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# Retention Factors for Assistant Retail Managers

Amber Huffman Echols  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Amber Echols

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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## Review Committee

Dr. Matthew Gonzalez, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration  
Faculty

Dr. Janet Booker, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. John House, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer  
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2016

**Abstract**

Retention Factors for Assistant Retail Managers

by

Amber H. Echols

MBA, Averett University, 2011

BA, Lynchburg College, 2008

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2016

## Abstract

The cost of losing a manager in the retail sector is 2 to 3 times their yearly salary. The purpose of this exploratory single case study was to explore strategies general managers in large retail organizations can use to improve assistant manager retention. Building upon Ramlall's adaptation of motivation theory, research was conducted to determine factors that contributed to retention of assistant managers in a general merchandise retail store operating in Virginia and North Carolina. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with 20 general managers of stores in the same organization located in Virginia and North Carolina, reflective journals, and researcher observations and were then coded by themes and analyzed using Moustaka's method of thematic analysis. Seven themes emerged from the study including needs for a supportive work environment, training and communication, pay, and appreciation and feedback. Implications for positive social change include increased wages through higher retention, which can affect the economy of the communities in which the company operates. The company operates nationally, so the potential insight on increased wages could have a wide impact on the economy if applied to all stores. Assistant managers will also benefit from consistency and growth within the company and in turn be able to provide more stability to employees that work for them. If applied to other companies, this study could also have a positive impact on a wider scale. General managers from different companies in different areas may use the results of this study as a starting point to assess and improve assistant manager retention within their stores. This improved retention could lead to more stability in their team and better knowledge retention for the organization.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this research to my husband, Seth, and my unborn daughter, Kaylynne. Seth, you have been the most supportive person throughout this program even when you didn't understand why I was doing it, you were always there when I needed help with house work or just to talk to. Kaylynne, you are not even here yet, but the motivation you have provided for me to complete this study is beyond measure. The desire to be done with my degree before your arrival was the biggest motivation I could ever have. I hope to be the best mom that I can be for you and look forward to spending all the time I possibly can with you. I also have to thank my mom and dad who have always told me how proud they are of me throughout this journey which has provided a great amount of support and encouragement.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Employee retention is essential to the success of any business. As employees work, they gain experience and knowledge. Anytime an experienced worker is lost, so is their knowledge and experience. In addition, the cost of hiring to replace employees that leave a company can be high. These costs can include job postings, training, onboarding, and administrative expenses. Because the costs to businesses include human and monetary capital, it is important to understand employee retention.

### **Background of the Problem**

In the mid 1990s, there were more jobs for unskilled workers, and employees were easier to replace than they are today (Oladapo, 2014). With the Baby Boomer generation retiring by 2025, over 70 million new workers will be needed to fill those roles (Oladapo, 2014). This change is occurring at the same time as large-scale ethnic and economic shifts in the U.S. workforce (Oladapo, 2014). Companies must improve talent management systems to ensure they are successful in retaining top management talent to combat the loss of human capital (Oladapo, 2014). Cascio (1991) found that turnover costs associated with replacing managers ranged from \$1,000 to \$1 million. Despite this fact, there are few studies that have addressed job turnover in upper-level management (Bortel, 2005).

### **Problem Statement**

The cost of losing a manager in the retail sector is two to three times their yearly salary (Carson, 2012). Between July and November of 2014, there were 3,523,000 employee separations in the retail sector in the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics

[BLS], 2014). The general business problem is that low retention rates of assistant retail managers negatively affect general managers and business operations, which results in a loss for the company. The specific business problem is that general managers in large retail organizations lack strategies to improve assistant manager retention.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single case study was to explore strategies general managers in large retail organizations can use to improve assistant manager retention. The participants in this study were general managers in working in a large retail organization in stores in Virginia and North Carolina. Assistant managers at these stores interact directly with hourly team members and provide direction and consistency for them. These managers also receive the most training of anyone in the stores, and spend more time in the stores than other employees. When managers in these positions resign, they take their knowledge with them. I selected Virginia and North Carolina as the setting for this study because I had access to general managers in both states.

There is a positive correlation between wages and tenure in the United States (BLS, 2008). Retention, therefore, has a positive social impact on the community because higher retention rates mean higher wages for workers, which in turn means that workers have more money to spend in their communities.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study was a qualitative exploratory single case study. The study lends itself to a qualitative exploratory method because it deals with people and trying to gain insight into their motivation for staying at their job. Festing (2013) said that a qualitative

exploratory method is the best choice when studying social phenomena that cannot be easily quantified. Qualitative, open-ended interview questions allowed me to explore general managers' strategies for assistant manager retention. Since this study was about life experiences, a quantitative method was not appropriate because such experiences cannot be reduced to statistical data. I could have used a mixed methods approach similar to that of Naicker (2013) to analyze knowledge management practices within organizations if I had access to historical data on assistant manager retention in the company. However, the company had not previously collected and retained this information, so I did not have access to quantitative data to include alongside the qualitative data produced in the interviews.

There are multiple types of qualitative designs. The major types are narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research, and case study research. Narrative research gives a life perspective of the participants (Green, 2013). This type of qualitative research design would not have worked for this study because participants' past experiences with other organizations may not necessarily have been relevant, and I was seeking to understand the opinions and feelings of the participants in their current organization. Phenomenological research gives a summary of conscious lived experiences of the participants (Tomkins, 2013). While experiences may have helped me understand why participants have the perspectives they do on retention, they would not necessarily have been factors in their current position that will factored into their retention strategies. Grounded theory research starts with data analysis that then leads to theory development (Khan, 2014). I did not have access to data in regards to retention in the company I studied. Ethnographic research has to do with finding self-

defined values, behaviors, or beliefs within a culture or group (Edberg, 2015). This research design was not appropriate for this study because the participants were not necessarily members of the same cultural or social group, but rather work at the same company.

The case study research designs involve single or multiple cases in a contemporary setting and take three forms: explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive (Yin, 2009). Researchers' end goals for case studies are to identify patterns and develop explanations from the collected information (Yin, 2009). A single case study is focused on a specific case and a specific issue (Yin, 2009). In my study, I focused on a single group (general managers in one company) and a single issue (retention). The lack of previous research on retention of assistant retail managers marked the need for exploratory research, so I used an exploratory single case study design.

### **Research Question**

The research question I designed to guide this study was: What strategies can general managers in large retail organizations use to improve assistant manager retention?

### **Interview Questions**

I designed the interviews to gain feedback from active general managers at a national retailer, hereafter referred to as Company A. I developed interview questions based on previous research and a study by Smucker (2001) on retention in a restaurant environment. Smucker gave me permission to use and modify these questions (see Appendix D). I altered and shortened the questions to fit the retail environment. Some questions, although not directly about retention, enabled me to explore retention factors



that I found to be relevant in my literature review. Question 3 has to do with empowerment, which Meyers (2013) found to be a driver of engagement and retention. Question 4 has to do with a bonus plan, which Laddha (2012) found to be a difference maker for retention. Question 5 has to do with employee involvement and engagement, which ultimately leads to higher retention according to Dash (2013).

1. What kind of training did you receive on retention?
2. What factors contribute to the retention of assistant managers in your store?
3. How do you empower assistant managers?
4. What effect does a bonus plan have on assistant managers?
5. As a general manager, how do you involve assistant managers in various responsibilities of the store?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add about the retention of assistant managers or factors that contribute to the retention of assistant managers in your store?

### **Conceptual Framework**

I used motivation theory to shape this research. Motivation theory is based on the idea that when employees are motivated, they tend to remain in their jobs (Ramlall, 2004). Motivation theory includes four components: need theory, equity theory, expectancy theory, and job design model (Ramlall, 2004). Needs are physiological or psychological deficiencies (Ramlall, 2004). Need theory is premised on the idea that individuals are motivated because they want to satisfy their needs (Ramlall, 2004). Equity theory is based on the understanding that individuals want to feel work is rewarded in a

fair system in which others do not receive more for the same work (Ramlall, 2004), and expectancy theory holds that people act in a certain way because they expect to receive a particular reward for these actions (Ramlall, 2004). Job design motivation has to do with the actual task of motivating the employee based on the excitement or challenge of a given task (Ramlall, 2004). These motivational theories could play a role in employee retention.

Motivation theory is largely based on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Maslow (1943) said that motivational theories should stress ultimate, rather than basic, goals. Maslow further noted that acts often have multiple motivations, and was careful to distinguish between motivation theory and behavioral theory because motivation only defines one aspect of behavior (Maslow, 1943).

I used motivation theory when designing because I determined that finding general managers perceptions of motivations for why assistant managers remain in their jobs would help to answer the research question. To develop strategies for retention, there must be an understanding of how employees are retained or lost. Their motivations to stay or leave a company may provide insight into retention and, therefore, retention strategies.

### **Operational Definitions**

Throughout this study I use the following terms. These are all commonly used in the literature and are critical to understanding the background of the problem and the research for this study.

*External locus of control:* A condition in which a person feels that outside factors are in control of the situation (Chhabra, 2013).

*External turnover:* A career move in which an employee leaves a job for a position in a different organization (Li, 2012). The company can plan for the external turnover, or the company may be surprised, depending on whether the turnover is voluntary or involuntary.

*Internal locus of control:* A condition in which a person feels as if he or she is in control of the situation (Chhadra, 2013).

*Internal turnover:* A career move in which an employee changes positions or areas within an organization usually predicted and planned for by the company (Li, 2012).

*Involuntary turnover:* A career move in which an employee leaves due to death or health issues (Green, 2013). It can also be when an employee is fired or let go due to performance, conduct, or layoffs.

*Job security:* A condition that has to do with how confident an employee is that their job will be there for the foreseeable future or how “safe” the job is (Morrison, 2014).

*Voluntary turnover:* A career move in which an employee decides to leave a company (Green, 2013).

*Work-life conflict:* A condition in which a person’s personal life and needs come into conflict with the demands and needs of their job (Hofäcker, 2013). Work-life conflict is also called work-life balance in the literature.

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

This study included several assumptions, limitations, and delimitations which I have outlined to insure transparency in regard to my research methods.

**Assumptions**

Assumptions are things that I cannot prove and are not in my control, but that I treated as true (Kapeller, 2013). Most of my assumptions in this study were founded on norms in general business practices. I assumed that participants had a working knowledge of their organization. I also assumed that assistant managers within the same company would have similar company set benefits, and that the benefits would not be different from store to store. Finally, I assumed that the work environment and expectations for employees are similar from store to store.

**Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses of a study that are not in the researcher's control (Argouslidis, 2014). One limitation in this study was that employees' reasons for retention may change over time. The change could be due to personal changes in their life or new expectations from the company. There also may be additional factors that influence retention, but did not come up in the interviews.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations are characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of the study (Berdychevsky, 2015). I limited the scope of the study to general managers of Company A stores in Virginia and North Carolina. Results may thus be specific to this company and this region, and may not apply to other companies. Further, findings may not apply to managers in other areas of Company A.

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it shows how this research may provide relevant information to the area of study. The reasons why this study is of value to retailers and

their management teams are included. A description of the improvements to make to business practices is included. There is also a discussion of the implications of the social change that this research may provide.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

Many of the existing studies on retention focus on employee turnover and the impact it can have on a business. By focusing on retention, this research may help business practitioners gain ideas that they may use in their organization in regards to retention. When retention rates for assistant managers improve, retailers save money and maintain valuable human capital in the organization.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Improving assistant manager retention for retailers will help with managers' development and the development of those they supervise. When there is more consistency in leadership, the whole retail store is more stable and employees know what to expect from an organizational culture standpoint. In addition, the longer a manager is involved at the same store, the more impact they can have on their community by making lasting connections with the people and organizations located there. There is also a positive correlation between wages and tenure in the United States (BLS, 2008). Retention, therefore, has a positive social impact because higher retention rates mean higher wages for workers, which in turn means that workers have more money to spend in their communities.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single case study was to explore strategies general managers in large retail stores can use to improve assistant manager

retention. As I show in this literature review, high employee retention has multiple impacts on a business. High retention reduces the costs associated with turnover such as advertising positions, training, and onboarding. In addition, job satisfaction improves employee performance. Consistency in management provides opportunities for better employee development and a stronger organizational culture. I begin this review with an overview of motivation theory, and then move on to discuss the benefits of retention. In the process, I review literature on factors that improve retention, and particularly focus on employee satisfaction as it relates to retention. The key factors I discuss are human resource practices, training, work environment, benefits, pay, and employee engagement. Human resource practices start from hiring and onboarding, and continue throughout the career of an individual. In the literature, I found that training was cited as a factor that launches the employees' careers and shapes their understanding of the organization. The work environment has many aspects that, just like any other environment, have an effect on employees psychologically and physically. Benefits and pay are motivating factors that, when used correctly, can have positive effects on retention. Employee engagement is often a great predictor of retention as it sets the stage for employees' level of loyalty and commitment to the organization.

This literature review includes information from journals and seminal scholarly books. To gather resources, I used ABI/Inform Complete, Business Source Complete, PsycINFO, and SAGE Premier databases. In these databases, I conducted searches for the following keywords: *turnover*, *retention*, *benefits*, *work-life balance*, *motivation theory* and *employee feedback*. At least 85% of these sources are peer reviewed and published

within the last 5 years. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the amount of peer review and publication status.

Table 1

*Number of Sources by Year and Peer Review*

|                   | Total sources | Year published (2012-2016) | Peer-reviewed sources | Percentage published 2012-2016 | Percentage peer-reviewed |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Full document     | 110           | 96                         | 97                    | 87.3                           | 88.2%                    |
| Literature review | 68            | 63                         | 63                    | 92.6                           | 92.6%                    |

### **Motivation Theory**

Motivation theory provides one framework for analyzing retention. Motivation theory involves multiple concepts including instincts, drives, incentives, and arousal. Instincts generally refer to animals and not humans, other than infants. Drive-reduction theory is the idea that physiological needs drive someone into being motivated to accomplish certain tasks (Myers, 2004). Humans naturally try to satisfy or reduce these drives by accomplishing the task that eliminates the physiological need (Myers, 2004). Incentives are positive or negative rewards that drive a person to do things (Myers, 2004).

