% of net private sector jobs, and 48.5% of private enterprise work. Also, administrators at the SBA reported that almost 13% of startup companies with payrolls open yearly and nearly the same percentage close.

Meanwhile, SBA leaders declared that in 2013, enterprise insolvencies were 7,000 less than the previous 33,212 suffered by small business owners in 2012. In short, as Shukla and Shukla (2014) noted, several transformative values that are very positive and never exaggerated are the effect of small business due to job creation and economic growth. Likewise, as Martin, McNeill, and Warren-Smith (2013) noted, small enterprises are the key drivers of innovation with a large effect on the economy.

To clarify, in this study, transformation theory is a reflection of the small business process of creating value via development of new ideas (Levy, 2012). More than that, Ivanov (2013) and Bello & Ivanov (2014) remarked that new small business innovation theory potentialities contrast, in method and impact. Also, Ivanov proposed that organizations survive when they innovate and improve. In a partial agreement, Gagnon, Michael, Elser, and Gyory (2013) declared that small firm owners were the drivers of innovation that led to social, economical, and sustainable outcomes. In an opposing evaluation, Peltier and Naidu (2012) described innovation as a process that tends to expand while business is small, but exponentially increases the chance of failure during the growth stage.

Fairfax County Virginia Small Business

Fairfax County is a growing municipality located southwest of Washington DC, the capital of the United States. In the business community, there are 10 Fortune 500 company headquarters (FCEDA, 2013). In the fiscal year 2011, Fairfax County companies received approximately $25.9 billion in federal contracts (USCB, 2012). The county accounts for 48% of contract dollars awarded to the state FCEDA (2013) and ranks third in median household income among U.S. counties (USCB, 2014b). The annual income from sole proprietorships increased by 7% in 2013, totaling $27 billion (USCB, 2014b).

In 2012, small business venture startups received 125,057 state loans, all under $100,000, a total value of $1.6 billion (SBA, 2014). Also, during that year, the small business sector consisted of a variety of enterprises (USCB, 2014a). Even more important, during 2012, small businesses created 19,830 net new state jobs, nearly 201,000 were women-owned, and another 145,000 started by other minorities (FCEDA, 2013). Further still, in 2012 Fairfax County sales from woman-owned businesses alone were just under $5.9 billion, or 18.9% of total sales. Commerce was not all relegated to in-state business, in 2012, about 7,626 Virginia state enterprises exported goods out of the United States. Of that total, almost 6,542 were small firms that generated over 28.7% of Virginia's total known exports (FCEDA, 2013). Meanwhile, another segment of the state's small business industry, state-chartered veteran-owned businesses, increased to 83,000 during 2012 (FCEDA, 2013). The business community responsible for these statistics fit the SBA small business definition of a company with less than 500 workers.

However, Elmuti et al. (2012) reported that some small enterprises had less than 50 employees. Kreiser et al. (2013) offered that small businesses with a workforce of 10 or less are called microbusinesses. In 2012, 494,170 small enterprises operated in the United States (USCB, 2014b). The number of companies with 20–99 employees in Fairfax County equaled 13,896 or 3% of the United States total (USCB, 2014b). California, with 59,465 or 12% of U.S. small firms, and New York, with 33,977 or 6% of the small companies, were the only other states with a population of more than 8 million, and a county with 13,896 or more small business firms (FCEDA, 2013).

In Fairfax County, 94% of the companies are small enterprises with fewer than 50 workers, private nonfarm establishments total 30,248, and 99,388 are nonemployer firms (FCEDA, 2013). It is also important to note, that in 2014, to support and bolster state small business growth, progress, and job creation, the Governor of Virginia, Terence McAuliffe issued Exec. Order No. 33 (2014) that established target goals for the Commonwealth, which required state institutions to purchase goods and services from certified small business establishments to maximize the success of small public institutions. The study based its research on data obtained from small enterprises in Fairfax County.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

The independence of the SBA affords small businesses an opportunity to engage the federal government in multiple ways. The agency assists, counsels, aids, and protects the interests of small businesses under Title 13, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 121–123, 13 CFR 121 (SBA, 2014). The substantial impact of having small businesses participate in federal contracting opportunities became evident years before the launch of the SBA, as a result of the Small Business Act of 1953 (SBA, 2014). The federal government used specific programs to strengthen and encourage small businesses activity. Some of these programs provide public policy exceptions, and others provide exemptions from regulatory processes (Gale & Brown, 2013). For example, schedules aimed at stimulating young innovative firms had different guidelines from those that subsidize established small businesses. According to Gale, some public policies include tax benefits such as the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, granting tax exceptions, based on the size of the firm.

Moreover, there are others such as the Small Business Investment Company Program, Gale and Brown (2013) noted where SBA investors used intermediaries to mediate small business contracts. With such measures in effect, small companies with fewer than 50 workers are unaffected by the compensation regulations requiring payment for family or medical absences (Gale & Brown, 2013). There are also health care reform exemptions for small businesses with fewer than 50 employees Gale and Brown related to the 2010 President Obama health care initiative. Also, when a firm had fewer than 20 workers an exclusion from age discrimination due to the 1964 Civil Rights legislation applies Gale and Brown (2013) and companies with fewer than 15 employees receive special exemptions as well. Since the establishment of these SBA regulations and programs, aimed at building and growing the small business community, the United States economy had profited immensely (Gale & Brown, 2013).

Transition

Section 1 contains a discussion of the problem, purpose statement, and nature of the study, which justifies using a qualitative method and descriptive multiunit case study design. The section also includes interview questions (Appendix B), the conceptual framework, assumptions, limitation, and delimitations of the proposal. The section concludes with the significance of the study, followed by a review of the professional and academic literature. The literature review includes a focus on researchers who explored perceived small business success factors while focusing on profitability strategies, leadership, and management.

In Section 2, I discussed eight integral study elements: the project purpose, investigator's role, participants involved, method and design, populace and selection, proper research, the gathering of data using instruments and technique, and reliability and validity process. In these elements, I laid out qualities related to study trustworthiness with extended coverage that considered the research path, through the lens of study method and design. I also provided procedures outlining the manner of population sampling, procedures for controlling and handling data, and a discussion of the understanding of the nature of ethical research. This section concludes with a complete examination and interrogation of the written material. In Section 3, I covered the analysis of the data, findings, conclusions, reflections and recommendations about professionalism, future implications, and societal benefits.

Section 2: The Project

Cronin-Gilmore (2012) reported U.S. small businesses sustained a high-tech lead in the worldwide marketplace through functions as the commercial driver of the country. This section contains 12 classifications that encompass all related aspects of the research study while aiding in the attempt to gain clarity about small business owner profitability. It is essential that all entrepreneurs gain exposure to the successful tactics used by small enterprises that survived for 5 or more years. Debrulle et al. (2013) identified that small startups lacked business experience and education, strategies, knowledge, and management skills needed to facilitate growth in modern retail.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive multiunit case study was to determine the entrepreneurial strategies small retail business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years. The study participants consisted of four small business owners in Fairfax County, Virginia, with fewer than 50 employees that were profitable for at least 5 years. As of 2014, about 94% of the 109,117 small firms in the state of Virginia, or 102,941 enterprises, were located in Fairfax County (FCEDA, 2013). Fewer than 50 people worked in each of the 102,941 companies noted (FCEDA, 2013). Also, at least 15,497 of the 102,941 small businesses were in operation for 5 years or more (USCB, 2015a). The county population contained hundreds of potential study participants and was a suitable location for this research. The social change that is possible because of recognization of small business strategies about profitability sustainability and success could influence enterprise and employee prosperity, improve family economic health, and strengthen Fairfax County community markets.

Role of the Researcher

Yin (2014) stated the case study research design includes single or multiple case studies for maintenance of internal validity. Granot, Brashear, and Motta (2012) noted that many methods are used to collect data. For this study, four semistructured interviews and a collection of business documents from small business owners in Fairfax County, Virginia, served as research data for analysis. I used face-to-face interviews as a means of synthesizing and interpreting participant data, and I was the only instrument.

The research process consisted of several roles, including recruitment of potential participants in the context of the study research method and design of the study to facilitate data collection and dissection. The process included the selection of research methodology and design, recruitment of potential participants, and collection and analyzation of the data. Moustakas (1994) recommended researchers set prejudgments aside before working with case studies. Bracketing enhances analytical quality and fosters rich insights due to retention of self-awareness during the research process (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

An additional aspect of the role of the researcher brings, even more, clarity to the integrated bracketing process woven throughout the case study design while at the same time ensuring study trustworthiness (Tufford & Newman, 2012). The exercise in self-awareness Tufford & Newman (2012) described as an intentional strategy for the purposeful selection of participants and which Anyan (2013) noted was fluidity related to the distribution of power during interviews. In support of that general concept Finlay (2014) suggested using a slow, open style process during interviewing, to avoid bias and to set the researcher's frame of reference aside.

For this study, the development of open-ended questions asked during semistructured interviewing, concentrated on material and strategies small retail business owners used to become profitable and successful. The interview procedures reflected a need to ensure that participants were relaxed and completely engaged in their chosen surrounding for beneficial results. Finlay (2014) suggested that the researcher should be aware of bias and Patton (2015) noted that purposeful sampling contained a bias in the approach. Therefore, the processes used to screen for and eliminate, potential researcher bias, were observed.

The documents that were integral to this study were yearly profit and loss statements, monthly cash flow statements, and reflective notes. Information about the date and time and demographics were kept tightly secured, and participant confidentiality ensured by securing all demographics in a single Word document on an external flash drive. Qualitative researchers have a significant amount of freedom in methods, the way to conduct interviews, and the techniques used to analyze data (Bansal & Corley, 2012)

In the interest of full disclosure and maximum transparency, I am a retired Marine Corps officer, and a small business owner living in Fairfax County, Virginia. For 25 years, as owner and operator of a successful small services firm in the county, there were opportunities to know and communicate with other small business entrepreneurs. Since suffering combat-related major illnesses and hospitalization, I have had no communication with enterprise owners. My education concentration, training, and experience have been in the areas of business, economics, and logistics. Therefore, this research topic had always been of particular interest.

The Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978) contains an account of ethical values and establishes guidelines for the protection of humans. When adhered to, the precepts of the report protect participants and researchers. The Belmont Report included a distinction between research and practice, with three basic ethical principles and proper application of the principles (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). There are three critical aspects of human subject research used during studies–they are personal respect, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). Moustakas (1994) suggested epoche to mitigate bias, and Leedy and Ormrod (2013) indicated the use of epoche reduces errors and bias in research. If there was bias to any preconceived notions I held while interviewing, a state of epoche prevailed. Foley and O’Conner (2013) recommended that to help achieve commonality, consistency, and reliability, qualitative researchers rely on interview protocols. My use of an interview protocol (Appendix B) contributed to ensuring that each participant received the same procedural approach.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was the planned method of acquiring study participants. They came from a public list that the Fairfax County Government, Office of Small

Business Resources provided. After initial screening, nine small business owners from the list received an e-mail containing a list of study demographics and a copy of Appendix C, which contains pertinent study parameters. Preferred members showed their willingness to share information honestly and in an open manner by responding to face-to-face, open-ended questions. The selection of the required four members who matched the case study profile came from sorting through the replies. Participants fitting the study criteria received formal invitations to participate in the study. The field study included four semistructured interviews and a collection of business documents from small business owners in Fairfax County, Virginia. The interviews, document collection, and screening continued until there was a state of saturation. The saturation condition occurred, as Walker (2012) explained, when the interviews and the documents failed to display new or additional information, and the data began repeating. The study incorporated face-to-face interviews as a means of synthesizing and interpreting participant data. I was the only researcher collecting data for the study. The participant selection criteria included four categories: at least 18 years old, own a small business physically located in Fairfax County, Virginia, and the businesses had to have been profitable for more than the first 5 years.

Research Method and Design

Goertzk and Mahoney (2012) asserted that distinctive practices and procedures and different values, norms, and beliefs are all conducive to qualitative and quantitative research. This study used a qualitative approach consisting of various standards, patterns, and principles. The purpose was to explore small businesses and discover precedents, practices, and themes implicit in the data. Research involves details and analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). This qualitative multiunit case study obtained details from participants using open-ended questions during semistructured interviews. There was also an examination of company documents and notes undertaken as a means of gathering research data. The recorded interviews, business papers, and notes emanating from the face-to-face study discussions became a part of the analyzing process.

This study followed the traditional process of qualitative research, which was a method of reducing emotions, thoughts, and behavior to words (Bernard, 2012) With qualitative research, scholars cannot just employ known data sets and statistical tests similar to quantitative researchers (Bansal & Corley, 2012). The reduction of numbers is fundamentally a quantitative data collection process (Bernard, 2012). Moreover, it is objective logistical deductive reasoning with numbers that provide core elements of analysis in support of statistical quantitative data inquiry (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013).

Mixed methods or hybrid approaches include both qualitative and quantitative techniques in a single study (Terrell, 2012). The need did not exist to evaluate or compare variables with this study, so a quantitative or mixed methods approach was not appropriate. The qualitative study focused on a small number of participants to gain in-depth insights into their perceptions and lived experience (Smythe, 2012). In this case, a qualitative method helped explore business experiences, strategies, training, education, and profitability. The process exposed management to the entrepreneurial talents small business owners need to succeed in business beyond 5 years.

Research Method

This research project was a qualitative, descriptive, multiunit case study. A grounded theory method would enable the development of a more general abstract theory of the process, action, or interaction (Smythe, 2012). The grounded theory method was not a candidate for this study because there was no new theory. Phenomenology is a way of thinking about things (Tomkins & Eatough, 2013). The case study will work with what, how, or why questions (Yin, 2014) as opposed to historical phenomena. Yin (2014) described three categories related to the case study. Descriptive studies serve to explain events and their particular context and explanatory case studies are appropriate for investigating causality associated with an event and its effects (Yin, 2014). In this exploratory case study, a *what* central research question well-defined the study. A descriptive multiunit case study design aligned with qualitative research and was appropriate for this study. Moreover, it enabled an exploration of strategies, skills, profitability, and experience through interview data and company documents provided by small business owners participating in the study.

Methodological triangulation (MT) of separate sources increases the assurance of the validity of the case study findings (Verner & Abdullah, 2012). Glaser and Laudel (2013) defined MT as the use of compound means to review a particular quandary or subject. Interview questions about participants’ business documents and reflective journals assisted the MT. Member checking included providing a copy of the reviewed and synthesized transcript of the recorded interview to the participants for concurrence. Also, member checking follow-up interviews helped secure saturation and heightened academic rigor. With MT, one source corroborated the evidence from another source, thereby reducing the risk that any single disputing data could shape the results (Verner & Abdullah, 2012). Heale and Forbes (2013) stated that MT provided a comprehensive picture, better than one type of data could alone. For this reason, I conducted four semistructured interviews and collected business documents from small business owners in Fairfax County, Virginia as a part of the study. The interviews, document collection, and screening continued until there was a state of saturation. Walker (2012) posed that saturation was evident when the data collected failed to produce new information and began repeating. The Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) processed and approved a request to conduct this field study; Certification No. 1465049. The certification addressed research with living participants and provided correct procedures to follow to avoid human rights violations.

Research Design

Grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, and case study are the main designs for qualitative research studies (Petty et al., 2012). The research design refers to a plan that involves exploring research questions and drawing study conclusions for the preparation of a model or report (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). A grounded theory design would enable the development of a more general abstract theory of the process, action, or interaction (Smythe, 2012). Grounded theory researchers develop methods to fit a phenomenon (Smythe, 2012). For this study, the design grounded theory was not acceptable because there is no new theory. Ethnography is a research process that views culture through participant-observation techniques (Lomborg, 2012) and exploring behavior and learning over time (Englander, 2012). This study did include participant observation or exploration of culture or community for a prolonged period. Therefore, an ethnographic study design was not appropriate for this study.

