


2016

Exploring Strategies to Gain Frontline Employee Buy-in During Change Initiatives in Manufacturing

Charles James IV
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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Charles James IV

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

Exploring Strategies to Gain Frontline Employee Buy-in During Change Initiatives in
Manufacturing

by

Charles James IV

MS, Ashland University, 2011

BA, University of Akron, 2008

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2016

Abstract

The high failure rates of change initiatives threaten the sustainability of commercial printing operations. The focus of this qualitative multicase study was to research the strategies commercial printing managers use to succeed in gaining frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability in a manufacturing environment. The participants included four commercial printing managers from the Midwestern United States. Each manager had implemented successful change initiatives in the past 2 years and maintained profitability of the business for 12 months before the study. McGregor's (1960) Theory Y served as the basis for the conceptual framework. Data collection included semistructured face-to-face interviews with managers, a review of company documents, and observations. Descriptive coding and sequential review of the interview transcripts using a modified Van Kaam thematic data analysis process revealed five themes: (a) constructive communication, (b) leadership behaviors, (c) performance management, (d) employee management, and (e) employee motivation. Recommendations for action include further research on using constructive communication tactics and identifying stimuli of employee resistance to buy in to change initiatives. Commercial printing managers may apply these results to engage frontline employees in participating in the implementation of change initiatives that improve productivity and profitability. Implications for social change include the increased potential of improving the success of commercial printing managers in implementing change initiatives that positively impact employment and economic health within communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my family. My parents, Chuck and Tami, have always encouraged me to follow through with my greatest ambitions. They instilled the work ethic I have to persevere and finish whatever I start in life. Thank you for having faith in me and encouraging me along the way. Thank you, Kairee, Chuckie V, and Kaylee for your love, support, and encouragement. Thank you for knowing there would be plenty of time after I finished my study to spend time together and to grow as an even stronger family. That time is here, and I am so happy that we will spend the future reflecting on this experience and embarking on a new chapter in life. I cannot describe the pride I feel to have my Grandparents, Ed and Judy, witness me graduate with my Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate degrees. Grandpa Ed, you were my inspiration to succeed. I have never witnessed another man as caring, giving, and hard working as you. Grandpa James and Grandma Anne we will always remember you and the influence you had on my life. I know you would be proud of these accomplishments. My final graduation, as a doctor, would not be possible without all of your love and support. Each one of you shares a piece of this success. Let this be a reminder to my children; follow your dreams, believe in yourself, and in order to succeed, your desire for success should be greater than your fear of failure.

Acknowledgments

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The manufacturing industry has experienced an unprecedented change in regulatory requirements, customer expectations, and competitiveness since the decline in economic activity leading to the 2008 global recession (Baily & Bosworth, 2014; Mishra, Pundir, & Ganapathy, 2014). Change initiatives to improve productivity are a driver of business growth and an enabler of competitive advantage during times of economic recovery (Baily & Bosworth, 2014; Demeter, Chikán, & Matyusz, 2011). Productivity improvements implemented through change initiatives often help optimize operational efficiency, eliminate waste, and increase profits by enhancing production processes (Helper & Henderson, 2014). Ineffective strategies that fail to gain the buy-in of the frontline workforce during change initiatives are a primary reason for unsuccessful productivity improvements (Fuchs & Prouska, 2014; Helper & Henderson, 2014).

Background of the Problem

The commercial printing industry is a subsector of manufacturing as classified by the North American Industry Classification System (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The industry consists of approximately 35,000 companies employing an average of 20 or fewer people and earns estimated revenues of \$3.5 million per year (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Commercial printing operations primarily print on paper, textile, metal, glass, and plastic using lithographic, gravure, screen, flexographic, digital, and letterpress processes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The demand for change initiatives involving productivity improvements in commercial printing is increasing (Davis, 2014). For this study, productivity is the number of finished

outputs for each unit of labor hour. Productivity improvements can lower the cost per unit of production and drive competitiveness (Graham & Owusu, 2015). Increasing the speed and effectiveness of machinery and production processes were the concentration of change initiatives involving productivity improvements.

Managers are often frontline leaders in a manufacturing setting who implement change initiatives to close a productivity gap (Kwon, Balogun, & Vaara, 2014; Li & Xu, 2014). The success of productivity improvements often depends on how managers influence the way frontline employees perceive, value, and accept a change initiative (Greve, 2013; Russ, 2011). Frontline employees who buy-in to change can influence the success rate of the productivity initiatives (Harris, Brown, Mowen, & Artis, 2014).

Problem Statement

The U.S. commercial printing industry with \$156 billion in annual output (Davis, 2014) has faced continued challenges to reinvent manufacturing processes and ensure profitability in the wake of constant change. Change initiatives crucial to organizational success fail approximately 70% of the time (Vakola, 2013). The strategy a manager chooses to implement change has the potential to influence frontline employees to either accept or resist the initiative (Fuchs & Prouska, 2014). The general business problem is that some managers attempt change initiatives without the adequate participation of the frontline workforce. The specific business problem is that commercial printing managers often lack strategies to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore the strategies commercial printing managers need to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability. The target population were managers of Midwestern U.S. commercial printing operations who had successfully implemented strategies to gain frontline employee buy-in during a productivity improvement within the last 2 years, as evidenced by a return on investment (ROI) upon completion of the change initiative. The findings of the study could contribute to social change by increasing managers' knowledge and ability to improve the buy-in of frontline employees, the success rate of change initiatives, and productivity of commercial printing operations that generates profitability for business growth. Additional business growth could proliferate economic improvements for the U.S. economy that increase the employment rate, standard of living, and economic wealth within the community.

Nature of the Study

Researchers choose the methodological approach best suited for a study. A researcher should also select the design most suited to answer the research question (Gartner, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Invoking a qualitative method helped to explore the strategies commercial printing managers need to gain frontline employee buy-in when implementing change initiatives in efforts to improve productivity and profitability.

The intent of the study was to gain insight into the perspectives of managers in the commercial printing industry. Alfes, Truss, Soane, Rees, and Gatenby (2013) identified

collecting the viewpoints of leaders as an effective approach to research the strategies that motivate employees to support change. A quantitative methodology was not ideal for the study. A researcher who applies a quantitative method relies on the knowledge and understanding of how to build constructs and accurately analyze statistical data (Hoare & Hoe, 2013). Similarly, a mixed method approach is the integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods, and researchers draw from the strengths of both research methodologies (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Both quantitative and mixed methods research were not suitable because the research question required in-depth exploration to understand the perspectives and experiences of commercial printing manager's strategies. A qualitative approach was the most appropriate choice, as the research objectives required an in-depth exploration to understand the perspectives and experiences of commercial printing manager's strategies. Qualitative study methodology allows researchers to exploit the exploratory nature of the approach to answering the research question (Finlay, 2014). The qualitative method and multicase design were appropriate because 30-minute semistructured interviews and document collection are two suitable approaches to achieve the necessary depth and breadth of information required for a viable study.

A case study is effective when the researcher has no control over the participants or procedures but must analyze real-life situations (Rowley, 2012). A multicase study of two commercial printing operations by interviewing four managers with a focus on understanding the strategies used to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability was the chosen research approach. A

multicase study was more appropriate than phenomenology, narrative, grounded theory, and ethnography designs for this research topic. When utilizing phenomenology, the researcher explores the perceived meaning of experiences related to a known phenomenon rather than a case within a bounded system (Tomkins & Eatough, 2013). Narrative research as a design is useful when extracting the participants' perspectives on a problem, environment, or relationship by gathering stories (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Grounded theory involves rigorous data collection and the development of theory, which was not the intent of this research. An ethnographic design is a way for researchers to study the culture of a target population (Stake, 2013; Vesa & Vaara, 2014); however, the purpose of the study did not fit with culture-based research designs. A multicase design was the most appropriate research approach to explore the broad meaning, patterns, and behavior through a study of the cases, by gaining insight into the experiences of participants captured through interviews (Yin, 2014).

Research Question

The central research question was, What strategies do commercial printing managers need to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability?

Interview Questions

1. What types of change initiatives have you and your organization implemented to improve productivity?
2. What is your role as a manager in promoting employee participation and gaining buy-in during change initiative to improve productivity?

3. What strategies do you use to succeed in gaining frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity?
4. How do you communicate expectations and goals to employees when implementing change initiatives to improve productivity?
5. How do you identify and address the individual training and developmental needs of your employees, so they are prepared for productivity improvements?
6. How do you encourage employees to exercise their physical and mental capacities to support productivity improvement related change initiatives?
7. What rewards or recognitions do you use to get employees to feel loyal and committed to productivity based changes?
8. What other strategies do managers use to achieve frontline employee participation and buy-in to implement change initiatives to improve productivity?
9. What else might you like to share about your experiences of gaining frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity?

Conceptual Framework

Theory Y represented and constituted the conceptual framework. McGregor (1960) formulated Theory Y to explain human behavior in the workplace. Theory Y is a concept of employee motivation and a perspective of management style (McGregor, 1960). McGregor promoted Theory Y as the foundation of good management practice and pioneered the argument that workers are not simple components of an organization;

rather, are vital assets who have needs and aspirations that align with organizational goals.

Managers who adopt Theory Y traits (a) perceive their job as a relaxing and normal activity, (b) exercise physical and mental efforts in a supportive manner, (c) may not require threat and coercion to work, (d) are loyal and committed when the job is rewarding and satisfying, and (e) have skills and capabilities that could help solve organizational problems (McGregor, 1960). Theory Y supporters have also believed that employees will exercise self-direction and self-control to the degree they support the achievement of organizational goals (Kopelman, Prottas, & Falk, 2012). Theory Y managers maximize employee buy-in using appropriate participative management strategies (Mohamed & Nor, 2013).

Theory Y represents an optimistic view of employee behavior in the workplace (Kopelman et al., 2012). McGregor (1960) emphasized that the use of Theory Y could create cordial team relations, responsible and stimulating jobs, and inclusive participation in the decision-making process. Understanding managers' assumptions about employee motivation to support change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability could influence how to utilize strategies to generate frontline worker buy-in. Managers could learn to adjust strategies to manage frontline employees more strategically during change initiatives.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions elaborate on technical terms, jargon, or special words to add clarity for the reader.

Change reaction: A change reaction is an employee behavior of either resistance to or support for a change initiative (Rafferty, Jimmieson, & Armenakis, 2013).

Commercial printing: Manufacturers in the printing subsector primarily print on paper, textile products, metal, glass, and plastic using lithographic, gravure, screen, flexographic, digital, and letterpress processes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Employee buy-in: Employee buy-in refers to an attitude toward change and comprises three factors: (a) affective factors, feelings toward a change; (b) cognitive factors, evaluations of worth and benefits of change; and (c) behavioral factors, intention to support or resist a change (Hon, Bloom, & Crant, 2014).

Frontline employees: In a hierarchical management structure with frontline employees, the highest level of authority originates with owners or senior managers, cascades down to middle or frontline management, and the lowest level of the hierarchy are employees who make up the direct labor workforce (Harris et al., 2014; Urtasun-Alonso, Larraza-Kintana, García-Olaverri, & Huerta-Arribas, 2014).

Grapevine: A method of informal communication used most frequently at the frontline of an organization where information spreads from employee to employee (Grosser, Lopez-Kidwell, Labianca, & Ellwardt, 2012).

Manager: The highest level of organizational hierarchy usually consists of owners or senior executives, cascades down to the middle or plant managers, and then to frontline management who manage the direct labor workforce (Urtasun-Alonso et al., 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are details associated with the study presumed to be true but are not verifiable (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Misrepresentation of the research findings could occur if the research question is not valid (Fisher & Stenner, 2011). The first assumption was that sufficient information would emerge by seeking managers' experiences using open-ended interviews without bias or coercion to answer the research question. The second assumption was that all participants would describe personal experiences openly and accurately when responding to interview questions. The third assumption was that both the qualitative method and multicase design would be appropriate approaches to explore the strategies managers have used to gain frontline employee buy-in when implementing change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability in the Midwestern U.S. commercial printing industry.

Limitations

The limitations of a study are potential weaknesses that can affect the outcomes of the research (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013). One limitation was the geographical area of the Midwestern United States. The results of the study may only relate to commercial printing operations in the chosen geographical location and might not be applicable to other organizations or industries in the same area. Commercial printing managers may have been unwilling to share the full extent of the strategies used to gain frontline employee buy-in to implement change initiatives that improve productivity and profitability. The potential for bias also existed because I was the only person involved in

collecting and interpreting the data. Yin (2014) noted that case study researchers are subject to bias if knowledge or experience related to the problem of a study exists.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the scope or boundaries of the study defined by the investigator (Bartoska & Subrt, 2012). The delimitations were (a) commercial printing industry, (b) geographical region, (c) job classification, and (d) participant experience. The bounds of the study included managers with a minimum of 5 years of experience with a Midwestern U.S. commercial printing operation who have successfully obtained frontline employee buy-in during a change initiative to improve productivity and profitability.

The success criteria included managers who had implemented a productivity improvement within the last 2 years where the outcomes of the change initiative created a positive ROI for the organization upon completion. Each company studied had average revenues that exceeded expenses for 12 months to validate the businesses were profitable and successful. The primary data surfaced from face-to-face interviews with commercial printing managers. Secondary data collection that consisted of permissible company-provided documentation demonstrated the organizations had implemented successful change initiatives that improved productivity and employee buy-in. During guided factory tours at each of the commercial printing operations, observations of the physical work environment and business practices that had emerged from the face-to-face interview data were rigorous data collection techniques that demonstrated the consistency of the information.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Many change initiatives fail because managers do not achieve the proper levels of buy-in from affected frontline employees (Neves & Eisenberger, 2012). The results of this study could add value to business practices as managers could learn to develop strategies that involve frontline employee decisions and result in greater employee buy-in to implement productivity related change initiatives. Increased productivity helps businesses compete with other contending companies and minimizes operational costs (Tassey, 2014). Employees react differently to change, and reactions can vary significantly among individuals (Carter, Armenakis, Feild, & Mossholder, 2013; Mohamed & Nor, 2013). The challenge for managers is to manage the different employee responses to change initiatives (Geertshuis, Morrison, & Cooper-Thomas, 2015; Lam & O'Higgins, 2012). The findings of this study could enhance business practices related to the strategies managers use to gain frontline employee buy-in when implementing productivity centered change initiatives. Successful change initiatives can improve business performance.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The findings of this study could have several implications for social change. Businesses are not strictly agents of economic exchange; they are workplace communities where employees seek to perform meaningful work in support of a purpose beyond profit (Beadle & Knight, 2012; Brammer, Jackson, & Matten, 2012; McGregor, 1960; Venkataramani, Labianca, & Grosser, 2013). Businesses are one of the society's

primary agents of social change (Brammer et al., 2012). Managers have a responsibility to define, create, and distribute constant value. Implementing change initiatives specific to improving productivity can enhance living standards and create business growth that generates economic benefits for local communities (Baily & Bosworth, 2014; Demeter et al., 2011). Economic benefits could include pay increases, job creation, or local business growth (Baily & Bosworth, 2014; Demeter et al., 2011). Effectively managed companies provide communities and employees secure employment opportunities and may decrease unemployment rates (Baily & Bosworth, 2014).

Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore what strategies commercial printing managers need to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability. Frontline employee reactions to change can influence the overall success of a company and the productivity of the operation. The strategies of managers are a crucial factor in implementing successful change initiatives (Helper & Henderson, 2014).

The strategy to source appropriate literature included perusing peer-reviewed and business sources to explore the strategies managers have used to succeed in gaining frontline employee buy-in when implementing change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability to merit doctoral level research. The primary themes and topics explored in this literature review are (a) perspective of Theory Y, (b) importance of managers, (c) importance of frontline employees, (d) organizational management, (e) change

management strategies, (f) organizational communication strategies, and (g) employee management strategies.

Studies on management strategies, frontline employee buy-in, change management, and productivity improvements in the manufacturing industry existed, but the literature associated with business practices was more prevalent in research considering other industries. Most of the manufacturing literature was specific to technology, economics, and specific production processes. For comparison, other searches for peer-reviewed sources in the commercial printing industry also resulted in limited relevant information related to this study. A search for peer-reviewed sources from nonmanufacturing industries resulted in a broad range of information about managers gaining employee buy-in during change initiatives.

The strategy for sourcing appropriate literature consisted of a review of seminal sources to ensure depth in research. Boolean logic, a thesaurus, and the relevancy tool supplied by most databases were the search strategies utilized to maximize the possibility of finding relevant literature and to ensure an exhaustive search. A perusal of more than 250 peer-reviewed journal articles, professional publications, articles from seminars and conferences, business books of theory and practice, and doctoral dissertations comprised the search strategy. The primary databases searched included EBSCOhost, ABI/INFORM Complete, SAGE Publications, PsycINFO, ProQuest, SAGE Full-Text Collection, Business Source Complete, Emerald, and Business and Management. Search terms and keywords consisted of *manufacturing*, *commercial printing change readiness*, *change resistance*, *change management*, *organizational change*, *productivity*, *strategic change*,

strategic initiatives, organizational development, organizational communication, communication practices, change failures, change success, change uncertainty, coping with change, executive leadership, middle management, manufacturing leadership, management strategies, manufacturing industry, commercial printing industry, frontline employees, manufacturing managers, and other variations and combinations of these terms.

All articles included in this literature review were from peer-reviewed journals or scholarly and professional books. Of these sources, a minimum of 85% have publication dates that comply with the 5-year requirement for inclusion. Research information from the literature review includes sources from 151 references. Of the 151 journal articles examined, 148 were peer-reviewed sources, representing 98% of the literature review. Of the 148 peer-reviewed sources, 129 sources were less than 5 years old, which represents 87% of the literature review.

The critically reviewed and cited academic and practitioner views in this doctoral study comprised 239 sources. Of these sources, only 15 were not peer reviewed. Therefore, 224 of 239 sources were peer reviewed, representing 94% of the entire study. Of the 239 sources, 207 were less than 5 years old, which represents 85% of the entire study.

Application to the Applied Business Problem

The practice of business often leads to the discovery of solutions to industry challenges through problem-solving, organizational learning, and continual improvement (Hill, Seo, Kang, & Taylor, 2012; Kamath & Rodrigues, 2014). This study is evidence

based and established on a review of the historical literature (Goodman, Gary, & Wood, 2014). The literature review strategy overall included relevant peer-reviewed literature from business, scientific, and theoretical perspectives to explore how these could inform the design and practice of management strategies during change initiatives in the commercial printing industry. The focus was to review the literature to identify the most credible and available research applicable to the business problem.

When manufacturing leaders and managers have a known business problem, it is incumbent upon them to evaluate the issue to identify cause and implement strategies that facilitate permanent solutions. The rate of change initiative failure that can affect manufacturing productivity and overall business performance is one such problem (Baily & Bosworth, 2014). The problem of some managers aggressively initiating change initiatives without adequate preparation can affect many aspects of business. Many manufacturing leaders have identified that the success of change initiatives often depends on how managers influence the way frontline employees react to strategies, and this problem is prevalent in industry publications and government documents (Greve, 2013).

Manufacturing involves the mechanical, physical, or chemical transformation of materials, substances, or components into new products; operates in plants, factories, or mills; and utilizes power-driven machines and material-handling equipment to produce finished products (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Manufacturing consisted of standalone workstations with manual labor and human-controlled machines for most of the post-World War II era (Tassey, 2014). Finished work passed from one workstation to the next

(Tassey, 2014). Successful companies achieved an economy of scale by manufacturing large quantities of standardized products at a low cost.

Customers are increasingly looking for customized or semicustomized products (Tassey, 2014). Manufacturing processes should be flexible to achieve the economies of scale required to serve diverse markets (Tassey, 2014). Manufacturing leaders build flexibility in their processes to maintain high performance and low unit cost (Tassey, 2014). Manufacturing leaders also implement productivity improvements such as new equipment or processing techniques, universal use of information and technology, and an engaged workforce to improve the operation (Berman, 2012; Tassey, 2014).

The increased use of technology and automation is a successful strategy manufacturing leaders frequently use to improve productivity and create market share opportunities. Productivity gains through automation can decrease employment opportunities that eliminate jobs, however also generate new business opportunities that increase the demand for higher skilled workers (Tassey, 2014). If productivity improvements such as automation do not occur, then the domestic manufacturing industry could move to foreign countries with lower cost labor economies (Tassey, 2014). If automation does occur, the labor cost per unit of output will decline, and the increased productivity could result in larger global market shares with incremental demand for higher paid labor (Tassey, 2014).

Emerging manufacturing technology has revolutionized the manufacturing industry in the 21st century. Advances in manufacturing involve new ways to manufacture existing products with innovative equipment, which can result in

productivity improvements (Baily & Bosworth, 2014; Mishra et al., 2014; Tasseey, 2014). Employee buy-in refers to an attitude toward change and comprises three factors: (a) affective factors, feelings toward a change; (b) cognitive factors, evaluations of worth and benefits of a change; and (c) behavioral factors, intention to support or resist a change (Carter et al., 2013; Hon et al., 2014). Due to the rapid technological changes and broadening of the scope of services provided by many of the companies in the commercial printing industry, printing businesses have expanded employee capabilities, engaged workforce strategies, and services to include creative design, e-commerce, web page, printed packaging, folding, design, mailing, fulfillment, and a host of services that provide horizontal marketing beyond the core-printing model (Timson & Hanley, 2016).

The commercial printing industry is the most geographically dispersed sector of manufacturing in the United States (Davis, 2014). Commercial printing businesses have a significant presence in all 50 states (Davis, 2014). The range of small, medium, and large firms are also diverse; however, the printing industry is the largest segment of small manufacturing businesses (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b; Davis, 2014). Two-thirds of all commercial printing operations employ 10 to 20 employees (Davis, 2014).

The printing industry is an advanced manufacturing environment where the use of innovative technology and employee-centered processes are the foundations for improving products or manufacturing methods (Davis, 2014; Kamath & Rodrigues, 2014). Two themes in printing industry literature surfaced during the review. Concepts of total productive management and employee development, empowerment, and

participation (EDEP) were the most common and relevant concepts associated with this business study.

In the commercial printing industry, sustaining technical and operational systems require a strong sociotechnical system (Kamath & Rodrigues, 2014). Kamath and Rodrigues (2014) conducted a pilot study in the printing industry for a sociotechnical system called total production management. The researchers developed a conceptual model called total production management, which is a hybrid concept of total productive maintenance (TPM) and total quality management (TQM) in the effort to attain a total productive environment (Kamath & Rodrigues, 2014). Kamath and Rodrigues combined both the production and maintenance functions to create a blend of good working practices, teamwork, and continual improvement to achieve a high-performance manufacturing system. The concept of total productive management is a valid construct and requires additional research to validate its significance.

Graham and Owusu (2015) are distinguished researchers who studied TQM in the printing industry. The researchers used the lens of TQM to explore an entire organization, all of its employees at all levels, and workers across all subunits who actively participate in providing satisfactory products and services. Frontline employees are equally important to consider in a productivity and quality improvement program (Graham, Arthur, & Mensah, 2014). To ascertain the contribution of workers in productivity or quality improvement programs, the extent of EDEP is a basic construct to validate further (Graham et al., 2014; Graham & Owusu, 2015).

Graham and Owusu (2015) argued that EDEP variables are determinants of performance improvements such as customer satisfaction, improved product or service, and printing processes. Leaders of printing businesses who view EDEP as an important management strategy could enhance their operations, quality, and serve customers better than their competitors (Graham & Owusu, 2015). Effective EDEP could help businesses deliver products and services at the lowest possible cost with fewer defects and waste through engaged, knowledgeable, and skilled frontline employees (Graham & Owusu, 2015).

Perspective of Theory Y

A conceptual framework is a theoretical tool for developing and supporting the thought process that guides the research (Rowley, 2012). The conceptual framework for this research served to maintain a close connection between the problem of the study and the lens of Theory Y. McGregor (1960) introduced Theory Y as a foundation for organizational management practice and formulated the theory to explain human behavior in the workplace. Managers who possess a Theory Y orientation believe employees are motivated to meet higher-order needs through accomplishing meaningful work (McGregor, 1960). Managers who support employee engagement and a high level of involvement in decision-making could gain greater employee buy in to implement productivity related change initiatives.

Many organizations use Theory Y assumptions to establish knowledge-based learning programs for employees (Kopelman et al., 2012). Because of growth in knowledge-based learning programs, Theory Y leadership behaviors are increasingly

becoming the management style of choice (Kopelman et al., 2012). Theory Y managers create and encourage a work environment where employees can take the initiative and engage in self-direction (Coleman, 1996; Şahin, 2012). Theory Y managers work to inspire teamwork, PDM, and decentralization of authority throughout an organization (Coleman, 1996; Gürbüz, Şahin, & Köksal, 2014; Russ, 2013b).

Research has revealed the impact of managers' Theory Y assumptions over cognitive outcomes. Neuliep (1996) applied Theory Y to managers' perceptions of organizational ethics. Neuliep found no significant difference of how managers with Theory Y orientations judged ethical or unethical behaviors when compared to other management styles. McGregor (1960) promoted Theory Y as the foundation of good management practice and pioneered the argument that managers who place the needs and aspirations of employees ahead of organizational goals increase the cognitive dissonance of workers. Regarding change management, cognitive dissonance is a motivator, which will often lead employees to change conflicting beliefs or actions about why a business initiative is important.

Fiman (1973) examined the impact of managers' Theory Y assumptions over affective outcomes. Fiman tested employee satisfaction using managers who possessed Theory Y orientations. Employees who work with Theory Y managers displayed greater satisfaction with their manager, work, people, pay, and opportunity to participate in decisions (Fiman, 1973). In contrast, when compared to workers who had managers who did not have a Theory Y management style, employees were disenfranchised and dissatisfied with the work environment (Fiman, 1973). The relationship between an

employee and their direct manager can have an effect on the implementation of change (Fugate, Prussia, & Kinicki, 2012).

Sager (2015) focused on employees' workplace behaviors in response to management styles. Sager studied the relationship between managers' Theory Y orientations and communication styles. A negative correlation exists between managers' with Theory Y assumptions and dominant communication styles (Sager, 2015). Managers' Theory Y assumptions also link to an anxious communication style but positively connect to supportive and nonverbally expressive communication styles (Sager, 2015). Sager confirmed there was a connection between Theory Y management practices and positive employee behaviors. Bisel, Messersmith, and Kelley (2012) acknowledged when manager communication to employees is constructive it could slow productivity during the implementation of a change initiative, but constructive communication is more effective at gaining employee buy-in compared to authoritative management.

Theory Y and PDM. PDM is the process of involving employees in making important organizational decisions (Russ, 2011). PDM can improve job performance, job satisfaction, mitigates resistance, enhances organizational commitment, and increases employee support to organizational change (Russ, 2011). Russ (2011) studied predictors of managers' propensity for PDM. Russ explored whether McGregor's Theory Y was a determinant of managers' tendencies to use PDM. In a survey of 144 full-time managers from different industries across the United States, Russ identified McGregor's theories linked to PDM. Theory Y managers perceive that PDM can have a positive impact on

their leadership influence and organizational effectiveness, especially during the implementation of a change initiative (Russ, 2011). The practice of open communication to share important company information and encouragement of high employee involvement could create positive perceptions of leadership that leads to employee buy-in of change initiatives.

Theory Y and participatory communication. Russ (2011) explored the connection between managers' Theory Y orientations and preferences for participatory communication. Russ sought to determine if managers' Theory Y orientations were a significant cognitive determinant of their tendency to engage employees in PDM. Russ wanted to understand the tendencies of Theory Y managers to involve employees and gain input during decision-making opportunities. In a study on employee participation, Theory Y managers appeared to believe that PDM has a positive influence on the personal ability to manage employees and the success of the organization (Russ, 2013a). Theory Y managers are more successful leaders when decision-making is complex (Russ, 2013a). Managers subscribing to the Theory Y philosophy work to inspire teamwork, PDM, and decentralization of authority (Russ, 2013b). PDM can improve job performance, job satisfaction, mitigates resistance to organizational change (Russ, 2011).

Importance of Managers

Some business leaders consider managers as intermediaries and frontline management's purpose is to communicate strategies from executives to frontline employees (Kilroy & Dundon, 2015). The average manager controls most of the manufacturing environment, manages up to two-thirds of the workforce, and has

responsibility for coaching and developing the frontline employees who manufacture the finished products for the customer (Townsend & Russell, 2013).

Business leaders recognize that a flexible work environment requires frontline employees to make full use of their creativity, judgment, and autonomy (Urtasun-Alonso et al., 2014). If managers work together with frontline employees, the resulting levels of motivation, receptiveness, and continual improvement far outweighs the costs of building stringent accountability structures (Hill et al., 2012; Seo et al., 2012). Job satisfaction and retention of frontline workers are directly dependent upon the relationship with their direct manager (Cullen, Edwards, Casper, & Gue, 2013; Kumar, Dass, & Topaloglu, 2014). Managers are crucial to developing an empowered, accountable, and engaged workforce (Vander Elst, De Cuyper, Baillien, Niesen, & De Witte, 2014).