One widely used motivation theory is Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Maslow's theory serves as the basis for many other motivational theories. Integrated wholeness must be at the foundation of motivation theory (Maslow, 1943). Motivational theories should stress and center upon ultimate versus basic goals (Maslow, 1943).

Unconscious goals are more fundamental to motivation theory than conscious ones (Maslow, 1943). Many times acts have multiple motivations versus just one (Maslow, 1943). It is important to note that motivation theory and behavioral theory are not the same as motivation only defines one aspect of behavior (Maslow, 1943).

Physiological needs are basic needs (Maslow, 1943). These needs include things like eating. I found that researchers have often referenced esteem, a higher-level need, in retention literature. Most people in U.S. society have a need for being highly regarded and having a sense of good self-esteem (Maslow, 1943). Self-esteem can be broken into two parts that include a desire for achievement and a desire for recognition (Maslow, 1943). People need to feel rewarded and accomplished.

The next level need is self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Self-actualization is a need that may arise after one meets the need for esteem (Maslow, 1943). Self-actualization is becoming more or making it to the highest point that one is capable (Maslow, 1943). These needs take many different shapes and forms in different individuals (Maslow, 1943). Self-actualization is a need that for some is never satisfied because a person can try to achieve the next level.

Although Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a very popular motivational theory, there are others that provide different insights into motivation. Theory X and Theory Y give another view of motivation in the workplace (McGregor, 1960). In Theory X, workers end up working either by direction or coercion because they dislike work (McGregor, 1960). In Theory Y, people can accept that they must work and will even seek out work in some instances (McGregor, 1960). In some ways, there is a conflict with



Maslow's theory in that Theory X would imply that not everyone has higher needs that must be met.

Herzberg (1959) developed a two-factor theory about motivation. Herzberg claimed that factors that lead to job satisfaction and factors that lead to job dissatisfaction are not the same. Herzberg found that satisfaction and dissatisfaction were not necessarily opposites. If employer's focus on the set of dissatisfying characteristics and work to decrease those while not increasing satisfiers, they may just be making employees less dissatisfied, but not any more satisfied (Herzberg, 1959). When employers use this theory, they are better able to focus on satisfaction and retention factors versus dissatisfaction and turnover factors.

Researchers and business practitioners have developed and adapted these theories over time. Shuck (2012) looked into emerging motivational themes to understand employee engagement and workplace dynamics, and found that emotional intelligence is more of a factor in leadership than previously thought (Shuck, 2012). In addition, Shuck asserted that leaders must find a way to meet employee needs to ensure engagement. Shuck's research shows that having transformational leadership that focuses on employee engagement results in lower turnover and higher productivity.

Self-determination theory is a more specific motivation theory that has to do with individual's internal motivation (Zepeda, 2013). Self-determination theory offers a framework for describing a person's psychological needs for autonomy, competency, and relatedness (Zepeda, 2013). When individuals do not fulfill their goals, they do not fulfill these psychological needs (Zepeda, 2013). When a person is part of a group trying to achieve a goal, these needs are met more easily (Zepeda, 2013). Many times, self-

determined individuals who are intrinsically motivated will, in turn internalize extrinsic motivations (Zepeda, 2013).

Positive and negative stimuli influence motivation (Ferris, 2013). A determining factor in how much stimuli influences the motivation in an individual's personality is their amount of self-evaluation (Ferris, 2013). When individuals have a high amount of self-evaluation, they are more internally motivated to achieve goals (Ferris, 2013). When individuals have a low amount of self-evaluation, they are less motivated to achieve goals (Ferris, 2013). Ultimately, self-evaluation influences an individual's work performance and becomes a mediating factor (Ferris, 2013).

Self-determination theory and motive disposition theory are subcategories of needs theory, which itself is a subcategory of motivation theory. Motive disposition theory is a theory of unconscious motivation, while self-determination involves a consciousness of motivation within the individual (Prentice, 2014). Self-determination theory defines needs as requirements for a person to function well in society (Prentice, 2014). Motive disposition theory defines needs as motives that lead to certain behaviors (Prentice, 2014). Prentice (2014) argues that psychological needs are defined as a person's need to obtain certain experiences in varying extents in order to feel good and be successful.

There is debate in the literature about the definition of psychological needs. Many debates go back to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, which connects psychological needs to a physical need of some sort. Others define a psychological need as something that, when satisfied, has a positive outcome (Prentice, 2014). Researchers using motivation theories often assume that acceptance is a psychological need in many

motivation theories (Prentice, 2014). Others suggest that needs are impulses that guide behaviors (Prentice, 2014). Prentice (2014) found that there can be individual differences in a person's need to be affiliated, need for achievement, and need for power.

### **Cost of Turnover**

Employee turnover can be very costly, often costing more than the annual salary of the position that is vacant (Allen, 2013). Likewise, the hiring and retention of employees can be a costly venture for business managers (Arnaiz, 2014). Staff replacement costs can be between \$12,000 and \$31,000 for each employee turned over (Arnaiz, 2014). The costs associated with this include advertising, reviewing applications, interviewing, hiring, and training (Arnaiz, 2014).

Different strategies for improving retention are emerging in multiple employment sectors. There are several strategies in regards to compensation, benefits, and other methods that can reduce turnover, and ultimately the costs associated with it (Allen, 2013). Salary structure, compensation procedures, types of compensation, and perceived fairness around compensation are all aspects of compensation that can be controlled and influence turnover (Allen, 2013). Nwokocha (2012) studied employee retention strategies emerging in Nigeria. With continued globalization in this region, employee turnover is increasing at a fast pace (Nwokocha, 2012). Nwokocha found that some of the reasons found for turnover are inequity of compensation and lack of satisfaction with managers.

Pay level and satisfaction, however, are not reliable predictors of turnover (Allen, 2013). One strong predictor of turnover is the withdrawal process (Allen, 2013). This has to do with critical job attitudes and the work environment (Allen, 2013). Spotting the withdrawal process helps managers to see turnover before it happens (Allen, 2013). Key

job attitudes include job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Allen, 2013). The work environment has to do with relationships between bosses and peers and the trust level between the two groups (Allen, 2013). Another avenue for reducing turnover is to define role expectations clearly, and to provide opportunities for growth and advancement to keep employees engaged (Allen, 2013). Turnover causes disruption in production and an increase in training costs (Nwokocha, 2012). Some actions can resolve issues such as this are strategic planning around training, development, and compensation (Nwokocha, 2012).

### **Human Capital and Knowledge Retention**

Employee retention is critical to firms because it has a positive impact on stocks of knowledge within the organization (Larkin, 2013). The individuals' knowledge-sharing within the organization often determines the degree of positive impact resulting from retention (Larkin, 2013). That is, retention has an ability to increase the absorptive capacity of an organization, but knowledge flow may still be limited (Larkin, 2013). At certain levels in the organization, employees become guarders of information rather than sharers (Larkin, 2013). Many times this information sharing is limited to the areas that a general manager will cover, and does not extend beyond his or her range of management (Larkin, 2013). Therefore, in order for retention to improve absorptive knowledge capacity in an organization, there must be a sound system that allows and encourages knowledge flow (Larkin, 2013).

There are organizational and behavioral factors that influence knowledge retention (Martins, 2012). One way to improve knowledge retention is to create better barriers to prevent knowledge loss in organizations (Bessick, 2013). When an employee

leaves an organization, they take knowledge with them (Martins, 2012). Nine factors play a role in knowledge retention (Martins, 2012). These factors are: knowledge behavior, strategy implementation, effective monitoring, people knowledge loss risks, knowledge attitudes and emotions, power play, knowledge growth and development, performance management, and organizational support (Martins, 2012). Career development is critical to knowledge retention, while job stress and burnout negatively influence knowledge retention (Bessick, 2013).

Organizations face many obstacles including globalization, technological transformations, and increasing competition (Govaerts, 2011). There are also demographic changes that challenge companies (Govaerts, 2011). Many workers from the baby boomer generation are retiring, and fewer young people are entering the workforce (Govaerts, 2011). Since boomers' retirements are causing companies to lose knowledge from experienced workers already, it is even more important to retain knowledgeable workers (Govaerts, 2011). Over the next 20 years, knowledge workers will become a valuable resource for corporations (Govaerts, 2011). There will also be competition for these workers, as the supply of knowledge workers will lessen (Govaerts, 2011). It is important that companies do not treat employees as a means to an end (Westermann-Behaylo, 2014). Firms should focus on creating instrumental relationships with employees, which includes being aware of characteristics of the employees' demographic (Westermann-Behaylo, 2014). In addition, any time there is a loss of employees, there is a chance that they may share confidential information with competitors (Govaerts, 2011).

### **Human Resource Practices**

High turnover rates have caused employee retention to be a major issue that leaders of organizations must address (Mohamed, 2014). Solving this problem can be tricky because what encourages retention with one person may not do the same thing for another person (Mohamed, 2014). One retention strategy is having strong human resource practices (Mohamed, 2014). Individual perceptions of organizational human resource management (HRM) practices can affect career satisfaction (Tan Fee, 2013). The idea of career strategies would be the mediation between HRM and career satisfaction (Tan Fee, 2013). Participants of the study were insurance agents in Malaysia (Tan Fee, 2013). Tan Fee (2013) uses questionnaires to collect data. Multiple regression analysis is the method for analyzing the data (Tan Fee, 2013). The results showed that career strategy and HRM practices positively correlate to career satisfaction (Tan Fee, 2013). Leader and employee exchanges also have an impact on retention management (Mohamed, 2014).

While the term branding usually refers to the products and services of a company, it is an important term in human resources as well. Just as a company wants to attract customers, they also want to attract and retain the top talent available in their field that shares the organization's vision (Oladipo, 2013). Great recruitment strategies are a great way to start managing retention (Vispute, 2013). In India, survey designed by human resource managers to survey bank and insurance professionals is used (Vispute, 2013). Results showed that recruitment strategy could affect employee retention within the organization (Vispute, 2013). The recruitment strategy used can also lead to better gauging commitment and turnover intention of employees (Vispute, 2013). Previous

schools of thought have now changed to include human capital management as a key to business success and profitability (Oladipo, 2013).

The millennials are creating a new problem for human resource managers (Ferri-Reed, 2015). Many millennials are now becoming entrepreneurs which is taking away many of the highly motivated workers (Ferri-Reed, 2015). Many millennials are looking for work-life balance, team environments, and good compensation (Ferri-Reed, 2015). In order to attract and retain these highly motivated workers, companies will have to adapt and implement new ways to attract talent and then gain their commitment to the organization (Ferri-Reed, 2015).

Human resource management can have an impact on employee commitment (Abdulkadir, 2012). Abdulkadir (2012) uses a survey of the banking sector of Nigeria to conduct research. There were fourteen different banks that replied to the survey (Abdulkadir, 2012). The results of the study showed that performance appraisal systems, career planning system, and employee participation do have a positive impact on employee commitment and organizational commitment (Abdulkadir, 2012). The results also showed that these things had poor scores in the Nigerian banking sector (Abdulkadir, 2012).

Employers must work to ensure that their branding to employees is just as good as or better than that for their consumer and ensure that this branding makes them competitive with other organizations seeking talent (Oladipo, 2013). Succession planning is also a key factor in businesses creating talent and keeping a good flow of talent in the organization (Galbraith, 2012). Galbraith (2012) used a survey with 25 questions that 34 ARL (Academic Research Library) institutions used to collect data. The questions

included ones regarding hiring practices and succession planning (Galbraith, 2012). The results were that there is a gap between principles of succession planning and their practice (Galbraith, 2012). It was also found that given the age demographics of these leaders there was a need to prepare for future leaders (Galbraith, 2012). This is what makes knowing employees and employee's career plans and aspirations are important so that successful succession plans are in place.

### **Hiring Practices**

Hiring practices are the first step in ensuring that the organization is obtaining the right people for the company. While practices do vary by organization type, there are still relevant lessons that apply to all organizations. There are eight factors used when hiring physician executives that can apply to many other positions (Moulton, 2013). First, there should be an assessment of the need for the creation of a new position (Moulton, 2013). Second, if filling an existing position, this same need requires assessment (Moulton, 2013). Third, a job description should ensure the business's needs are included, and potential employees can see a realistic description (Moulton, 2013). Next, Moulton (2013) created a realistic compensation plan for the position (Moulton, 2013). Fifth, the staff, shareholders, or owners should be on board with all of the previous steps (Moulton, 2013). The sixth is resolving any issues that these players may have with the previous steps (Moulton, 2013). Seventh is having a transition plan for the new employee whether they are replacing a previous position or it is a new position (Moulton, 2013). The last step is to train and coach the new employee and ensure there are well orientated into the organizational culture (Moulton, 2013).



Low employee dependability and high turnover can have a negative impact on profit in most business environments (Jonsson, 2013). There are many different things that hiring committees look for in a potential employee (Hodge, 2012). The candidate's geographic location can be a consideration for employment (Hodge, 2012). The availability of the candidate to start when needed for the position was a concern (Hodge, 2012). One hypothesis is that poor person-job fit creates lower well-being (Warr, 2012). Job engagement and well-being are associated with job fit (Warr, 2012). Personality fit is also an important factor in productivity of the employee and the employee's longevity with the company (Jonsson, 2013). Interviews can assess these personality traits to help identify applicants with the appropriate personality fit for the company (Jonsson, 2013). Sometimes if the committee finds other qualifications and employee personality to be fitting, they overrule the listed "requirements" (Hodge, 2012). Interviewees knowledge of the institution prior to the interview can be a determining factor, as well (Hodge, 2012). Future studies should focus on different forms of well-being and expanding upon the idea of job fit (Warr, 2012). Bad personality fits lead to tardiness and absenteeism (Jonsson, 2013).