Phenomenology is a manner and process that involves the way people think (Tomkins & Eatough, 2013). Englander (2012) reported that the phenomenological design is appropriate when the researcher seeks to interpret lived experiences from the perspective of others. Saturation was not reachable in the phenomenological study of small business owners because same data collection from multiple sources was not feasible. The phenomenological design was not a candidate for this study. Qualitative case study works best because manners and procedures are unscripted (Yin, 2012). A qualitative study is also an exploration of one case or several separate instances (Verner & Addullah, 2012) and used research questions with what or why questions (Yin, 2014). Thus, scholars used case study when discerning **c**ontextual backdrop of an experience (Yin, 2014).

Population and Sampling

Rowley (2012) reported that a process for correctly selecting study members was vital to the inquiry process. The qualitative descriptive multiunit case study was research that involved interviewing four small business owners from Fairfax County, Virginia. The objective was to determine what entrepreneurial strategies small business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years. The interviews, document collection, and screening continued until there was a state of saturation. Saturation was noted when all collected documents and the synthesized summary of the recordings failed to provide new information and data repeated (Walker, 2012). When there are very few members in the study, the exploration must be all-inclusive (Yin, 2012). More importantly, Robinson (2014) advised that research questions should reinforce interview examinations.

The development of the interview questions was comprehensive and designed to strengthen interview review. Yin (2014) inferred that an interview using open-ended questions affords many chances to expand and enhance the study. The examinee should be able to react to an assortment of issues with a range of methods (Rowley, 2012). For example, Rowley (2012) emphasized that an interviewer attempt to obtain maximum responses from a participant during face-to-face verbal exchanges. More, Robinson (2014) submitted that one-on-one interviews allow deeper exploration of subjective and sensitive topics. Therefore, a single research question with several open-ended questions Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2013) communicated, prepared in a study questionnaire format is beneficial to an interviewer. Riiskjær, Ammentorp, and Kofoed (2012) offered that prompting members with unscripted questions generate general rejoinders with many details. In this case, based on participant responses, additional follow-up inquiries were necessary.

Qualitative researchers have considerable freedom to determine a method, the conduct of interviews, and the techniques used to analyze data (Bansal & Corley, 2012). Purposeful exploration occurred through the use of modified, semistructured inquiries, authorized for use and created by Schorr (2008). The requested documents to support triangulation of the review were yearly profit and loss and 12 monthly cash flow statements, which were part of the analysis. The date, time, and demographics of the documents were a part of the record-keeping process.

Ethical Research

The study approved by the IRB at Walden and the three critical values that apply to research involving human subjects were all a part of this study process. The three fundamental research ethical doctrines are principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. These values, located in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research Subjects, 1978), guided the study. The values previously mentioned were essential to the implementation of research with participants.

No names of participants appeared in this study. Each member was identified by a code, P1 through P4. Demographics played a minuscule role in the primary P systems, such as, only in a string of the coding, to ensure the maintenance of strict participant anonymity. The selected participants received an invitation to participants letter (Appendix C) via e-mail explaining the intent of the study. The invitation to participants included an explanation of procedures used in the discussion. The process alerted participants concerning the fact that company documents were required. The invitation to participants letter clarified that participation in the study was voluntary and individuals could remove themselves at any time without penalty or prior permission. The e-mail documented that recompense or other enticements were not going to be a part of the research study. The study participants received a copy of the completed Synthesized transcripts to facilitate the member checking requirements. Contact with the participants via telephone enabled accurate scheduling of interviews, meeting times, and dates. During the conduction of interviews, the observation of ethical standards is crucial (Patton, 2015). Further, the aim of trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry, as Elo et al. (2014) opined, supports the argument that findings are valid, and addressed properly. Moreover, at all times during data gathering, storage, and analysis, the utmost care and privacy are paramount (Yin, 2012). Protection of participant rights and the preservation of their collected data had been carried out through the use of electronic means, retaining them on a personal, password-protected, external hard drive, destined for disposal after 5 years. Written data and findings will remain in a double-locked cabinet drawer until the end of 5 years. Shredding of all research documents to include conclusive study results is planned to occur 5 years after study completion.

This qualitative multiunit case study included only one data collection instrument. Rowley (2012) stipulated that when the researcher was the primary research instrument, sensitivity, skills, and abilities are essential to the quality of the study. Data associated with case studies originate from six sources, and collection must include at least two of them (Yin 2014). The sources are (a) interviews, (b) direct observations, (c) participant observation or site visits, (d) archival records, (e) documents, (f) physical artifacts (Yin, 2012). Data collection included the use of open-ended questions during semistructured interviews. Yearly profit and loss and monthly cash flow statements, notes or reflective journals, and member checking were used to support triangulation. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) indicated researchers could create their data collection instruments; however, for this study, I was the instrument. In-depth, semistructured interviews involved prepared questions guided by established themes in a consistent and systematic manner. The process included detecting and removing data that did not conform to the search criteria plus all irrelevant data (Simon & Goes, 2013).

Probing took placed during the face-to-face interviewing to obtain the most detailed responses (Patton, 2015). The interview protocol (see Appendix B) outlined the process planned for use during the meetings. A case study protocol is essential for use of multiunit case study design for topic focus, stabilization, and reliability (Yin, 2014). A developed case study protocol is a list of data collection procedures centering on questions and a study report guide. Simon and Goes (2013) declared that member checking verifies that the researcher’s analysis of the collected data is correct. Likewise, in qualitative research, the process facilitates correction of errors of fact and errors of interpretation (Simon & Goes, 2013). Also, member checking increases the level of legitimacy of the process (Simon & Goes, 2013). Upon completion of the interviewing process, data cleansing addresses possible threats to validity. The process included detecting and removing data that did not conform to the search criteria plus all irrelevant information (Simon & Goes, 2013). After completing data cleansing, folders containing transcribed synthesized interviews, were transferred into Word documents and uploaded into the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). The software, in this case, MAXQDA Version 12 (Release 11.0.11) for Windows produced separately coded wording frequencies, which supported data interpretation and ultimately became integral to the development of emerging themes.

Data Collection Instruments

During qualitative research, sometimes the researcher is the instrument; or if desired, one could be created for collecting data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). In this qualitative multiunit case study, I was the data collection instrument, a process Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Miller-Day (2012) recommended. Rowley (2012) reminded that knowledge, sensitivity, and skills are essential to the quality of the facts produced when the researcher is the instrument. Covell, Sidani, and Ritchie (2012) explained that open-ended questions during data collection influenced participant responses. Moreover, Yin (2012) advised that data for case studies had six origins, and a study should contain two of the original six. The six are records used for observing, interacting with participants, interviewing, documenting, use of artifacts, and archiving and storing files (Yin, 2012). A case study protocol consists of, an overview of the case study, data collection procedures and questions, and a guide for the case study report (Simon & Goes, 2013; Yin, 2014). Appendix A is a copy of the written consent by Schorr (2008) granting the use of a modified version of her semistructured interview questions in this study. The modification is a variation of the details and a textural application of the particulars that are part of the applied business problem under study (see Appendix B). While conducting the interview, a researcher could introduce questions other than the fixed set to explore the phenomenon (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The adjusted interrogatories and the interview protocol are in Appendix B. Patton (2015) suggested that the best style of interviewing for a case study was a semistructured question method because participants are more likely to express their experiences fully, than with structured questions. However, the ability to probe and intently listen is a vital capacity and is essential to the context of semistructured, preliminary interviews where themes are emergent (Knight, 2012). The face-to-face open-ended questions, during the semistructured interviews, incorporated the use of four collection implements designed to enhance research technique. They were open-ended questions during semistructured interviews, yearly profit and loss statements, monthly cash flow statements, and interviewer notes in the form of a reflective journal, or notebook. These elements also became valuable assets in the analytical process. Rubin and Rubin (2012) identified several related facts to support a reliable, valid, systematic data examination. Member checking is an important part of the qualitative study because it enhances the reliability and validity of the research (Patton, 2015). The member checking technique validates participant accuracy and increases the credibility of the study (Munn, Porritt, Lockwood, Aromataris, & Pearson, 2014).

Data Collection Technique

In the role of the instrument, a researcher could add skills to a study that are a vital part of the quality of the results (Rowley, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). To be sure, collection processes involving face-to-face open-ended questions and semistructured interviews enhance the research technique (Patton, 2015). The interrogatories attendant to this study is set forth elsewhere in the proposal. They were constructed to assist in the collection of interview data from the participant as well as profit and loss, and cash flow documents. Appendix B incorporates protocol procedures with data collection questions needed to elicit the type of information (Yin, 2014) described as a review and general guide for the comprehensive case study. In this instance, the study interview procedure included the use of nine open-ended interview questions, follow-up inquiries, and probing as needed.

To accommodate interviewing, an Echo Sky Pen, and the audio record option on a Hewlett Packard 17.3 notebook computer recorded the participant interviews. A Sony M2, Micro SD, ICD- PX333 handheld audio recorder served as a backup recorder. Three weeks before the meeting, selected participants received Appendix B, the electronic participant permission form for review of the interview questions and procedures. Two weeks before the interviews, telephone calls to the interviewees helped to set up a mutually acceptable time and place for a face-to-face meeting with each participant. Yin (2014) indicated various case study interviews are focussed and require only about an hour. The planned duration of each session related to this study was 30 minutes, expanded to 60 minutes whenever needed. Company documents, in the form of profit and loss, monthly cash flow statements, and interviewer notes in the shape of a reflective journal or notebook, were the objects for research triangulation.

The day before each scheduled meeting, a telephone call to the participant confirmed the interview date, time, and location. Also, before each session, all recording devices were examined to ensure that they functioned properly. The reflective journal served as a booklet for recording the time, date, ambiance of the surroundings, and participant and instrument shared interactions. For the interview, first there was an introduction and then small talk to build rapport and make the member feel comfortable. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) stated informal talk before an interview relaxes interviewees and makes them comfortable. The recording of the intended interview took place in a private room with only the participant and the researcher present. All recorded and collected data became a part of the member checking and analysis process.

In a qualitative study, when a researcher is interested in collecting facts, understanding opinions, experiences, and other insights, interviews are used (Rowley, 2012). There are many approaches to the data collection technique, but a common practice is contrasting face-to-face talking with the use of questionnaires (Rowley, 2012). The survey questionnaire is an instrument that had the advantage of being able to reach large numbers of individuals and generate findings on a broad scale. However, for this case study, using a questionnaire to interview a small number of people could result in doubt about the reliability of the collected data (Rowley, 2012).

Computer audio-recorder interviewing (CARI) is also dynamic and used for qualitative study interviewing. CARI is a system that records accurate responses, reduces researcher effort, and provides quality data for transcription (Thissen, 2015). The CARI had a considerable disadvantage because it was not a researcher operated recorder and used helpers to handle recorders, manage, and process data. Consequently, such procedures are human rights violations that contravene IRB regulations. Rowley (2012) acknowledged that an appropriate manner of capturing values, experiences, and opinions was through recorded interviews. For this study, the data collection technique used was audio interviews instead of detailed survey questionnaires.

Immediately after the interview, listening to and transcribing the recorded interview became the next major effort in the data collection technique process. There was no transcript review process associated with this study. Reflective journal notes were valuable assists in recording atmosphere, prospectives, and other central points of discourse between interviewer and participant. Yin (2014) recommended triangulation following the cleansing of the recorded data, the transcribing of the recorded data, and member checking to assure factual accuracy. In short, a variety of unique combinations could clarify inquiry questions (Patton, 2015). For this study, the synthesis of recorded data, profit and loss statements, 12 monthly cash flow statements, and a reflective journal served as sources for MT and helped increase trustworthiness and study accuracy. The study process included member checking to enhance the quality of the synthesis of recorded data product. Member checking involved asking participants to review the synthesized data to discover if there were errors of omission, and to assure that all data was accurate. Simon and Goes (2013) declared that member checking verifies the validity of the collected information with the participants.

For this study, the completed synthesis of the recorded data was mailed to the participants via the U.S. Postal Services (USPS), return receipt requested. About 1 week after the USPS mailing, an e-mail with the synthesis attached, and a reminder to respond to corrections or adjustments, within 1 week and that absent a reply the synthesis would be considered to be accurate, was forwarded to the participant. Differences in interpretations or understandings were examined and accommodated and the member checking process repeated. All participants responded to the USPS mailings promptly, and the analysis process began in a routine fashion.

Data Organization Technique

In 1997, coding evolved as the primary data organization technique of the methodology called grounded theory (Glaser & Laudel, 2013). Ultimately, the concept became acceptable into the broad spectrum of qualitative data analysis, and today it is the recommended practice (Glaser & Laudel, 2013). The freeware software MAXQDA and NVivo support coding as a modern application of the use of qualitative data analysis processing (Patton, 2015). Several fundamental differences exist between the freeware software and the purchased version; namely, necessary procedures of indexing themes and indexing (Kuckartz, 2014). For this study, theme indexing after word-for-word summarizing of recorded interviews was the primary data organization technique. The written summary supported methodological member checking and aligned with exact meaning and intent of statements made while questioning. Patton (2015) argued that member checking in qualitative research with face-to-face interviews and company records enhance study reliability. Data scrubbing ensured removal of all additional facts unrelated to the elements of the MT source data. After that, the placement of different sized clips, sentences, and whole paragraphs of raw transcribed text into individual Word folders, labeled with participant tags and demographic coding, allowed collection of transliterated data for combining with developed thematic thoughts and insertion into CAQDAS, for automated analysis. For this study, the CAQDAS used was MAXQDA, for support of coded qualitative content data analysis, automatic alignment of summarized text passages with key theme categories, and subcategories, text editing, and established data anonymity (Kuckartz, 2014). Glaser and Laudel (2013) noted that in qualitative research analysis, CAQDAS helps organize, manage, code, and analyze information after cleaning. Several of the many advantages of using CAQDAS include time saving, management of voluminous qualitative data, expanded verification and flexibility, and audibility of qualitative research (Kuckartz, 2014). Collection and storage of all data were in compliance with IRB requirements. I had sole control of and exclusive access to all study information at all times. The accumulated data, stored and safeguarded on a code word-shielded peripheral apparatus, is scheduled to be destroyed after 5 years. In the meantime, all backup records and files were stored in a cabinet with two locks until shredding takes place.

Data Analysis

Schorr (2008) granted me permission to use a variation of a published study interview questions. A probing and exploring process used the following questions:

1. What are your overall business experiences and what were the industries?
2. What critical strategies did you lack when you first established this business?
3. What other small firms have you owned or managed before this enterprise?
4. What do you believe prior knowledge, skills, and abilities helped, or prepared you for during the first 5 years of small business ownership?
5. What strategies have you used to become profitable?
6. What are the key strategies you used to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
7. What management and financial strategies have been the most critical to business profitability?
8. What do you believe the profitability of your company has brought to you, your employees, your family, and the community?

9. What else would you like to share concerning your experiences of becoming a profitable and successful small business owner?

Multiple types of data provide the researcher with a more thorough picture than one type alone could (Heale & Forbes, 2013; Patton, 2015). Triangulation is a means for using multiple sources of analysis to substantiate the validity of the study results (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). The question and answer session addressed the central research question and probed the establishment's level of profitability and small business owner strategy.

Company document compilation in the form of yearly profit and loss and monthly cash flow statements, and notes assisted MT. MAXQDA served as the computer software for coding and analysis of the interview data. Participant codes P-1 through P-4 provided anonymity and matched members with their interview data. The participants' actual names only appear on one separate document, with their codes and related demographic information. Word documents labeled Doc 1, 2, 3, and 4, contained participant codes P-1 through P-4 and synthesized member transcripts linked to themes.