Managers are important organizational agents who have the responsibility for both motivating frontline employees to deliver superior performance and ensuring the efficient delivery of good business performance (Edgar, Geare, & O’Kane, 2015; Kilroy & Dundon, 2015). The issue of ineffective frontline management strategies can lead to the reduction of human capital, employee resistance, failed change initiatives, productivity loss, and poor performance (Helper & Henderson, 2014). Understanding the most successful strategies managers use when implementing change initiatives could lead to a more efficient approach to sustaining the competitiveness of a company in a fast-changing marketplace (Tortorella & Fogliatto, 2014). Increasing the speed and effectiveness of machinery and production processes were the concentration of change initiatives involving productivity improvements for this study. The success of

productivity improvements often depends on the strategies managers use to influence the way frontline employees accept a change initiative (Greve, 2013; Russ, 2011). Frontline employees who buy in to change may affect the success rate of the productivity initiatives (Harris et al., 2014).

Importance of Frontline Employees

Human capital is the individual knowledge, skills, ability, and other experiential characteristics of both managers and frontline employees (Bartoska & Subrt, 2012; Urtasun-Alonso et al., 2014). Human capital management is important to a company because it is a source of creativity and innovation (Urtasun-Alonso et al., 2014). Human capital is harder to manage because a business does not physically own the asset and employees can directly or indirectly moderate their contributions to organizational objectives (Bartoska & Subrt, 2012; Urtasun-Alonso et al., 2014). The innovation capability of a business often depends on the availability of intellectual or organizational knowledge (Martín-de Castro, Delgado-Verde, Navas-López, & Cruz-González, 2013). The management of human capital and business leaders' ability to deploy those employees with technical ability, problem-solving skills, and work ethic can lead to a high-performing organization (Martín-de Castro et al., 2013). High-performing organizations frequently communicate the specific expectations necessary to achieve change implementation success (Martín-de Castro et al., 2013).

In a study on why frontline employees engage as idea collectors, Woisetschläger, Hanning, and Backhaus (2015) went beyond the direct relationships between human and technological knowledge assets by proposing a moderating role of innovation culture.

Woisetschläger et al. surveyed 251 technology driven manufacturing firms. They analyzed the relationship between human capital and product innovation developed by businesses. A moderating role of an innovation culture exists when managers foster a knowledge-based work environment (Woisetschläger et al., 2015). Knowledge-based work environments have employees with the skills and ability to implement change initiatives. In environments where the momentum generated by employee ideas channel successful change outcomes, the skills may be due to conventional management practices, but is often a result of a culture that discovers areas of the organization that was previously unknown.

The importance of frontline employees' participation and contribution to the innovativeness of a company is often underestimated (Martín-de Castro et al., 2013; Seo et al., 2012). Martín-de Castro et al. (2013) showed the importance of distinguishing different forms of frontline management strategies to engage employees in participative decision-making and reduce role stress. Because role stress can cause employees to quit or have low job satisfaction, it is important to manage human capital carefully to maximize its benefit (Bartoska & Subrt, 2012; Martín-de Castro et al., 2013; Vander Elst et al., 2014). Theory Y management practices can reduce role stress (McGregor, 1960). For organizational change initiatives to be successful, managers need to demonstrate the ability to understand the dynamics of the change process, the human response to change, and the determinants of a successful change process. The ability of organizations to absorb frequent and complex change helps all affected stakeholders begin to identify, when faced with a need for change, a robust means to implement initiatives successfully.

Organizational Management Strategies

Understanding the history of organizational management could help managers recognize how contemporary business philosophies developed over time. Managers benefit from the experiences and research of predecessors because researchers have constructed the paradigms of existing management philosophy. Managers have the opportunity to evaluate elements of traditional management strategies and integrate newly identified business techniques to create an evolving system of management practice.

Organizational management is a concept of business administration (Donaldson, Qiu, & Luo, 2013). Organizational management is the planning and directing effort of employing both human and material resources to accomplish predetermined business objectives (Donaldson et al., 2013). Managers who participate in managing human and physical assets also carry out administrative functions that often include planning, decision-making, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling resources (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Managers also carry out critical functions that include monitoring business risk and cultivating organizational culture (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012).

Taylor's (1939/1984) concept of scientific management was the first dominant approach to organizational management in research. The focus of the scientific management approach was to optimize productivity and control costs (Taylor, 1939/1984). Locke (1982) discussed a strategy that emphasized everyday interactions between frontline employees and the individuals responsible for evaluating the outcomes

of the work (i.e., managers or supervisors). Locke also cited Gilbreth's 1923 work, which started to shift the management approach to focus primarily on employee behavior.

Worker productivity began to undergo investigation in experiments such as the Hawthorne experiment. The results of the Hawthorne experiment highlighted the importance of formal and informal interactions among employees in the workplace (Locke, 1982). Kemp (2013) put forward the concept of TQM, which was one contemporary example of a type of organizational management strategy. Kemp applied the principles of scientific management to find ways of controlling business outputs (e.g., by setting goals and targets) rather than controlling employee behaviors to develop new strategies.

Managers can monitor performance and evaluate the effectiveness of an organization when they develop goals (Grachev & Rakitsky, 2013; Kemp, 2013). Managers use goals and priorities to develop an anticipatory management strategy rather than a reactionary management response (Cordery et al., 2014). Organizations do not exist in a static environment, and managers continually struggle to manage goals and priorities associated with business change (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van de Ven, 2013). Consequently, the behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions of employees do not remain static (Kehoe & Wright, 2013). Because organizations and employees are always changing, managers have difficulties developing an anticipatory management strategy to change that maintains equilibrium in the business environment (Greve, 2013).

The many variables associated with the employee aspect of managing change force managers to learn new strategies to execute company objectives (Kehoe & Wright,

2013). Even with complex analytical tools such as mathematics, statistics, and controlled experiments, managers have relied on instinct, skill, and experience to develop management strategies (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012). Failing to implement organizational management strategies can prevent managers from identifying the tactics required to keep a company abreast of competitive demands (Kehoe & Wright, 2013).

With the demand for business change across most industries, managers have concentrated on more than just the execution of organizational management strategies (Bull & Brown, 2012). Change management and organizational communication are strategies used to implement all forms of business change (Bull & Brown, 2012). The implications of organizational management strategies are interdependent with change management and communication strategies (Bisel et al., 2012). Employee management strategies are a third aspect of implementing change.

In contemporary research on change management there tend to be two primary points of view. First, readiness to change is typically the measurement of an organization's financial, material, human, and informational resources available when implementing change (Gartner, 2013). Secondly, readiness is the psychological willingness of affected people to cooperate in bringing the change to fruition. These two points of view are paramount when exploring change management strategies.

Change Management Strategies

Change management is a framework for managing the implementation and sustainability of new business processes, modifications to organizational structure, mergers, downsizing, or cultural reforms (Pangarkar, 2015). Change management is the

systematic process of managing the people, processes, equipment, and infrastructure affected by a change (Wiley, 2012). A systematic approach to change management is beneficial when trying to communicate and educate employees about change. Effective managers explain to stakeholders why a change needs to occur, how to implement the change, and the lasting impact the change will have on the business (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012; Kuhn, 2012). Change management is a process that managers have often used to set expectations, employ tools to execute initiatives, and proactively reduce the rate of change failure (Edgelow, 2012).

Kotter (1995) initiated the idea of leading and managing change. Kotter acknowledged that people's approaches and responses to change could influence the results of an initiative. Managers can understand what influences employees to react to change by evaluating how employees perceive, feel, and engage in a specific initiative (Kotter, 1995). A comprehensive change management plan tends to increase cohesiveness between employees and managers because there is a shared understanding of organizational strategy, expectations, and roles and responsibilities (Oreg & Berson, 2011). Kotter claimed that when managers assess the behaviors of employees they have an opportunity to adjust situational management strategies accordingly. When implementing change initiatives, the ability of managers to adjust situational management strategies is crucial to the success of attaining employee buy-in.

When reviewing studies on leadership style and change recipients' commitment, researchers agreed that effective management strategies include communication, teamwork, trust, and coordination (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012; Hamdi & Rajablu, 2012;

Oreg & Berson, 2011). The execution of effective communication and teamwork can improve the level of employee support for change (Carter et al., 2013; Xie, Wu, Luo, & Hu, 2012). Rafferty et al. (2013) performed an analysis of change readiness and identified a concept called *change reaction*, which is an employee behavior of either resistance to or support for a change initiative. Distinguishing the stimuli of employee resistance to or support for a change initiative could help refine strategies to influence frontline employees to buy in to the implementation of productivity improvements (Hon et al., 2014).

Models of change management. Two early models for managing change surfaced in the literature—Lewin’s (1947) three-step model of the change process and Kotter’s (1995) eight-step model for implementing change. Lewin’s model of change management consisted of (a) unfreezing the status quo, (b) taking action and moving to the desired end state, and (c) refreezing the new change into permanency. The first step, unfreezing the status quo, relates to the relative levels of fearlessness to complacency in an existing state of comfort and equilibrium (Lewin, 1947). To change the status quo, researchers have claimed that managers must divert employee behaviors away from the status quo (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012; Kotter, 1995; Lewin, 1947). Managers who decrease the limitations that hinder movement away from operational equilibrium could help employees separate from the status quo (Airo, Rasila, & Nenonen, 2012; Battilana & Casciaro, 2012). Once employees break habits and transition away from the status quo, Lewin claimed, managers have to refreeze the change event by replacing temporary restraining forces with permanent reinforcement. Refreezing a change may require

managers to implement procedures, policies, employee training, physical process controls, or process audits as methods of permanent reinforcement (Carter et al., 2013; Lewin, 1947).

Kotter's (1995) model for implementing change expounded upon Lewin's (1947) model. Kotter claimed that change management issues occurred when managers did not mitigate the following concerns: (a) lack of a sense of urgency about the need for change, (b) failure to create alignment when managing the implementation process, (c) lack of vision for change, (d) failure to communicate the vision for change, (e) improper removal of barriers that impede the change, (f) failure to provide short-term and long-term change objectives, (g) a tendency to declare successful change too early, and (h) an inability to solidify the changes in the organization's culture.

Kotter (1995) believed that managers enabled change management issues. Kotter developed eight guiding principles for managers to follow to overcome change implementation issues. Kotter's first guideline is that managers have to establish a sense of urgency to gain momentum with stakeholders when initiating change. The second guideline is that managers must develop a powerful partnership with all interested parties to gain trust and support to lead a change effort. The third guideline is to create a vision for a change initiative and develop the necessary strategies to achieve the vision. The fourth guideline is to communicate the change vision using every available method to inform stakeholders of the new strategy. The fifth guideline is to empower stakeholders to act on the new vision by removing barriers to change and encourage problem-solving.

Kotter explained that encouraging risk taking, revolutionary ideas, activities, and actions are ways to achieve the newly developed vision when implementing the fifth guideline.

Kotter (1995) explained the sixth guideline as planning for, creating, and rewarding short-term wins to engage and activate employees involved in the improvements. Kotter described in the seventh guideline the importance of consolidating improvement, reassessing the changes, and making necessary adjustments to the new program as improvement begins to occur. Consolidating changes reinvigorate a proposed initiative by exploiting the increased credibility of the change management strategy (Carter et al., 2013). Kotter explained in the eighth guideline that institutionalizing a new initiative reinforces a change by demonstrating the relationship between new behaviors and organizational success. Kotter's change management strategy advanced Lewin's (1947) model of change and provided managers with an approach for implementing and sustaining organizational change.

Carter et al. (2013) also advanced Kotter's (1995) change management model. Managers try to identify, organize, manage, execute, provide positive feedback, and actively execute all aspects of the change process (Carter et al., 2013). Carter et al. discovered that successful managers first conceptualize the need for a change and then plan the overall strategic initiative. Some managers take an adverse approach to implementing change and do not take the time to plan properly (Hambdi & Rajablu, 2012). Shin, Taylor, and Seo (2012), similarly to Carter et al., found that focusing on the best approach to promoting the need for change to frontline employees could generate positive outcomes of the initiative. Frontline employees often buy in to change if

managers provide insight when emphasizing the benefit an initiative could create (Shin et al., 2012). Gaining employee buy-in through positive feedback and reinforcement during organizational change are widely considered a practice that will solidify sustainable results (Bouckennooghe, 2012; Keyton et al., 2013; Shin et al., 2012).

Change management practices, formal and informal, develop over time in organizations or among organizations and their employees. Change management practices can aid or impede change. For example, a rigidly hierarchical decision making structure that impedes the speed of implementation can affect the outcomes of change and influence employees to shy away from participation. Less formal practices can create confusion about policies, which may also suppress the forward movement for fear that any action conflicts with policy. In formal or informal change management practices, leading and managing change and the diverse perspectives of employees are two points of view that are equivalent when exploring change implementation strategies.

Leading and managing change. The disruptive impact of organizational change is often unavoidable (Coulson-Thomas, 2013b). Historically, the speed and frequency of change were insignificant (Coulson-Thomas, 2013a; Dominguez, Galán-González, & Barroso, 2015). The magnitude of change was nominal, and traditional management approaches to managing the process were adequate (Jiao, Alon, Koo, & Cui, 2013). Managers are less effective at managing the frequency, speed, and complexity of organizational change and the 21st century work environment is becoming more dynamic (Coulson-Thomas, 2013b; Jiao et al., 2013; Lawrence, 2015).

Twenty-first century business environments have entered a new era of hyper competition that greatly influences the speed and frequency of business change (Jiao et al., 2013). Managers must react to the increase in global competition and transition from slow-changing, stable oligopolies to complicated and unpredictable organizations (Jiao et al., 2013). Managers have continually established new competitive advantages by creating, eroding, destroying, and recreating new strategic change initiatives (Jiao et al., 2013).

Managing the diverse perspectives of employees. Managers who recognize the diverse perspectives of employees affected by a change can generate better business results (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2012; Shin et al., 2012). Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2012) and Shin et al. (2012) noted that managers struggle to integrate the diverse perspectives into change management plans (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2012; Shin et al., 2012). The ability of managers to value the diversity of stakeholders is essential to business results (Geertshuis et al., 2015).

Managers have difficulty integrating the diverse perspectives of employees, given the value society places on linear thinking (Olsen & Martins, 2012). Critical thinking and understanding employee perceptions are important leadership traits for overcoming linear thinking (Knight, 2014). In a study of teaching critical thinking in business and professional communication, some managers lacked the knowledge needed to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies used to influence employee participation in tasks that align with organizational change (Knight, 2014). The lack of awareness to influence employee

participation necessitates a review of the strategies used to evaluate the diverse viewpoints of a workforce.