### **Onboarding and Training**

Onboarding is an important aspect of employee retention (Cable, 2013). Human resource management has a role in recruitment, selecting, training, compensation, and integration, which all play a role in retention (Da Silva, 2014). From day one, human resources are trying to gain commitment to the organization and the organization's mission from new employees (Cable, 2013). Investment in recruitment, selection,

benefits, training, and development are critical to businesses slowing or reducing turnover (Da Silva, 2014).

There are weaknesses with current onboarding techniques that need improvement (Cable, 2013). One is that in onboarding and trying to gain acceptance of the organization's identity, many times the individual's identity is suppressed (Cable, 2013). The technique can be harmful to the individual and the organization as personal attributes should be what makes the individual valuable to the organization (Cable, 2013). Cable proposes a different technique called "personal identity socialization" (2013, p. 24). This method encourages employees to find how employee strengths best fit into the organizational culture and helps the employee to find where they can add the most value (Cable, 2013). Compensation, integration, and performance did not show a significant relation to turnover (Da Silva, 2014).

Managers' capabilities are one of the biggest competitive advantages for companies today (Albizu, 2010). The problem is that many organizations have trouble retaining competent managers (Albizu, 2010). Training is key to ensuring employees understand the role the employee has and buy into the company's mission. Training has an impact on organizational commitment and turnover (Jehanzeb, 2013). Organizational commitment relates to turnover (Jehanzeb, 2013). One alternative to improving retention is to create training and developmental programs to develop talent from inside the organization. The Mondragon Cooperative Group created a program that demonstrated improvement in retention and job security through employee training and promoting within the company (Albizu, 2010).

## **Work Environment**

The biggest challenge for organizations in today's market is recruiting and retaining high-level talent (Arora, 2012). Effective talent retention ensures that businesses are competitive and have better performance (Arora, 2012). Almost all fields of business have seen low retention (Arora, 2012). Work-life balance, atmosphere, and supportive management encouraged retention more so than salary and other monetary benefits (Arora, 2012). At all levels, stronger co-worker relationships can improve motivation (Basford, 2012). Intent to stay is highly correlated with peer relationships with upper management (Basford, 2012).

Another way to look at the work environment is Person-Environment fit (Queiri, 2014). There are more millennials workers in the workforce and they have a high turnover rate (Queiri, 2014). One of the difficulties that employers have in preventing turnover is finding out what these workers value (Queiri, 2014). The work environment is now more global and competitive when it comes to skilled workers (Queiri, 2014). Specifically, Person-Environment refers to how compatible the employee is with the environment (Queiri, 2014). A positive Person-Environment fit leads to job satisfaction and commitment (Queiri, 2014).

Turnover is more likely when the workplace is a bad place to work according to employees (Markey, 2015). The key to understanding turnover is finding out what makes a workplace have a good or bad environment in the view of the employees (Markey, 2015). When people perceive the workplace to be a good workplace, stress level played a major role in probability of quitting and actually increased chances of turnover by 25 per cent (Markey, 2015). Parents who work in a good workplace are 18 per cent less likely to

quit in that environment than non-parents (Markey, 2015). Informing employees of important decisions also improves retention (Markety, 2015).

### **Employee Feedback**

Applying employee feedback can make good retention programs (Dumitrescu, 2012). Dumitrescu (2012) argues that direct marketing research also helps to gain this feedback. Dumitrescu (2012) recommends using questionnaires to gain employee feedback because questionnaires are easy to fill out and do not require someone to watch employee. Dumitrescu (2012) conducted this type of research on 400 employees in Sibiu banks. Fifty-six percent of employees felt there were proper working conditions. Fifty-two percent said that there were clear objectives for the job. Forty-four percent felt involved in the decision making process in the organization. Forty-three percent of employees felt that there is appreciation for their work. Fifty percent of respondents were satisfied with training. Thirty-eight percent of employees were satisfied with promotional opportunities. Fifty-four percent were satisfied with the amount of work. Forty percent of employees were satisfied with salaries. Only twenty-eight percent of employees were satisfied with the reward system in place. Forty percent of employees were satisfied with the communication in the organization (Dumitrescu, 2012).

### **Pay and Benefits**

Employee retention is beneficial to employees and the organization (Laddha, 2012). In today's job market many times when employees become dissatisfied, retention is less likely (Laddha, 2012). Many times there is a disparity between what employees feel pay should be and what employers are willing to pay (Laddha, 2012). Pay and benefits can come in many forms. This can be straight pay, incentive pay, healthcare, bonuses, tuition

reimbursement, and etcetera. Companies must understand these different aspects of pay and benefit in order to ensure companies provide the right ones in order to know the impact retention. Retention strategies help to ensure a strong and reliable workforce versus one full of frustrated and stressed employees (Laddha, 2012).

Turnover in healthcare is very costly and can be detrimental to performance in this field (Steinmetz, 2014). An issue that is causing turnover in the field is that employees believe there is no compensation for the time spent on tasks (Steinmetz, 2014). Steinmetz (2014) found that working time was an issue in multiple countries. Promotional opportunities were also a factor (Steinmetz, 2014). One option is to base pay on performance, which can affect employee turnover (O'Halloran, 2012). O'Halloran (2012) found that there was a negative relationship between performance related pay and employee turnover. There was also a negative relationship between profit sharing and turnover (O'Halloran, 2012). One advantage to employers is also that performance pay plans vary with profits of the firm so it is easier to stay in line (O'Halloran, 2012).

Equal employee benefits can influence job satisfaction (Mochama, 2013). Mochama (2013) used a stratified random sample of 49 from a Kenyan pipeline company to gather data from a questionnaire and interview (Mochama, 2013). Mochama (2013) found that equal employee benefits increased efficiency in the workplace. This ultimately led to more profitability for the business (Mochama, 2013). If a company manages employee benefits correctly, it can help the company to maintain top talent and reduce costs associated with strikes (Mochama, 2013).

Many Russian companies use benefits for employees to help improve retention (Juurikkala, 2012). These benefits include medical care, day care, and housing

(Juurikkala, 2012). Juurikkala (2012) studied 404 different companies in 40 different areas in Russia. The results show that non-wage benefits encourage retention and therefore reduce turnover costs (Juurikkala, 2012).

Tuition reimbursement is one benefit that employers have started to use to retain employees and improve human capital (Manchester, 2012). Manchester (2012) evaluated two different aspects of tuition reimbursement that may affect retention. The first aspect is how employees decide on joining the organization and how tuition reimbursement influences this (Manchester, 2012). Manchester (2012) called this the *sorting effect*. The second aspect is retention of employees because of the enrollment in classes (Manchester, 2012). Manchester (2012) called this the *participation effect*. Manchester (2012) studied an employer who had just implemented a tuition reimbursement program so that the employees just hired before the implementation could be a control group.

Manchester (2012) used human capital theory to base his research on. Participants were in supervisory and non-supervisory roles in a white-collar organization (Manchester, 2012). The results were only significant at the 5% level once broken down into supervisor and nonsupervisory employees (Manchester, 2012). Supervisors are employees that are exempt of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (FLSA) (Manchester, 2012). Nonsupervisory employees participated in the reimbursement program more than supervisory employees with 57.1% of participants being nonsupervisory and 42.9% being supervisory (Manchester, 2012). Results that were significant at the 10% level had to do with participants that were hired before implementation of the reimbursement program and after implementation (Manchester, 2012). Results that were significant at the 5% level included leaving before 5 years, age, and graduate degree (Manchester, 2012). Of

those hired after implementation that participated in reimbursement, 37.3% left before 5 years of employment where as those hired before implementation that participated had 54.3% leave. The age at hire of those that joined the organization after implementation was an average of 30.2 while pre implementation reimbursement participants averaged age 33.1 (Manchester, 2012). The type of degree varied in reimbursement participants with pre implementation having 47.8% getting a graduate degree while post implementation participants had 64.4% obtaining a graduate degree (Manchester, 2012). Ultimately, Manchester (2012) concluded that the sorting effect explained 80% of retention while participation explained 20%.

### **Work-life Balance**

It is important for organizations to retain employees and therefore it is necessary to predict employee satisfaction and turnover intent (Roulin, 2014). Work-life balance programs had a significant positive impact on job satisfaction and employer satisfaction for males in Japan (Ueda, 2012). Work-life balance programs had a significant impact on job satisfaction for females but not on employer satisfaction when it came to females (Ueda, 2012). A potential variable to study further is the income disparity as work-life balance programs are larger for higher paid employees (Ueda, 2012). Roulin (2014) studied the satisfaction of nurses in Swiss hospitals. The results showed that individual and group level factors influenced job satisfaction (Roulin, 2014). Organizational factors have less impact (Roulin, 2014). Individual level factors include burnout and work-family conflict (Roulin, 2014). Group level factors include cohesion and effectiveness as a unit (Roulin, 2014).

The more competitive the business environment, the harder it is to retain talented employees (Idris, 2014). While an increase in financial benefits for employees is an easy way to retain employees, it is not sustainable (Idris, 2014). One alternative to a financial strategy for retention is a strategy based on flexibility (Idris, 2014). Consistent work hours and flexible leave time for employees negatively correlates to turnover intentions (Devrimci, 2013). This type of flexibility can include time flexibility, leave and time off flexibility, and career and placement flexibility (Idris, 2014). Idris (2014) gathered information from personal interviews with Malaysian bank managers. The results of the study indicated that flexible leave time or time off appears to be the most popular practice and the only prevalent one brought up in the study (Idris, 2014).

Longer hours are negatively affecting workers balance between leisure and work time (Taneja, 2013). Hülshager (2013) investigated mindfulness and how it may reduce exhaustion and improve job satisfaction. Mindfulness describes when an individual is receptive and non-judgmental to events occurring (Hülshager, 2013). The study involved 219 employees that kept a diary for five days (Hülshager, 2013). The results indicated that mindfulness had a negative relationship with emotional exhaustion (Hülshager, 2013). Mindfulness positively relates to job satisfaction (Hülshager, 2013).

When people work longer hours, poor lifestyle choices are more likely (Taneja, 2013). This includes choosing unhealthy foods because these foods are quicker, not exercising frequently, and less sleep (Taneja, 2013). Workers are also more likely to fall ill and have negative emotional implications when they work longer hours (Taneja, 2013). While it may be hard for employers to see it, reduced work hours could boost



overall productivity (Taneja, 2013). This was the case when work hours reduced in the United States in the 1970s and in Western Europe in the 2000s (Taneja, 2013).

### **Job Burnout**

There is a significant and positive relationship between job burnout and intention to quit (Faloye, 2013). Burnout describes emotional stressors for employees and how each employee responds to them (Faloye, 2013). Burnout leads to low job satisfaction in service industries (Faloye, 2013). Job burnout can also cause decreased response times for employees at work (Faloye, 2013). Rewarding or offering benefits can help to reverse feelings of job burnout (Faloye, 2013). Job burnout ultimately leads to intention to quit and eventually turnover (Faloye, 2013).

Efforts to maximize employee productivity can actually lead to burnout and then turnover (Ching-Fu, 2014). Job demands or job workloads can play a role in job burnout (Ching-Fu, 2014). Time constraints and role conflicts within the organization can affect job burnout also (Ching-Fu, 2014). The level of job control is also a factor in job burnout as people in more control or their workload and activities are less likely to feel job burnout (Ching-Fu, 2014). The more resources available to employees, whether people or material, the less likely they are to have job burnout (Ching-Fu, 2014)

Job burnout can play a role in turnover. The retail grocery industry has higher turnover rates than those of other industries (Harrison, 2014). Ultimately, this high turnover negatively affects profitability in this industry (Harrison, 2014). Harrison (2014) found that value conflicts that employees had resulted in cynicism and ultimately more turnover. A mismatch between the work environment and employees' perception about their job can cause this cynicism (Harrison, 2014).

Choi (2012) studied job burnout in customer service representatives. Choi's (2012) study aims to find out if supervisor support, monetary rewards, and career paths could help prevent job burnout from turning into turnover. A survey conducted with 287 customer service employees that worked in call centers (Choi, 2012). The results indicated that supervisor support was the biggest moderator in keeping burnout from turning into turnover (Choi, 2012).

### **Employee Engagement**

Organizational commitment can come from many things. One prediction that Vella (2012) had was that managers' perceptions of the organizations performance could influence employee's commitment to the organization. Wang (2013) studied the impact of authentic leadership on employee engagement by examining employee trust. Equity theory is the basis of one perspective of employee commitment (Vella, 2012). Vella (2012) collected information from managers in the banking industry. There is a positive effect on organizational commitment when perception of performance was high and the opposite effect when it was low (Vella, 2012). Wang (2013) collected data from 386 Taiwanese employees in the top 1,000 manufacturing companies and top 500 service companies (Wang, 2013). Supervisors' consistency between words and actions are positively related to employee engagement and employee trust (Wang, 2013). Perceptions around leaders morality is also positively related (Wang, 2013). Employee trust and employee engagement are also positively related (Wang, 2013).

Ziegler (2012) studied job ambivalence and how it may moderate job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Ziegler, 2012). The study involved researchers gathering data twice two months apart (Zeigler, 2012). Job satisfaction, job

ambivalence, frequency of positive and negative emotions, and dispositional positive and negative activity and OCB were all subject matter that participants gave information on for both themselves and peers (Ziegler, 2012). Ziegler (2012) found that job satisfaction and OCB were stronger with lower job ambivalence. Negative emotions showed a negative relationship to OCB (Ziegler, 2012).

Employee engagement is a measure of how committed an employee is to the job and organization (Dash, 2013). Employee engagement is ultimately important because it has a significant impact on employee performance (Dash, 2013). The economic downturn since 2008 has made employees and employers struggle more with engagement than ever before mostly due to managements decisions made in light of this difficult economy (Dash, 2013). Dash (2013) studied the levels of employee engagement in executives within organizations.