The MAXQDA was the software used to identify the same word frequencies from the summarized data. Nodes created with the MAXQDA software enabled differentiation of participants using separate color codes and color-coded stripes. Rowley (2012) proposed that researchers organize the dataset, get acquainted with the data, classify, code, and interpret the data, and finally present and write up the data. MAXQDA software allows a researcher to organize text, understand and code text and perform keyword searches (Rowley, 2012). The consolidated data displayed revelations about some of the key strategies that contributed to Fairfax County, Virginia small business owner profitability. Yin (2014) listed several stages that a researcher should proceed through to accomplish case study research. The critical phases are collecting, separating, and regrouping the data into themes, assessing the information, and developing conclusions. The conceptual framework creates a lens to understand the context of the research (Galea, 2012). The conceptual framework that grounds this qualitative multiunit case study was ET. A determination of the entrepreneurial human capital small business owners used to become profitable aligned the study's findings with previous literature analysis for comparison. Face-to-face, semistructured interviews were used to collect live feedback from participants. Individual recorded performances, lifted from the recorder, served as hard copy transcripts of the interviews. The software may enable a researcher to perform keyword searches, organize the text, code, and interpret the text (Rowley, 2012).

The software programs that supported search and management of research data collection was MAXQDA 2011, a reliable professional software designed for qualitative analysis in business and economic studies. EndNote x 7.3, Browser 2015 (Ver. 8536) was the software used for reference document updating and library management. Moreover, Evernote, Chromium open faced Browser 2015 (Ver.5.8.8.7837) further complemented the computerized effort with Web document clipping and storing of study reference materials.

As soon as an interview was over, the data transfer, stratification, and coding software were the tool used to massage emergent summarized word similarities. The member checking process included synthesis of the interview tapes and e-mailing synthesized versions to each participant for review. Houghton et al. (2013) remarked that member checking captured the exact meaning and choice of words. After inserting the audio recording into MAXQDA and listening while transcribing at speeds slow enough to type participant responses word for word, the summaries were copied into separate Word documents and then placed into a single folder on a secured Hewlett Packard computer for safe keeping. After cleansing and synthesizing the data, linking the data to preestablished themes, analyzation of the composite data was completed with MAXQDA. Theme frequency, integration of the research question, and word and phrase frequencies from the interview, were color coded by MAXQDA. The use of matrix coding queries aided the identification of items used by more than one participant and the frequency of their appearance. Further, using a model was a process that enabled the spreading of collected data from interviews, observations, and company documents across multiple data points.

The entire process constructed a pathway from the semantics of audio recording to the semiotics of mechanical design. Following a procedure of organizing datasets, becoming familiar with the data, classifying coding, and interpreting, and presenting write-ups is proven research methodology (Rowley, 2012). Moreover, the association of small business strategies, success, profitability, and sustainability, aligned with ET, buttresses the case study and substantiates the research question, and the conceptual theory.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

White, Oelke, and Friesen (2012) emphasized that trustworthiness and data management are essential to the success of qualitative studies. However, Street and Ward (2012) stressed the relevance of reliability and validity to the accuracy and precision of research. The tools used in qualitative research include semistructured interview protocols to obtain commonality and strengthen validity, consistency, and reliability, (Foley & O'Conner, 2013). Internal validity plus reliability in quantitative research is equivalent to qualitative research ideas of dependability and credibility (Munn et al., 2014). Several criteria apply to the evaluation of rigor in qualitative research. For example, Houghton et al. (2013) emphasized a need for dependability, creditability, transferability, and confirmability in research.

The quality of qualitative studies relates to the reliability (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2012). The protocol interview (Appendix B) served as a guide and confirmed continuity based on a structured process. Participant company documents obtained at the end of the meetings and notes supported MT. Transcripts delivered via e-mail, afforded participants with an opportunity to review, validate, and ensure the absence of discrepancies or errors. Member checking enhanced the dependability of study results. Moreover, the use of CAQDAS in the form of MAXQDA as a qualitative data coding tool increased reliability. Credibility is pertinent to qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2012). The concept of dependability aligns with reliability (Munn et al., 2014). Quantitative validity is different. It does not require creditability, authenticity, and trustworthiness, like qualitative validity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

Validity

Company data collection provides an opportunity to execute two of the manual triangulation data elements and enhances study credibility. Simon and Goes (2013) offered that member checking is a participant validation technique to increase accuracy, aid in the development of better validity, and improve the reliability of the study. Creditability assesses whether there is a match between the source data and the researcher's interpretation (Munn et al., 2014). As the only data collection instrument in the qualitative study, using protocols, procedures, and self-awareness during the research process may improve validity consideration (Houghton et al., 2013). Examining the degrees to which qualitative findings transfer to another context or setting helps assess transferability (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2012). Portability refers to whether or not individual results are transferable to another comparable situation or context while preserving the meanings location (Houghton et al., 2013).

Houghton et al. (2013) asserted that the confirmability process denoted data neutrality and accuracy. Establishing frequencies of words and themes in MAXQDA for accurate analysis additionally confirmed the interview results. Walker (2012) noted that participant interviews should continue until data saturation occurred. Dworkin (2012) suggested that in the case study design, saturation occurred once the data repeats repeatedly, and no new information appeared. The sample of four participants and member checking validated MT. In that manner, study credibility improved.

Transition and Summary

The problem statement in this study indicated a high rate of small business failure resulting from lack of firm strategies. The focus of the study was profitability. It was measurable during an analysis of each owners' official business papers. ET, which formed the conceptual framework, provided a stable base to explore small businesses and strengthened the study through an assessment of the literature, focusing on elements such as leadership, management, motivation, sustainability, and human capital. The full display of business procedures and practices of small businesses were not always clearly delineated in the literature when viewed through the commerce lens of ET. In Section 2, I covered the researcher and how discussions with selected participants, details, research methodology, and strategies evolved. There was also a description of (a) population and sampling method; (b) the exploration of ethics; (c) the gathering of data, the procedure and use of instruments and configuration; and (d) assessment and techniques.

Section 2 contained 12 elements centering on the business project purpose and plan of activities used and focused on a discussion of the merits related to study reliability and validity procedures. During the development of Section 3, a full composite of the proposal emerged. The results of the investigation of the central research question and the application of the conceptual framework presented a notion concerning small businesses' lack of success. For example, a clear and thorough presentation of findings provided the strategies small retail business owners used to succeed beyond 5 years. Further, clarity related to a full description of the methods linked, to validation of enterprise findings, have now become available. Moreover, evidence of correlation in the study, which focused on profitability, leadership, management, and motivation was insufficient, given the past and present literature.

The validation of the study's conceptual framework and literature connection prompted further research and generated a clearer analysis of this study about general applicability with small business economics. Further still, the value of the context of the study was neither successful or unsuccessful; however, professional small business practices examined in light of the current economic conditions, aided in the development of a consensus. The DBA doctoral study process provided an introspective glimpse of the participants and their circumstances during the exploration. Moreover, the findings ratified the effort to discover the meaning, purpose, and opinion of a research journey that found small business retail strategies, used to create profitability, and sustainability.

Ruminations about personal feelings related to this expedition into the research world were exceptionally beneficial and hopefully of immense value to the small business community of Fairfax County, Virginia. The study findings are a reminder of the need for additional studies to advance and elevate these conclusions about small business profitability. For instance, the findings could contribute to and impact change in the society by influencing small business strategies to learn how to sustain profitability and success, affecting enterprise and employee prosperity, improving family economic health, and thereby strengthening Fairfax County community markets.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive, multiunit case study was to determine what entrepreneurial strategies small retail business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years. From 2012 through 2015, small businesses accounted for 99% of the firms in the private industry and provided 38% of the goods and services sold in the United States (Alkali, 2012). Arasti, Zandi, and Bahmani (2014) pointed out that more than 50% of the U.S. small firms failed inside of 5 years. Moreover, Arasti et al. (2014) also revealed that more than 20% of U.S. small businesses failed during the first year.

I conducted four interviews, using face-to-face open-ended questions during semistructured interviews with successful small enterprise owners operating and licensed in Fairfax County, Virginia. During the face-to-face exchange of information with the small business owners, there was evidence that the spillover knowledge theory, as well as ET, were part of planning strategies designed to Amel & Akkari (2012) create profits and gain a competitive business edge. The company profit and loss statements for 2015 and earlier, and 12 months of cash flow reports were the means used to carry out MT (Verner & Abdullah, 2012). The study contains informative data about accumulated small business spillover skills, knowledge, and performances that directly influenced economic growth, entrepreneurship, and profitability (Amirbekova et al., 2014).

Presentation of the Findings

This study had an overarching central research question of: What entrepreneurial strategies did small retail business owners use to succeed in business beyond 5 years?

The descriptive demographic offered a significant amount of participant personal privacy and therefore, research data did not contain personal information. Participant names and any other personal identifying information do not reside in this report. Instead, I used codes of (P-1) through (P-4) to distinguish the participants, and a series of alphanumeric designators not included in this final study signified owner demographics and company documents for analysis. All of the participants’ actual demographics reside in a single Word document on a flash drive, permanently secured in a drawer with locks, when not in use.

As soon as data saturation came about, the synthesized interview summary data, plus a notion of the conceptional model and the central research question, located in four individual Word documents, were inserted into CAQDAS, MAXQDA software. I used the information to develop six emergent themes in the form of similarities, quotations, and summaries from the computerized merger of interrelated inputs. MT of four methods used in the study--profit and loss statements, monthly cash flow statements, transcripts, and interviewer notes--facilitated validation through cross verification of separate sources, which Verner and Abdullah (2012) asserted, increased the likelihood of the trustworthiness of the results. Six major emergent themes came from transcribed synthesis. They were (a) management practices, (b) motivation and attention to detail, (c) application of active leadership principles, (d) sustaining positive energy, (e) owner dedication and passion, and (f) identifying and understanding employee value. During the analysis phase, sharp clarity of the emergent themes, owner profitability, and answers to the research question came from wide-ranging elements of the synthesized transcripts, profit and loss statements, monthly cash flow reports, and reflective interviewer notes containing observations. The facts surfaced as developing summaries showed that owner actions were consistent with the conceptual framework, and no substantive activities were incompatible with the concept.

The first emergent theme involved managing practices, which relates to everyday supervision and administration of small businesses. Supervision included the execution of many vital operations, identified by the firm owners. The second theme pertained to the need for an owner to openly display optimism and demonstrate positive motivation, particularly during sales drop-offs, lack of profits, or an economic downturn. A progression described by (P-1) as “at least put on the smiley face.” Furthermore, (P-3) stated, “when there is transparency, the discovery of a dip in profits travels through the offices quickly, and sometimes you have to pick everybody up, every day; you have to be the motivator.”

The third essential subject, leadership principles, according to (P-3) was, “the essence of the belief and practice of company values.” The standards of leadership values as applied by many owners failed to account for differences between business strategy and sustainability (Khan & Adnan, 2014). The summaries also contained a formidable, for-profit leadership style, inherent in the positions and ideas communicated by the owners.

The fourth belief summarized as an emergent theme called for an enthusiastic high-spirited, positive energy exhibition by management and ownership at all times. The summaries showed that the most critical area of concern was the part of the firm that the public viewed. There has to be an extra effort to bring enthusiasm and energy to the deficiencies, which stand out in the major performance tracking indicators (Alkali, 2012). Performance markers are always high for the high achievers (Alkali, 2012). To help grow the business, (P-3) asserted, “It was necessary to send showroom sales personnel to the local gym several times a week.”

The fifth emergent topic was that owners felt that the well-being of their firms was the most pronounced when the company operated as an extended family. The summaries contained the concept of discussions favoring owner-employee and stockholder-worker. Dedication and the welfare of the enterprise are equally important to employees and ownership (Brau et al., 2015). In the same matter (P-4) allowed that “customer service should involve a family-oriented type of contact.”

The sixth emergent theme exposed the magnitude of the need to identify the right person for each available firm position. Employee hiring, (P-3) suggested, “was more vital to the growth of the company than the bottom line because their effectiveness makes a bottom line.” Other discussions alluded to wages and their effect on the ability to find the right people. In support of new ventures, Bae et al. (2014) reported early planning, learning, and competencies were paramount. Several owners lamented the evolution of civic, economic, and ecological issues. (P-1) and (P-3) stated during their interviews that the Internet caused a disruption that affected hiring because of social media and its intricately connected elements. The undercurrent in the summaries was the understanding concerning what the owners thought about employee value. Some felt it was more important to some owners than to others. Nonetheless, the emergent themes collectively summarized economic business benefits and related ideas of management practices, attention to detail, leadership principles, dedication and passion, and employee values. Topic groups present a more amalgamated discussion of the similarities versus owner responses in the following subsets.

Emergent Theme 1: Management Practices

The initial emergent theme was an immediate indication that the management and practices of the small business firm applied to ET, efficient production, and profitability. The word, management, came up once by (P-1) and on multiple occasions by (P-3), (P-4), and (P-2). Business and administration practices uttered by (P-3), (P-4), and (P-1) came up again and again. The expression was, in many cases followed by the word, education, (P-4), and by, the lack of experience (P-1), (P-4), and (P-2). On other occasions, absence of professionalism, (P-4) and (P-3) was associated with the pursuit of an accounting background (P-2), and (P-1) later discussed financial ability.

The status of the various bookkeeping practices repeatedly registered throughout the recordings. Fadahunsi (2012) described economic weaknesses within small firms as a responsibility to be addressed early by management. Each participant mentioned that the initial inability to become profitable was due to critical strategic financial missteps. In the case of several owners, serious setbacks were experienced, a serial entrepreneurship condition had to be transcended (P-4), and failed business ventures to be overcome (P-2) and (P-1). The significance of Theme 1, management practices, is summarized and condensed in three separate sets of word groupings (a) *critical core startup strategy,* (b) *competency, skills, and exceptional capabilities*, and (c) *business model and keys to success.*

Emergent Theme 2: Motivation and Attention to Detail

Some of the revelations exposed in Theme 2 were that strategies necessary to sustain a small business beyond 5 years were known and a part of the firm's motivation and attention to detail. Over and over the words preparation, business development, and success were voiced by (P-1) through (P-4). In several other cases, prior knowledge was stated by (P-1) and detailed follow-up by (P-3) and (P-2). On some occasions, all four of the participants had used the words: skills, leadership, work ethic, and abilities. Most of the time, the term, motivation, was related to a discussion of workspace attitude, (P-1) and (P-3), and followed by the word, inspiration, (P-2) and staying focused (P-4).

The term, motivation, did not always appear with the words, attention to detail. However, in the instance of an extended response to the question, "What else would you like to share concerning your experiences of becoming profitable and successful?" The substance of the comments related to teamwork and motivation (P-1), hiring the right employees (P-3), and multitasking (P-2). Riiskjær et al. (2012) related that when prompted with unscripted questions, replies with many details are generated. The significance of Theme 2, motivation and attention to detail is summarized and condensed in three separate sets of word groupings (a) *continuous encouragement*, (b) e*mpowerment of others,* and (c) *leadership style and networking.*

Emergent Theme 3: Active Leadership Principles

The third theme related to words that always caused long pauses and even more extended answers which seemed to praise leadership qualities in general and question evidence that leadership was in fact always the driving force in a business success (P-1) and (P-3). However, Ritchie et al. (2013) showed that leadership within small businesses was one of the several significant elements needed to generate and sustain profits. The key strategies mentioned were about leadership (P-2). However, policies and leadership required to gain profitability (P-4) and general entrepreneurship practices (P-1), (P-4), and (P-2) was related to work ethic by (P-3). Sarasvathy et al. (2013) contended that small business owners could use entrepreneurship tendencies to increase the probability of commercial success. The significance of Theme 3, active leadership principles, when summarized and condensed, became four separate sets of word groupings: *executive performance*, *greater activity comes from strong leaders*, *leadership is the base support apparatus of the firm*, and *transformational leadership is an important goal.*

Emergent Theme 4: Sustaining Positive Energy

Two participants, (P-1) and (P-3), stated that competition is always an initial consideration when developing marketing strategies. Energy, as discussed by owners, was sometimes forced, as it relates to customers, and mostly on display, as (P4) stated: “to impress customers.” “Dealing with an unsatisfied customer is very tough,” (P-2) declared, “when the dissatisfaction is related to a personal service.” The participants shared views openly about the dynamism required in sustaining energy in close-in communities. The participants also spoke about how upgrading a neighborhood and marketing trends affected sales. For example, (P-1) pointed out that it was beneficial to business when the street paving around the firm took place. Energy and excitement in the business community sparked a heavier volume of customer traffic and brought more business to the shop, said (P-4). Cronin-Gilmore (2012) argued creation and expansion of small business marketing strategies should link with advanced community advertising trends.