Managers have used several strategies to assess the various viewpoints of a labor force (Hoever, Van Knippenberg, van Ginkel, & Barkema, 2012; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). First, managers must strive to establish critical thinking and interpersonal communication skills (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). Managers should also avoid forming negative judgments about frontline employees' ideas, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, behaviors, or concerns about an immediate business change (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2012). Managers should show empathy for employees' perspectives and view workers perspectives as legitimate until proven otherwise (Gondo, Patterson, & Palacios, 2013). Hoever et al. (2012) also embraced the concept that managers are more effective at engaging employees in participating in the change process when they valued the diverse viewpoints of the workforce. Managers who enact strategies to gain access to and embrace the diverse viewpoints of their workforce are more successful at gaining employee buy-in when making workplace changes (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2012; Gondo et al., 2013; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011).

Experienced managers who lack strong critical thinking skills struggle to remain competitive (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). Van de Ven and Sun (2011) explored a tool for assessing managers' critical thinking performance during business change as part of a broader research initiative. The Critical Thinking Performance Assessment is a tool managers could use to evaluate change management decisions (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). The use of performance assessments is a way managers can reflect on the effects

of management decisions and adjust strategies throughout the change process (Hurn, 2012).

Successful change management requires more than critical thinking. Hurn (2012) studied the effects of valuing diversity and the ability of managers to recognize employee perspectives during a change initiative. Olsen and Martins (2012) and Hurn found that successful managers tolerate and decipher ambiguity in the feedback of those affected by change. Van de Ven and Sun (2011) identified the importance of managers learning to develop creative strategies to merge the diverse perspectives of change stakeholders into new, mutually supported ideas. Most managers possess the ability to identify problems from employee viewpoints but do not use the proper strategies to integrate employees' ideas to influence buy-in (Oreg & Berson, 2011).

Communicating change. Successful managers use communication to engage employees (Morténus, Fridlund, Marklund, Palm, & Baigi, 2012). Four basic management strategies related to communication during change exist in the literature (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014; Hornstein, 2014). Hornstein (2014) focused on managers' ability to define and agree on change objectives, whereas Falkheimer (2014) concentrated on the capacity of managers to communicate effectively with low levels of distorted information and with high connections between actions and words. In a study of inclusive management practices, managers who engaged in active listening had a high degree of success in gaining employee buy-in (Purdy & Manning, 2014). Managers who listened to both the facts and feelings expressed by employees had a better chance of engaging individuals in the change process (Day et al., 2014; Van de

Ven & Sun, 2011). In a case study of multiple teams communicating in construction design, stakeholder engagement is a mediating factor to eliminate many communication barriers and has a positive impact on the outcomes of the change process (Xie et al., 2012). At any level of the organizational hierarchy, managers who possess the ability and willingness to listen and communicate in a transparent manner can generate trust and credibility by increasing the degree of interaction, communication, and technical collaboration with employees (Mazzei, 2014; Xie et al., 2012). Mazzei (2014) has identified that highly effective communicators are more likely to be better performing managers, while lower performing leaders can benefit from improving communication practices. Improvements to communication strategies could enable managers to achieve more successful change initiatives.

Pihlak and Alas (2012) investigated how employee perceptions of leadership communication prompted uncertainty and stress. Managers who communicated the specific expectations necessary to achieve change implementation success were more efficient at reducing employee uncertainty and stress associated with the unknown aspects of change (Pihlak & Alas, 2012). Similarly, other researchers confirmed that when employees perceived sufficient, timely, and useful information about an upcoming change, they were more cooperative about participating in the process (Bordia, Restubog, Jimmieson, & Irmer, 2011). Bisel et al. (2012) also found that employees were able to conceptualize and execute activities that supported change when managers communicated change announcements promptly. Pihlak and Alas (2012) have shown that organizations have difficulty communicating with the appropriate levels of clarity and

detail. Not surprisingly, difficulty communicating with appropriate clarity and detail influences the success of an organization's change initiatives.

Sufficient communication ameliorates employee fears about change and can encourage employee participation (Johansson, Miller, & Hamrin, 2014). Managers who communicate the scope of an imminent change to employees can gain buy-in (Vakola, 2013). Employees also gained confidence when managers communicated the importance of participating in a change (Gioia, Nag, & Corley, 2012; Vakola, 2013). In a slightly different approach, Gioia et al. (2012) found that ambiguous communication during strategic change could satisfy employees if defined goals exist and the articulation of the ambitions of the initiative are clear. Leaders and managers can dictate change if one has enough power to force the initiative; however, the dictator approach is becoming less prevalent in modern business environments (Gioia et al., 2012). Effective communication and employee engagement during change are becoming the most dominant approach (Gioia et al., 2012; Lozano, 2013; Pardo-del-Val, Martínez-Fuentes, & Roig-Dobón, 2012; Vakola, 2013). In most studies, employees were more likely to reciprocate with ideas that help bring about successful change if managers facilitated communication and engagement (Gioia et al., 2012; Lozano, 2013; Pardo-del-Val et al., 2012; Vakola, 2013).

Employee participation in change. Sashkin and Burke (1987) believed that frontline employee involvement in change fulfills three basic social work needs—autonomy, meaningfulness, and decreased isolation. Fuchs and Prouska (2014) added to Sashkin and Burke's findings by identifying that when employees felt personal opinions matter, contributions to the change process were more meaningful. Managers who

listened to employee feedback were able to break down feelings of isolation while also collecting valuable information about the successful and unsuccessful aspects of the change management strategy (Kim, Sting, & Loch, 2014; Kotter, 1995). Employees showed less resistance and engaged in more autonomous work activities when empowered to communicate during the change process (Rafferty et al., 2013). A less resistant workforce and employee empowerment could gain greater employee buy in to implement productivity related change initiatives.

Bouckennooghe (2012) and Rafferty et al. (2013) found employees were more likely to display positive behaviors that supported a change initiative when they participated in the planning stage. Change management strategies that facilitate employee participation could create positive attitudinal responses (Rafferty et al., 2013). Employee engagement and willingness to support change improves when there is a high level of involvement in decisions (Bisel et al., 2012; Rafferty et al., 2013).

Successful managers possess the ability to monitor the progress of change implementation and provide the necessary feedback to employees when progress is lacking (Day et al., 2014; Langley et al., 2013). Managers should adjust change management strategies throughout the lifecycle of a change event to ensure the objectives of a project are relevant to current implementation challenges (Langley et al., 2013). Langley et al. (2013) focused on how and why the change process emerges, fails, or succeeds over time but did not include how managers can evaluate the effectiveness of management strategies throughout the lifecycle of change. Similarly, Battilana and Casciaro (2012) performed a longitudinal study with eight in-depth case studies

analyzing 68 organizational change initiatives undertaken in the health service industry. Both sets of researchers identified that manager's strategies are a contributing factor to change initiative outcomes (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012; Langley et al., 2013). Managers leading a change initiative need not be experts in the change field, but they should be capable of diagnosing the need for change, communicating the need and vision for the change, and designing intervention strategies to implement changes with minimum resistance and maximum support of employees. Specifically, managers need a level of knowledge and skills to implement change for their specific organization.

The conditions that managers can influence employees to adopt changes with different degrees of resistance from the institutional status quo relate to informal workplace networks (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012). Informal networks are key sources of influence in organizations. Managers who must implement change have difficulty initiating and implementing organizational change when informal networks exist (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012). Employees who engage in informal networks create a cohesive network of tightly linked social actors that can influence the outcomes of a change event (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012). Battilana and Casciaro (2012) examined the effect of employee networks on managers' ability to implement change; however, they identified contradictory findings in many existing studies. High levels of network closure among employees can lead to successful change adoption if managers influence the network properly (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012). Managers' abilities to lead, manage, communicate, and influence employees are critical for executing successful change initiatives within closed informal networks (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012; Langley et al.

2013; Rafferty et al., 2013). The existing body of literature includes many theories about change management, but research related to implementing change and enhancing management strategies has lagged. Research that continues to advance understanding of how managers develop strategies to improve the success rate of change initiatives and employee buy-in could add substantively to the existing literature (Day et al., 2014).

Organizational Communication Strategies

The concept of organizational communication is the direct work of Redding (1979). Redding described communication as an essential component of organizational change. Researchers have viewed communication practices alone as insufficient to improve organizational productivity (Hill et al., 2012; Wittig, 2012). Operational effectiveness depends on the synchronization of all processes among stakeholders in the value chain of an organization (Wittig, 2012). Organizational communication is vital in coordinating all members of an organization to achieve one goal (Wittig, 2012). For managers and employees to work together to bring about successful change, they must communicate effectively. The literature is replete with methods that enhance communication. To make this literature review more manageable, only communication structure and strategies as they relate to business practice are the focus of this section.

Organizational communication is a medium used to send messages that motivate employees, express emotion, and transfer information in the workplace (Fuchs & Prouska, 2014). Ruck and Welch (2012) discussed five key elements of organizational communication: (a) the message source/sender, (b) the message/information, (c) the channel/medium, (d) the receiver/decoder/target/listener, (e) and feedback. The

researchers also identified common communication barriers that influence the relationships between managers and frontline employees. Ruck and Welch found that communication noise, filtering, selective perception, language, information overload, mixed messaging, message fragmentation, communication apprehension, and gender differences were barriers that affected communication between managers and employees. Lamprinakos (2015) also identified directional communication, which flows vertically, horizontally, or diagonally throughout an organization, as important methods of communication to consider.

Verbal and nonverbal communication media are the most widely discussed types of information exchange in the business related literature (Lamprinakos, 2015). Face-to-face, broadcast, mobile, electronic, and written channels of communication also were discussed in the literature (Falkheimer, 2014; Mazzei, 2014; Men, 2014; Sisko Maarit Lipiäinen, Karjaluoto, & Nevalainen, 2014). Most researchers found that complex messages require face-to-face interaction to ensure clarity (Falkheimer, 2014; Mazzei, 2014; Men, 2014). Face-to-face interaction combined with written communication surfaced as the most effective method of business communication (Falkheimer, 2014; Men, 2014).

Change initiatives often suffer when the communication process fails (Bouckenooghe, 2012; Geertshuis et al., 2015; Hamdi & Rajablu, 2012). Sufficient communication could lead to reduced stress levels and improved teamwork among individuals experiencing a changing work environment (Ruck & Welch, 2012). Effective communication is essential in gaining employee buy in to change (Mazzei, 2014).

Organizational structure and communication. A review of the research literature revealed information about two types of communication networks in the workplace—formal communication networks and informal communication networks. Formal communication networks are bureaucratic and typical in the sense that organizational hierarchies provide clear guidelines about who is accountable for a given task (Bouckenooghe, 2012). Downward communication interaction is a process of formal information sharing (Neves & Eisenberger, 2012). Downward communication occurs when superiors initiate information sharing with subordinates (White, Vanc, & Stafford, 2010). In the case of managing change, downward communication is a process managers use to deliver information about strategies to employees. Downward communication is also a way for managers to guide employees throughout the change process.

Managers use formal communication to share five essential types of information with employees: (a) information about work instructions, (b) rationale for work assignments, (c) organizational procedures and practices, (d) feedback to subordinates, and (e) indoctrination of organizational culture (Ruck & Welch, 2012; Welch, 2012; White et al., 2010). When organizations use informal communication structures, subordinates direct upward information to superiors (Neves & Eisenberger, 2012). The types of upward communication included information about subordinate activities, unsolved business problems, improvement suggestions, questions of policy, feelings about the job, and issues with coworkers (Welch, 2012; White et al., 2010). Managers systematically use formal hierarchical structure to manage upward communication and to cascade business initiatives to lower levels of the organization (Shuck & Herd, 2012).

Cascading communication during change is a process that managers use to deliver messages of significance to reach employees at every level.

Salis and Williams (2010) studied informal communication. Informal communication networks develop as social interactions between coworkers who are friends, share personal or professional interests, and work near each other (Salis & Williams, 2010). Frontline employees often use informal networks of communication to confirm, expand, expedite, circumvent, or supplement formal information sharing (White et al., 2010). Most information transfers through an informal network of communication called the *grapevine* (Grosser et al., 2012). Grosser et al. (2012) noted that informal channels of communication are more prevalent among peers who work near one another. Grapevine communication occurs more frequently at lower levels of an organization's hierarchy (Grosser et al., 2012). Grapevine communication is more predominant in work environments where employees develop informal communication network structures (Grosser et al., 2012). Grapevine communication during a change initiative can be both constructive and destructive. When frontline employees use grapevine communication to discuss change initiative results with other coworkers the outcome could lead to positive or negative workforce reactions.

Vertical communication. Bisel et al. (2012) suggested that communication in the workplace is a process that requires an organized structure. Vertical communication transpires between different levels of authority (Linke & Zerfass, 2011). Vertical communication occurs when information or messages flow upward and downward from the top levels of the organizational structure to the bottom levels (Linke & Zerfass, 2011).

Vertical communication is a formal strategy for sharing information between superiors and subordinates (Linke & Zerfass, 2011).

Vertical communication between managers and frontline employees is a strategy used to eliminate workplace barriers and solve problems (Bisel et al., 2012). Senior leadership teams are often the gatekeepers of new organizational strategy, but the middle-to-lower level managers are often the individuals who deliver strategic messages to the frontline workforce (Bisel et al., 2012). In a study of employee reactions to organizational change, Wittig (2012) reported that senior leadership delivers business messages to middle management teams in a vertical communication structure. Middle management teams then deliver consistent but modified strategic messages to frontline employees that are similar to the original information (Wittig, 2012). Vertical communication helps managers to dispel rumors and miscommunication (Wittig, 2012). Managers can communicate directly to employees to break down resistance to new ideas by facilitating discussion and input where the dialogue is two-way communication. Employees do not need to have their thoughts or recommendations accepted to support a decision to change or new initiative (Bisel et al., 2012), but they do need to know that managers believe frontline feedback is essential to the success of a project. Vertical communication is a way employees can ensure that leadership has listened and provided the opportunity to understand and respond to feedback from the workforce. The concept of vertical communication is relevant to employee buy-in and could be a beneficial strategy when implementing change initiatives.

Many benefits of vertical communication exist (Bakar & Mustaffa, 2013). The advantages of vertical communication include useful labor–management relations, discipline, methods of exchanging policies and procedures, effective decision making, a formal chain of command, and efficiency in assigning jobs and communicating performance (Bakar & Mustaffa, 2013). Vertical communication systems provide structures for superiors and subordinates to exchange adequate information about work assignments where decision-making requires authority (Bisel et al., 2012). Depending on the complexity of a change initiative, decision-making authority may be necessary because of the lack of technical knowledge of employees or significance within the scope of the strategy.