Tew (2013) focused on how manager support for fun and activities affected employee performance and turnover. Fun in the workplace has both positive and negative effects on employees in the hospitality industry (Tew, 2013). These activities include teambuilding activities, contests, social events, and celebrations for achievements (Tew, 2013). A sample of 195 servers from a restaurant chain was the sample used in the study (Tew, 2013). Fun activities and managerial support for fun improve employee turnover (Tew, 2013). Managerial support for fun had a negative effect on performance (Tew, 2013). Factors that Dash (2013) found to influence employee engagement were; corporate values, ethical leadership and the psychological contract, organizational citizenship, and communication. Some initiatives that may help to improve employee

engagement are; employee feedback, training and development, employee welfare schemes, tenure recognition program, and other rewards and recognition (Dash, 2013).

One can apply science to employee engagement (Meyer, 2013). In order to do that Meyer's (2013) measured drivers of engagement (Meyer, 2013). While the concept may seem innovative and new, it is a new name for other drivers analyzed in the past (Meyer, 2013). Meyer (2013) suggests that knowledge accumulates and then applies to multiple different issues in business. One great source for information such as this is the Gallup poll (Meyer, 2013). Meyer (2013) lists three different drivers of engagement; work design, leadership, and employee empowerment. For this reason, Meyers (2013) suggests that data on these three drivers can provide insight into engagement.

Organizational commitment has become an increasing topic of the organizational behavior and human resources arena (Chhabra, 2013). This comes from the ideology that commitment from employees benefits the function and effectiveness of an organization (Chhabra, 2013). Chhabra (2013) examined whether the locus of control was a mediator between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Locus of control is a moderator between job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Chhabra, 2013). The relationship was stronger for individuals with an internal locus of control versus an external locus of control (Chhabra, 2013).

Employee engagement can affect many things in an employee's life. Simbula (2013) studied the longitudinal relationships between employee engagement and mental health problems, job satisfaction, and work engagement outcomes. Simbula (2013) based his study on Conservation Resources theory and the Broaden-and-Build theory. The participants were 157 schoolteachers over a 5-month average (Simbula, 2013). The

results showed that employee engagement had a negative relationship to mental health problems and a positive relationship to job satisfaction and organizational citizenship (Simbula, 2013). These relationships however are likely reciprocal so there is not a clear definition as to which one is the predictor and which one is the result (Simbula, 2013).

### **Employee Satisfaction**

Voluntary and involuntary turnover both relate to managerial derailment (Carson, 2012). This derailment can cost companies money and can have dysfunctional interpersonal tendencies and derailment potential behaviors precede it (Carson, 2012). Dysfunctional interpersonal tendencies include acting against others in the organizations and can contribute to derailment potential (Carson, 2012). Managers with these characteristics are more likely to quit or be let go (Carson, 2012).

Turnover not only affect hiring and staffing, but also can ultimately affect the success of the firm. Kwon (2013) researched how turnover can influence firm performance. Not only how many leave, but who leaves matters in the South Korean firms studied (Kwon, 2013). Human capital theory and social capital theory explain this phenomenon (Kwon, 2013). Kwon's (2013) research suggested that there was a negative relationship between high-performer turnover and firm performance. Job satisfaction has a positive effect on the commitment to the organization and turnover intentions (Yucel, 2012).

Absenteeism and attrition are prominent and complex problems in organizations today (Menon, 2012). Effectiveness of communication, satisfaction with benefits and compensation, satisfaction with promotional opportunities, clear job expectations, and satisfaction with the job contribute to employee attrition and absenteeism (Menon, 2012).

Absenteeism and attrition are withdrawing behaviors (Menon, 2012). These behaviors are also predictors of a poor organizational culture.

Employees from different backgrounds may look at satisfaction differently. Gill (2012) conducted his research on how job satisfaction and experience affect the employees need for empowerment. Gill (2012) used a survey with restaurant employees in Canada and India as participants. The survey gauged perceptions of satisfaction, experience, and empowerment (Gill, 2012). Gill (2012) found that employees wanted more empowerment with more experience. This also led to more job satisfaction (Gill, 2012). Ultimately, if managers want to increase employee's desire for empowerment, employers must ensure employees are satisfied with the job in order to improve employee retention (Gill, 2012).

Employees are so crucial to the retail sector because of the contact with customers and suppliers directly, which can have an enormous effect on the success of the business (Singh, 2013). Employee satisfaction connects to customer satisfaction (Singh, 2013). In addition, productivity of employees has a significant effect on the bottom line of the organization (Singh, 2013). The level of attrition in the retail sector is currently at 40% in India (Singh, 2013). Retention practices that have proven effective in other industries should be implemented in the retail sector as well (Singh, 2013). These include a pleasant working atmosphere, training and continued learning, and competitive pay (Singh, 2013). The biggest opportunities that retailers could improve on were challenging employees to use full potential, making employees feel valued, and limiting levels of stress and frustration (Singh, 2013).

## **Customer Service**

In today's market, customer service and relationships with customers are a top priority to achieve success (Lai, 2012). Job satisfaction and performance influence the service that frontline employees give (Lai, 2012). Maintaining the same staff can also help with familiarity for customers (Lai, 2012). Lai (2012) used a convenience sample of 616 questionnaires to analyze this. The results revealed that self-efficacy positively relates to job satisfaction and in turn performance (Lai, 2012). The effort also has a positive effect on job satisfaction (Lai, 2012). Job satisfaction in turn has a negative influence on turnover (Lai, 2012).

Problematic customer behavior may lead to a change in customer service employee's attitudes and intentions on turnover (Poddar, 2012). This may be not just turnover from the individual company, but the occupation in general (Poddar, 2012). The results showed that problematic customer behavior led to emotional exhaustion in employees, which negatively relates to job satisfaction (Poddar, 2012). The turnover intent within an organization that provides customer service relates to turnover intentions in that occupation (Poddar, 2012).

## **Transition and Summary**

Retention has multiple factors that may cause or affect it. Retention is important to companies because there are significant costs associated with turnover. In addition to the monetary costs associated with replacing an employee, there is a loss of knowledge. When employees leave the company, they take knowledge from the organization. These costs are not easily quantifiable but can have a great influence. Human resource practices play a significant role in retention. Human resource managers are involved in recruiting,

hiring, onboarding, and training. All of these practices can influence employee commitment and ultimately satisfaction. Commitment to the organization and satisfaction with the job play a role in employee turnover intentions. Another factor involved in retention is pay and benefits and how well-compensated employees feel. Ultimately, good retention can improve customer service which is another connection to the company's bottom line. These factors and the relevance of these factors can vary by organization and type of position that leads to the need for further research.

Section 1 included an overview of the research problem and purpose. A review of the literature was included. In section 2, there will be a summary of the research that done to add to the understanding of how this research can affect business practice. The summary will include the methodology and design of the research. There will also be a definition of the population used and the sampling of this population. In addition, there will be information on the steps taken to ensure the research is ethical. In section 3, there will be a presentation of the findings of this study. There will also be an application to professional practice and how this research applies to business today. Section 2 also covers implications for social change. Also, there are recommendations for action and further research.



## Section 2: The Project

In this section, I offer a summary of the research. This section includes a definition of the connection between the research and business practice, an explanation of my role as researcher is included, a discussion of the methodology and design of the research, and a definition of population and sampling. The section concludes with information on the steps I took to ensure that the research was ethical.

My goal was to improve retention and thus provide economic benefit for Company A. I collected data through in-person interviews with general managers from Company A. Assistant managers come directly in contact with hourly team members and provide direction and consistency for them. These managers also receive the most training of anyone in the stores and spend more time in the stores. When managers in these positions turnover, much of the knowledge they have is lost. In addition, hourly team member relationships are lost, which can in turn affect hourly employee engagement and retention. The location of the study was Virginia and North Carolina due to the access I had to the general managers in the area. When there is high retention, employees have more consistency in pay and more stability. Retention has a positive social effect on the community.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single case study was to explore strategies that general managers in large retail stores can use to improve assistant manager retention. The participants in this study were general managers in large retail stores located in Virginia and North Carolina. Assistant managers come directly in contact with hourly team members and provide direction and consistency for them. These

managers also receive the most training of anyone in the stores and spend more time in the stores. When managers in these positions resign, they take the knowledge with them. I conducted the study in Virginia and North Carolina because I had access to general managers in both states.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as researcher was to prepare questions for the interview, conduct the interview, and record it accurately. Similar to Rothausen's (2015) method of participant recruitment, I used existing networks to gain access to participants. Prior to beginning the study I reviewed the Belmont Report (1979) to insure that I my research methods were ethical and that my participants would be protected. In regards to boundaries between practice and research, I found that there were no conflicts with me collecting information on the opinions of the employees of Company A. I did not use medical or non-medical therapies or practices, and I followed basic ethical principles. Participation was voluntary and the participant could have opted out at any time during the interview. Appendix A includes a consent form that I gave prospective participants to inform them of the research and its purpose. To further protect participants, I have not included the names of the participants and the company in the publication of the study. I used previously used research questions and altered them only to change from a restaurant setting to a retail setting. I eliminated some questions to shorten the interview. I did not create these questions, so these do not contain any bias from me.

Because there is a limited amount of literature on retention in the retail setting, I determined that an exploratory case study design was best suited for this research. The exploratory case study design enabled me to use interviews to gain information from

participants. Interviewing is a technique used in many retention studies because of the affective and experiential nature of the information. The human factor of the research lent itself to a qualitative exploratory method (Festing, 2013). During the literature review, I found that there was not enough information available for business practitioners on retention, and therefore determined that exploratory research was needed to help identify factors needed to retain assistant managers in the retail setting. When doing person-centered and humanistic focused research, interviews are beneficial (Fadyl, 2013). Interviews are a tool that researchers can use to explore everyday experiences of people, and are one of the only ways to see how individuals construct meaning to a given topic (Fadyl, 2013). For these reasons, I used interviews to collect data.

I used an interview protocol when conducting the interviews (see Appendix E). The interview protocol provided consistency between interviews, and ensured that I used the same structure and looked for the same cues in all interviews. The protocol also included a reminder to set up a time for member-checking of the interviews.

### **Participants**

Participants for the study were general managers that work for Company A in Virginia and North Carolina. I gained contact information and access to the participants through networking. I contacted the participants via phone to introduce the study and provided them with all relevant information and consent forms. I did not previously have contact with these participants through their organization. Not having previous interaction with participants is in line with accepted practices for research (Holian, 2013).

## **Research Method and Design**

In this section, I offer a description of the research method and design, and provide justification for using the method and design. The method and design were fundamentally connected to the problem statement, and I used them to answer the research question.

### **Research Method**

In deciding which method to use for this study, I considered quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. In his study, Fuller (2015) used a quantitative method, which allowed testing of a business strategy prior to implementation. This method would be suitable for a follow up study once there is a proposed plan for retention, but was not a good choice for this initial study because there was not yet a proposed strategy in place. Since my study was about life experiences, a quantitative style would not have allowed me to adequately capture the participants' experiences. Naicker (2013) used a mixed methods study to analyze knowledge management practices within organizations. This same mixed methods approach of questionnaires and quantifying historical data could have worked for this study if information was available. However, there was no historical data available on assistant managers in Company A in regards to retention. Thus, a mixed methods approach was not appropriate for this study because of the lack of historical data.

I used a qualitative exploratory single case study method to better understand the reasons assistant retail managers stay in their positions. There are many studies on retention and turnover, but to understand this specific group there must be a chance for open-ended questions and answers. Gathering ideas through interviews allowed me to

find common themes that may help to provide the retail industry with information about factors that can help to retain assistant managers. These factors will ultimately provide general managers with more consistency and help them retain human and monetary capital.

In the literature review, I found that the best and most common method for collecting data about retention was through questionnaires or interviews. I used the interview method in this instance since questionnaires usually have a lower participation rate and the sample size in this study is relatively small. The interview method allowed me to collect retention data from more general managers. I chose the interview method over the survey method because I did not want participants to rush through the survey, and I wanted to be present in order to ask clarifying and follow-up questions. My disinclination to use surveys came out of Poddar's (2012) study on turnover, where he threw out many surveys because the participants only took six minutes to fill them out, versus the average time taken of twenty minutes.

The interviews were semistructured. Semistructured interviews allow the researcher to respond to interviewees' cues (Miller, 2016), and are common for this type of research (Kaewsaeng-on, 2015). Semistructured interview with open-ended questions help to ensure the aim of the study is met (Moonaghi, 2015). When interviewing the participants, I used an interview guide to insure that I followed the same procedures for all interviews.

The research project was qualitative in nature. I selected qualitative research because it is hard to quantify reasons for management to stay or leave a company. Also, this research was exploratory in nature. I could not clearly identify themes that could

influence retention for this sample. There would need to be more data and quantified themes to complete a quantitative research study.

### **Research Design**

There are multiple types of qualitative designs. The major types are narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research, and case study research. Narrative research gives a life perspective of the participants (Green, 2013). Ultimately, narrative research allows the researcher to collect stories from individuals (Green, 2013). This type of qualitative research design did not work for this study because past experiences with other organizations were not necessarily relative, and because I was looking for opinions and current feelings of the participants in their current organization. Phenomenological research gives a summary of conscious lived experiences of the participants (Tomkins, 2013). The goal of this research is to see what experiences are like for the participants (Tomkins, 2013). While experiences may have helped me understand why participants had the perspectives they did on retention, they would not have necessarily given insight to retention factors in their current position. Grounded theory research starts with data analysis that then leads to theory development (Khan, 2014). In order to use this theory, the researcher must have access to data. I did not have access to data in regards to retention in Company A for this study. Ethnographic research has to do with finding self-defined values, behaviors, or beliefs within a culture or group (Edberg, 2015). This research design did not work for this study because the participants are not necessarily members of the same cultural or social group, but rather work at the same company.

The case study research design involves a single case of study in a contemporary setting (Yin, 2009). The three primary types of qualitative case study designs are explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive (Yin, 2009). The goal of case study research is to identify patterns and provided explanations from the collected information (Yin, 2009). A single case study is focused on a specific case and a specific issue (Yin, 2009). A single group was the subject in my study, and there was a single issue, retention. The lack of previous research on retention of assistant retail managers lent itself to exploratory research. Therefore, I undertook an exploratory single case study.