Appreciation for employees also came from a mixture of the participants. The positive comments were part of the feeling that performance that was energetic and very confident, (P-3) stated, helped customers to have a pleasant shopping experience. At the same time, (P-1) spoke about supervisors who displayed enthusiasm and a high level of energy. The significance of Theme 4, sustaining positive energy when summarized and condensed in five phrases were: *having the right employees*, *aggressive marketing*, *a rigorous work ethic, having a great time and loving the work*, and *the customer is always right*.

Emergent Theme 5: Owner Dedication and Passion

Emergent Theme 5 contained a glimpse of the passion and dedication on the part of the participants and revealed that there were layers of sincere and fulsome feelings tied to the success of their ventures. Tasnim, Yahya, and Zainuddin (2014) posited that passion broadly exhibited by owners signifies genuine sentimentality regarding goals and business endeavors. Participant owner (P-3) stated that desire to create a business was an intense prolonged ambition, whereas (P-2) outlined the discomfort and depression tied to failure and the hustle and self-centered passion it took to be successful. Also, (P-4) noted a pure, simple satisfaction about the idea, the success of the endeavor, and the thought of never working for someone else. Working long days and nights, consumed by work plans, the idea of being successful and engaging the economic community is a big part of the essence of the entrepreneur's existence. Foley and O'Connor (2013) explained that personalizing small business ownership through networking is a strategy.

The significance of Theme 5, owner dedication and passion, is summarized and condensed in five phases:(a) *pleasure of being able to make lifestyle decisions*, (b) *knowledge that the family would continue to build the dream*, (c) *feeling of contentment about life's work*, (d) *the happiness that comes with the ease of providing for children's schooling,* and (e), *staying connected and watching success grow*.

Emergent Theme 6: Identifying and Understanding Employee Value

The sixth emergent theme signaled that the tenants of entrepreneurship related directly to the workforce. There was a clear, precise understanding on the part of (P-3) about what the company employees needed and what they wanted. The insight was similar in the case of (P-1), who stressed the importance of trust and value of the workers and the provision of their necessities. The positive steps taken by (P-2) amounted to not letting the employees forget essential established company, personal, and business values. Gale and Brown (2013) identified some of many benefits associated with understanding employers, such as SBA administrative privileges for firms with less than 20 employees and progressive Civil Rights legislation. Pride in the enterprise established years ago, (P-1) asserted, made customers feel a sense of community and belonging. A unique knowledge of the value came from (P-2) via a narrative of particular interest to health food customers and how some of the employees adopted the healthy practices related to the foods the company sells. The level of skills and abilities needed to work in the firm created a profile of the types of workers who were an exact fit for business. According to (P-4), to keep a certain kind of worker, there must be incentives and bonuses for quality employees, and especially the employee with the most sales and record of returning customers. The significance of Theme 6, identifying the value of employees while understanding their worth evolved into five compiled and summarized phrases: (a) training coaching and mentoring, (b) employee benefits, (c) family allowances, (d) keeping the outstanding workers, and (e) knowing worker value. The themes and ideas that emanated from the exchanges with the owners were clearly in line with the attributes of the study, the central question, and the conceptual framework.

Small Business Participants

The genesis of participant selection started with a list of more than 15,000 Fairfax County, Virginia small businesses provided by the County Economic Development Authority. A manual scrub of the list resulted in 780 firms that met the study research criteria of fewer than 50 employees and being active for more than 5 years. A solicitation, in the form of an *Interview Protocol* (Appendix B), was sent via e-mail to a group of 25 qualified candidates and it provided a total of 16 positive responses, from which I chose nine as likely participants.

An Invitation to Participants (Appendix C) sent via e-mail, went to each of the nine probable participants. All nine business owners agreed to take part in the study and confirmed acceptance by returning the e-mail with “I Consent” as the subject. Four of the nine owners became the actual study participates. The arrangement of interviews took place via telephone, at which time, dates, times, and locations, were mutually determined.

Subsequently, a second Interview Protocol and Questions (Appendix B) went out to each participant via e-mail to once again identify the proposed interview plans. The determination of an experience fitted to the research mission, the collection of instruments, and the data collection techniques, flowed from input derived from the nine semistructured interview questions and relevant probing and follow-up.

The participants engaged fully and willingly presented a full range of experiences, which helped to maximize the research effort. Then an examination and sequencing and reviewing of study elements, including computer-aided interpretation using MAXQDA software, took place. The scrutinized results are the substance that formed the analysis of this final study report, which supports confirmation of the research findings.

The participants consisted of a restaurant and bar owner (P-1); a health and beauty products store owner (P-2); a marble and tile renovation and sales firm owner (P-3); and an electronics, computer sales, and services store owner (P-4). I cannot overstate appreciation for the individual contributions of the four entrepreneurs in this study. Moreover, the use of the semistructured interview questions, prevented participants from having an opportunity to provide philosophical responses (Brebels et al., 2013). Openly sharing, each participant engaged fully and willingly presented a full array of response-laden experiences and the requested financial documents. The recordings and the financial records offered the opportunity to exhaust research possibilities and provided a rich collection of facts, statistics, and economic data, which ultimately led, as Walker (2012) documented, into a position to obtain saturation when the resource data repeated. Officials at the SBA possessed data on the professional practices of the county businesses (see Table 2). Table 2 is made up of statistical rankings, which show that restaurants and bars are representative of approximately 25% of the 780 county firms screened as possible study candidates. Health and Beauty 27%, marble and tile 6%, computer and electronics 14%, and others 28%. Moreover, about 63% of the commercial enterprises defined by the firms in question, consisted of businesses owned by individuals who were self-employed with a workforce of fewer than 20 employees.

Table 2.

Business Retail Types Using 780 Enterprises Versus 1501 Availability

Type of Business Eligible	Percent of 780 Firms Screened	Number	Percent of 1,501 County Firms
(P-1) Health and Beauty	27%	211	26%
(P-2) Marble & Tile	6%	46	6%
(P-3) Computers and Electronics	14%	109	15%
(P-4) Restaurant and Bars	25%	195	24%
Other	28%	218	29%

Note. Percentages of enterprise retail types screened separately using the total 780 (invitations sent out) and 1,501 (county eligibility list). Same number of business types reflect slightly different ratios, in three of the categories, within two columns; 780-firm screening base provided suitable analysis of county small business profile. Other business types included varied retail firms populating the county. Adapted from *Statistics of United States Businesses*, by the United States Census Bureau, 2012. http://www.census.gov/econ/susb/. In the public domain.

Small Business Participant Experiences

Interview times and locations were negotiated with each owner and resulted in the use of the sites offered as the primary choice for each business owner. In the instances of

(P-1) and (P-2), the settings were private office spaces, the spot desired by (P-3) was a private meeting room, and in the case of (P-4), the location was a private secluded conference room. All meeting locations met the guidelines of ethical principles, personal respect, beneficence, justice, and confidentiality (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research Subjects, 1978).

Approximately 21 questions were presented and answered by each participant at each of the four individual interviews. Each session lasted 1 hour or less. Nine of the inquiries were open-ended questions previously developed to support the study, all, related to the central research question. The remaining 12 questions were a combination of probes and followed ups. Before the start of each meeting, I used the interview protocol document in Appendix B to establish a uniform approach during the interaction with each of the four participants. At the conclusion of each interview session, when the official business was over, I took several moments to recognize the volunteer efforts of each owner. At the same time, I obtained a copy of 12 monthly cash flow reports for 2015, and profit and loss statements ending in the month of December 2015. Finally, before leaving, each participant was given an opportunity to listen to the raw recording and confirm that the contents echoed their exact words and meanings. The small business owners all regularly responded without hesitation in their attempt to accommodate both the inquiry and the integrity of the study. The reply to the question what were your overall business experiences and what were the industries helped to disclose that one of the participants, (P-1), owned the enterprise for 35 years and was sole proprietor the entire time. The (P-1) owner also enjoyed establishment profits on a consistent basis for the past 20 years. Acs, Audretsch, and Lehmann (2013) opined that entrepreneurial spillover knowledge theory was widespread in firms owned for extended periods. However, a new study released since I wrote the proposal superseded previous analysis of that matter conducted over the last 15 years. The new literature, a unique view of entrepreneur theory, indicated knowledge theory was a coequal of the entrepreneurship theory. The new construct, entitled *spillover knowledge theory of entrepreneurship, (SKTE)*, Ghio, Guerini, Lehmann, and Rossi-Lamastra (2015) argued, elevates the substance, accord, and concept of SKTE into the worldwide scientific community. The new research article contained similar beliefs, and the later findings reinforced the existing premise of this study. The reply to the question What other small firms have you owned or managed before this enterprise, participant (P-2) owned three prior establishments. One failed business was an after-school child daycare activity; a sole proprietorship operated out of the recreation room in a friend's home. The function was not a venture (P-2) enjoyed as an owner, and it eventually collapsed when the project was no longer lucrative. Several investments later (P-2) owned a fitness and health spa that failed as well. In 2005, (P-2) purchased a small building and launched the current enterprise. The existing company fills a niche in the community and had become a valuable neighborhood commodity, and operated successfully for the past 10 years, as supported by 2015 fiscal records.

A multiple of failures, Garg and Garg (2013) proposed, indicates that because of a variety of issues, some entrepreneurs fail with more regularity than others. That same outlook Hamrouni and Akkari (2012) declared that the likely cause of firm failure was a lack of management skills. Still another failure contradiction is that common business risks, occurring at particular company ages, promote failure (Amel & Akkari, 2012). The three scholars all provided findings that represent literature related to effective business practice, which coincided with the precepts of this research. Moreover, the paucity of new literature helps to buttress findings expressed in the study.

In 1992, (P-3) purchased a large four-acre parcel of land at the edge of a large city in Fairfax County. For the first 6 years, (P-3) operated a sand, pebble and cement outlet from a small make-shift building, constructed as storage and office space. Subsequently, with the help of two brothers and three part-time employees, they erected a 6-foot brick wall around the entire 4-acre property, which held several tons of tile, marble, granite, and auxiliary motorized assets. Responding to the question What management and financial strategies have been the most critical to business profitability? Participant (P-3) identified several policies. Among them were acquisition planning, strategic investments, and money management, plus the admonishment that is building inventories of industrial supplies, like cement, gypsum, gravel, rocks, and other raw materials in the early years contributed to the current profit growth.

In 2003, the brothers left the company and opened ventures in different industries. Today, the original physical plant is a collection of five elegant display rooms encircled by several acres of inventory. The owner, (P-3), employs 44 workers and provides free facility upgrades for nonprofits, like homeless rescue support establishments and soup kitchens, in local communities. The business had been profitable for the past 11 years. The owner (P-3), shared information concerning the use of more worker-manager employees as plans to sell the firm, retire and relocate with the family to another climate materialized.

Despite the profile provided by (P-3). Burdin (2014) proffered that companies managed by workers were more vulnerable, than conventional businesses, to failure. At the same time, Pellegrino et al. (2014) advised that management theory enabled small businesses in emerging industrial sectors to survive. However, a new study, released since I wrote the proposal, displays an analysis that is contrary to the previous theory of management. Abidin, Hasnan, Abdullah, Mohtar, and Zulhumadi (2014) described the implication of social networking as civic enrichment, which aligns well with ET and the production of goods and services within industrial firms. The existing study is an amalgamation of the new literature that presents views that incorporated *relationship bridging*, related to internal and external social capital, community involvement, and industrial production.

Participant (P-4) previously owned and operated a trash-removal service company that also contained a snow plowing element that functioned on a seasonal basis. The company had lasted for 3 years before a local bank repossessed the three trucks. In 2006, (P-4) launched the current enterprise with the assistance of SBA management training in small business operations and accounting. The owner (P-4) pursued startup financing with all of the local banks. Monies received via small business credit, and asset loan withdrawals were insufficient and (P-4) executed a series of crowdfunding efforts that finally generated financing required to implement startup of the small firm. The company is encumbered at a very manageable debt level and based on the financial records had been profitable every year since 2008. The efforts by (P-4) document the degree of difficulty associated with startups, and this study is evidence of similar circumstances as well. The results correlate with the current study posture about both the SBA and external funding complexities faced by small business owners. The four small firms in this study managed to acquire funding in multiple different ways, with the result that only one owner sought SBA management training and accounting services. However, currently no new subject matter studies have been released, and the prevailing small business financing challenges and the present findings are the latest on the topic of expansion funding literature by SBA or external funding by private enterprise (see Table 3).

Table 3

Participant Experiences Workers and Profits

Participant	Years of Experience	Employees	Years of Profit	ET Aligned
(P-1)	35	14	20	Yes
(P-2)	10	12	8	Yes
(P-3)	23	44	11	Yes
(P-4)	9	6	7	Yes

Note. Participant businesses, employees, experiences and profits. The data render participant statistics as characteristic of Fairfax County, Virginia, small firms, conducting business in 2015. Adapted from "Business Statistics" by Fairfax County, Virginia Economic Development Authority, 2016, http://www.fairfaxcountyeda.org/category/content-tags/business-statistics). Copyright March 2013, Fairfax County, Virginia Economic Development Authority.

Small Business Participant Findings

The all-encompassing questions about the business strategies, small retail business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years, had been researched using participant responses, and the results are a part of the study's findings. Distillation of small business owner success strategies came from the expanded tactical change innovations that coated rich creative experiences. However, the synthesized interview summary, generated from participant interviews based on semistructured research questions, also produced the ample emergent themes listed elsewhere in this study. While crafting inquiry strategies for the field work, the roadmap utilized came from advice contained in O'Reilly and Parker (2012), mandating that a rigorous variety of interviewer resources help enhance participant and subject matter exploration.

Leadership was a principle part of the discussion by (P-3) and (P-1) but was not put forth by (P-2) or (P-4). The impetus of the (P-3) statement pertained to leadership's form of influence, style of management, inspiration, and supervision. The essence of the comments by (P-1) raised a question about a leaders' level of attention to detail and knowledge of how to manage the enterprise when the cost of doing business becomes erratic. There is a point made here because Elmuti et al. (2012) advised that the United States small business leadership and administration often proved that few entrepreneurs knew what to do, and violated well-known fundamental business rules. The role of leadership, Khan and Adnan (2014) announced, involved an account of leadership theory wherein management is dependent on set goals assessed from the top down. An article released since I wrote the proposal features a leadership management analysis that is outside of the explanation offered by either Khan and Adnan (2014) or Elmuti (2012). Contrary to the previous theories of management, Akhtar and Khan (2015) suggested that a participative leadership approach was the most significant. This most recent study channels thoughts that are not new. However, the premise had changed enough to cause scholars to label the findings as the evolving theory. In that vein, Mertel and Brill (2015) produced a case study that identified two estimations that proposed establishing a connection between servant leadership qualities and a leader's values.

When asked what do you believe prior knowledge, skills, and abilities helped, or prepared you for, during the first 5 years of small business ownership, the comprehensive insight offered by the business owners was mixed but forthright. There was talk about the need to take immediate corrective actions, on more than one occasion, to keep the company active. For example, (P-3), (P-2), and (P-1) stated unequivocally, that there were days, nights, and other times, they considered locking the doors and never returning. A similar view extended by (P-4) included experiencing frequent incidents during startup of leaving the store doors open, with a notice to the community of leaving. There was no attempt to prompt or follow up the relating of incidents that occurred years ago.

Education saved the (P-4) enterprise. A decision to return to college presented the opportunity for the benefits of the SBA assistance and guidance to be better understood. The new awareness focused the features of entrepreneurial management and finances.