Despite the numerous advantages of vertical communication, many disadvantages exist. Frontline employees experience significant upward communication barriers when providing feedback to middle management (Mazzei, 2014). Vertical organizational structures consist of formal reporting layers, defined lines of authority, and a tight span of control (Mazzei, 2014). Hambdi and Rajablu (2012) argued that misunderstandings are common in vertical structures due to upward and downward communication filtering. Misunderstandings exist when recipients of information receive filtered or manipulated messages from different layers of the organization (Foste & Botero, 2012). Middle managers often manipulate messages when delivering communications to senior leadership that originated from lower level employees (Bakar & Mustaffa, 2013). Vertical communication often generates feelings of inequality between employees at different levels of authority (Bisel et al., 2012). Feelings of inequality are one reason

employees neglect superiors and cause relationship issues in organizational hierarchies (Foste & Botero, 2012; Hambdi & Rajablu, 2012). Many change initiatives fail since managers underestimate the importance of their working relationships with employees (Wittig, 2012). Employees with high quality relationships with their managers often accept change more readily than employees with lower quality relationships, arguably due to increased access to information, support, and involvement in decision-making (Wittig, 2012).

Horizontal communication. Another type of information sharing structure is horizontal communication. Horizontal communication occurs among employees at the same level of authority (Ruck & Welch, 2012). The most frequent type of organizational knowledge transfer is through horizontal communication (Salis & Williams, 2010). Employees have reported higher levels of satisfaction with horizontal communication interaction (Salis & Williams, 2010). Abdullah and Antony (2012) found that organizations with a horizontal communication structure tend to generate more employee cooperation. A horizontal communication structure works best when reporting relationships are informal and an organizational hierarchy is undefined (Abdullah & Antony, 2012; Fraser, Gunawan, & Goh, 2013).

Bisel et al. (2012) acknowledged that horizontal communication is more constructive for employees but could slow productivity when authoritative decision-making is necessary. Bisel et al. also suggested that it is difficult for organizations to convert from a vertical to a horizontal organizational structure. Converting from an authoritarian, vertical communication system to a peer-to-peer, horizontal communication

structure is a challenging initiative (Abdullah & Antony, 2012). The importance of developing ways to assess, measure, and evaluate the effectiveness of either vertical or horizontal communication structures is essential to knowing what strategies business leaders and managers should enact (Abdullah & Antony, 2012). Salis and Williams (2010) and Abdullah and Antony (2012) noted it was important to develop an organizational communication assessment strategy. Managers often lack the ability to create strategies to evaluate when barriers to organizational communication begin to affect a company's performance (Abdullah & Antony, 2012). An assessment strategy can help managers prioritize opportunities to communicate better with employees.

Communication in business practice. Managers use organizational communication to foster coordination of activities and goal alignment in the workplace (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Managers often use multiple communication media such as telephones, letters, memos, and meetings (Welch, 2012). The most frequent type of information sharing in the workplace is oral communication (Dibble et al., 2013; Falkheimer, 2014; Lausic, Razon, & Tenenbaum, 2014). The highest number of misunderstandings occur during oral communication (Men, 2014). Misunderstandings occur when the receiver of information interprets the message differently from the sender's intended purpose (Keyton et al., 2013). Oral communication is the most efficient when employees use clear language when speaking to one another (Dibble et al., 2013). Dibble et al. (2013) explained that when employees use unmistakable language in the workplace, they minimize misinterpretation. Using basic business vocabulary is an effective strategy to assure clarity when communicating (Bisel et al., 2012). Pihlak and

Alas (2012) posited that communicating with the appropriate levels of clarity and detail minimizes employee resistance to change.

The goal of high-level language about an idea, thought, or plan is to use little detail (Bisel et al., 2012). High-level language can be troublesome because it is subject to a wider range of interpretations by the receiver of the message (Keyton et al., 2013). Some researchers found that using jargon and ambiguous language is strategically more appropriate depending on the complexity of the change initiative and the work environment (Gioia et al., 2012; Woodhams, 2014). For example, Patoko and Yazdanifard (2014) argued that the use of jargon could save time. Jargon is strategically advantageous when subject matter experts use language that is technical and complex, but it is often not useful for communicating with a large number of nontechnical recipients (Patoko & Yazdanifard, 2014; Woodhams, 2014). Ambiguous language is an accepted communication practice when managers need to deliver subtle messages to frontline employees (Gioia et al., 2012; Woodhams, 2014). In contrast, to deal with ambiguity employees need to be comfortable with uncertainty. Fuchs and Prouska (2014) argued that managers who minimize employee uncertainty could facilitate workers to be part of discovering the unknown aspects of change.

In verbal communication, words are the inherent mechanism managers use to deliver information, but nonverbal communication includes all other forms of expressed meaning that are not phonological (Van Dyne et al., 2012). Nonverbal communication contains a substantial level of communicative value (Van Dyne et al., 2012).

Communicators do not always intend to send nonverbal messages; however, appearance,

body movements, facial expressions, and tone of voice convey communicative meaning (Elfenbein, 2013). The more recipients of communication are aware of the nonverbal behavior, the more likely they are to understand the context of a message (Elfenbein, 2013; Van Dyne et al., 2012). Employee awareness of nonverbal communication is a form of ambiguous language that could cause employee uncertainty when implementing change (Van Dyne et al., 2012), and research on the topic is sparse.

Organizational communication is a complex process (Van Dyne et al., 2012). Communication barriers increase the complexity of sending messages and can limit the effectiveness of information sharing (Lauring & Selmer, 2012; Madera, Dawson, & Neal, 2014; Stephens, Barrett, & Mahometa, 2013). Employee confidence can suffer from any breakdown in the communication process (Van Dyne et al., 2012). Employee trust and communication breakdowns can affect the success rate of change implementation. Continued cross-fertilization between organizational communication and change management research could enrich organizational management in practice, and improve the speed at which employees buy in to change initiatives.

Employee Management Strategies

Managers routinely undervalue the employee aspect of organizational change (Bond & Seneque, 2013). The challenges of managing people are often harder than the technical aspects of change (Bond & Seneque, 2013). Bond and Seneque (2013) claimed managers often do not consider the effects of change on employee relationships, motivation, work habits, and perception of risk.

Everyone reacts differently to workplace change. Managers who understand that the variety of ways employees respond to change is a normal part of the process are usually strong leaders (Edgelow, 2012). For a frontline manager, the ability to recognize and respond to employee reactions is a skill needed to improve strategies that promote the success of a change initiative. The ability of managers to develop insight into how employees perceive the potential losses associated with a change could help predict the specific reasons why individuals react to various behavioral inducements (Edgelow, 2012). If managers can predict or identify the specific reasons why employees respond to change, efforts to improve existing management strategies could yield positive business outcomes (Edgelow, 2012).

Employee reactions to change. Piderit's (2000) tripartite definition of resistance to change is one of the most organized methods of classifying employee reactions. The components of the tripartite definition of employee resistance to change are affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions. In the tripartite classification of resistance, Piderit grouped how employees feel (affect), think (cognition), or intend to act (behavior) in response to change initiatives.

Affective reactions to change. Researchers who explored employees' affective reactions to change primarily investigated the negative feelings employees demonstrate (Cullen et al., 2013; Kaplan, Cortina, Ruark, LaPort, & Nicolaidis, 2014; Rafferty et al., 2013). Several forms of affective reactions to change, including anxiety, fatigue (Stensaker & Meyer, 2011), morale, and negative emotions have surfaced in the literature (Wittig, 2012). Abu Khalifeh and Som (2013) produced results that indicated a strong

correlation between employee job commitment and feelings of satisfaction. High job satisfaction was a reliable predictor of employee buy-in to change (Abu Khalifeh & Som, 2013).

Cognitive reactions to change. Bouckennooghe (2012) evaluated employee commitment to change by using the job-demand resource model. Bouckennooghe questioned the moderating role of three categories of employee thought that have initiated either positive or negative reactions to change—trust in top management, history of experienced change results, and formal communication. Bouckennooghe found that a combination of these three modes of employee thought moderated negative behaviors. Specifically, higher levels of trust in top management and formal communication about change can reduce employees' negative perceptions about a change (Bouckennooghe, 2012).

Mazzei (2014) also investigated employees' cognitive reactions to change. Mazzei used the term *sensemaking*. Sensemaking is the experience of employees attempting to make sense of phenomena in the work environment. Maitlis, Vogus, and Lawrence (2013), who investigated how employees use situational awareness to make sense of contributions to change, expanded the term's definition. Situational awareness and sensemaking are two common cognitive approaches that employees used to adapt to, respond to, and cope with change (Maitlis et al., 2013).

Employees who adapt, respond, and deal with change initiate a thought of either accepting or resisting a specific initiative (Fugate et al., 2012; Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011). The most common cognitive reactions to change in the literature were

perceived fairness (Bordia et al., 2011), perceived need for change (Vakola, 2013), and perceived benefit or harm from the change outcomes (Oreg et al., 2011). Employees use a combination of cognitive reactions to rate the overall potential for change implementation success (Oreg et al., 2011; Vakola, 2013). For example, in a study of charisma and organizational change, employees negatively perceived leadership commitment and provided less support if managers did not clearly display charisma and foster team performance (Nohe, Michaelis, Menges, Zhang, & Sonntag, 2013).

Behavioral reactions to change. Behavioral studies were the most prevalent in the literature (Bordia et al., 2011; Michel, By, & Burnes, 2013; Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2013). Employees who resisted change displayed withdrawal behaviors that distanced them from the goals of the organization (Fugate et al., 2012). Withdrawal behaviors included the intent to quit, absenteeism, tardiness, subversion, obstinacy, detachment, negative communication, and resistance to perform job duties (Abu Khalifeh & Som, 2013; Fugate et al., 2012; Grosser et al., 2012; Shin et al., 2012). Matos Marques Simoes and Esposito (2014) proposed that managers often perpetuate employee withdrawal behaviors. A majority of managers have difficulty implementing changes if employees display withdrawal behaviors (Fugate et al., 2012; Shin et al., 2012). Bouckennooghe (2012) and Zepeda and Mayers (2013) held similar views and identified that when managers properly engage employees, the number of individual workers willing to buy in to change increases. When managers used strategies that clarified how and to what extent employees' roles and responsibilities could transform, employees could better anticipate the impact of a proposed change on their

individual situations (Bond & Seneque, 2013). When employees anticipate change, positive contributions manifest with greater involvement in and support of the implementation of change management initiatives (Zepeda & Mayers, 2013).

Jaramillo, Mulki, Onyemah, and Pesquera (2012) found that employees were more likely to resist change when the perceived outcomes would increase their workload. Other researchers identified that employees are less likely to resist change when they have higher levels of self-efficacy (Jaramillo et al., 2012; Oreg et al., 2011). Mazzei (2014) investigated a behavioral reaction called active listening, which is an important stimulator of employee self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the strength of employees' belief in the ability to complete tasks or reach goals. Employees displayed low self-efficacy when unwilling to listen or cope with information regarding a change (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011).

Coping is an employee's reaction to adapting and constructing behaviors to deal with the actual or perceived losses associated with a change (Franckeiss, 2012). Employees demonstrated a coping reaction during periods of stress, anxiety, and change uncertainty (Kuula, Putkiranta, & Toivanen, 2012). Employees demonstrated a strong psychological resilience when able to cope with a lack of information about an organization's strategic change plans (Shin et al., 2012). Managers have a better chance to implement successful change when employees possess higher levels of psychological resilience (Shin et al., 2012).

Affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions to change were the three most profound types of employee reactions identified in the literature. Some researchers

investigated a combination of these three classifications of employee reactions, and others focused on a single class (Kaplan et al., 2014). When researchers did not classify employee feelings, thoughts, or behavioral reactions to change as affective, cognitive, or behavioral, the research was ambiguous and not applicable to the study.

Causes of employee reactions to change. When implementing change initiatives, it is imperative to identify the causes of employees' negative or positive reactions. Unidentified sources of affective, cognitive, or behavioral reactions to change can create stressful situations for all stakeholders involved in the process. Understanding the stimuli of employee reactions could help managers implement change more successfully (Vander Elst et al., 2014).

Employee uncertainty. Fuchs and Prouska (2014) argued that managers who foster employee participation also minimize uncertainty because doing so facilitates workers to be part of discovering the unknown aspects of change. When managers encourage employees to participate and provide feedback, the feedback process plays a mediating role in reducing change uncertainty (Kuntz & Gomes, 2012). Bond and Seneque (2013) also supported an employee engagement model based on motivation and social interaction. Social interactions in the workplace are a way to endorse participation, communication, and contribution to decision-making (Bond & Seneque, 2013).

Employee motivation. Kumar et al. (2014) researched employee motivation as an underlying cause of workers' willingness to make targeted modifications to behaviors that support a proposed change. When employees perceive change-related outcomes as fair, it helps them become more motivated to participate. Individuals' motivational needs

can prohibit or encourage employees to buy in to a change initiative (Kuntz & Gomes, 2012).

Researchers have found that job insecurity decreased employee motivation to change (Carter et al., 2013; Koivisto, Lipponen, & Platow, 2013). Job insecurity, employee dissatisfaction, tension, and emotional distress can lead to motivational problems (Koivisto et al., 2013). Carter et al. (2013) also noted that when employees perceived that managers adequately communicated details about change, employees better understood the business benefits and were motivated to participate.

Perceived benefits or harm. The degree to which employees understand the benefits or harm of change may influence their supporting or resisting behaviors to change (Jacobs, van Witteloostuijn, Christe-Zeyse, & Polos, 2013). Jacobs et al. (2013) claimed that when employees perceived changes in the workplace as beneficial, the reactions were positive, and the opposite reaction ensued when employees perceived changes in the workplace as harmful.

Changes in the workplace such as downsizing, increased workload, or increased work complexity can lead employees to perceive harm or loss (Cullen et al., 2013; Fugate et al., 2012; Lawrence, 2015). Employees who perceive harm or loss display higher levels of resistance and symptoms of withdrawal (Cullen et al., 2013; Fugate et al., 2012; Lawrence, 2015). When employees see the disadvantages of change as greater than the benefits, it often leads to lower levels of job satisfaction (Oreg et al., 2011). In some cases, perceived losses associated with downsizing, layoffs, and reassignments prompt employees to quit or feel of disenfranchised (Fugate et al., 2012).

Caldwell (2013) noted that positive outcomes of change might include a stimulating upgrade to equipment, work that is more challenging, increased personal development, or increased pay. Job satisfaction increased in a study in which employees perceived positive outcomes after the implementation of change (Fugate et al., 2012). Employees' perceived benefit or harm was found to influence either positive or negative reaction to change depending on the outcome of past or current change initiatives (Caldwell, 2013; Fugate et al., 2012; Oreg et al., 2011).