The design used for this research was an exploratory single case study design. The research was exploratory in nature and through the research completed, this method was ideal for exploratory research in regards to retention. Through the literature review, it was determined that the most common types of research designs used for retention studies were surveys and interviews. I contacted participants and conducted interviews. I made contact so no member of the participant's direct management was involved as this was a limitation from Islam's (2013) study that I hope to avoid. In Islam's (2013) turnover study, managers helped to administer the questionnaire to participants who may have influenced participant's responses.

Given that there is a limited amount of research on retail and retail management specifically, the interview design would be appropriate. Since this study was more exploratory in nature, there was a need to have more open-ended questions to ensure discovery of the true themes for retention. I started with a sample size of 20 and then assessed saturation. Geary (2014) used thematic analysis to assess saturation. Thematic analysis is the technique that I employed to assess saturation. At that point, there was no

new information arising, so I did not conduct additional interviews as saturation was already achieved.

The design for this study was an exploratory single case study. The proposition of this case study was to explore retention in assistant managers for Company A to understand how to improve retention of these employees. The unit of analysis for this case study was assistant managers from Company A. The boundaries for this exploratory single case study were Company A in Virginia and North Carolina. I used thematic analysis to link the data to the proposition and assess saturation (Geary, 2014). After this analysis was completed, I compared the data I collected to rival explanations.

### **Population and Sampling**

General managers from retail Company A in the Virginia and North Carolina area, were the population of this study. The sampling method used was purposeful sampling. Qualitative researchers agree that the purposeful sampling method gives the most in-depth insight (Reybold, 2013). General managers from different style and different volume stores in Company A are represented in order to obtain viewpoints from each type of store. Interviews took place at an offsite location and not at the general manager's store. Purposive sampling is a method that can be beneficial when conducting in-depth interviews. Abdulai (2014) used this technique to analyze employee's participatory decision making and productivity in his study. Purposive sampling based on diversity and characteristics of the population allows the researcher to ensure they are gaining all points of view (Moonaghi, 2015). Data saturation is data accuracy or the point at which one does not gain new information by collecting more qualitative data (Kerr, 2010). Six to 20 samples is a recommended starting point for saturation in qualitative



studies (Kerr, 2010). There were 20 interviews conducted. Saturation was achieved with these 20 interviews. If no new information is being gathered then saturation is achieved (Moonaghi, 2015).

### **Ethical Research**

This study was approved by the IRB at Walden University. Walden University's approval number for this study is 05-20-16-0420251 and it expires on May 19, 2017. Participants were provided and asked to sign the consent form (see Appendix A) before participating in the study. I asked participants to read the consent form thoroughly and provided them a copy to keep and time to review the form (Fisher, 2013). Interviewees agreed to the consent form before participating in the study (Moonaghi, 2015). I allowed interviewees to withdraw from the study and I informed them of how to withdraw from the study (Fisher, 2013). Participants could have withdrawn from the study at any point during the interview process. They could have emailed me before the interview if they wished to withdraw or let me know at any time during the interview if they would have liked to withdraw. If questions made them uncomfortable, or they did not wish to continue with the interview, they could have withdrawn at any time during the interview. I did not use any data collected already through the interview if the participant chose to withdraw. This information was included in the consent form (see Appendix A). Participants did not receive any incentive before or after the study for participation. I will maintain in a safe place for 5 years to protect rights of participants. I provided an agreement document for participants listed in the appendices. I will maintain confidentiality of the participants and the company (Gubrium, 2014). In order to do that, I assigned each participant a number. I recorded the data by the participant number. This

method was to protect the identity of the individual. I will refer to the organization as Company A in all documentation to ensure confidentiality.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

I collected data through an exploratory single case study using semistructured interviews conducted by myself. This method consisted of open-ended questions to gain information from interviewees that I then coded into common themes (Bolling, 2012). I then used this code for data analysis (Bolling, 2012). I conducted these interviews using interview questions from previous research. I conducted a thematic analysis on the data. I then calculated the frequency of these themes in order to determine which the most important factors to review are.

Previously developed research questions by Smucker (2001) were used. I used these questions to assess employee empowerment and self-direction in a retail setting. The original questions are in Appendix B. I altered the questions to change the wording from a restaurant to a retail setting. I eliminated questions that did not apply to the study. These altered questions are in Appendix C. I included the researcher's permission to use and alter these questions in Appendix D. The published study is part of a dissertation for completion of a doctoral level degree at Walden University. Reliability and validity concerns with this instrument were that the study needs repetition to confirm results, preferably within 5 years (Smucker, 2001). I strictly followed the interview questions during the interview process to avoid the threat of inconsistency from interview to interview. Appendix E contains the interview protocol.

In addition to interviews, I used direct observations, member checking and a reflective journal to provide triangulation. I collected direct observations while I was in

each store. I also had general managers review the summary of their answers to ensure it represented their responses accurately. I kept a reflective journal to provide any other insight for the study.

### **Data Collection Technique**

I collected data through an interview process. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed as done in other previous research (Kaewsaeng-on, 2015). This is standard for interviews (Miller, 2016). In-person interviews were chosen over phone interviews due to a lack of precedent in using phone interviews in single case studies in the literature (Kaewsaeng-on, 2015). I chose in-person interviews over phone interviews so that I could assess body language. In-person interviews also allow the researcher to respond to interviewees' reactions (Miller, 2016). Neutral locations were the site for the interviews. One disadvantage of in-person interview is that interviewee may feel more comfortable over the phone and feel like there is better protection of his or her anonymity than in person administration (Islam, 2013). I used interview questions from Smucker's (2001) study on employee retention in the study. This study was on employee retention in a restaurant setting. These questions from Smucker's study are included in Appendix A. The interviews were semistructured. Semistructured interviews allow the researcher to respond to interviewees' cues (Miller, 2016). Semistructured are common for this type of research (Kaewsaeng-on, 2015). Semistructured interview with open-ended questions help to ensure the aim of the study is met (Moonaghi, 2015). I asked interview guide questions of participants. I followed up with questions for clarity and more information as was needed. I used member checking to ensure accurate synthesis of the general manager's responses.

### **Data Organization Techniques**

I recorded data via an audio recorder (Kaewsaeng-on, 2015; see also Moonaghi, 2015; Miller, 2016). I then transcribed these recordings in a Word document (Kaewsaeng-on, 2015; see also Moonaghi, 2015; Miller, 2016). I kept a reflective journal to write down any observations. I then analyzed the transcriptions for common themes in answers as done in previous studies by Geary (2014) and Moustaka (1994). I calculated the frequency of the themes in an Excel spreadsheet. I labeled each participants responses with a corresponding number as Gubrium (2014) did in his study. Original recordings and transcriptions will be stored on a USB drive in a fireproof lock box in my office for 5 years.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed data for common themes in answers. I used thematic analysis to do this (Geary, 2014). I then categorized key themes. I used excel to track these themes and categorize them on multiple sheets. I then coded the data by these key themes. A participant number was listed in excel with key themes listed by interview question. I noted which theme each participant mentioned in each question next to their participant number in excel. After I coded the data, I reduced it using Moustaka's (1994) method of data analysis. I recorded the relevant themes (Moustaka, 1994). I removed vague or unrelated data (Moustaka, 1994). I made categories to group themes into (Moustaka, 1994). I then constructed a structural description from my interpretation of the data (Moustaka, 1994). There is a presentation of the data and for which questions and participants I recorded a particular theme.

Direct observations and reflective journal notes were analyzed using thematic analysis also to look for common themes. In addition, I used member checking. I conducted a member checking interview with respondents. I gave them a copy of the questions with my synthesis of the transcript of their interview. The respondent then assessed whether they felt the synthesis accurately reflected their responses or not. These methods provided triangulation for the study.

There is an explanation to give a better understand of the interviews and findings as a whole. This includes how the information compares with information collected in the literature review and the concepts discussed there. I went through each topic in the literature review and showed information from the data analysis that relates to each topic. This includes whether the research supported or conflicted with the information collected through the literature. There is also an analysis of how the results relate to motivation theory. I compared each aspect of motivation theory discussed to the data and supporting and contradictory data for each aspect of the theory. I also compared this study to new studies published since the literature review was completed. I searched the same data bases with the same search keywords to find literature published since my literature review. I compared any new themes to the data from interviews.

Data analysis also included how the data does or does not support the idea of motivation theory in regards to retention. The motivation theory states that when employees are motivated, there is better retention of them (Ramlall, 2004). Motivation theory can be broken down into five parts: need theories, equity theory, expectancy theory, and job design model (Ramlall, 2004). I analyzed the findings of this study under the scope of motivation theory in these five parts. There is also a summary of any

relevant literature introduced since the study was proposed and how it relates to the study.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are concerns in this study. In this study, reliability is attained through providing dependability. Dependability is provided through triangulation. Validity in this study is discussed in terms of reliability, transferability and confirmability.

#### **Reliability**

Attainment of dependability is through triangulation, replication, and inquiry audit (Morse, 2015). Dependability in this study had challenges as Company A is a large retailer that changes with the needs of the business. There are also many facets to the business of Company A that can affect day-to-day tasks and priorities for assistant managers in Company A. There are ever-changing processes and initiatives in Company A. The idea is that even given, these changes, the results should still be relatively dependable given the interview questions do not focus on specific initiatives and how the execution of such initiatives, but in general terms of anonymity or autonomy in the company. To test dependability the study would need replication in similar conditions as Cope (2014) did in his study. To do this, it is necessary to have a very detailed description of the study to ensure the ability to replicate to test for dependability (Stake, 2010).

#### **Validity**

Credibility in research has to do with the plausibility of the research findings and if they seem true (Gordon, 2013). In many instances, the participants determine

credibility in qualitative research. I asked participants to review the results of the research to judge whether they were credible given their point of view. This type of review and discussion with the participants is one way to improve credibility (Cope, 2014). Another way to ensure credibility is to look for recurring behaviors or actions in findings (Eisner, 1991). To ensure that the method and instrument used in this study are credible, I examined methods and instruments from previous studies. Survey and interview method were the most popular in the literature in regards to retention and turnover. These methods were the most popular because they allowed researchers to gain feedback from multiple people. In cases where there is less known about the reason for turnover within the population in question, interviews are used instead of surveys. The more common use of interviews is why I chose this method for this study.

Transferability is external validity or generalizability (Morse, 2015).

Transferability is a measure of whether the research findings apply to other groups besides the one being studied (Cope, 2014). One way to do this is to take a great amount of notes and recording interviews (Silverman, 2005). Thick description in the research can help with transferability (Morse, 2015). Transferability of this research is ultimately up to future researchers to decide. There is a lack of knowledge around retention in retail management. The interview questions in this study are from a previous study. I altered the interview questions to contain wording that pertains to the retail industry versus the food industry. This means that this method and these questions could apply to multiple fields. I conducted the research in one geographic region of the United States with one company. The limitation to this once geographic area will limit the transferability of the research.

Confirmability is the objectivity of the study (Morse, 2015). Part of confirmability is the researcher being self-critical and criticizing all aspects of the research (Mandle, 2011). Confirmability is a concern in this study. I work for another large retailer. To keep this from affecting the validity of the study, I took several precautions. The first precaution is that I did not conduct interviews with anyone that works in the same geographic area as I do. This restriction means that employees interviewed were not familiar and do not work or network with myself or my individual retail store. Also, I described how I made interpretations. This is a standard used in previous research to address such concerns (Cope, 2014).

### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 2, there was an overview of the research method and design. I will define participants and sampling. I will detail data collections, techniques, and analysis. Also, I will discuss credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of the study. In Section 3, I will discuss the findings of the research as well as practical implications.



### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single case study was to explore strategies that general managers in large retail stores can use to improve assistant manager retention. I collected data using purposeful sampling and semistructured in-person interviews. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by themes using Moustakas's (1994) thematic analysis method. Several themes emerged from the study that provided a better understanding of the phenomenon. The major themes I found were as follows: supportive work environment, training and communication, pay, work-life balance, empowerment and involvement, promotional opportunities, and appreciation and feedback.

The work environment was one theme that involved multiple aspects from how nice the store itself was, to how the general managers treated the assistant managers while at work including how they showed appreciation. According to information obtained through interviews with general managers, the work environment included a team environment with good training and communication. Participants cited the opportunity to get feedback from general managers and have promotional opportunities as a major factor in assistant manager retention. Another key factor to retention was general managers involving assistant managers in decision making, giving them the authority to make decisions, and empowering them to do so. Pay and work-life balance played a major role as well, and related to motivation.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

This exploratory single case study with purposeful sampling consisted of 20 general managers from Virginia and North Carolina. The 20 participants agreed to participate in the study by signing a consent form (see Appendix A). I collected the data using audiorecorded semistructured in person interviews. Data was verified using member checking. I transcribed the data were transcribed and organized it by question and by participant in an excel spreadsheet. I analyzed the raw data and listed themes that emerged from each question. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis. I used thematic analysis to understand the factors that contribute to retention of assistant managers in Company A.

There were multiple steps taken to complete the thematic analysis. After I coded the data, I reduced it using Moustaka's (1994) method of data analysis. I recorded the relevant themes, removed vague or unrelated data, and made categories to group themes into (Moustaka, 1994). I constructed a structural description from my interpretation of the data (Moustaka, 1994), and created a presentation of the data including the number of times I recorded a particular theme.

The steps of the thematic analysis I used are as follows: listing themes and grouping like themes together, reducing and eliminating unrelated data, grouping similar themes together, and creating a structural description. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis as used by Moustakas's (1994) and Geary (2014). Participants' experiences were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using an excel sheet using thematic analysis. I used a reflective journal to ensure triangulation and establish reliability (Morse, 2015). Member

checking (Cope, 2014) established validity, and I used themes to organize the findings. The results of this study addressed the research question and underscore retention factors.