In another case, (P-3) and (P-1) stated that there is absolutely no argument to be made against business education, and absolutely no substitution for business experience. Throughout all of the recordings, the owners (P-1) through (P-4) individually agreed that survival during catastrophic early startup and the reversal of imposing collapse was by chance. The results were more about (P-1) "God-given luck", (P-4) and (P-2) "faith," and (P-3) "the whole thing just turned itself around," but never about knowledge and skill. An illustration of growth surfaced during questioning when (P-1), in response to the question What critical strategies did you lack when you first established this business? Moreover, (P-3)'s answers to the inquiry What strategies have you used to become profitable? Each participant made similar but obvious points in their responses. The owners cited summaries that included daily events described as a process of staged-management necessary to overcome never-before-experienced, serious business issues. The incidents, they acknowledged resulted from deficiencies in experience, insufficient preparation, and financial mismanagement, all promoting ill-conceived decisions.

Owner (P-4), while referring to the same questions, cited numerous occasions where disasters during the first 3 years created a loss of inventories that required additional financing and forced operating mishaps that necessitated a practice of constant quick-learning. Meanwhile, for (P-2) there were income losses during the first 4 years of operations, as well as a similar learning curve. The (P-1) and (P-3) owners each credited the use of a best practices manual with helping to avoid the repetition of negative events and loss of the businesses while building wisdom about sustainment and core business values. Moreover, (P-2) and (P-4), spoke of company operations involving learning and applying everyday experiences to enhance business functions.

All participants engaged specifically with their personal perspectives in response to questions on the topics of products, marketing, profit, production, fiscal management, customers, workers, experience, failure, training, skills, strategies, financial management, family, community, and much more stimulated by the open-ended questions. Moreover, each owner replied to the inquiry, What are the key strategies you used to sustain your business beyond 5 years? The owners answered with variations of the types of responses that relate directly to strategic considerations, such as, recognizing customer needs, applied leadership, defining customer values, competitive marketing, extending character, dedicated management, transparency, and leveraging assets.

Meanwhile, since writing the proposal, there have been new peer-reviewed journals, and different results, or disputed results, to the existing literature about this study and effective enterprise practice. Thus, such discoveries are incorporated into the final results of this study. There were a few well-defined responses to the question What strategies have you used to become profitable? To demonstrate, participant (P-3) discussed entrepreneur strategy as the outgrowth of business innovation and services. That belief is comparable to this study, represented as entrepreneurs symbolize creating innovative businesses, in the form of startups, manufacturing products, or providing services (Parilla, 2013). There is a dispute, however, concerning acceptance of these new findings portraying entrepreneurs as co-controllers of production, mediators of change, or visionaries who locate prospects for moneymaking returns (Oleabhiele, Oleabhiele, & Ariya, 2015).

The new findings should not be considered acceptable for the reason that further research failed to locate supporting citations to collaborate the assertion. What is more, (P-2) answered the question about *profitability* by identifying entrepreneurship as business opportunities, growing companies, and profit-taking. After a follow-up question, (P-2) responded that “sometimes return on investment is around $0.10 for every dollar of revenue earned after taxes.” Further prompting did not produce answers that warranted more urging during the interview. However, while listening to the recorded response over and over again, there were just a low forced, disbelieving laugh, and the words “no comment, no comment.” The transcription was confirmed by (P-2) and accepted as such for the study.

Perhaps, the most typical rejoinders that highlighted an impression that although prosperous, the participants appeared financially insecure, was the interview question referencing the benefits of affluence, and distribution of ownership profits. The question, What do you believe the profitability of your company has brought to you, your employees, your family, and the community? was answered by all of the participants, but required much prompting, and follow-up and ultimately did not generate measurable responses. During MT reflective notes displayed comments describing (P-2) as looked right, up, and down, before wringing hands and answering. Participant (P-2) stated that there is an open house at the shop once a month to give neighborhood women free hair shampoos with blow-drying. To this end, (P-3) spoke about an aggressive community action campaign of social interaction, giving back to the community, which had always been an active company project. The (P-4) reply was equally telling, declaring that job security for employees was a priority because work is hard to find locally. The (P-1) response confirmed that there was a deep interest in the local neighborhood, the company, its employees, and their families.

The answers by (P-1) and (P-3), highlighted that personal accomplishment and other advantages are secondary to the neighborhood or local community. Meanwhile, the responses from (P-2) and (P-4) were reflective of some of the same considerations. In all cases, their employees were doing well and appeared to like the work environment, work, and benefits. When prompting and following up the question of the benefits of employer profitability, (P-3) and (P-1) spoke only about economic trends, small business regulations, and the escalating cost of being in business. Additional follow-up, addressing (P-3)'s formal wooden private room, and (P-1)'s elegant physical setting, drew the reply from (P-1) that "living upstairs above the establishment was not extravagant enough."

None of the participants were overly enthusiastic about explaining or entertaining follow-ups to the question What else would you like to share concerning your experiences of becoming a profitable and successful small business owner? However, (P-3) briefly spoke about the economy not being "small business friendly at this time." Comparable remarks repeated on the recordings of (P-2), (P-4), and (P-1).

Small Business Profitability Consensus

The MT involved member checking and analysis included a detailed review of synthesized transcripts, reflective notes, and specific financial records from each participant. The synthesized transcripts each contained several succinct paragraphs of derived interpretations of responses made to questions by participants and shared with the instrument. Each participant validated the descriptions of their responses via member checking. The financial documents disclosed the unique status of each owner's financial condition and profit status.

Each member's policies underlined proven keys to success. In each instance, the policies helped to document precisely the owners' level of business profitability, and the knowledge that the participant successfully operated the enterprise for more than 5 years.

Chikweche and Fletcher (2012) stated careful decision-making, focus, financial growth, and attention to detail are some of the policies necessary to the achievement of commercial success.

The earnings increase was a collective experience shared by all four study participants, confirmed by detailed financial analysis of 3 years of profit and loss statements from (P-3), 2 years of statements from (P-4), a 1-year statement from (P-2), and 4 years of statements from (P-1). Also, the assessment included a comprehensive evaluation of 12 separate months of cash flow statements from each of the four participants. Karadag (2015) emphasized that extrapolating financial performances, using relevant business records outlining effective business practices, such as annual income and quarterly cash flow statements, is a method applied in the determination of past and present financial profits.

The (P-3) company documents included the highest profitability ratio of any of the three other participants. The operating profit margin for (P-3), proved to be an average of 36% during the past 3 years. In the case of (P-1), for the last 4 years, the profit and loss and cash flow statements revealed a profit margin average of 30%. Whereas in the instance of (P-2), review of all of the company financial records for 2015 showed that for the year, 18% was the average profit margin. The 2 years of fiscal records for (P-4) displayed a growth pattern that mirrored the average net margins of the other participant companies, with the exception that 11% was the profit margin (see Table 4). The determination of proceeds, in the instance of each participant, was a method that was refined and calculated using the rule profit margin=net income/net sales=revenue. The process is a recognized practice utilized for the purpose of breaking down company earnings to determine profitability.

Table 4

Small Business Best Practice Financial Awareness

Participant	Best Practice Used	Lack/Acquire Strategies	Financial Awareness	Profit Margin
(P-1)	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes	30%
(P-2)	No	No/Yes	No	18%
(P-3)	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes	36%
(P-4)	No	No/Yes	No	11%

Note. Growth strategies, best practices, and financial awareness, related to earnings. Lack of strategic plans or best practices uses correlated with net margins. Adapted from "Financial Management Challenges in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises" by H. Karadag, 2015, *Emerging Markets Journal*, *5*, p. 27. Copyright May 2014, H. Karadag.

Small Business and Conceptual Framework

The substance of the findings contains many ties to the existing literature, the central question, and the conceptual framework. That is to say, the synthesized interview summaries uncovered many interconnected ET related themes and functions. Mostly, the results and similarities were those previously paired with data, using existing literature. In such cases, the new research findings replaced the extant references. Further, the study reference list, now updated, reflects newer versions of each appropriate journal.

Some of the journals replaced because of new findings are in the study's research references; for instance, in dispute of a literature finding of business practice. Overall, there are significant adjustments made to improve the currency of the study. Therefore, the accumulation of ET findings from new and existing journals included a substantial amount of rich research material, which tied the conceptual framework to the findings and answered the central research question.

To illustrate, all participants closely aligned with ET during their active pursuit of effective day-to-day business practices within their respective enterprises. Schumpeter (1939) presented ET to small businesses as a transformation of economic innovation. That is to say, when owners engage in modeling economic values, to reshape commercial trade and industry, they utilize ET to execute business-related decisions. Thus, the merging of strategies, and experiences, during startup, and later attempts to achieve commercial profits require entrepreneurship decision-making (Chikweche & Fletcher, 2012).

Incidentally, the routine of small business enterprises, strategizing to modify predetermined baseline operations, is a transformation using ET economic innovation. Galea (2012) contended that the conceptual framework creates a lens to understand better the context of business. In this way, during typically regulated operations, participants applied ET to build core strategy tasks and to modernize operating pedestals. Take the case of (P-1), who discussed how the concept of management differed while running one establishment collocated across from a second concern in the same large building, each requiring appropriate and separate weekend management controls. The strategy involving ET enabled (P-1) to use the specific entrepreneurs’ tool, innovation, to exploit changes necessary to marry two atypical businesses, and determine the best opportunity for executing effective business practices. That particular execution used what the authors of new knowledge, Ghio et al. (2015) described as the spillover knowledge theory, a coequal of the entrepreneurship theory.

To summarize, the fundamental question of ET strategy relates to (P-3) who discussed positioning ET and innovation, at the center of the business model, instead of marshaling the business' independent forces largely unaffected by internal company policy. Then, (P-4) who explained about an initiative to temporarily defer economic growth, so that ET related to training, knowledge, and new technology could become a part of enterprise plans. Alternatively, in the case of (P-2), who referenced actions taken to apply an expansion of commercial schemes, and shift internal controls, under ET to promote economic prosperity and success. Further, the understanding includes conceptual findings, and or disputed results, of existing literature about effective business practices and knowledge appearing in this study. Martin et al. (2013) declared that ET is a primary driver directly related to an entrepreneur's knowledge-based economic efforts.

Applications to Professional Practice

The traditional idea of professional practice seems to embody an outsized but restricted group of particularized people and regulation wizards of matter and different skills driven by a comparatively vast and regimented cycle of schooling, training, and internship measured by a fraternity of already successful participants in practices. Of course, then, an ethic service concept should become a part of any consideration. Small business owners in the United States provided services to many without comparable exceptional personal history and calling and are professional practitioners, although not fitting the traditional idea expressed above, and perform skillful services that improve the quality of life of their customers, and the public at large.

The appropriateness of these findings to professional practice rests in an area of relevant strategies exhibited by small businesses seeking to gain profitability. This research is transcending and important for small business startups that fought battles attempting to avoid firm failure during the first 3 years (Byrd et al., 2013; Gartner et al., 2012; Jenkins et al., 2014). More importantly, Gagnon et al. (2013) agreed that profitable small businesses were creators of innovation that led to social and economic sustainment.

During 2013, more than 50% of U.S. small firms failed inside of 5 years, and over 20% failed during the first year (Arasti et al., 2014). The research discoveries of the failures emanated from peer-reviewed journals, and the participant owners in this study led to the detection of small business profitability impelled by the framework, ET, conceived by Schumpeter (1939). ET influenced private enterprise to become an integral element of the capitalist process of creativity, strategy and expansion, which resulted in improved business practice via small businesses' use of management, leadership, and spillover theories.

The findings concerning the professional practice of operations uncovered the concept of ET used by small business owners in professional practice to create profitability and sustained success for more than 5 years. The expansion of that propensity, throughout all disciplines of activity, benefits small firms functioning in industries and trades in domestic and in international business arenas.

Implications for Social Change

There is an absolute consensus about entrepreneurs and how they drive to increase social value and contribute to the welfare or well-being of human communities. Albina Ruiz's approach to the innovative waste collection in the back alleys of Lima, Peru, and the well-known Ben and Jerry are examples of what aggressive small business social responsibility can accomplish. A survey released in 2014 by Walden University implied that participation in social, technological change is significant (Walden University, 2014, p. 14). The mere inference to the technology world is that it is time for an active human social exchange. The idea is significant, widespread, and moving forward, as a result of businesses and technology working to address issues of importance. The organizations best positioned to assume the brunt of the charge are local business owners, and on some other occasions, agencies in support of small firms.

There is a good reason for linking human social exchange with young business startups they are on the level where businesses are close to the population, and that is the point of job creation. For instance, without growth due to the actions of small business startups, net job change would have been negative during the years 1980 through 2014 (SBA, 2015). Given the role small firms play in quantifying U.S. value through economic support strategies, it is important to grasp a concept Shukla and Skukla (2014) stated, that small businesses are job creators and the economic growth engines of the country. The findings from this study exposed a truth advocated by Gagnon et al. (2013), that startup success leads to widespread social, economic, and sustainable outcomes. Further, the findings vindicated remarks of Pollak (2013) on the effectiveness of research in providing additional implications that social change contributes to the growth and convergence of technology and human capital.

Indeed, the notion goes that those important drivers of innovation generated by small business profits and the use of human capital affected change, and as stipulated by Oberschachtsiek (2012), contributed to small firms' strategies about viability, sustainability, and success. Peltier and Naidu (2012) argued enterprise and employee prosperity improve family economic health and strengthened community markets. The implications for social change are appropriate considerations regarding tangible improvements to individuals, cultures, organizations, institutions, and societies because study findings sometimes match social behavior.

This business study is a small-scale version of the broad initiative designed to identify social change, or difficulties, in a general populace. However, the active efforts of small businesses have generated jobs, stimulated economic growth, improved net individual income, increased the domestic gross national income and increased federal government revenue. In so doing, living in the United States reflects a realization of social exchange related to small business owner initiatives.

Recommendation for Action

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive multiunit case study was to determine the entrepreneurial strategies small retail business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years. The population consisted of four small business owners in Fairfax County, Virginia, with fewer than 50 employees, whose businesses were profitable for at least 5 years. The number of U.S. small businesses in 2011 was 28.2 million, and 17,700 had fewer than 500 employees (SBA, 2014).

In short, small business equals almost half of private enterprise and hires about 50% of the workforce, while producing two-thirds of all free enterprise jobs (Byrd et al., 2013). The potential for small business owners reflected in this study's findings came from participant research experiences. The analysis could enable other entrepreneurs to benefit from the participants' experiences and adventures and minimize their risk. The benefits of this study, if considered, offer advantages to less informed new owners before assuming the uncertainties of what the SBA (2014) declared are the advantages and disadvantages attendant to self-employment.

The individuals who need to pay attention to these results are those preparing to venture into entrepreneurship. Immediate issues of note are the small business failure rate, the risks of entering into a venture without adequate preparation, the absence of management strategies, single owner difficulties, and more. Therefore, small business owners intending to launch startups should first learn the differences inherent to the functionality of policy analysis, management, substance, assets, and practices.

In particular, small business owners should pay distinct attention to management. Shields & Shelleman (2015) reported findings that company management evaluation produced three primary concerns. They are (a) underdeveloped organizational roles, routines and trust relationships; (b) liability of smallness leading to the risk of failure associated with firm size and (c) difficulty raising capital and vulnerability in the marketplace preventing owner competition (Shields & Schelleman, 2015). Examples of the Shields and Shelleman management assessment are relevant to the findings of this study. By way of illustration, participants (P-1) and (P-4) overcame the difficulties of acquiring capital while being exposed to negative market conditions but ultimately became successful. In the case of (P-2), smallness created a risk factor and failure circumstances that business knowledge helped eliminate before attaining prosperity. (P-3) began with a small role in an organization and fractured trust relationships, which made the establishment of a customer base demanding in early development and delayed success.

I recommend that these findings be reviewed and adopted as significant to ongoing and future small business owners located in metropolitan Washington DC. The appropriate administrators of the FCEDA and the SBA, Washington DC, branch, are the most suitable agencies to disseminate the findings to all prospective impending and existing firm small owners.

I also recommend that the SBA include the results in their education business syllabus for training, counseling, support, and other small business, service-related guidance. I further intend to deliver a summary to each participant with the promise of the next availability of a copy of the published doctoral study. Finally, I make the ardent recommendation that not only small business owners in local Metropolitan Washington DC but small business owners in states throughout the United States have the opportunity to use the study results.