Employee resistance. Resistance to change is a recurring concept in the literature. Many researchers have supported the claim that managers understand the value or need for organizational change but do not always understand how to evaluate whether employees are supporting or resisting the effort (Oreg et al., 2011; Parker, Verlinden, Nussey, Ford, & Pathak, 2013). Employee resistance to change is one of the leading causes of failed change initiatives (Vakola, 2013).

Resistance and unwillingness to adapt to change are the most common reactions among employees (Wiley, 2012). Heidenreich and Spieth (2013) categorized employees' reactions as either active or passive resistance to change. Active resistance includes behaviors such as being critical, selectively using time, disrupting normal operations, distracting peers, and starting rumors (Stensaker & Meyer, 2011). Passive resistance includes behaviors such as remaining silent, avoiding confrontation or conflict, procrastination, and withholding information (Heidenreich & Spieth, 2013). Oreg et al. (2011) focused on 20 years of quantitative studies that concentrated on the obvious employee reactions to change. The culmination of quantitative research Oreg et al.

gathered showed specific employee responses; however, did not lead to the identification of an agreed-upon management strategy to mitigate negative reactions to change.

Change involves transforming an organization or a component of the business. Employees are likely to resist change if managers do not implement the proper procedures, policies, or practices to prepare for the transformation (Stensaker & Meyer, 2011). Managers can have a substantial effect on employee behavior, but it is important to identify the reasons why workers resist change or lack commitment so that the proper management strategies can undergo further research (Stensaker & Meyer, 2011). A common theme surfaced in the literature that understanding why employees are resistant to change could help reduce the percentage of initiatives that fail from the current estimation of 70% (Decker et al., 2012; Oreg et al. 2011; Vakola, 2013).

Employee commitment. The lack of employee commitment was a prevalent factor researchers identified as a reason workers do not actively support change (Awad & Alhashemi, 2012). Commitment to change is a particular outcome of employees' beliefs, attitudes, or intent to pursue goals consistent with the success of a company (Vakola, 2014). The degree of commitment is critical when attempting to determine if employees will buy in to a proposed change (Meyer, Stanley, & Parfyonova, 2012; Nohe et al., 2013).

Bouckenooghe (2012) advocated managers build employee commitment to change in three phases—preparation, acceptance, and commitment. The preparation phase of an initiative represents the point in the process when employees become aware that change will take place (Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, & Bakker, 2014). The

acceptance phase consists of employees making a judgment about a change and forming a disposition toward the effort (Michel et al., 2013). The commitment phase entails managers demonstrating why a change is necessary (Welch, 2012). If frontline employees understand the need for change, managers can use strategies at each phase of the process to assimilate workers and build change readiness plans (Bouckennooghe, 2012; Cullen et al., 2013). Many managers who develop change readiness plans make the mistake of thinking confidence occurs by overemphasizing communication and sponsoring involvement (Gondo et al., 2013).

Employee readiness. Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993) proposed two concepts related to change readiness. Change readiness occurs when employees understand the need for change and have the confidence to execute the initiative (Armenakis et al. 1993). Van den Heuvel et al. (2014) defined *employee readiness* as a shared psychological state wherein employees' feel committed to supporting a proposed change. Grant and Hartley (2013) and Holt and Vardaman (2013) investigated employee confidence in leadership's ability to provide tangible support for change. Tangible support for change can include resources or information that assists in accomplishing the task (Grant & Hartley, 2013; Holt & Vardaman, 2013). If employees feel they possess enough information or resources to complete change related tasks, the commitment to participate in the process increases (Grant & Hartley, 2013; Holt & Vardaman, 2013).

Gondo et al. (2013) and Rafferty et al. (2013) expanded on Armenakis et al.'s (1993) concepts of change readiness. Individual readiness includes concepts such as recipient self-efficacy, recipient confidence, and recipient motivation to accept change,

and perceived organizational readiness includes recipient confidence and disposition toward the ability of organizational leaders to lead, manage, implement, and sustain change plans (Rafferty et al., 2013). Stensaker and Meyer (2011) found that employee readiness for a change was low if subsequent management support was not evident to employees. Employees displayed higher levels of change readiness with the perception and belief that personal participation was relevant (Rusly, Corner, & Sun, 2012).

Researchers discovered that managing levels of employee commitment to change is an effective tool for reducing employee resistance (Fugate et al., 2012; Hill et al., 2012; Shin et al., 2012).

Transition and Summary

Section 1 includes information regarding the research problem. The problem statement includes the general and specific business problem, and the purpose statement includes a brief explanation of the research method, design, and participant sample.

Section 1 also consists of the nature of the study, research question, conceptual framework, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and explanation of the significance of the study. A thorough review of past literature concludes Section 1. Section 2 includes an outline of the research components, purpose of the study, participant recruitment, data collection, and analysis. Section 3 contains a formal presentation of the study findings and suggestions for practical application of collected information.

Section 2: The Project

Section 1 contains the business problem, method, and details on the design used to conduct the study. A comprehensive review of literature illustrated the need to explore

the strategies to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability. Section 2 begins with the purpose statement. The purpose statement includes an explanation of the research strategy and the use of a qualitative multicase design. Section 2 includes (a) the purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) participants, (d) research method, (e) research design, (f) population and sampling, (g) ethical research, (h) data collection, (i) data analysis, and (j) reliability and validity. Section 3 concludes with a presentation of the findings and recommendations.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore the strategies commercial printing managers need to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability. The target population were managers of Midwestern U.S. commercial printing operations who had successfully implemented strategies to gain frontline employee buy-in during a productivity improvement within the last 2 years, as evidenced by a return on investment (ROI) upon completion of the change initiative. The findings of the study could contribute to social change by increasing managers' knowledge and ability to improve the buy-in of frontline employees, the success rate of change initiatives, and productivity of commercial printing operations that generates profitability for business growth. Additional business growth could proliferate economic improvements for the U.S. economy that increase the employment rate, standard of living, and economic wealth within the community.

Role of the Researcher

I was the data collection instrument for this qualitative study. My role as the researcher was to establish a research design, obtain approval from the university's institutional review board (IRB), identify participants, and collect and analyze the data. The privacy of participants remained secure through adhering to ethical research standards. The strategy for the treatment of participants followed the standards outlined in the Belmont Report. Per the guidelines of the Belmont Report, researchers must maintain a relationship with participants based on respect, present the expectations of participation through consent forms, and establish and administer procedures fairly (Davidson & Page, 2012; DuBois et al., 2012). All study subjects consented to participate upon signing the informed consent form. At any time, participants could stop the interview, ask questions, or withdraw from the process entirely without providing any reason.

The recruitment of participants occurred through the direct interaction and cooperation of host organizations from Midwestern U.S. commercial printing operations. The research remained as fair as possible and interviewed participants' could freely volunteer once indicating they understood the right to refuse to participate, information remains confidential, and were aware of the potential uses of the data. Explaining the purpose of the study was a prerequisite for entering into the fieldwork. The assumption that participants did not have a complete appreciation of the nature and aims of this academic research was a consideration throughout the research. Consent alone did not absolve the responsibility to explain to each host organization the process for anticipating

and guarding against potentially harmful consequences for participants. An explanation to study participants included full disclosure of the limited risks, aside from recalling minor distressing events during an experienced change initiative to improve productivity.

The semistructured interviews with managers and a request for company documentation such as action trackers, before-and-after pictures, and performance indicators from the appropriate decision-makers took place once an organization granted permission to conduct the research on the premises by signing a letter of cooperation. The strategy for retrieving additional secondary data was to search public records on the Internet, company websites, and review local or state government agencies that could have archived information available. The purpose of collecting documentation was to retrieve factual data that further exhibited managers had successfully gained frontline employee buy-in when implementing change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability in a commercial printing environment.

An interview protocol is a guide that includes a reminder to complete the informed consent form, classify each interviewee with an assigned code, identify the interviewer, document the date and time of the meeting, and lists the questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). An interview protocol helped to make sure all the steps defined for the process were consistent. The intent was to conduct each interview consistently and to elicit useful data from commercial printing managers (see Appendix A).

The data collection strategy was to use semistructured interviews and to gather company documents aligned with the purpose of the study. The four semistructured interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each. Participants partook in the interview

process after signing the informed consent form. After volunteering, participants had the option to follow the process for answering each open-ended question, as written in the interview protocol.

Open-ended interview questions helped explore each participant's experience and achieve the necessary depth and breadth of information from the responses. The data analysis steps entailed transcription of the digitally recorded interview data, synthesis, error checking, and identification of themes. The document collection method was the chosen secondary source of data to gather additional pertinent information to the study. All hard-copy data collected will remain in a locked safe and digital information on a password-protected personal computer to maintain participants' privacy. The observance of integrity, ethics, and participant privacy were the safeguards chosen to ensure the validity of the study and was in alignment with the standards of the Belmont Report. The ethical compliance standards in this study included ensuring respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; Mikesell, Bromley, & Khodyakov, 2013).

The role of a researcher involves recognizing and preventing potential bias in the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A researcher should take a neutral approach and mitigate participants exposure to bias (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Participants may answer questions in ways they believe are socially accepted (Shedlin, Decena, Mangadu, & Martinez, 2011). Regardless of the research method or design, some participants may explain experiences inaccurately to present themselves in the best possible manner (Shedlin et al., 2011). Researchers can minimize social desirability bias

by phrasing questions to show it is acceptable to answer in a way that is not socially desirable, allowing respondents to project personal feelings and provide representative responses of lived experiences (Shedlin et al., 2011).

Minimizing potential bias during the interview process occurred through a coherent focus on my role as the researcher. Minimizing researcher bias entailed separating personal experiences as a manager in the food and beverage manufacturing industry by making a conscious effort not to guide participants' responses in any way. The use of an interview protocol minimized coercing participants to answer questions with predisposed inputs (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A written interview protocol with predetermined open-ended questions helped maintain a personal but unbiased point of view during data collection (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

Experiences with gaining frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives and productivity improvements in the food and beverage industry led to a desire to study the specific business problem. Direct contact with the commercial printing participants did not occur outside of the research environment and there was no potential influence on business relationships in any way. Having no direct contact outside the research environment prevented potential ethical issues, conflicts of interest, and the influence of participant bias. My role as a manager in a food and beverage manufacturing company does not relate to the commercial printing industry; therefore, it did not influence participants or interview responses in any way.

Participants

For a qualitative multicase study, using in-depth and open-ended interview questions allowed participants to respond with facts and opinions, which makes them informants rather than respondents (Anyan, 2013; Granot, Brashear, & Motta, 2012; Yin, 2014). The participant group consisted of commercial printing managers, who upon request participated in individual open-ended interviews. The eligibility criteria to participate in the study required managers to have held supervisory level responsibility or direct accountability for the commercial printing operation, including the frontline workforce for inclusion as a participant.

Stake (2013) recommended narrowing the concentration of the case study in terms of time and place. The specific requirements to participate included commercial printing managers from the Midwestern United States who have a minimum of 5 years of experience. Participants who demonstrated success in the use of strategies to gain frontline employee buy-in when implementing change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability in the last 2 years were eligible.

Given the objectives of this study, it was imperative to identify existing host commercial printing operations and managers who demonstrated success in the use of strategies to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability. Selecting appropriate participants required a defined and narrow interview pool to meet the objectives of the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Identifying managers with experience managing frontline employees and who had a role in decision-making during change initiatives was critical. The selected participants

provided interview responses that answered the central research question because of relevant work experience.

The success criteria for inclusion of an organization in this study included selecting a commercial printing operation that generated profits over the previous 12-month period. A profit and loss statement (P&L) is a financial statement that summarizes the revenues, costs, and expenses incurred during a fixed period, usually 1 year (Financial Accounting Standards Advisory Board, 2016). When a company's average revenue exceeds expenses for a 12-month period, a company is profitable. Therefore, per the definition of success for this study, the strategies implemented by commercial printing managers who have successfully gained frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity assumedly contribute to profitability. In addition to 12 months of profitability, success criteria included managers implementing a productivity improvement within the last 2 years where the outcomes of the change initiative generated a positive ROI for the company upon completion.

Companies achieve profitability by following some strategy or process aimed at obtaining a specified result or success criteria (FASAB, 2016). Being profitable and achieving productivity increases in commercial printing constitutes some degree of success, which was the adopted success criterion to select participants. The selection of host organizations and managers was dependent on a review of P&L statements and actual ROI documentation. The evaluation of participation eligibility occurred during initial discussions and information sharing about the companies' achievements

throughout the participant identification process. Both commercial printing operations voluntarily presented P&L statements and ROI documentation that met the criteria.

A review of all available company-provided documentation that related to the research was part of the data collection technique. After the completion of interviews, a request to each host commercial printing operation asking for documented evidence that included action trackers, before-and-after pictures, performance indicators, performance trends, documentation of effective strategies demonstrating successful productivity centered change initiatives, and employee buy-in within the last 2 years resulted in significant data collection. Company-provided documentation or information could be highly confidential; however, neither host organization denied the request. Each of the host organizations shared information such as key performance results, employee performance presentations, production strategy presentations, and procedures to support the face-to-face interviews. I also requested a factory tour to make direct observations and to take field notes. Both commercial printing organizations granted permission to take a factory tour with one of the interview participants as a guide. The intent of the factory tours was to capture observations or business activities to identify events in real time and the context of the work environment as they related to interview data.

Researchers take field notes to record and remember the behaviors, activities, and events observed in the research setting (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012; Yin, 2014). The observations from the factory tours enhanced the interview data by validating the business practices each interviewee described as pertinent strategies to gain employee buy-in during change initiatives were actual company processes.

The Midwestern U.S. region contained hundreds of potential participants from the commercial printing industry and was a suitable location to acquire research subjects. I accessed participants through direct face-to-face contact with the first commercial printing operation and obtained the name and contact information of the owner of Company 1 through a professional business contact. Meeting with the owner of the company resulted in obtaining a signed letter of cooperation. After receiving the letter of cooperation, access to the organization to recruit participants followed. Initial contact with each of the potential interview participants facilitated face-to-face interactions. After securing participants from Company 1, snowball sampling helped to identify two other commercial printing business owners. One of the two commercial printing operations did not meet the criteria of the study. The second did meet the requirements to host the research and the owner signed the letter of cooperation, which became Company 2.

In multicase research, a range of four to 10 interviews is typically an adequate sample size depending on reoccurrence of information (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2014). The number of targeted participants was four. A request for permission to conduct a second meeting with each of the four participants to complete the process of member checking was a validation procedure to determine the accuracy of interview interpretations. Data collection continued until no new themes or keywords emerged, indicating data saturation.