The themes I collected in the interview process are as follows: supportive work environment, training and communication, pay, work-life balance, empowerment and involvement, promotional opportunities, and appreciation and feedback. The themes that emerged from the study were significant factors that influenced assistant manager retention in Company A. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single case study was to explore strategies general managers in large retail can use to improve assistant manager retention.

A supportive work environment was a theme that was in line with findings in other studies that I came across in my literature review. At all levels, stronger co-worker relationships can improve motivation (Basford, 2012). Intent to stay is highly correlated with peer relationships with upper management (Basford, 2012). In my study, participants likewise noted that retention was related to relationships with upper management. Training was another theme that was in line with findings in the literature. Training is key to ensuring that employees understand the role that each has, and helps them buy into the company's mission. Training has an impact on organizational commitment and turnover (Jehanzeb, 2013). The general managers in company A almost all mentioned training at some point in their interviews, and they noted how important it was for their assistant managers to know everything they knew.

Pay was another theme that was consistent with the literature. Many times there is a disparity between what employees feel pay should be and what employers are willing to pay (Laddha, 2012). Pay and benefits can come in many forms. The responses I received

in this study indicated that pay was a factor in retention in Company A as well. Many general managers did not think the pay was high enough, and a majority felt that some bonus plan would be motivating for assistant managers. Work-life balance was also consistent with the literature. Consistent work hours and flexible leave time for employees negatively correlate to turnover intentions (Devrimci, 2013). This type of flexibility can include time flexibility, leave and time off flexibility, and career and placement flexibility (Idris, 2014). The idea of flexibility in scheduling and time off was a theme in this study.

Empowerment and involvement was a theme I found in this study that resonated with the literature. Gill (2012) found that employees wanted more empowerment with more experience. This also led to more job satisfaction (Gill, 2012). General managers in Company A felt that empowerment and involvement helped to keep their assistant managers happy and kept them with Company A. Empowerment and involvement also often led to promotional opportunities for assistant managers because the more empowered they were, the more likely they were to take on extra responsibility and be ready for promotion. Another avenue for reducing turnover is to define role expectations clearly, and to provide opportunities for growth and advancement to keep employees engaged (Allen, 2013). While promotional opportunities and advancement were a topic in the literature review, they were much more prominent features of my study.

Appreciation and feedback were not themes I encountered in the literature, at least not in the sense they were found in this study. Feedback in the literature mainly had to do with feedback from employees to employers to improve retention. In this study, many general managers talked about how their feedback to their assistant managers on

performance improved retention. This included showing appreciation for the assistant managers when they did a good job, and offering constructive criticism when they did not. Appreciation and feedback were the only themes that were different from the literature.

The conceptual framework used in this study was motivation theory. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs is the origin of motivation theory. Maslow (1943) said that motivational theories should stress ultimate goals over basic goals. Many times, acts have multiple motivations, not just one (Maslow, 1943). The seven themes that emerged from this study of general managers in Company A indicate that there are multiple motivations for retention.

Motivation theory was useful for this study, because finding the motivations for retention helped me answer the research question regarding which strategies employers can implement to improve retention. To develop strategies for retention, there must be an understanding of why employees are retained or not. Motives for staying or leaving a company give insight into retention and, therefore, can be instrumental in the creation of effective retention strategies.

### **Theme 1: Supportive Work Environment**

The first theme I identified in the data was a supportive work environment. This includes an atmosphere with good physical conditions, a team work environment, and a general manager who is understanding and supportive. Forty-five percent of general managers thought work environment was a factor in retention. General managers reported that when they created an environment where they worked as a team with their assistant managers, they were more likely to retain their assistant managers. General managers

also reported that the way they treated their assistant managers played a major role in retention. They felt that being supportive and understanding was critical. The results showed that 55% of general managers at company A believed that a supportive work environment was a factor in retention. For example, Participant 9 noted that assistant managers responded well to a “teamwork environment,” and that general managers should “try to listen to their needs and let them chime in on ideas.” This manager also said that general managers should “make sure they are actively involved with store.” Participant 12 claimed that “always having their back” and “showing you care” were central to maintaining a supportive work environment. Participant 19 linked the physical work environment and time flexibility, noting that maintaining a “clean store” and giving assistant managers “days off when they need it” are vital to their retention.

## **Theme 2: Training and Communication**

The second theme that emerged from general manager responses was training and communication. Fifty-five percent of general managers I interviewed said that retention was part of the training they received when they started their position. This training included hands-on and classroom training. Forty percent of general managers said they had no training on retention. One participant reported receiving specific training on how to deal with people.

General managers in Company A feel that constant training is essential to retention of assistant managers. Fifty percent of general managers said that training and communication was a factor in retention. Assistant managers need both initial and ongoing training as the company develops new programs and procedures. Training goes

hand in hand with communication. General managers feel that the more consistent and detailed the communication they have with their assistant managers, the more likely they are to retain them. The results revealed that 70% of general managers in Company A believed that training and communication was a factor in the retention of their assistant managers. For example, Participant 15 stated that “training and getting involved, having pride in the store, and letting assistant managers do things with you including training,” were valuable, “because you can’t do it all on your own. If they don’t know what to do they can’t do it.” Participant 13 believed that “they should go through the same training; it would help them stay longer.” Participant 5 claimed that “clear direction” was important and that “if they feel like they don’t understand they won’t stay.”

### **Theme 3: Pay**

Pay was the third theme that came up in thematic analysis. Pay was a theme from actual hourly pay for assistant managers to bonuses and pay raises. Fifteen percent of general managers mentioned pay as a factor in retention. Many general managers felt like the pay was not enough for assistant managers especially considering they had many of the same duties the general managers do on a daily basis. They felt that many assistant managers would stay with Company A if there were higher pay or more opportunities for bonuses or raises. Pay or bonuses was thought to have an impact on retention with 85% of the general managers.

A recent study on the Nigerian banking sector found that pay had a positive impact on retention (Ibidunni, 2016). A recommendation from that study was to increase pay and bonus programs to improve employee retention (Ibidunni, 2016). According to

the general managers interviewed in this study, Company A does not currently have a bonus plan for assistant managers, only for general managers. Sixty-five percent of general managers thought that a bonus plan would motivate assistant managers and have a positive impact on their performance. Twenty-five percent of participants said that they thought a bonus plan would have a positive impact on retention. Ten percent of participants thought that a bonus plan for assistant managers would have no impact. For example, Participant 2 said “it’s all about the benefits and pay.” Participant 6 believed that “They should consider pay for assistants. There would be less turnover if offered more in terms of pay or bonuses as the only way to get a pay raise right now is once a year.” Participant 5 stated that “competitive pay” was important.

#### **Theme 4: Work-life Balance**

The fourth theme found was work-life balance. Flexible work hours increase employee’s job satisfaction and commitment (Ahmad, 2016). This allows employees to more easily have a work-life balance and improve retention (Ahmad, 2016). In this study, twenty percent of general managers said that work-life balance was a factor in retention. General managers felt that if they provided a good balance for their assistant managers between their work and their home life they were more likely to stay. This included being flexible with their assistant managers especially when it came to scheduling. General managers felt that fair and consistent scheduling helped their assistant managers to balance their home life. They also felt that being willing to give them a day off if something came up was important as well. Work-life balance had an impact on retention according to 25% of the general managers. For example, Participant 11 said “caring



about them when you write the schedule” and “being fair and considerate.” Participant 19 suggested “giving days off when they need it.” Participant 2 stated that “having a good balance with home life, that’s what keeps people here is flexibility.”

### **Theme 5: Empowerment and Involvement**

The fifth theme found in general managers’ responses was empowerment and involvement. The theory used to shape this research was motivation theory. The idea that when employees are motivated, there is better retention of them is the basis of motivation theory (Ramlall, 2004). Motivation theory includes four components: need theories, equity theory, expectancy theory, and job design model (Ramlall, 2004). Needs are physiological or psychological deficiencies (Ramlall, 2004). Need theory is the idea that one is motivated because they want to satisfy their needs (Ramlall, 2004). The theme in this study that supports this is pay as the assistant manager’s pay helps fulfill their basic needs. Individuals want to feel work is rewarded in a fair system in which others do not receive more for the same work (Ramlall, 2004). This idea is the basis of equity theory (Ramlall, 2004). In this study, equity was the opportunity for promotions and appreciation and feedback. Expectancy theory is when people act in a certain way because they expect to receive a particular reward for these actions (Ramlall, 2004). Job design motivation has to do with the actual task motivating the employee (Ramlall, 2004). This motivation may be because the task is exciting or challenging (Ramlall, 2004). Empowerment and involvement in this study supported this idea. These motivational theories play a role in employee retention according to the research findings.

General managers felt that the more they involved their assistant managers in what they do day in and day out, the more likely they were to be successful and ultimately stay with Company A. Sixty percent of general managers talked about giving their assistant managers the authority to make decisions when talking about how they empowered assistant managers. Thirty-five percent of general managers felt that appreciation and feedback were part of how they empowered assistant managers. Twenty percent thought that training was an important part of empowering their assistant managers. Empowerment and involvement, especially in decision making, was a factor in retention with 50% of general managers interviewed.

A multi-source study showed a negative relationship between ethical leadership and turnover (Babalola, 2016). Increasing employee's self-esteem or feeling of empowerment also reduced turnover (Babalola, 2016). Twenty-five percent of general managers talked about training as a way of involving assistant managers in the store. They specifically talked about teaching assistant managers to do what they do as general managers. Thirty percent of general managers talked about decision-making and how assistant managers shared the decision making responsibilities in the store. The consensus was that assistant managers share the same responsibilities day to day as the general manager, and there was a daily set of responsibilities that one manager worked on until they left and the other manager picked up where they left off. General managers had a few additional responsibilities that assistant managers could not do which included; hiring, firing, interviews, and writing up employees. For example, Participant 20 said that her assistant manager is "completely in charge of the store when I'm not here. I allow her to make the decisions, wrong or right." Participant 11 said that, "A lot of times

they're left in charge. When something new comes down we make a plan to do it together. They get pretty much the same emails that keep them involved and let them know what's going on." Participant 6 said that they "sit down at the beginning of every week and pick who to delegate to" which gives them "a sense of ownership."

### **Theme 6: Promotional Opportunities**

The sixth theme that emerged from interviews with general managers in Company A was promotional opportunities. The ability to move up and move up quickly in Company A was a retention factor for assistant managers according to general managers. Thirty percent of general managers said that promotional opportunities were a factor in retention of assistant managers. Many of the general managers themselves had started in other positions and moved up. There are also lots of stores opening in Company A and stores relatively close together which makes it easier for assistant managers to promote without having to change where they live. Through interview responses, 25% of general managers in Company A believe that promotional opportunities and the ability to grow with Company A play a factor in retention of assistant managers. For example, Participant 7 said that "people have a lot to do with helping you grow while helping them grow." Participant 10 claimed that "some have moved up" and that there are "lots of opportunities to move up." Participant 18 said that the "possibility of moving up in the company" was important.

### **Theme 7: Appreciation and Feedback**

The seventh theme was appreciation and feedback. General managers identified this through praising their assistant managers when they did well and giving prizes in

some cases. They also found constructive criticism and feedback were important as well. In interview responses, 40% of general managers mentioned appreciation or feedback as a factor in retention. For example, Participant 9 suggested to “give them praise when they do well or take initiative on tasks and correct when needed.” Participant 7 claimed that it was important to “try to get them to make decisions, if they make the wrong one, we correct the issue” but also “if they make the right one then praise them for doing the right thing.” Participant 6 said that praise and constructive criticism is important.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

There are multiple themes that play a factor in improving assistant manager retention in Company A. Understanding the retention factors that impact assistant manager retention helps to create a plan improve assistant manager retention. Several of the participants stated that a supportive work environment, training and communication, pay, work-life balance, empowerment and involvement, promotional opportunities, and appreciation and feedback were all factors that could be improved or focused on to retain assistant managers. This study adds to the existing body of knowledge on retention and provides Company A with resources that they can use to develop retention strategies. There were some new themes discovered that were not readily found in the literature. In addition, the study supported some of the themes found in previous retention studies in different job settings and gave reason to believe that these themes apply across different business types. The study gave specific themes for the retail environment as studies about retention in retail are not commonly found.

The researcher identified common themes that contribute to assistant manager retention. General managers in Company A can use the findings to create retention strategies that improve assistant manager retention. The study can be used to develop retention strategies that improve general manager and assistant manager relationships and retention. Developing retention strategies that improve assistant manager retention can reduce turnover costs which can range from a thousand dollars up to a million dollars (Cascio, 1991). The cost of losing a manager in the retail sector requires two to three times their yearly salary (Carson, 2012). Reducing these costs can have a significant positive impact on Company A.

Some ways in which companies can use this information is to create their strategies to analyze these themes. They could use surveys for assistant managers to gauge how they feel about the factors found in this study. They could then focus on factors that rated low in their company and make plans for improvement. They could also take a look at implementing of re-evaluating bonus plans for assistant managers. They could look at promotional opportunities and growth paths within their company and how many internal versus external promotions they have. These would all be good ways to use the factors found in this study to apply to other companies.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The results of the study could help create a positive social change within the communities in which Company A operates. Low retention rates lead to instability for Company A and employees of Company A and therefore, the communities in which they live. There is a correlation between wages and tenure in the United States (Bureau, 2008).

Within the same industry, wages increase with employee tenure (Bureau, 2008).

Retention, therefore, has a positive social impact on the community because higher retention rates mean higher wages for workers. Higher wages means that workers have more money to spend in their communities. Therefore, if Company A can improve retention rates in their stores in Virginia and North Carolina; it could have a positive impact on the communities in those areas.

In addition, if Company A was able to apply these results nationally to their stores, it could have an even larger geographic impact. Retention of assistant managers could also have an impact on the employees that work for them as they will have more consistency in management and direction which could improve the retention of employees and development. Having retained employees in a community provides consistency and helps to increase the capital being spent and the confidence that those wages will be there. This can compound growth of businesses within a community that is experiencing such retention and consistency.