Recommendations for Further Research

With this qualitative descriptive multiunit case study, the principle limitation was that I focused only on businesses with 50 or fewer employees, instead of medium or large companies with 500 employees or more. Data saturation is the process of continuing to conduct additional interviews with more participants, until no new data appears and the information repeats and becomes redundant due to replication (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Data saturation occurred after receiving full and open recorded participant responses, to open-ended questions during 60-minute semistructured interviews with the four study participants. Another possible limitation, the absence of complete and free interaction by study participants, was never in fact a limitation. The same applies concerning the access to individual company records, which in fact was not a constraint. Each participant provided a copy of their firms’ 2015 profit and loss statement and several provided other years and 12 monthly cash flow statements. The company records, the recorded transcripts, and the reflective interviewer notes qualify as MT (Heale & Forbes, 2013), providing a more comprehensive picture than one type of data alone.

I recommend that later studies incorporate enterprises with 500 or more employees and a history of successful operations of more than 10 years. Increasing the number of workers and extending the number of years of successful operations of small businesses could produce findings relevant to a different segment of the small business community. Owners are responsible for the control and management of firms of greater size over an extended period, governed by regulations and procedures, which could expand their sphere of influence in the economy as a whole. The research was limited to Fairfax County, Virginia and I recommend that a study originate in another geographical location, larger than the county in Virginia and that the research takes place during each of the four seasons of the year.

For example, in the past, inclement winter weather and traffic have had an effect on consumer spending. Small business retail activities, conducted by owners of larger small firms, enjoy economies of scale, experience vast differences in tools of strategic analysis, like employment of strategy scholars who focus on how internal firm marketing capabilities affect the growth and performance of the business. Finally, given that this was a case study using the qualitative method, a different method and design should be attempted to enhance further research and profitability strategies.

Reflections

The encounter with the DBA doctoral study activity was unique, fast paced, and memorable. The subject is of great importance to small business owners living and working in communities like Fairfax County, Virginia and the health and welfare of their families, the firm's employees, and their families. Moreover, the small business topic is of essential importance to the prosperity of small business owners, in counties across the face of the United States; places where small businesses should have every possible chance to be profitable and to succeed.

During this research and at each procedural step during the conduct of study development, I made efforts to minimize errors and to eliminate inappropriate researcher bias. Moustakas (1994) suggested epoche to mitigate bias. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) contended that if there is bias to preconceived notions, while interviewing, a state of epoche prevailed. I observed the central methodological principle of epoche, and bracketed, or set aside, prior expectations about the character of the small business, since bias during the study could result due to my business experience.

Further, Foley and O'Conner (2013) recommended this method to help achieve commonality, consistency, and reliability. Qualitative researchers should rely on interview protocols. I used an interview protocol (Appendix B) thereby ensuring that each participant received the same approach within the same interview procedures. The participants in the research provided everything possible to assist in the smooth completion of this study. Collectively, they proved to be everything one could hope for in small business entrepreneurs serving as retailers in this great nation. They also exhibited strong evidence of character, leadership, management, energy, motivation, dedication, passion, and values. I am inclined to associate with and provide more support to these stalwart small business store owners who sustain their local communities and help to improve the economy.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive multiunit case study was to determine the entrepreneurial strategies small retail business owners used to succeed in business beyond 5 years. I interviewed four small business owners, using open-ended questions, and recorded the conversations in private at their locations. All of the participants were willing volunteers over 18 years of age and owners of enterprises with fewer than 50 workers that had been profitable for at least 5 years.

The subordinate data effort contained owner profit and loss statements and monthly cash flow statements about profitability. A combination of transcripts, business records, and reflective interviewer notes facilitated MT. Heale and Forbes (2013) argued that MT provide a more comprehensive picture using multiple types of sources. For this study, the computer assisted software used was MAXQDA. The coded qualitative data analysis process automatically assigned transcribed text passages to major theme categories and subcategories out of shared data. The gathering, analyzing, and storage of the participant information was in direct compliance with IRB prerequisites.

The conclusions grew from the findings related to improved practice in business, and the professional custom of operations. Moreover, the findings uncovered a concept of entrepreneurship theory utilized by small business owners in licensed practice who created profitability and sustained success for more than 5 years. The expanded use of ET by all of the small retail firms provided rich detail about their operations and strategies. Flowing from the conclusions was also a new study that described spillover knowledge theory as a coequal of the entrepreneurship theory. The new construct entitled the SKTE added research findings that helped clarify conclusions. Further, Ghio et al. (2015) suggested, the results elevated the substance, accord, and concept, of SKTE within the worldwide scientific community.

My study findings were clear in suggesting that owner and management using well-intentioned strategic processes are sometimes faulty. Further, motivation and value were always highest in firms with high-profit margins. Moreover, application of active leadership principles was defined by each profitable retail business. Further, the more ineffective, or incomplete projects were, the more difficult it was to sustain positive energy. Also, there is no substitute for ownership dedication and passion, and that there was a critical need to hire and retain employees who are crucial to sustaining profitability for more than 5 years.

References

Abatecola, G. (2013). Survival or failure in the organizational life cycle. What lessons for managers? *Journal of General Management, 38,* 23–38. Retrieved from http://art.torver gata.it/handle/2108/75867

Abidin, R., Hasnan, N., Abdullah, C., Mohtar, S., & Zulhumadi, F. (2014). The relationship between social capital and technology transfer performance: A study on companies in the technology park. *Journal of Southeast Asian Research, 3*(1), 1–9. doi:10.5171/2013.11672

Acs, Z. J., Audretsch, D. B., & Lehmann, E. E. (2013). The spillover knowledge theory of entrepreneurship. *Small Business Economics, 41*, 757–774. doi:10.1007/s11187-013-9505-9

Akhtar, P., & Khan, Z. (2015). The linkages between leadership approaches and coordination effectiveness: A path analysis of selected New Zealand-UK International agri-food supply chains. *British Food Journal, 117*, 443–460. doi:10.1108/BFJ-12-2013-0357

Albliwi, S., Antony, J., Halim, S. A., & van der Wiele, L. T. (2014). Critical failure factors of Lean Six Sigma: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management, 31,* 1012–1030. doi:10.1108/IJQRM-09-2013-0147

Aldrich, H. E., & Yang, T. (2014). *Easy to celebrate but hard to execute* (Report No. 14-03-14). Taberg, Sweden: TMG Taberg. Retrieved from http://eng.entreprenorskapsforum.se/2014/03/14/20-years-of-entrepreneurship-research-from-small-business-dynamics-to-entrepreneurial-growth-and-societal-prosperity/

Alkali, M. A. (2012). An empirical study of entrepreneur's educational level and the performance of small business manufacturing enterprises in Bauchi State, Nigeria. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business, 4*, 914–923. Retrieved from http://www.ijcrb.com/archives.htm

Alstete, J. W. (2014). Strategy choices of potential entrepreneurs. *Journal of Education for Business, 89,* 77–83. doi:10.1080/08832323.2012.759094

Amankwah-Amoah, J. (2014). A unified framework of explanations for strategic persistence in the wake of others' failures. *Journal of Strategy and Management, 7,* 422–444. doi:10.1108/JSMA-01-2014-0009

Amel, D. H., & Akkari, I. (2012). The entrepreneurial failure: Exploring links between the main causes of failure and the company life cycle. *International Journal of Business and Social Science, 3,* 189–205. Retrieved from http://www.ijbssnet.com

Ames, M. (2012). *Small Business Association: What are the major reasons for small business failure?* Retrieved from www.sba.gov/content/

Amirbekova, D., Tayauova, G., & Chowdhury, D. (2014, July). *The impact of knowledge creation and exchange of SMEs performance in Kazakhstan.* Paper presented at the Sixteenth Annual International Conference on Managing in an Interconnected World: Pioneering Business and Technology Excellence, Baku, Azerbaijan. Abstract retrieved from http://www.researchgate.net/GBATA2014-Readings-Book.pdf

Anyan, F. (2013). The influence of power shifts in data collection and analysis stages: A focus on qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Report, 18,* 1–9. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/sss/QR/index.html

Arasti, Z., Fakhrisadat, N., & Narges, I. (2014). Explaining the role of managerial skills of entrepreneurship in business success. *International Journal of Management Sciences, 4*, 42–52. Retrieved from http://www.rassweb.com

Arasti, Z., Zandi, F., & Bahmani, N. (2014). Business failure factors in Iranian SMEs: Do successful and unsuccessful entrepreneurs have different viewpoints? *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research, 4,* 1–14. doi:10.1186/s40497-014-0010-7

Astebro, T., Holger, H., Ramana, N., & Weber, R. A. (2014). Seeking roots of entrepreneurship: Insights from behavioral economics. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 28,* 49–70. doi:10.1257/jep.28.3.49

Ayala, J. C., & Manzano, G. (2014). The resilience of the entrepreneur, influence on the success of the business: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 42,* 126–135. doi:10.1016/j.joep.2014.02.004

Bae, T., Qian, S., Miao, C., & Fiet, J. (2014). The relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions: A meta-analytic review. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 38,* 217–254. doi:10.1111/etap.12095

Bansal, P., & Corley, K. (2012). What's different about qualitative research? *Academy of Management Journal, 55,* 509–513. doi:10.5465/amj.2012.4003

Behrens, J., & Ernst, H. (2014). What keeps managers from a losing course of action? G/stop decisions in new product development. *Journal of Product Innovation*

Management, *31*, 361–374. doi:10.1111/jpim.12100

Bello, B., & Ivanov, S. (2014). Growth strategies for very small organizations: A case study of a very small entrepreneurship: *International Journal of Organizational Innovation*, *6*, 51–53. Retrieved from http://ijoi.fp.express academic.org/

Bergsteiner, H., & Avery, G. C. (2012). When ethics are compromised by ideology: The global competitiveness report. *Journal of Business Ethics, 109*, 391–410. doi:10.1007/s1055 011-1136-y

Berman, S. J. (2012). Digital transformation: Opportunities to create new business models. *Strategy & Leadership, 40*, 16–24. doi:10.1108/10878571211209314

Bernard, R. (2012). *Social research method: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bisel, R. S., Messersmith, A. S., & Kelley, K. M. (2012). Supervisor-subordinate communication: Hierarchical mom effect meets organizational learning. *Journal of Business Communication, 49*, 128–147. doi:10.1177/0021943612436972

Blavin, F., Blumberg, L. J., Buettgens, M., Holahan, J., & McMorrow, S. (2012). How choices in exchange design for states could affect insurance premiums and levels of coverage. *Health Affairs, 31*, 290–298. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.2011.1049

Brau, J. C., Cardell, S. N., & Woodworth, W. P. (2015). Does microfinance fill the funding gap for microentrepreneurs? A conceptual analysis of entrepreneurship seeding in impoverished nations. *International Business Research 8*, 30-42. doi:10.5539/ibrv8n5p30

Brebels, L., De Crème, D., Sedikides, C., & Van Hiel, A. (2013). Self-focus and procedural fairness: The role of self-rumination and self-reflection. *Social Justice Research, 26*, 151–167. doi:10.1007/s11211-013-0180-4

Bublak, D. R. (2013). *Barriers to small business participation in federal overseas contracts and subcontracts* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (UMI No. 1473898282)

Burdin, G. (2014). Is worker managed firms more likely to fail than conventional enterprises? Evidence from Uruguay. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review, 67*, 203–238. Retrieved from http://www.econstor.eu

Byrd, K., Ross, L. W., & Glackin, C. E. W. (2013). A preliminary causal analysis of small business access to credit during economic expansion and contraction. *Journal of Applied Finance and Banking, 3,* 77–84. Retrieved from http://www.scienpress.com/journal_focus.asp?Main_Id=56

Chandler, V. (2012). The economic impact of the Canada small business financing program. *Small Business Economics, 39*, 253-264. doi:10.1007/s11187-010-9302-7

Chen, J. (2013). Selection and serial entrepreneurs. *Journal of Economics & Management Strategy*, *22*, 281–311. doi:10.1111/jems.12016

Chikweche, T., & Fletcher, R. (2012). Undertaking research at the bottom of the pyramid using qualitative methods. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, *15*, 242–267. doi:10.1108/13522751211231978

Christensen, C. (2013). *The innovator's dilemma: When new technologies cause great firms to fail.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Cole, A. H. (1946). An approach to the study of entrepreneurship: A tribute to Edwin F. Gay. *Journal of Economic History, 6*, 1–15. doi:10.1017/S022050700052876

Covell, C. L., Sidani, S., & Ritchie, J. A. (2012). Does the sequence of data collection influence participants' responses to closed and open-ended questions? A methodological study. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 49*, 664–671. doi:10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2011.12.002

Criscuolo, C., Gal, P. N., & Menon, C. (2014). *The dynamics of employment growth: Evidence from 18 countries* (CEP Report No. 1274). London, England: School of Economics. Retrieved from Economic Performance Center website: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/60286/1/dp1274.pdf

Cronin-Gilmore, J. (2012). Exploring marketing strategies in small businesses. *Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness, 6*, 96–107. Retrieved from http://www.na-businesspress.com/jmdcopen.html

Cumming, D., & Li, D. (2013). Public policy, entrepreneurship, and venture capital in the United States. *Journal of Corporate Finance, 23*, 345–367. doi:10.1016/j.jcorpfin.2013.09.005

Dahmen, P., & Rodriquez, E. (2014). Financial literacy and the success of small businesses: An observation from a small business development center. *Numeracy, 7*(1), 1–14. doi:10.5038/1936-4660.7.1.3

Debrulle, J., Maes, J., & Sels, L. (2013). Start-up absorptive capacity: Do the owner's human and social capital matter? *International Small Business Journal, 32*, 777–801. doi:10.1177/0266242612475103

Duval-Couetil, N. (2013). Assessing the impact of entrepreneurship education programs: Challenges and approaches. *Journal of Small Business Management, 51*, 394–409. doi:10.1111/jsbm.12024.