I submitted a letter of permission to conduct research on the host organization's premises to each potential commercial printing company owner to aid in receiving the required authorization to recruit participants. A letter of cooperation presented to each

commercial printing owner and signed by the appropriate business leader at each site ensured meeting the requirement to begin the research (see Appendix B). An explanation to each commercial printing owner and participant that all proper confidentiality safeguards were in place before starting the data collection process was a critical step in gaining the permission from all participating individuals. The letter of cooperation and informed consent, acquired before data collection, ensured adherence to ethical research standards. The commercial printing owners and participants reviewed and signed the documents to confirm consent to volunteer (see Appendix C and Appendix E).

Due to the nature of the commercial printing industry and the inclusion criteria to participate, there were no participants under the age of 21. By signing the informed consent form, participants volunteered to take part in the study. Participants also confirmed falling within the age minimum 21 and the eligibility requirement of 5 years of service before initiating the interview process. There were no vulnerable groups in the study. As with any industry, commercial printing managers may have disabilities, but no discrimination occurred through inclusion or exclusion criteria about disabilities.

Researchers choose purposeful sampling to determine the selection of participants based on the purpose of the study, which makes the subjects suited to provide data that could help answer the research question (Lamprinakis, 2015; Robinson, 2014; Sierzchula, 2014). Lamprinakis (2015) identified benefits of frontline employee inclusiveness and participation when implementing change in a food and beverage company. Lamprinakis chose business leaders and managers who had experienced multiple change events and applied management strategies to ensure the participants matched the target audience.

The method Lamprinakos chose aligned with Lund et al.'s (2014) use of purposeful sampling of choosing participants by age, ethnicity, experience, social, or economic status. Sierzechula (2014) similarly used a purposeful selection of participants to elicit views and experience of technological advances in the automobile industry for a study on electric vehicles and sustainability initiatives. Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) and Palinkas et al. (2013) evaluated purposeful sampling as a suitable method for soliciting valid participants.

The use of purposeful sampling enables researchers to select participants who can offer data that aligns with the research objectives (Lund et al., 2014; Pisarski & Ashworth, 2013; Poulis, Poulis, & Plakoyiannaki, 2013). Purposeful sampling was the chosen participant selection method. The selection of participants included managers who work in the commercial printing industry and had direct experiences in using strategies that gained frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives. This participation selection approach ensured that participants aligned with the research objectives. Each of the participating managers had direct responsibility for frontline employees and was accountable for the successful outcomes of the commercial printing operation.

Several considerations exist for complying with ethical research guidelines when recruiting participants. A description of my role as the researcher and an explanation to all participants that they were not obligated to answer any question and could withdraw from the study at any time was the selected strategy to uphold good research ethics. The work experience, knowledge, and purposeful selection of each participant in the commercial printing industry made this group of subjects' ideal contributors to the study.

A thorough explanation of the ethical standards to uphold the confidentiality and any potentially identifying information to the four participants was the chosen approach to gain the confidence of participants. The four participants agreed to participate in the study based on the safeguards outlined for this study.

The data will remain in a locked safe, and all digital data will reside on a password-protected personal computer. Participants may request access to the recorded audio, written notes, or transcript data at any time up to 5 years from the date of the interview. Contacting each participant personally, helped to establish a time and place for an interview, reminded each of the criteria to participate, and explained the process of protecting all data after receiving the completed informed consent form. A request for permission from the participants to record the interview, as described in the informed consent form, was a measure to ensure accuracy and data integrity. Four semistructured interviews took place. Synthesis of the data commenced immediately after the interview to ensure the retention of all information for recall and analysis.

Research Method and Design

The research approach included a qualitative research method and multicase design. The qualitative method and multicase design were appropriate to explore the problem and gain an in-depth understanding of the topic (Yin, 2014). To gain rich knowledge of the research problem, Yin (2014) recommended the use of case study design, which comprises multiple sources of research data. Semistructured interviews and company documents were the two primary types of evidence. The exploratory nature and

need for a deeper understanding of the strategies and experiences of managers led to undertaking a qualitative multicase research study.

Research Method

A researcher's goal is to select the right research method for the chosen line of inquiry to obtain meaningful results (Houghton et al., 2013). The three methods of research are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Each of these methods results in a different form of information from the population (Petty et al., 2012). Qualitative methodology is an exploratory approach and was appropriate to answer the research question because semistructured interviewing involves direct interaction between a researcher and the participants. Semistructured interviewing differs from traditional structured data collection because researchers use it to explore a topic broadly (Finlay, 2014). The purpose of using qualitative method is to explore the existing knowledge and to add a deeper understanding of a research topic (Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014). Quantitative methodology consists of researchers developing hypotheses and assumptions that may limit the in-depth exploration of the study (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Hoare & Hoe, 2013; Yang, Kumaraswamy, Pam, & Mahesh, 2011). Mixed methods research is the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (Terrell, 2012).

This study involved exploring the experiences of commercial printing managers. Using a qualitative methodology helped to understand the management challenges related to the topic. In a qualitative multicase study, the researcher uses multiple sources of information to explore different levels and perspectives of the same phenomenon

(Roulston, 2013). Yin (2014) noted that researchers use qualitative research to explore the human element and meanings of situations in a research environment.

A quantitative methodology was not suitable for this study. Quantitative research entails instrument-based questions to prove or disprove a hypothesis using numerical data (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Palinkas et al., 2013). Quantitative researchers describe trends through numerical analysis that may lead to generalization of specific findings to an entire population (Yilmaz, 2013). Quantitative research does not result in a broad understanding of a phenomenon; rather, findings are specific to the chosen population (Tomkins & Eatough, 2013).

Mixed methods research comprises both the strengths and weaknesses of the qualitative and quantitative methods (Terrell, 2012). Mixed methods research is much more rigorous because the researcher has to collect qualitative and quantitative data, interpret the information, and identify findings from both approaches (Terrell, 2012). A researcher who chooses a mixed methods approach has to perform the rigors of each method, which was not suitable for this study because of time and financial constraints (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

Learning new information about employee buy-in when implementing change initiatives from the managers' perspectives required using a qualitative method involving the capture of in-depth experiences and was an appropriate method for studying the phenomenon (Roulston, 2013). Providing participants the opportunity to reveal personal experiences through interviews allows open communication and forthrightness on issues valuable to a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Roulston, 2013;

Yilmaz, 2013). Conducting a qualitative multicase study served to gain detailed information through semistructured interviews and collected documents associated with the performance of the host commercial printing operations. Interviewing participants helped to understand the various experiences that could lead to unpredicted insight about how commercial printing managers use strategies to gain frontline employee buy-in.

When using a qualitative methodology, it is important to recognize the limitations of the approach because of the potential for researcher bias. A researcher who has experiences or beliefs related to the topic can have preconceived ideas about how a participant should answer interview questions (Woodard, 2012). Developing an interview protocol and establishing the questions before interviewing the participants was one chosen method to mitigate any possible personal bias (see Appendix A).

Research Design

A qualitative multicase study was an appropriate approach to answer the overarching research question: What strategies do commercial printing managers need to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability? Researchers select qualitative research designs appropriate to keep the target population and research question aligned with the purpose of the study. In making choices to suit the objectives of the study, a consideration of the following five qualitative designs: (a) grounded theory, (b) ethnography, (c) phenomenological, (d) narrative, and (e) case study lead to the choice of a multicase design.

Grounded theory is a research design used to create new theories (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). The purpose of using grounded theory is to investigate the elements of a

group experience and produce theories to comprehend the social context in a group environment (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Grounded theory was not suitable because the goal was not to develop a theory on the strategies commercial printing managers use to explain the phenomena of gaining frontline employee buy-in to change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability.

Ethnographic researchers systematically explore people and culture instead of an issue or event (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013). Researchers performing ethnography spend a significant amount of time in the field exploring cultural phenomena (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013). Ethnographic researchers transcribe information in a narrative format (Petty et al., 2012). Researchers who have limited familiarity with the cultural phenomena under investigation or narrative writing technique could struggle to complete the research proficiently (Petty et al., 2012). The goal of this research was to explore the various perspectives and approaches from four commercial printing managers rather than exploring one specific cultural aspect of the population. Ethnography was not appropriate because the topic of the study was not suitable for culture-based research and familiarity with the cultural background of the selected population was limited.

Researchers use a phenomenological approach to explore lived experiences. Phenomenology is a philosophical design used to gain an understanding of the relationship between individuals in a research environment (Tomkins & Eatough, 2013). The relationship between workers and the workplace could be part of the study; however, a multicase case design was preferred because it served optimally in the exploration and analysis of differences within and between cases.

A researcher uses a narrative approach when attempting to learn in-depth information from the memory or life stories of a limited number of participants (Anyan, 2013; Petty et al., 2012). A narrative approach consists of field notes, participant observations, or other forms of data collection (Petty et al., 2012). The most suitable research design was a multicase approach because it entails identifying the boundaries, depth, occurrences, and context of a problem. Petty et al. (2012) noted that exploring a case involves a decision as to what to research versus a narrative design in which the participants' stories guide the direction of the study.

Selecting from a detailed review of options, aided in determining which qualitative research designs to eliminate and the nature of the data required to answer the research question. Gaining insight into the in-depth experience of managers' experiences of a business issue was the intent; therefore, qualitative designs other than a case study were not appropriate. Qualitative multicase research is an emergent approach. When using a qualitative multicase design, it is a challenge to specify how many participants will provide enough data to achieve saturation (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). The target number of participants for this research was four. Initial interviews and a second meeting that consisted of member checking with each participant continued until data saturation. Member checking is a research technique used to ensure data saturation by performing follow-up interviews with participants to validate the interpretations accuracy of participant responses and to ensure no new information emerged (Dworkin, 2012; Houghton et al., 2013; Walker, 2012). Data saturation represents the stage when there is no new information from participant responses, and further interviews result in

diminishing to no returns and are therefore of questionable utility (Dworkin, 2012; Walker, 2012). Participants may only share surface level information during the initial interview (Dworkin, 2012). After the original interview had taken place, I interpreted the information to organize and understand the data. Follow-up meetings can help reach data saturation through obtaining in-depth information and enhance academic rigor (Dworkin, 2012). The purpose of the follow-up meeting with each participant is to share the interpretation of the initial data to validate the conclusions with each participant (Dworkin, 2012; Walker, 2012). Member checking entailed follow-up meetings with each participant after the initial interview. Each participant validated that the interpretation of initial interview responses was accurate. All participants also offered more in-depth explanations to some of the most common concepts that emerged from the responses during the member checking process. The additional in-depth information enhanced academic rigor and helped achieve data saturation.

Population and Sampling

Sampling is a critical process used to develop a quality study (Emmel, 2015; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Patton, 2015; Robinson, 2014). When performing a qualitative multicase study, researchers use multiple data sources to identify recurring themes that ensure rigor and saturation (Emmel 2015; Guest et al., 2006; Houghton et al., 2013). Data collection should continue until no new themes or keywords appear. A range of four to 10 interviews is usually an adequate number of participants when performing a multicase study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2014). Choosing rich cases can result in

comprehensive and in-depth information about the phenomenon and is important when collecting extensive insight into the experience of participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Purposeful sampling is a nonrandom selection of participants who link to the research question (Jawale, 2012; Patton, 2015; Robinson, 2014). Purposeful sampling was the chosen method to select the participants who were most aligned with the purpose of the study to provide insight and understanding of the phenomena. Furthermore, initially recruited participants also assisted with snowballing sampling (Jawale, 2012). The first host commercial printing owner recommended other commercial printing owners they thought would have an interest in hosting the research. The printing manager participants helped recruit colleagues to participate in the study. After recruiting the first host organization, snowball sampling was the chosen strategy to identify additional participants who met the inclusion criteria.

Choosing participants with varying roles could help to generate more information about the phenomenon (Bansal & Corley, 2012; Finlay, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I identified and selected four participants from two different commercial printing operations. The inclusion criteria for the participants were managers (a) working in the commercial printing industry in the U.S. Midwest, (b) who held direct responsibility for frontline employees, (c) with a minimum of 5 years experience, (d) who successfully implemented strategies to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives in the last 2 years. Three out of four participants were operations managers, and one participant was a quality control manager. All participants met the inclusion criteria.

An advantage of qualitative methodology is the flexibility to conduct interviews and the techniques used to analyze data that researchers can use to gain an understanding of the phenomenon (Bansal & Corley, 2012; Finlay, 2014); therefore, it was necessary to have participants openly describe both frontline employees' buy-in and the implementation of change initiatives. Before the interviews, the commercial printing managers received an introduction to the study, including the purpose of the research, the potential impact on business practices, and the implications for social change. The participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the research objectives. The interviews with managers consisted of nine questions and lasted approximately 30 minutes. The participants selected convenient locations of their choice to conduct the interview. The interviews took place in private and quiet locations to minimize interruptions.

Ethical Research

Researchers implement processes to protect participant rights and anonymity (Rowley, 2012). Researchers also develop trust with participants and protect them from potential harm during the interview process (Rowley, 2012). Research objectives must meet the criteria of applicable laws, professional conduct, practices, and institutional regulations (Antes, 2014). My credentials included completion of the NIH Office of Extramural Research's web-based training course on January 11, 2013 (Certification Number 1072932; see Appendix D).

The interview process did not start until the Walden University IRB granted approval to perform research. Contact with participants occurred by direct

communication with various commercial printing operations in the U.S. Midwest. I obtained the contact information of the first commercial printing operation owner who met the inclusion criteria from a professional business acquaintance that provided the information to initiate and request a face-to-face meeting. Once granted permission to recruit managers, and all participants had an equitable opportunity to participate without coercion. Participants who volunteered to take part in the study had the chance to read and review the informed consent form. Participants had the right to withdraw at any time by oral or written request. There were no incentives offered to participate in the study.

The researcher has a duty to ensure the anonymity, confidentiality, and consent of the participants while appropriately analyzing participants' explicit and implicit meanings (Antes, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). The strategy enacted to protect participant's identity was to use alphanumeric codes. Numbering contributions from all participants in chronological order of involvement safeguarded their anonymity and privacy. For example, P1 and P2 represented Participants 1 and 2. The alphanumeric codes of C1 and C2 indicated the participants were from Company 1 or Company 2. For example, P1C1 was participant 1 from Company 1. All information will remain in a locked safe, and all digital data will reside on a password-protected personal computer for no less than 5 years. The measures to ensure confidentiality and anonymity include the destruction of all information that may link the participants to the study by erasing all electronic data and shredding hard-copy information after 5 years.

Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012) emphasized constructing the informed consent form so that participants could understand their role in the process clearly. The informed

consent form (see Appendix C) includes an explanation that each interview would last approximately 30 minutes, there were nine open-ended questions (see Appendix A), and collected data will remain in a locked safe for no less than 5 years. After 5 years, shredding of all data will ensure continued anonymity of study participants.