### **Recommendations for Action**

There are multiple significant factors that impact assistant manager retention in Company A. These findings could help general managers in Company A implement retention strategies. Not implementing any new retention strategies may have a significant impact on Company A. It is critical for general managers to understand how to develop retention strategies in Company A.

The researcher recommends that general managers in Company A use the themes found in this study to assist with the creation of new retention strategies. Creating retention strategies can have a positive effect on assistant managers and Company A.

General managers should create a working environment in which their assistant managers are comfortable and feel supported. This type of work environment allows them to grow and feel good about coming to work. General managers should focus on having consistent communication with assistant managers and continuous training. This allows assistant managers to feel comfortable in their role because they feel like they know what is going on, and they have the training they need to do their job. General managers should understand that pay is a major factor in the retention of their assistant managers and make suggestions to Company A to create assistant manager bonus programs. This type of pay incentive would have a motivating factor to assistant managers and make them more invested in their store. General managers should focus on the work-life balance of their assistant managers and provide them with flexible schedules when possible to allow them to have the flexibility needed to feel successful at work and home. General managers should make sure that their assistant managers feel empowered and involved in decision making that goes on in their store. Being involved in decision-making allows assistant managers to feel like they have ownership and that their opinion matters. General managers should focus on personal growth with assistant managers and know if they want to promote so that they can help get them to the next level. Focusing on personal growth will show investment in their career, but also help them to see that they can do more with Company A. General managers should also ensure that they show appreciation and give feedback daily to help assistant managers grow and improve, but ultimately feel that their work is valued.

The findings can be disseminated through academic and professional conferences, academic research journals and publications. The study can apply to other companies and

geographic areas as a starting point to improve retention. Any general managers in a retail environment could benefit from paying attention to the results or anyone looking to find retention factors for assistant managers in a retail setting.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

There was very little research on retention strategies for assistant managers in the retail environment. There is a need for more studies to be conducted on manager retention in the retail setting on a larger scale. The need for more studies includes both other companies and other geographic locations. Conducting a larger scale study could provide retailers with more insight into how to improve assistant manager retention in their stores on a larger scale. A larger scale study could improve retention, motivation, and the financial bottom line of the organization. I recommend that future research explores human resource practices, benefits, job burnout, and employee satisfaction to help determine if those factors influence retention. A study exploring these factors may help to give a broader range of factors to use in creating a retention plan for general managers in retail organizations. Addressing these factors would also address one of the limitations of this study which is that there may be other factors that influence retention that did not come up with this interview guide. Also, repeating this study or similar studies over time could address another limitation that this study was done once and would need to be repeated as assistant manager's reasons for retention may change over time.

### **Reflections**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single case study was to explore strategies general managers in large retail can use to improve assistant manager retention.



There were 20 general managers interviewed in Virginia and North Carolina. The data collection process allowed for semistructured conversations between the researcher and the participants. Most participants were very willing to share their perspectives and had strong opinions on retention.

Through my literature review and completion of interviews, I found a new understanding of all the multiple factors that could potentially play a role in retention. I also realized that companies may not always talk about retention or have retention plans and that this in itself may be a factor. Many participants appeared to be talking about these subjects for the first time or at least for the first time about retention. Many participants were also eager to hear the results of the study.

As a current human resource manager myself, I did have some ideas of what I thought some of the factors might be that would influence retention. Some were reflected in the findings and some were not. I think it helped to open my eyes to think about other possibilities. It also helped me to realize that some of the factors I'd previously considered important may not be as influential as I originally thought.

### **Conclusion**

Employee retention is essential to the success of any business. As employees work, they gain experience and knowledge. Anytime an experienced worker is lost, so is their knowledge and experience. Also, the cost of hiring to replace employees that leave a company can be high. These costs can include job postings, training, onboarding, and etcetera. The costs to businesses reflect human and monetary capital and are why it is important to understand employee retention.

Multiple factors that influence retention were found as a result of the semistructured interviews conducted in this study. The work environment was one theme that involved multiple aspects from how nice the store itself was to how the general managers treated the assistant managers while at work including how they showed appreciation. The work environment includes a team environment with good training and communication. The opportunity to get feedback from general managers and have promotional opportunities was a major factor. Another factor was general managers involving assistant managers in decision making and giving them the authority to make decisions and empowering them to do so. Also, pay and work-life balance played a major role as well and related to motivation. General managers in Company A to assist with the creation of new retention strategies can use the findings.

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## Appendix A: Consent Form

### Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of retail manager retention in Company A. The researcher is inviting current general managers with Company A in the VA/NC area to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Amber Echols, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to find common factors that encourage the retention of assistant managers in Company A in the VA/NC area. A suggested plan will then be provided for Company A to implement to improve retention in assistant managers within their organization.

#### **Procedures:**

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

- Answer questions via in person interview. The interview will last about 30 minutes and will contain questions regarding your views on different aspects of Company A.

Here are some sample questions:

- What kind of training did you receive on retention?
- What factors contribute to retention of assistant managers in your store?

#### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

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

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as stress or becoming upset. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

The potential benefits of the study would be to help Company A provide you and your peers with a better strategy to improve retention which could improve your experience with Company A.

**Payment:**

There will be no payment or reimbursement for this study.

**Privacy:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by ensuring audio recordings are kept in a locked container in the researchers home. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxxxx.xxxxxx@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 05-20-16-0420251 and it expires on May 19, 2017.

Please print or save this consent form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

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

## Appendix B: Interview Questions for General Managers

Where have you worked at previously?

What is it like to work at Isaac's Restaurants? Both good and bad.

How is Isaac's different from other places you have worked? How are managers at Isaac's treated differently?

How would you rate customer satisfaction at Isaac's compared to other restaurants/competitors?

Tell me about the training you have received. How has it been the same as/or different from other places you have worked?

Your job description says that you are to "develop a trustworthy relationship with all employees.

What do you do to accomplish this? What does Isaac's do to develop trust with employees?

How is this the same and/or different from other places you have worked?

How does this trust manifest itself on a day-to-day basis? What does Isaac's do differently as a

result of trusting employees vs. other restaurants? Are there different expectations?

What does empowerment mean at Isaac's? How are employees empowered? In what areas do

they have power to make decisions or use their own discretion? What are the down-sides to empowerment?

Can you recall a story(ies) that provides examples of empowerment in action?

What does an empowerment philosophy require of you as a GM? How might this differ from a restaurant that does not have the same philosophy?

If an employee has an idea that they think would help improve the restaurant, what do they do with that idea? Do they have some autonomy to fix it? Or do they need to get permission to make changes?

Compared to other places you have worked, how would you compare the commitment of Isaac's employees?

As a general manager, how do you involve employees in various responsibilities of the restaurant?

Tell me about the front-line bonus plan, what affect does that have on staff empowerment and problem solving?

Do you cross-train people in different jobs? If so, tell me how you feel about this? How is this done? What is it like?

On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being outstanding, rate the level of trust you think Isaac's corporate management has in you to do a good job without watching over your shoulders?

Are the tasks you perform clearly defined or do you have some discretion to go about your work

in your own way? In other words, does Isaac's corporate tell you how to do things in a strict

way or does your unit have discretion in how it organizes and gets the job done?

As a manager, what are the differences in the role that you perform at Isaac's and other restaurants/organizations that you have performed supervisory functions?

As a manager, how would you go about implementing a new idea or solving a problem?

As a manager, what things do you have to get permission to do from your boss? What decisions

can you make on your own?

Do you ever get directives or specific instructions from corporate? Give me some examples.

What decisions do GM's have autonomy on regarding marketing/other?

What happens if you have an idea to improve your restaurant? What do you do with the idea?

What if it affects other restaurants?

Can you give me an example of changes Isaac's has made as a result of GM input?

How do ideas get disseminated from restaurant to restaurant?

What is the glue that keeps Isaac's together?

Why are there so many committees at Isaac's? Do you ever get tired of being in meetings?

How would you describe the role of the DC's?



What is David's role as operations VP? Describe your relationship with him.

How would you describe Becky's role as marketing person?

### Appendix C: Interview Questions for General Managers

1. What kind of training did you receive on retention?
2. What factors contribute to retention of assistant managers in your store?
3. How do you empower assistant managers?
4. What effect does a bonus plan have on assistant managers?
5. As a general manager, how do you involve assistant managers in various responsibilities of the store?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add about retention of assistant managers or factors that contribute to retention of assistant managers in your store?

## Appendix D: Permission from Dr. Jim Smucker

**Jim E Smucker**

Aug 3

to me

Amber,

Good to hear from you. I hope your DBA work is going well.

I am fine with you taking and modifying my questions. Actually just flattered that anyone has paid any attention at all to my dissertation. Typically they are written and sit on a shelf somewhere in obscurity.

Best wishes as you continue your research.

Jim Smucker  
Vice President & Dean  
Eastern Mennonite University School of Graduate and Professional Studies  
<http://www.emu.edu/graduate-and-professional-studies/>

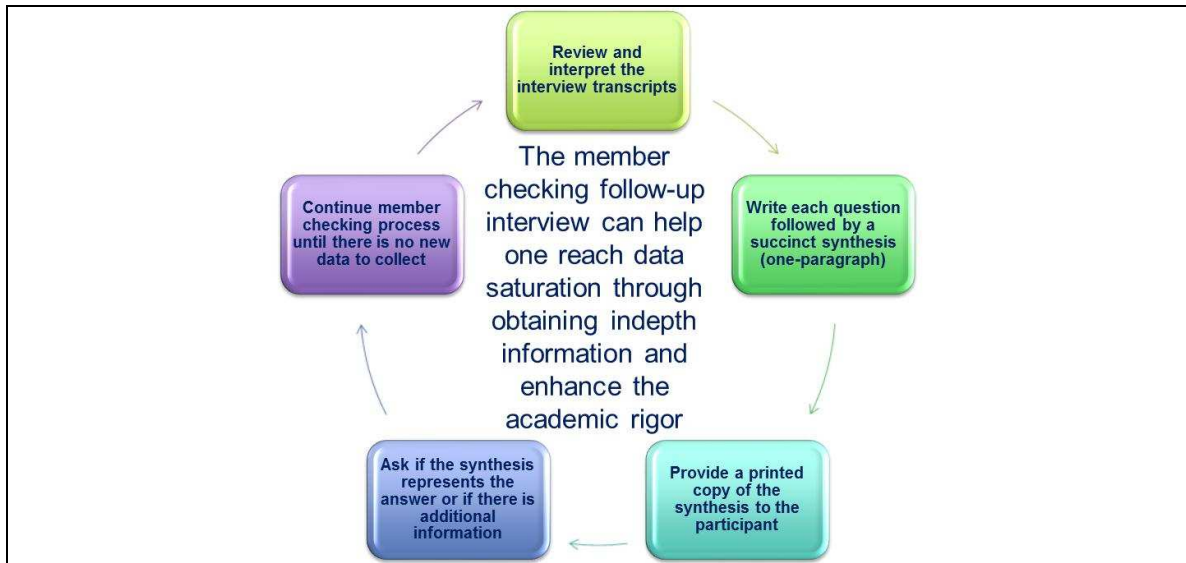
Program Director - Collaborative MBA  
A program of Bluffton University, Eastern Mennonite University, and Goshen College

1200 Park Rd.  
Harrisonburg, VA 22802  
Ph. [717-471-6733](tel:717-471-6733)

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## Appendix E: Interview Protocol

| <b>Interview Protocol</b>  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>What you will do</b>  | <b>What you will say—script</b>  |
| Introduce the interview and set the stage—often over a meal or coffee  | Hi, I'm Amber Echols, Assistant Manager at store XXXX for Company A. I appreciate you taking the time to sit down with me and answer my questions. Please let me know if you have any questions. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch for non-verbal queues</li> <li>• Paraphrase as needed</li> <li>• Ask follow-up probing questions to get more indepth</li> </ul> | 1. What kind of training did you receive on retention?   |
|  | 2. What factors contribute to retention of assistant managers in your store?   |
|  | 3. How do you empower assistant managers?  |
|  | 4. What effect does a bonus plan have on assistant managers?   |
|  | 5. As a general manager, how do you involve assistant managers in various responsibilities of the store?   |
|  | 6. Is there anything else you would like to add about retention of assistant managers or factors that contribute to retention of assistant managers in your store?                               |
|  | 7. I would like to thank you again for your time and your contribution to my research. Please let me know if you have any questions.   |
| Wrap up interview thanking participant   | I would like to schedule a follow-up member checking interview to ensure I accurately captured the information in your responses. When would be a good time for you?                             |
| Schedule follow-up member checking interview   | I would like to schedule a follow-up member checking interview to ensure I accurately captured the information in your responses. When would be a good time for you?                             |
| Follow-up Member Checking Interview  |  |



Graphic by Gene E. Fusch, Ph.D. not needed in proposal or study—just a visual reminder during proposal stage when creating interview protocol.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Introduce follow-up interview and set the stage  | I have a printed copy of the interview questions I asked you followed by a synthesis of your responses for your review. |
| Share a copy of the succinct synthesis for each individual question  | Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed                                |
| Bring in probing questions related to other information that you may have found—note the information must be related so that you are probing and adhering to the IRB approval.<br><br>Walk through each question, read the interpretation and ask:<br><br>Did I miss anything? Or, What would you like to add? | 1. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed                             |
|  | 2. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed                             |
|  | 3. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed                             |
|  | 4. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed                             |
|  | 5. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed                             |
| 6. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed  |   |
| 7.   |   |