Dworkin, S. L. (2012). Editorial: Sample size policy for qualitative studies using in-depth interviews. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 41*, 1319–1320. doi:10.1007/s10508-012-0016-6

Ejrnces, M., & Hochguertel, S. (2013). Is business failure due to lack of effort? Empirical evidence from a large administrative sample. *Economic Journal, 123,* 791–830. doi:10.1111/ecoj.12013

Elmuti, D., Khoury, G., & Omran, O. (2012). Does entrepreneurship education have a role in developing entrepreneurial skills and ventures' effectiveness? *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education, 15*, 83–98. Retrieved from http://alliedacademies.org/Public/Default.aspx

Elo, S., Kaariainen, M., Kanste, O., Polkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngas, H. (2014). Qualitative content analysis: A focus on trustworthiness. *SAGE, 4*(1), 1–10. doi:10.1177/2158244014522633

Englander, M. (2012). The interview data collection in descriptive phenomenological human scientific research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 43*, 13–35. doi:10.1163/156916212X632943

Erlingsson, C., & Brysiewicz, P. (2013). Orientation among multiple truths: An introduction to qualitative research. *African Journal of Emergency Medicine, 3*, 92–99. doi:10.1016/jaf/jem.2012.04.005

Exec. Order No. 33. (2014). Local government conflict of interests Act, section 2.2-3100 et seq. of the Code of Virginia. Reprinted as amended in Code of Virginia 2.2-3114 (6) (2015)

Fadahunsi, A. (2012). The growth of small businesses: Towards a research agenda. *American Journal of Economics and Business Administration, 4*, 105–115. Retrieved from http://thescipub.com/journals/ajeba

Fairfax County Economic Development Authority. (2013). *A great place to work and live.* Retrieved from http://www.fairfaxcountyeda.org/sites/default/files/pdf/fairfax_facts.pdf

Fairlie, R. W. (2013). *Kauffman index of entrepreneurial activity, 1996–2012.* Retrieved from http://www.kauffman.org

Farashah, A. D. (2013). The process of the impact of entrepreneurship education and training: Entrepreneurship perception and intention: Study of the educational system of Iran. *Education + Training, 55*, 9–10. Retrieved from http://www.emeraldin sight.com/0040-0912.htm

Fernandez, S., Malatesta, D., & Smith, C. R. (2013). Race, gender, and government contracting: Different explanations or new prospects for theory? *Public Administration Review, 73*, 109–120. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2012. 02684.x

Finlay, L. (2014). Engaging phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 11*, 121–141. doi:10.1080/14780887.2013.807899

Foley, D., & O'Connor, A. J. (2013). Social capital and networking practices of indigenous entrepreneurs. *Journal of Small Business Management*, *51*, 276–296.

doi:10.1111/jsbm.12017

Frankish, J. S., Roberts, R. G., Coad, A., Spears, T. C., & Storey, D. J. (2012). Do entrepreneurs learn? Or do they just tell us that they do? *Industrial and Corporate Change, 22*, 73–106. doi:10.1093/icc/dts016

Gagnon, M. A., Michael, J. H., Elser, N., & Gyory, C. (2013). Seeing green in several ways: The interplay of entrepreneurial, sustainable and market orientations on executive scanning and small business performance. *Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness, 7,* 9–28. Retrieved from http://www.na-businesspress.com/jmdc open.html

Gale, W., & Brown, S. (2013). Small business, innovation, and tax policy: A review. *National Tax Journal*, *66*, 871–892. Retrieved from http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/57384/

Galea, S. (2012). Simplicity, complexity, and conceptual frameworks. *Psychiatry: Interpersonal & Biological Processes, 75*, 223–226. doi:10.1521/psyc.2012.75.3.223

Garg, P., & Garg, A. (2013). An empirical study on critical failure factors for enterprise resource planning implementation in Indian sector. *Business Process Management Journal*, *19*, 496–514. doi:10.1108/14637151311319923

Gartner, W. B., Frid, C. J., & Alexander, J. C. (2012). Financing the emerging firm. *Small Business Economics, 39*, 745–761. doi:10.1007/s11187-011-9359-y

Ghio, N., Guerini, M., Lehmann, E. E., & Rossi-Lamastra, C. (2015). The emergence of the spillover knowledge theory of entrepreneurship. *Small Business Economics*, *44*(1), 1-18. doi: 10.1007/s11187-014-9588-y

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods, 16*, 15–31. doi:10.1177/1094428112452151

Ghobadi, S., & D'Ambra, J. (2012). Knowledge sharing in cross-functional teams: A competitive model. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 16*, 285–301. doi:10.1108/1367327121 1218889

Glaser, J., & Laudel, G. (2013). Life with and without coding: Two methods for early-stage data analysis in qualitative research aiming at causal explanations. *In Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 14*, 1438–5627. Retrieved from http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs130254

Goertzk, G., & Mahoney, J. (2012). Methodological Rorschach tests: Contrasting interpretations in qualitative and quantitative research. *Comparative Political Studies, 46*, 236–251. doi:10.1177/0010414012466376

Granot, E., Brashear, T. G., & Motta, P. C. (2012). A structural guide to in-depth interviewing in business and industrial marketing research. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 27,* 547–553. doi:10.1108/08858621 211257310

Greenwood, M. D., & Terry, J. J. (2012). Demystifying mixed methods research: Participation in a reading group "sign post" the way. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches, 6*, 98–108. doi:10.13054/mije.13.35.3.2

Guarnieri, P., Sobreiro, V. A., Nagano, M.S., & Serrano, A. L. M. (2015). The challenge of selecting and evaluating third party reverse logistics providers in a multicriteria perspective: A Brazilian case. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 96*, 209–219. doi:10.1016 /j.jclepro.2014.05.040

Haltiwanger, J., Jarmin, R. S., & Miranda, J. (2013). Who creates jobs? Small versus large versus young. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *95*, 347–361. doi:10.1162/REST_a_00288

Hamrouni, A., & Akkari, I. (2012). The entrepreneurial failure: Exploring links between the main causes of failure and the company life cycle. *International Journal of Business & Social Science, 3,* 189–205. Retrieved from http://www.ijbssnet.com

Hassini, E., Surti, C., & Searcy, C. (2012). A literature review and a case study of sustainable supply chain with a focus on metrics. *International Journal of Production Economics, 140*, 69–82. doi:10.1016/j.ijpe.2012.01.042

Heale, R., & Forbes, D. (2013). Understanding triangulation in research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, *16*, 98. doi:10.1136/eb-2013-101494

Heinze, I. (2013). Entrepreneur sense making of business failure. *Small Enterprise Research, 20*(1), 21–39. doi:10.5172/ser.2013.20.1.21.

Hewege, C. R. (2012). A critique of the mainstream management control theory and the way forward. *SAGE Open, 2*, 1–10. doi:10.1177/2158244012470114

Hisrich, R. D. (2014). *Advanced introductions to entrepreneurship.* Cheltenham UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Holloway, I., & Wheeler, S. (2013). *Qualitative research in nursing and healthcare.* San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Houghton, C., Casey, D., Shaw, D., & Murphy, K. (2013). Rigour in qualitative case-study research. *Nurse Researcher*, *20*, 12–17. doi:10.7748/nr2013.03.20.4.12.e326

Hutchison-Krupat, J., & Chao, R. O. (2014). Tolerance for failure and incentives for collaborative innovation. *Production & Operations Management*, *23*, 1265–1285. doi:10.1111/poms.12092

Ibe, S. O., Moemena, I. C., Alozie, S. T., & Mbaeri, C. C. (2015). Financing options for small and medium enterprises (SMEs): Exploring non-bank financial institutions as an alternative means of financing. *Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research, 2*, 28–37. Retrieved from http://ztjournals.com/index.php/JEPER/article/view/21

Ivanov, S. (2013). Defects in modern organizations: Field findings and discovery. *International Journal of Innovation, Management, and Technology, 4*, 204–208. doi:10.7763/IJIMT.2013.V4.392

Jayawarna, D., Jones, O., & Macpherson, A. (2014). Entrepreneurial potential: The role of human and cultural capitals. *International Small Business Journal, 32*, 918–943. doi:10.1177/0266242614525795

Jenkins, A. S., Wiklund, J., & Brundin, E. (2014). Individual responses to firm failure: Appraisals, grief, and the influence of prior failure experience. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *29*, 17–33. doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2012.10.006

Jennings, J. E., Edwards, T., Jennings, P. D., & Delbridge, R. (2014). Emotional arousal and entrepreneurial outcomes: Combining qualitative methods to elaborate theory. *Journal of Business Venturing, 30*, 113–130. doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2014.06.005

Jolley, E., Rhodes, T., Platt, L., Hope, V., Latypov, A., Donoghoe, M., & Wilson, D. (2012). HIV among people who inject drugs in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia: A systematic review with implications for policy. *BMJ Open, 2,* 1–20. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2012-001465

Jones, C., Matlay, H., & Maritz, A. (2012). Enterprise education for all, or just some? *Education+Training*, *54,* 813–824. doi:10.1108/00400911211274909

Karadag, H. (2015). Financial management challenges in small and medium-sized enterprises: A strategic management approach. *Emerging Markets Journal*, *5,* 26–40. doi:10.5195/emaj.2015.67

Kerr, W. R., Nanda, R., & Rhodes-Kropf, M. (2014). Entrepreneurship as experimentation. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 28*, 25–48. doi:10.1257/jep.28.3.25

Khan, A. Z., & Adnan, N. (2014). The impact of leadership styles on organizational performance. *International Journal of Management Sciences, 2,* 501–515. Retrieved from http://www.rassweb.com

Kim, D. J. (2014). Success and failure factors of technology commercialization—A Korean case. *Asian Journal of Innovation and Policy, 3*, 25–49. doi:10.7545/ajip.2014.3.1.025

Knight, J. (2012). Deletion, distortion, and data collection: The application of the neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) meta-model in qualitative interviews. *Australasian Journal of Market & Social Research, 20,* 15–21. Retrieved from http://www.amsrs.com.au/

Kovacevich, R. (2014). The financial crisis: Why the conventional wisdom has it all wrong. *Cato Journal, 34*, 541–556. Retrieved from http://www.cato.org/cato-journal

Kreiser, P. M., Marino, L. D., Kuratki, D. F., & Weaver, K. M. (2013). Disaggregating entrepreneurial orientation: The non-linear impact of innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking on SME performance. *Small Business Economics 40*, 273–291. doi:10.1007/s11187-012-9460-x

Kuckartz, U. (2014). *Qualitative text analysis: A guide to methods, practice and using software* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Kuechle, G. (2013). The determinants of effective entrepreneurial behavior: An evolutionary game theory critique. *International Journal of Management, 30*, 507–521. Retrieved from http://www.emeraldinsight.com

Kuratko, D. F. (2013). *Entrepreneurship: Theory, process, and practice* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Lechner, C., & Gudmundsson, S. V. (2014). Entrepreneurial orientation firm strategy and small firm performance. *International Small Business Journal, 32,* 36–60. doi:10.1177/026624261245 5034

Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2013). *Practical research: Planning and design* (10th ed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Leitch, C. M., McMullan, C., & Harrison, R. T. (2013). The development of entrepreneurial leadership: The role of human, social and institutional capital. *British Journal of Management, 24*, 347–366. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8551.2011.

00808.x

Leroy, H., Manigart, S., Meuleman, M., & Collewaert, V. (2015). Understanding the continuation of firm activities when entrepreneurs exit their firms: Using theory of planned behavior. *Journal of Small Business Management, 53*, 400–415. doi:10.1111/jsbm.12077

Levy, S. J. (2012). Metrics for innovation and entrepreneurial success: A study on firm performance in the South Florida region. *Journal of International Management Studies, 7,* 1–6. Retrieved from http://www.jimsjournal.org/index.html

Li, H., & Sun, J. (2013). Predicting business failure using an RSF-based case based reasoning ensemble forecasting method. *Journal of Forecasting*, *32*, 180–192. doi:10.1002/for.1265

Lomborg, S. (2012). Researching communicative practice: Web archiving in qualitative social media research. *Journal of Technology in Human Services, 30*, 219–231. doi:10.1080/15228835.2012.744719

Lueg, R., Malinauskaite, L., & Marinova, I. (2014). The vital role of business processes in a business model: The case of a startup company. *Problems and Perspectives in Management, 12*, 213–220. Retrieved from http://www.businessperspectives.org

Mantzos, L., Capros, P., Kouvaritakis, N., & Zeka-Paschou, M. (2003). *European energy and transport: Trends to 2030*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/trends_to_2030.pdf

Marom, S., & Lussier, R. N. (2014). A business success versus failure prediction model for small businesses in Israel. *Business and Economic Research, 4*, 63.

doi:10.5296/ber.v4i2.5997

Marshall, B., Cardon, P., Poddar, A., & Fontenot, R. (2013). Does sample size matter in qualitative research? A review of qualitative interviews in is research. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, *54*, 11–22. Retrieved from http://www.iacis.org/jcis/jcis.php

Martin, L., McNeill, T., & Warren-Smith, I. (2013). Exploring business growth and eco-innovation in small rural firms. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research, 19*, 592–610. doi:10.1108/IJEBR-10-2012-0118

McManus, J., & Floyd, D. (2013). New entrepreneurial models: An overview. *Strategic Change*, *22*, 125–127. doi:10.1002/jsc.1927

Mertel, T., & Brill, C. (2015). What every leader ought to know about becoming a servant leader. *Industrial and Commercial Training, 47*, 228–235. doi:10.1108/ICT-02-2015-0013

Meyer, W. G. (2014). The effect of optimism bias on the decision to terminate failing projects. *Project Management Journal*, *45*, 7–20. doi:10.1002/pmj.21435

Mirocha, J., Bents, R., Labrosse, J., & Rietow, K. (2013). Strategies for developing leaders in small to medium sized firms: An analysis of best practices in the most successful firms. *Organization Development Journal, 31*, 23–38. Retrieved from http://www.isodc.org

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Munn, Z., Porritt, K., Lockwood, C., Aromataris, E., & Pearson, A. (2014). Establishing confidence in the output of qualitative research synthesis: The ConQual approach.

BMC Medical Research Methodology, *14*, 1–7. doi:10.1186/1471-2288-14-108

Nasr, K. B., & Boujelbene, Y. (2014). Assessing the impact of entrepreneurship education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 10,* 712–715. doi.10.1016/jsbspro.2013 12.534

National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. (1978). *Belmont report: Appendix, ethical principles, and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research.* Retrieved from http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/

Oberschachtsiek, D. (2012). The experience of the founder and self-employment duration: A comparative advantage approach. *Small Business Economics*, *39*, 1–17. doi:10.1007/s11187-010–9288-1

Oleabhiele, E. O., Oleabhiele, E. P., & Ariya, D. A. (2015). Entrepreneurship education and sustainable development. *Academic Research International*, *6*, 279–285. Retrieved from http://www.journals.savap.org.pk/journal.html

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Byers, V. T. (2014). An exemplar for combining the collection, analysis, and interpretation of verbal and nonverbal data in qualitative research. *International Journal of Education, 6*, 183–246. doi:10.5296/ije.v6i1.4399

O’Reilly, M., & Parker, N. (2012). Unsatisfactory saturation: A critical exploration of the notion of saturated sample sizes in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *13*, 1–8. doi:10.1177/1468794112446106

Parilla, E. S. (2012). Level of management practices of micro and small businesses in Ilocos Norte. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social*

Sciences, 3, 439–466. doi:10.6007/IJARBSS/v3-i7/67

Parker, S. C. (2013). Do serial entrepreneurs run successively better-performing businesses? *Journal of Business Venturing, 28*, 652–666. doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2012.08.001

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pellegrino, G., Piva, M., & Vivarelli, M. (2014). How do new entrepreneurs innovate? *Istituto di Politica Economica, 70,* 1–46. Retrieved from http://istituti.unicatt.it

Peltier, J. W., & Naidu, G. M. (2012). Social networks across the SME organizational lifecycle. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 19*, 56–73. doi:10.1108/14626001211196406

Petty, N. J., Thomson, O. P., & Stew, G. (2012). Ready for a paradigm shift? Part 2 Introducing qualitative research methodologies and methods. *Manual Therapy, 17*, 378–384. doi:10.1016/j.math.2012.03.004

Pezalla, A. E., Pettigrew, J., & Miller-Day, M. (2012). Researching the researcher-as-instrument: An exercise in interviewer self-reflexivity. *Qualitative Research, 12*, 165–185. doi:10.1177/1468794111422107

Phakathi, S. T. (2013). Getting on and “getting by” underground: Gold miners’ informal working practice of making a plan (planisa). *Journal of Organizational Ethnography, 2*, 126–149. doi:10.1108/JOE-052012-0026

Pollak, A. (2013). Growth and convergence when technology and human capital are complements. *Economic Inquiry, 51*(1), 31-45. doi:10.1111/j.1465-

7295.2012.00454.x

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the United Kingdom. (2012). *Enterprise and entrepreneurship education: Guidance for UK higher education providers.* Retrieved from http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents /enterprise-entrepreneurship-guidance.pdf

Quan, L., & Huy, H. (2014). The effect of entrepreneurial human capital and entrepreneurial failure learning on the entrepreneurial restart intention. *Asian Social Science, 10,* 99–112. doi:10.5539/ass.v10n16p99

Rideout, E. C., & Gray, D. O. (2013). Does entrepreneurship education work? A review and methodological critique of the empirical literature on the effects of university-based entrepreneurship education. *Journal of Small Business Management, 51*, 329–351. doi:10.1111/jsbm.12021

Riiskjaer, E., Ammentorp, J., & Kofoed, P. E. (2012). The value of open-ended questions in surveys on patient experience: Number of comments and perceived usefulness from a hospital perspective. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care, 24*, 439–440. doi:10.1093/intqhc/mzs039

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Roberts, N., Galluch, P. S., Dinger, M., & Grover, V. (2012). Absorptive capacity and information systems research: Review, synthesis, and directions for future research. *MIS Quarterly, 36*, 625–648. Retrieved from http://www.ucipfg.com

Robinson, O. (2014). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 11*, 25–41. doi:10.1080/14780887.2013/ 801543

Rowley, J. (2012). Conducting research interviews. *Management Research Review, 35*, 260–271. doi:10.1108/01409171211210154

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sarasvathy, S. D., Menon, A. R., & Kuechle, G. (2013). Failing firms and successful Entrepreneurs: Serial entrepreneurship as a temporal portfolio. *Small Business Economics, 40*, 417–434. doi:10.1007/s11187-011-9412-x

Schumpeter, J. A. (1939). *Business cycles: A theoretical, historical, and statistical analysis of the capitalist process* (Vol. 1). New York, NY: Harper.