## Appendix F: Interview Responses Coded by Theme

| Question |   |                          |
|----------|---|--------------------------|
| 1        | What kind of training did you receive on retention?   |                          |
|          | Participant's words   | Key themes               |
| 1        | It's part of our initial training.  | part of general training |
| 2        | None.   | no training              |
| 3        | We receive constant training but none specifically on retention   | no training              |
| 4        | Basically just show up  | no training              |
| 5        | They didn't really train us on that.  | no training              |
| 6        | We go to a class for two weeks, retention was a piece of that training.   | part of general training |
| 7        | I worked two weeks with a training manager. It was part of that.  | part of general training |
| 8        | Basic training modules on the computer.   | part of general training |
| 9        | Yes, classroom and hands on training  | part of general training |
| 10       | Not a whole lot.  | no training              |
| 11       | People training, learning how to deal with people.  | People training          |
| 12       | A whole lot you teach yourself, but we had plenty of training in everything.  | part of general training |
| 13       | A week long class next week and 14 days of general training initially.  | part of general training |
| 14       | Series of tests to go through.  | part of general training |
| 15       | Trained that it was all up to store manager.  | part of general training |
| 16       | A lot, I started entry level and moved up to key then assistant, then store manager within eight months. Gotten experience handling things and by doing things. Had a week long classroom training. | part of general training |
| 17       | None.   | no training              |
| 18       | Training program for one week in the classroom to cover everything.   | part of general training |
| 19       | Not much specific training, told what the company needs and that's that.  | no training              |
| 20       | Basically none.   | no training              |

| Question | What factors contribute to retention of assistant managers in your store?   |   |   |
|----------|---|---|---|
| 2        |   |   |   |
|          | Participant's words   | Key themes  | Reduced themes  |
| 1        | Good work environment and training for them.  | work environment, training                                      | work environment, training and communication                    |
| 2        | Pay - it's all about the money.   | pay   | pay   |
| 3        | Communication, good work ethic, honesty, training.  | communication, training   | training and communication                                      |
| 4        | Knowing how to deal with people.  | managers interpersonal skills                                   | work environment  |
| 5        | Clear direction, if they feel like they don't understand they won't stay. Calm work environment. Competitive pay.   | training, work environment, pay                                 | work environment, training and communication, pay               |
| 6        | Communication, understanding, ability to get along personally. Once you build a personal relationship it makes the business relationship easy.                                      | communication, managers interpersonal skills, work/life balance | work environment, training and communication, work/life balance |
| 7        | People have a lot to do with helping you grow while helping them grow.  | promotional opportuniteis                                       | promotional opportunities                                       |
| 8        | Willingness to learn.   | development   | promotional opportunities                                       |
| 9        | Teamwork environment, try to listen to their needs and let them chime in on ideas. Make sure they are actively involved with store as long as they feel like they are a part of it. | team environment  | work environment  |
| 10       | Most have moved, but some have moved up, lots of opportunities to move up.  | promotional opportunities                                       | promotional opportunities                                       |
| 11       | Positive attitude, feedback, caring about them when you write schedule being fair and considerate   | work/life balance, managers interpersonal skills                | work/life balance, work environment                             |

|    |  |  |   |
|----|--|--|---|
|    |  | communication, managers interpersonal skills, empowerment      | work environment, training and communication, empowerment and involvement |
| 12 | Always having their back, showing you care, communication.   |  |   |
| 13 | They should go through same training, it would help them stay longer.  | training   | training and communication  |
| 14 | Repetition in what they do as far as policies and procedures.  | training   | training and communication  |
| 15 | Training, if you don't train they won't stay.  | training   | training and communication  |
| 16 | How you handle situations with customers, consider that they're people. Team work with me.   | team work, managers interpersonal skills, empowerment          | work environment, empowerment and involvement                             |
| 17 | Have to do everything I do. Really need to be on call. Pay. Ability to move up.  | promotional opportunities, training, pay                       | training and communication, pay, promotional opportunities                |
| 18 | Possibility of moving up in the company. Hours.  | work/life balance, promotional opportunities                   | work/life balance, promotional opportunities                              |
| 19 | Clean store. Don't make them do that much. Give days off when they need it. Don't know why they stay the money sucks. They can move up in the company. | promotional opportunities, work environment, work/life balance | work environment, work/life balance, promotional opportunities            |
| 20 | They know exactly what I know, they follow along with what I do.   | training, empowerment  | empowerment and involvement, training and communication                   |



| Question |  |                                       |                            |
|----------|--|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 3        | How do you empower assistant managers?   |                                       |                            |
|          | Participant's words  | Key themes                            | Reduced themes             |
| 1        | Through training and delegation.   | training, delegation                  | training and communication |
| 2        | Support them, don't have to be hands on. Tell them if I'm not here it's their home, if a decision needs to be made, make it. If it's wrong we'll fix it. | authority to make decisions, feedback | appreciation and feedback  |
| 3        | Constant encouragement   | feedback                              | appreciation and feedback  |
| 4        | Give them the authority.   | authority to make decisions           |                            |
| 5        | Whatever position, training for next position. If make a decision I back them, there's nothing we can't fix.   | authority to make decisions           |                            |
| 6        | Praise and constructive criticism  | feedback                              | appreciation and feedback  |
| 7        | Try to get them to make decisions, if wrong one, we correct issue if right one praise them for doing the right thing.                                    | authority to make decisions, feedback | appreciation and feedback  |
| 8        | Support them and give them a chance to make decisions on their own.  | authority to make decisions, feedback | appreciation and feedback  |
| 9        | Give them praise when do well or take initiative on tasks and correct when needed.   | feedback                              | appreciation and feedback  |
| 10       | A lot of protocol, give them designated responsibility.  | authority to make decisions           |                            |
| 11       | Give them things to do that make them ready for the next elevation and training to be ready if can do what I do.   | training, challenge assignments       | training and communication |
| 12       | Letting them know they are appreciated.  | appreciation                          |                            |
| 13       | Treat them like equal, more likely to share opinions.  | Treat as equal                        | work environment           |
| 14       | Same power I do when not here, manager on duty, they make the calls. Whatever decision they make should be in the best interest of the store.            | authority to make decisions           |                            |

|    |   |   |                            |
|----|---|---|----------------------------|
| 15 | Train them, let them make decisions. If they're scared to make decisions, train them so they want to replace me. Some store managers are scared to train people for the next level.           | authority to make decisions, training                                 | training and communication |
| 16 | Kick off meeting weekly, mainly for us to talk about topics of the week, policy changes, how we will run trucks.  | communication, involvement in decision making                         | training and communication |
| 17 | When they take my place when I'm not here they make the decisions.  | authority to make decisions   |                            |
| 18 | Encourage them by telling them what the company expects. Give praise and reward in anyway I can. I put their name in for a promotion, give personal praise, let them know I appreciate them.  | appreciation  |                            |
| 19 | Tell them it's all on them when I'm not here. They act like the manager and I'm available if needed.  | authority to make decisions   |                            |
| 20 | I allow them to make decisions on their own. If they make the wrong decision, we discuss why it would be better to do it this way. We talk about stuff day in and day out. We work as a team. | authority to make decisions, feedback, involvement in decision making | appreciation and feedback  |

|               |  |            |
|---------------|--|------------|
| Question<br>4 | What effect does a bonus plan have on assistant managers?  |            |
|               | Participant's words  | Key themes |
| 1             | A bonus plan would have a good effect. It would make them work harder.   | motivation |
| 2             | It would be wonderful if we had one. It gives more incentive for pushing sales, but the best benefit would be an extra day off with pay. | motivation |
| 3             | It would drive them to want to do a better job, that's what it does for me   | motivation |
| 4             | None here, but yes it would have an impact on how hard they work.  | motivation |
| 5             | A bonus does help motivate them.   | motivation |
| 6             | It would make a huge difference. It would give them more motivation.   | motivation |
| 7             | It would drive them to work harder. It would empower them to boost sales.  | motivation |
| 8             | I think it would be a good thing to keep good people.  | retention  |
| 9             | I think it would help greatly. It would make them more active in sales.  | motivation |
| 10            | Probably would if it were offered. Probably make them do more.   | motivation |
| 11            | Yes, it would every little bit of money helps to make them stay.   | retention  |
| 12            | Yes, I feel like they should get bonuses and they should be salary. It would make them more invested.                                    | motivation |
| 13            | They probably would stay longer if there was one.  | retention  |
| 14            | I couldn't answer that since we don't have one.  | no answer  |
| 15            | Probably not   | no effect  |
| 16            | It would have a good effect since they currently get no discounts, would probably keep them here.  | retention  |
| 17            | I would think so as my previous company did. If I get a bonus I give them a share they like that. I think it helps them to stay.         | retention  |
| 18            | It definitely would make a positive difference   | positive   |
| 19            | I think so, I think it would have a positive effect.   | positive   |

|    |              |           |
|----|--------------|-----------|
| 20 | Probably not | no effect |
|    |              |           |

| Question | As a general manager, how do you involve assistant managers in various responsibilities of the store?   |                            |   |
|----------|---|----------------------------|---|
| 5        |   |                            |   |
|          | Participant's words   | Key themes                 | Reduced themes  |
| 1        | Involve them in decisions and tell whys behind what we do.  | training                   | training and communication                              |
| 2        | Making them do it. Try to train them to do what I do and I can see if they have questions. I am there to support them. A lot of managers won't train because they feel threatened. Training makes your life easier. | training                   | training and communication                              |
| 3        | They can do everything I can do, everybody is of equal power.   | Equal authority, training  | training and communication, empowerment and involvement |
| 4        | Maintenance, ensuring most important things are taken care of, responsibilities change day by day.  | delegate                   |   |
| 5        | Pretty much anything I do I show them how to do it. They shadow me.   | training                   | training and communication                              |
| 6        | We sit down at the beginning of every week and pick who to delegate to, gives them a sense of ownership   | decision making            | empowerment and involvement                             |
| 7        | Involved in just about everything, stocking, ordering scheduling. Anything I can show them to get them to the next level  | training                   | training and communication                              |
| 8        | Certain tasks each day and we work off a list.  | delegation                 |   |
| 9        | Already share most of the responsibility. If they are wanting to do more I will give extra responsibility like interviewing.  | team work, decision making | work environment, empowerment and involvement           |
| 10       | A lot of times decide who gets to do one thing or the other. Whatever the day calls for.  | decision making            | empowerment and involvement                             |
| 11       | A lot of times they're left in charge. When something new comes down we make a plan to do together. They get pretty much the same emails that keep them involved and let them know what's going on.                 | decision making            | empowerment and involvement                             |

|    |   |                                  |   |
|----|---|----------------------------------|---|
| 12 | Delegate tasks to them. Have a notebook with a daily agenda. They don't have a certain area just whatever needs to be done for the day.     | delegation                       |   |
| 13 | Ask for their opinion and take into consideration. A lot of them have more experience than men.   | decision making                  | empowerment and involvement                   |
| 14 | Same responsibilities I do there is no division of who does what.   | do everything                    |   |
| 15 | I include them in everything I do and if they don't know they won't get involved. The more included the more they feel like part of a team. | team work, decision making       | work environment                              |
| 16 | She knows everything I do and has leeway. General responsibilities are the same.  | do everything                    | empowerment and involvement                   |
| 17 | They're trained to do everything I do. They will pick up and finish where I leave off   | do everything                    | empowerment and involvement                   |
| 18 | I delegate to them. I ask them to help me because I can't do it myself. It is easy if you involve people.                                   | delegate, share responsibilities | work environment                              |
| 19 | They're involved in everything. I teach them everything I know in case they want to move up.  | do everything, training          | work environment, empowerment and involvement |
| 20 | She's completely in charge of the store when I'm not here. I allow her to make the decisions, wrong or right.                               | do everything                    | empowerment and involvement                   |

| Question 6 | Is there anything else you would like to add about retention of assistant managers or factors that contribute to retention of assistant managers in your store?                   |   |   |
|------------|---|---|---|
|            | Participant's words   | Key themes  | Reduced themes                              |
| 1          | No  | none  |   |
| 2          | It's all about the benefits and pay. Having a good balance with home life. That's what keeps people here is flexibility and cash.   | benefits, pay, work/life balance                                      | work/life balance, pay                      |
| 3          | Train and treat them fairly, compliment and give constructive criticism and they'll stay forever.   | training, fair treatment, feedback                                    | training and communication                  |
| 4          | Understand your customer and you have to enjoy working with people.   | enjoy customer service  |   |
| 5          | I really think that if you can motivate them through seeing that there is hope and that it can be done, they'll be a key factor in getting it done. You also need mutual respect. | respect, motivation   | work environment                            |
| 6          | They should consider pay for assistants. There would be less turnover if offered more in terms of pay or bonuses as the only way to get a pay raise right now is once a year.     | pay   | pay   |
| 7          | Treat people good. Let them grow by making mistakes if need be. I want them to grow to the next level so they can benefit themselves and the company.                             | promotional opportunities, how treated by manager, grow from mistakes | work environment, promotional opportunities |
| 8          | No  | none  |   |

|    |   |  |   |
|----|---|--|---|
| 9  | You've got to have plenty of hours. They usually get 40 hours a week and I try to keep them involved in a lot of decision making so it's not one sided. Team work, if they tell someone something don't step over their decision. Try to give them authority so respect is given to both assistant and store manager and it makes them feel involved. | involved in decision making, hours, given authority, team work | work environment, empowerment and involvement                           |
| 10 | Don't think so  | none   |   |
| 11 | Be fair and honest and they do pretty good. Show you care. Keep them informed. Give them feedback.  | feedback, keep informed, be fair, show caring and honesty      | work environment, trianing and communicaiton, appreciation and feedback |
| 12 | No  | none   |   |
| 13 | Respect, show them respect if you respect them hey will respect you.  | respect  |   |
| 14 | Focus on customer service, without customers you wouldn't have a job  | customer service   |   |
| 15 | Training and getting involved, have pride in the store, let assistant managers do things with them including training. You can't do it all on your own. If they don't know what to do they can't do it.   | involvement, training  | training and communication  |
| 16 | No  | none   |   |
| 17 | Working with me, leadership with all levels has to all be treated the same.   | treated the same, team work                                    | work environment  |
| 18 | No  | none   |   |
| 19 | No  | none   |   |
| 20 | Other than just make sure that you empower the person beneath you. You have to train them so you can move up and they can move up.  | training, empowerment  | training and communication  |