Schorr, F. (2008). *Becoming a successful entrepreneur: A phenomenological study* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No.3326847)

Shandrow, K. L. (2015, April 5). From Marco Polo to Mark Zuckerberg: The evolution of the Entrepreneur. *Entrepreneur Magazine, 32.* Retrieved from http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/244563

Shields, J., & Shelleman, J. (2013). Small business seasonality: Characteristics and management. *Small Business Institute Journal*, *9*, 37–50. Retrieved from http://www.sbij.ecu.edu/index.php/SBIJ

Shukla, P. K., & Shukla, M. P. (2014). Small business survival index traction and movement in rankings of states (2000–2013). *Journal of Business & Economics Research, 12*, 153–158. Retrieved from http://www.cluteinstitute.com

Simon, M. K., & Goes, J. (2013). *Dissertation & scholarly research: A practical guide to start and complete your dissertation, thesis, or formal research project.* San Bernardino, CA: Kendall Hunt.

Singh, S., Corner, P. D., & Pavlovich, K. (2014). Failed, not finished: A narrative approach to understanding venture failure stigmatization. *Journal of Business Venturing, 51*, 329–351. doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2014.07.005

Small Business Act of 1953. Pub. L. No. 83-163, 67 Stat. 232 (2012).

Smith, W., & Chimucheka, T. (2014). Entrepreneurship, economic growth, and entrepreneurship theories. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 5*, 160–168. doi:10.5901/mjss.2014.v 5n149160

Smythe, L. (2012). Discerning which qualitative approach fits best. *New Zealand College of Midwives, 46*, 5–12. Retrieved from http://www.midwife.org.nz

Snider, K. F., Kidalov, M. V., & Rendon, R. G. (2013). Diversity governance by convenience? Federal contracting for minority-owned small businesses. *Public Administration Quarterly, 37*, 393–432. Retrieved http://www.spaef.com/PAQ dex.html

Street, C. T., & Ward, K. W. (2012). Improving validity and reliability in longitudinal case study timelines. *European Journal of Information Systems, 21*, 160–175. doi.10.1057/eji s.2011.53

Talbot, S., Mac A. N., Bhaird, C., & Whittam, G. (2015). Can credit unions bridge the gap in lending to SMEs? *Venture Capital, 17*, 113–128. doi:10.1080/13691066.20151 021027

Tasnim, R., Yahya, S., & Zainuddin, M. N. (2014). “I’m loving it!” What makes the successful entrepreneur effectively committed to entrepreneurial performance? *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship, 19*, 27–52. Retrieved from http://www.huizenga. Nova.edu/jame/

Taylor-Ritzler, T., Suarez-Balcazar, Y., Garcia-Iriarte, E., Henry, D. B., & Balcazar, F. E. (2013). Understanding and measuring evaluation capacity: A model and instrument validation study. *American Journal of Evaluation, 34*, 190–06. doi:10.1177/109821 4012471421

Teck-Hong, T., & Yong-Kean, L. (2012). Organizational commitment as a moderator of the effect of training on service performance: An empirical study of small-to medium-sized enterprises in Malaysia. *International Journal of Management, 29*, 65–76. Retrieved from http://www.internationaljournalofmanagement.co.uk

Terrell, S. R. (2012). Mixed methods research methodologies. *Qualitative Report*, *17*, 254–280. Retrieved from http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/

Thissen, M. R. (2015). Computer audio-recorded interviewing as a tool for survey research. *Social Science Computer Review, 32*, 90–104. doi:10.1177/0894439313500128

Tiftik, H., Kilic, S., & Saglam, M. (2015). Leadership theories and comparison of them. *Journal of Research in Business, Economics, and Management*, *4,* 312–322. Retrieved from www.scitecresearch.com/journals/index.php/jrbem/index

Tomkins, L., & Eatough, V. (2013). The feel of experience: Phenomenological ideas for organizational research. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management, 8*, 258–275. doi:10.1108/QROM-04-2012-1060

Tourish, D. (2014). Leadership more or less? A processual, communication perspective on the role of agency in leadership theory. *Leadership, 10*, 79–98. doi:10.1177/174271501350 9030

Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2012). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work, 11*, 80–96. doi:10.1177/147332501036831

Ucbasaran, D., Shepherd, D. A., Lockett, A., & Lyon, S. J. (2013). Life after business failure the process and consequences of business failure for entrepreneurs. *Journal of Management*, *39*, 163–202. doi:10.1177/0149206312457823.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *Statistics of United States businesses.* Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/econ/susb/

U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). *The statistical abstract.* Retrieved from http://www.census.gov

U.S. Census Bureau. (2014a). *American fact finder*. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov

U.S. Census Bureau. (2014b). *Fairfax County quickfacts from the US Census Bureau.* Retrieved from http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html

U.S. Census Bureau. (2015a). *2012 business dynamic statistics.* Retrieved from http://www.census.gov

U.S. Census Bureau. (2015b). *Fairfax County NAICS sector employer changes 2010–*

2011. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov

U.S. General Services Administration. (2011a). *Small business goaling report.* Retrieved from https://www.fpds.gov/downloads/top_requests FPDSNG_SB_Goaling_FY_2011.pdf

U.S. General Services Administration. (2011b). *Top 100 contractors report, fiscal year 2011*. Retrieved from https://www.fpds.gov/fpdsng_cms/index.php/en/reports

U.S. Small Business Administration. (2012). *What is the definition of a small business concern?* Retrieved from http://www.sba.gov

U.S. Small Business Administration. (2014). *What is a small business?* Retrieved from http://www.sba.gov

U.S. Small Business Administration. (2015). *Advocacy: The voice of small business in government [Virginia small business profile]*. Retrieved from https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/SB%20Profiles%202014-15_0.pdf

Venkatesh, V., Brown, S. A., & Bala, H. (2013). Bridging the qualitative-quantitative divide: Guidelines for conducting mixed methods research in information systems. *Management Information Systems Quarterly, 37*, 21–54. Retrieved from http://www.misq.org

Verner, J. M., & Abdullah, L. M. (2012). Exploratory case study research: Outsources project failure. *Information and Software Technology, 54*, 866–886. doi:10.1016/j.infsof.2011.11.001

Walden University. (2014). Vision, mission, and goals. In 2014-2015 Walden University catalog. Retrieved from http://catalog.waldenu.edu/content.php?catoid=65&navoid=10668

Walker, J. L. (2012). The use of saturation in qualitative research. *Canadian Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing, 22*, 37–46. Retrieved from http://pappin.com/journals.php

White, D. E., Oelke, N. D., & Friesen, S. (2012). Management of a large qualitative data set: Establishing trustworthiness of the data. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 11*, 244–258. Retrieved from http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/article/view/9883

Williams, D. A. (2014). Resources and business failure in SMEs: Does size matter? *Journal of Business & Management, 20*, 89–102. Retrieved from http://www.chapman.edu/argyros/jbm/

Wolcott, H. F. (2014). Writing up qualitative research better. *Qualitative Health Research, 12*, 91–103. doi:10.1177/1049732302012001007

World Bank. (2016). *Doing business 2016: Measuring regulatory quality and efficiency*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-0667-4.

Wright, B., & Wallis, S. E. (2015). Using integrative propositional analysis for evaluating entrepreneurship theories. *SAGE Open, 5*, 2–9. doi:10.1177/2158244015604190

Yang, T., & Aldrich, H. (2012). Out of sight but not out of mind: Why failure to account for left truncation biases research on failure rates. *Journal of Business Venturing, 27*, 477–492 doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2012.01.001

Yin, R. K. (2012). *Applications of case study research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:

Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Appendix A: Permission to Use Interview Questions

From: **Colonel Jaime Solis**

Date: Thu, May 21, 2015, at 9:28 PM

Subject: Permission to Use Interview Questions

To: Frauke Schorr, Ph.D.

Cc: [redacted]

Dear Dr. Schorr,

My name is Colonel Jaime Solis. I am a doctoral candidate. While researching, I had an opportunity to read your entrepreneurship dissertation. I was impressed. It was outstanding. My proposed research study topic involves small business entrepreneurs in Fairfax County, Virginia. I am sending an official e-mail seeking your permission to use your instrument questions.

In the dissertation, there was an email address XXXXXXX However, a colleague informed me that there was an indication that you were reachable on LinkedIn at the address on this post.

If this approach were inappropriate, would you please provide me with your contact information? I would like to write and ask you for permission to use your instrument, and possibly discuss a little about my topic.

Regards

Colonel Solis,

MBA, Doctoral Candidate

From: Frauke Schorr, Ph.D.

Sent: Friday, May 22, 2015 12:11 PM

To: Colonel Jaime Solis

Subject: Re: Permission to Use Interview Questions

Hi, Colonel -

Nice to hear from you. Great to hear about your interest to expand on the research of entrepreneurship. It is important work! I am happy to hear that you found my dissertation study valuable in this context.

I would love to hear a bit more about your research focus, type of study you are planning to conduct, and how you are planning to use my research approach. To clarify: I utilized the Transcendental Phenomenological research methodology by Moustakas as my research instrument but created my set of research questions. I am assuming that when you are asking for permission to use my research instrument, you are referring to this questionnaire, yes?

Thanks, Frauke

From: Colonel Jaime Solis

Sent: Friday, May 22, 2015 1:20 PM

To: 'Frauke Schorr, Ph.D.

Subject: RE: Permission to Use Interview Questions

Hi Dr. Schorr,

Thank you for much for your timely response to my inquiry. I am glad you are aware of the time management issues surrounding the movement of this dissertation process.

Yes, I am requesting permission to use your research questions in conjunction with my study of successful small business owners in Fairfax County, Virginia. I explored and determined the key strategies small business owners used to achieve success beyond the first 5 years of business. The study was a descriptive qualitative case study. I interviewed four small business owners, with fifty or fewer employees, with a record of success (profit) and business sustainment in the county for 5 years or longer.

The questions in your study are concise and well directed. I wish to apply a variation of them while questioning participants for my research.

I hope I have provided a clearer understanding of my request for your permission to allow the use of the study questions. Please do not hesitate to seek further clarification.

Regards,

Colonel

From: Frauke Schorr, Ph.D.

Sent: Wednesday, May 27, 2015, 3:30 PM

To: Colonel Jaime Solis

Subject: Re: Permission to Use Interview Questions

Hi, Colonel

That sounds good. Please go ahead and use a variation of the questionnaire. Out of curiosity: What is the focus of your study? Mine was on the experience of becoming successful. What specifically are you focusing your research on with the small business owners you are interviewing?

Good luck,

Frauke

From: Colonel Jaime Solis
Sent: Wednesday, May 27, 2015, 11:10 PM
To: 'Frauke Schorr, Ph.D.
Subject: RE: Permission to Use Interview questions
Hi Doctor Schorr,

Thank you very much for permission to move forward.

The exact focus of the study will be on the experience of being successful entrepreneurs.

Thanks again for your kind consideration.

Regards

Colonel

Appendix B: Interview Protocol and Questions

The purpose of this protocol procedure was to ascertain that each face-to-face interview follows the same exact set-up process. Further, the document ensures that all steps required for preparation necessary for each interview, follow a set process at the beginning of each face-to-face meeting, and continue during approximately 60 minutes of recorded responses to nine open-ended questions, follow-up, and additional prompting. At some point after the meeting, you were given an opportunity to review and return, a synthesis of the responses given, to ensure that the researcher captured exact meanings of the interview replies provided.

Protocol

I. Complete introductions.

II. Present consent form, go over contents, answer questions and concerns of participant(s)

III. Give participant copy of consent form.

IV. Turn on Sony and backup Windows PC recorder devices.

V. Introduce participant(s) using a pseudonym/coded identification; note exact location, time, and date.

VI. Begin the interview with question # l; continue through to the final question.

VII. Follow up with additional questions.

VIII. End interview sequence; discuss triangulation documents and member checking procedures with the participant(s).

IX. Obtain a copy of the company documents. Thank participant(s) for their participation in the study. Discuss contact numbers for any follow-up questions and concerns by participants.

X. Turn off Sony and backup Windows PC recorder. End protocol.

Interview Questions

The following interview questions by Schorr (2008) revised with permission (granted in Appendix A) is part of this descriptive qualitative multiunit case study. Question 1 was a probe question, Questions 2–8 are conception questions, and Question 9 is a wrap-up question.

1. What are your overall business experiences and what were the industries?
2. What critical strategies did you lack when you first established this business?
3. What other small firms have you owned or managed before this enterprise?
4. What prior knowledge, skills, and abilities do you believe helped, or prepared, you for during the first 5 years of small business ownership?
5. What strategies have you used to become profitable?
6. What are the key strategies you used to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
7. What management and financial strategies have been the most important to business profitability?
8. What do you believe the profitability of your business has brought to you, your employees, your family, and the community?

9. What else would you like to share concerning your experiences of becoming a profitable and successful small business owner?

Appendix C: Invitation to Participants

Date:

Dear (Participant),

The Fairfax County Government Economic Development Authority, Office of Small Business Resources, Fairfax County Business, Professional, and Occupational Licenses (BPOL) office provided me with a list containing licensed small business owners in the county. Your company information is on that list.

The request outlined in this letter is an invitation for you to participate in a research study about small retail business owner strategies. I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. The research effort represents the field study phase of an academic dissertation focusing on U.S. small business owner profitability.

The objective of this case study is to determine what entrepreneurial strategies small retail business owners, who fit a particular study criterion, and who physically operated a small business within the geographical limits of Fairfax County, used to succeed in business beyond 5 years. Your company profile matches study parameters. Should you decide to become a part of the study, additional information is needed, and response to this e-mail by you will initiate further contact and preparation.

Of course, participating in this study is voluntary, and if you agree to be involved, you may remove yourself at any time, regardless of continued involvement. An initiation of removal from the project requires that you send me an e-mail requesting the withdrawal. Additional questions about the study could be answered by me, my Committee Chairperson, or by contacting the University.

There will be a 40 to 60-minute tape recorded interview, after which, I will request a copy of a one-year Income and Expense statement, and a Cash Flow statement for the same year. The company documents are not necessary for screening purposes, but the financial records are needed to help determine profitability, and along with a synthesis of the recorded interview, to carry out cross-checking, a process defined by the University as **“Methodological Triangulation.”**

Moreover, all of the resolute research study procedures demand validity, rigor, and trustworthiness. Thus, **"Member Checking"** which is a process whereby study participants received the opportunity to review and adjust their recorded responses before analysis, to ensure that they are error-free, accurate, and exactly what was intended, was a part of the process. Evaluating and validating the written texts of the recording, by participant and researcher, will be done via e-mail. However, the interview or any follow-up meetings could occur in your office, or my conference room, whichever you choose.

Upon conclusion of the study, a request will be made to determine if you are interested in receiving an official copy of the final study. If so, a copy will be sent by e-mail to you as soon as the formal study is complete. However, even if an official full version of the report is s not necessary, a brief summary of the study is going to be sent to each participant simultaneous with research completion.

You will not receive any gifts or financial compensation for participation in the study. However, the results of the study could contribute to social change by influencing small business strategies about learning how to sustain profitability and success, impacting enterprise and employee prosperity, improving family economic health, and strengthening the Fairfax County community markets. There is little doubt, that your participation, which might be of consequence, will be beneficial to you and small businesses in general.

Please consider this invitation, and provide me with your answer as soon as possible. You may reply to me via e-mail. Contact information is as follows, email [redacted]

Regards,

Colonel Jaime Solis

Doctoral Candidate