Data Collection Instruments

A data collection instrument is a device used to collect information (Yin, 2014). I was the primary data collection instrument for this study. Researchers use semistructured interviews to ask open-ended questions, with the benefit of asking follow-up inquiries to obtain further explanations (Finlay, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014). The chosen data collection methods included using an interview protocol (see Appendix A), along with document collection consisting of company provided information. Member checking included asking follow-up questions so the participants could review the interpretations of their responses, obtain further explanations of themes from the initial interview, and achieve data saturation.

The data collection tool consisted of an interview protocol that included nine open-ended semistructured questions (see Appendix A). The data capture of participant responses to the open-ended questions occurred using a Livescribe Echo Smartpen digital recording device with a personal smart phone's audio recorder serving as a backup. Interpretation of what the participant shared in the interview process occurred immediately upon completion of the meeting.

The document-gathering step was the second method of data collection. Each host organization submitted different forms of documentation to show the success of gaining

frontline employee buy-in implementing successful change initiatives. The company-provided documents included positive ROI documentation, action trackers, before-and-after pictures, performance indicators, and performance trends demonstrating successful productivity initiatives and employee buy-in. The process of verification included a review of a variety of public records in the form of company websites, news articles, and annual reports as part of the document collection process. The two participating host organizations offered guided factory tours, which were helpful in gaining additional information and insight regarding how managers used strategies in practice. The strategies that managers described in the interview process were evident on the factory tour via visual displays and more in-depth explanations from the guiding participants. The interviews, document collection methods, and factory tours produced several distinct forms of evidence; therefore, methodological triangulation was the chosen method for upholding reliability and validity of the data.

Using semistructured interviews with open-ended questions enables participants to share in-depth and descriptive experiences by recommendations for rigorous research (Dworkin, 2012; Giorgi, 2012; Nirupama & Etkin, 2012). Challenges exist with open-ended interview questions. A researcher could have challenges grouping and creating themes when analyzing the data (Emmel, 2015). In contrast, one advantage of open-ended interview questions is they could minimize researcher bias by allowing participants to describe their experiences openly (Nirupama & Etkin, 2012; Riiskjær, Ammentorp, & Kofoed, 2012). The use of qualitative inquiry helped to explore the perspectives and experiences of managers.

Member checking is a technique to improve the accuracy and relevance of the participants' intended meaning while achieving the maximum benefit for reliability and validity (Walker & McNamara, 2013). Member checking is a process wherein participants confirm the researchers' interpretation of the transcribed interview answers to validate alignment with the intended meaning of the response (Amerson, 2011). Member checking and data saturation are research methods used to strengthen the trustworthiness of the qualitative research findings (Amerson, 2011; Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011; Walker & McNamara, 2013).

Member checking took place after the initial interview and data interpretation. Interpreting each participant response and writing a one to two page summary immediately after each interview ensured accuracy of the data. The next step was to share the interpretation with the participant for validation through a follow-up meeting. All participants agreed the interpretations accurately reflected the views expressed in the interviews. Some researchers have argued that participants could create interpretation issues during member checking; however, Barusch et al. (2011) countered that the process increases trustworthiness.

Coding is a process in which the researcher organizes the answers from transcribed interview questions to generate themes that emerge from the data (Da Mota-Pedrosa, Näslund, & Jasmand, 2012). I organized the interview questions, data, and notes into categories before coding. The data that emerged from the interviews underwent interpretation and coding to identify themes using QSR NVivo 10 software. Participants had a designated alphanumeric code to ensure confidentiality and protection of their

identity. The purpose of this approach was to establish credibility by transcribing and coding the data based on the themes that emerged from participants' responses. The data will remain protected in a locked safe for 5 years. At the expiration of 5 years, I will destroy all the data.

Semistructured interviews, collected business documents, and factory tour observations were the sources of data. The semistructured interview process facilitated open discussions for participants to share experiences related to the purpose of the study. The interviews of four participants continued and the data collection process extended to member checking, culminating in data saturation, or the stage at which no new information emerged.

Data Collection Technique

The participants were commercial printing managers from the Midwestern United States. A multicase design was the chosen data collection technique to gather data from multiple sources of information. Using purposeful sampling ensured the participants selected to participate in the interviews had experience utilizing strategies to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability.

Semistructured interviews with managers were the primary data collection technique, and various company-provided documents were the second source of data. The capture of all semistructured face-to-face interview data required using a Livescribe Echo Smartpen Digital recording device, while using a smart phone's audio recorder as a backup. Yin (2014) recommended checking the voice recorder occasionally to ensure it is

working properly. Asking the interview questions sequentially helped to maintain consistency and control of the process.

White and Drew (2011) explained that disadvantages of the open-ended nature of qualitative interview questions could create issues in interpreting the meaning of the responses; however, the advantage of this approach is that researchers can identify emerging themes rather than just capturing data. The benefit of collecting documentation in combination with participant interview responses is the comprehensiveness of the data that originates in the host commercial printing operation (Rowley, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie, & Green, 2012).

The two commercial printing business owners granted permission to conduct factory tours, so the goal was to observe the entire manufacturing environment and check for consistency data that emerged throughout the interview process. The advantage of a factory tour was that it offered a chance to observe the physical environment and identify additional information that might have value in the study. During the factory tour, I was able to observe several of the strategies that the commercial printing managers explained during the face-to-face interviews in practice in the work environment. After evaluating the multiple sources of data, in-depth information about the strategies commercial printing managers used to gain frontline employee buy-in when implementing change initiatives comprised the process of data triangulation.

A pilot study was not required because Walden University does not mandate it for qualitative research involving the use of open-ended interview questions. Interview times and places were set up at the participants' choice after signing the consent form. The

interviews began with an introduction about the significance of the research and included an explanation of the value each participant added to the study's results. The length of time for each interview depended on the depth and detail each participant provided in answering the questions. The average duration of each interview was approximately 30 minutes. After synthesizing the information, asking each participant to offer feedback on the relevance and accuracy of the interpretation of the responses helped to ensure accuracy of interpretation and complete member checking of participant responses. Member checking helped to ensure the data interpretation matched with the intended meaning of each participant's response (Amerson, 2011). After member checking, uploading the data into the qualitative data analytical software, QSR NVivo 10 was the method for organizing the data to code the information. Uploading the data into QSR NVivo 10 completed the process of data collection. Participants received a one or two-page summary of the research results upon final CAO approval of the study.

Data Organization Techniques

Data organization is essential for effective analysis. All aspects of data collection, storage, and retrieval during the research process are the individual responsibility of the researcher. The data organization technique included an effort to synthesize data immediately upon the completion of the initial interviews. Once the synthesis was complete, each participant had the opportunity to member check the interpretations of the data to ensure they were accurate. The process of member checking consisted of contacting each participant to review the finalized interpretations of each interview synthesis to gain concurrence regarding the accuracy of the data analysis, interpretations,

and facilitate any amendment if warranted. The following process entailed transcribing all recorded interview data immediately upon the completion of member checking, and typing the data verbatim into Microsoft Word. The data organization technique also included the coding of managers' responses into emergent themes pursuant to the analysis of interviews.

Methodological triangulation is a way to compare multiple sources of data to prove, establish, and construct the validity of the research findings (Barusch et al., 2011; Bekhet & Zausniewski, 2012). The data underwent triangulation to assure the validity of the findings in addressing the research question. The process involved collecting company documentation and comparing the data to the interview responses to ensure consistency between the two sources of information. The comparisons of interview responses and the ROI documentation, action trackers, before-and-after pictures, and performance-indicating documents to existing commercial printing publications confirmed consistency among the data. The data analysis entailed an additional review of commercial printing reports from the Printing Industries of America (PIA) along with newly published articles to identify the extent of similarities and differences from existing literature.

The use of technical features and capabilities of QSR NVivo 10 software facilitated organizing and interpreting the data. The purpose of using QSR NVivo 10 software was to highlight themes and patterns for analysis and to organize and code the data in a way that helps trend the themes and patterns. All data collected and organized will reside on a password-protected personal computer and remain in a locked safe to

ensure confidentiality for 5 years from the completion of the study. Erasing of text files through a computer program and shredding of paper document associated with the research will ensure appropriate data storage and participant confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Researchers collect, organize, analyze, and interpret data to identify emerging themes (Chikweche & Fletcher, 2012). The data analysis approach was to gather the information, review and transcribe the voice-recorded interviews by typing the summary into a Microsoft Word document, synthesizing the evidence, and collecting documents related to management strategies, change initiatives, productivity improvements, and employee buy-in. Open-ended interview questions served to prompt the commercial printing managers into insight. Participants were also encouraged to ask questions to clarify any interview questions that were confusing, which ensured a clear understanding of the inquiries (Amerson, 2011). The interview questions were open-ended to facilitate discussion and in answering the central research question. The questions used in the interviews of commercial printing managers were

1. What types of change initiatives have you and your organization implemented to improve productivity?
2. What is your role as a manager in promoting employee participation and gaining buy-in during change initiative to improve productivity?
3. What strategies do you use to succeed in gaining frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity?

4. How do you communicate expectations and goals to employees when implementing change initiatives to improve productivity?
5. How do you identify and address the individual training and developmental needs of your employees, so they are prepared for productivity improvements?
6. How do you encourage employees to exercise their physical and mental capacities to support productivity improvement related change initiatives?
7. What rewards or recognitions do you use to get employees to feel loyal and committed to productivity based changes?
8. What other strategies do managers use to achieve frontline employee participation and buy-in to implement change initiatives to improve productivity?
9. What else might you like to share about your experiences of gaining frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity?

Thematic data analysis is an effective method for summarizing information from multiple sources (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). An analysis of the interviews using a process of constant comparison of interview transcripts resulted in themes emerging. The emergent themes compared with company records and documentation, supplemented with notes taken from a factory tour and the observations thereof, ensured a holistic process of data triangulation. The data analysis step also entailed an additional review of the academic literature along with any newly published articles from the PIA, and other credible industry reports to complete triangulation.

Data analysis entailed seven steps: (a) uploading the transcribed data into QSR NVivo 10 software, (b) coding and sorting the information by reviewing the data in detail, (c) grouping emerging information by comparable words and phrases into themes, (d) synthesizing the data by further reviewing the codes, (e) analyzing both sources of data by linking interview information and company documents, (f) comparing interview and company documents with factory tour observations, and (g) reviewing additional literature along with any published articles published after 2014 from the PIA or other credible reports to identify the extent of correlation with and differences from existing literature. Utilizing a modified van Kaam method to conduct an analysis of the interview responses, aided in identifying shared meaning and themes (Moustakas, 1994). During the data analysis phase, it was essential to view the process in light of the conceptual framework. Theory Y served as the link between the literature, the methodology, and the results to ensure conclusions reflected the proper integration and reference to the theoretical foundation of the research.

Observing the data through the lens of Theory Y was the conceptual foundation that aided in viewing and analyzing the strategies commercial printing managers in the U.S. Midwest need to gain frontline employee buy-in to implement change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability. An analysis of the nine semistructured interview responses and the company documentation collected from host commercial printing operations took place. The careful review of interview data led to the identification of emerging patterns and themes and aided the categorization of each into separate and appropriate classifications. The observations gathered during the factory tours reinforced

the themes that emerged from both the interview process and the collection, evaluation, and verifications of company documents.

The large volume of textual information associated with this research design presented a reliability and validity risk. The potential to make mistakes and have errors in was moderate. The data analysis technique included using QSR NVivo 10 software to reduce the risk of mistakes, improve the data analysis process, and enhance my ability to interpret the data. The selected approach was to group the data into themes while assigning an alphanumeric code to protect participant identities. The data analysis technique involved identifying themes by trending and reviewing the frequency of word repetition, reviewing the words that emerged most frequently, and assigning meaning to the overall theme. Synthesizing the data immediately after each interview helped mitigate interpretation errors. Transcribing the data verbatim immediately after each interviewee performed member checking also mitigated the potential for mistakes since the recall and summarization of information transpired after participants confirmed interpretations were accurate.

The conclusions of this study developed from evaluating the responses from the semistructured face-to-face interviews, evaluation, and scrutiny of company documents that included ROI documentation, action trackers, before-and-after pictures, performance indicators, and performance trends, and observations noted during factory tours. The process of using methodological triangulation was a holistic approach to compare and contrast responses from the semistructured interview responses and company documents. My aim was to develop unbiased conclusions that could increase the rigor of the study.

Using the factory observations helped support the validity of both the interview responses and the collected documentation. Unbiased conclusions substantiated the significance of the findings.

Reliability and Validity

The purpose of this section is to outline the steps used to safeguard against threats to the reliability and validity of the study. Reliability is the accuracy and precision of producing consistent and repeatable study results (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Validity addresses whether a study measures what the researcher claims to measure (Hammer & Berland, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). The overall goal of ensuring reliability and validity is to present findings that are accurate, reliable, and valid (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A careful review of past research and seminal sources regarding reliability and validity served to identify examples of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For example, Kaplan et al. (2014) demonstrated dependability of the finding's validity through peer examination, triangulation, and replication. The following headings address the concepts and means for assuring the reliability and validity of this study.

Dependability. Internal validity and reliability in quantitative research are equivalent to qualitative research philosophies of dependability and credibility (Houghton et al., 2013). Many considerations warrant recognition in observing the paradigms of rigor in qualitative research. For example, Houghton et al. (2013) explained the concepts of dependability, creditability, transferability, and confirmability challenge the results of

qualitative research. The challenges associated with qualitative research require measures to ensure dependability and academic rigor.

The implementation of member checking by requesting each participant validate the interpretations of the interview data enhanced the academic rigor and dependability of the research findings. The concept of dependability aligns with reliability but is different from quantitative validity. Achieving quantitative validity is less about a focus on creditability, authenticity, and trustworthiness in the same way as qualitative validity (Houghton et al., 2013). To enhance the dependability of the study, engaging participants in member checking served in instilling accuracy and demonstrating the appropriate level of rigor. The second phase of conversations with participants also helped confirm the accuracy of the thematic interpretations of the data. Member checking is a process in which participants have the opportunity to correct potential interpretation errors and challenge the analysis of the researcher to ensure the study is dependable (Houghton et al., 2013).

Dependability also consists of researchers checking the extensiveness of the findings by ensuring data saturation and continuing to collect information until there is no new information (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The collection and review of company documents were part of the triangulation process and delivering synthesized interview data to participants facilitated the review, validation, and insurance of accurate data interpretation. The observations noted during the guided factory tours helped elicit more in-depth information and confirmed emergent themes that evolved from both the interview and company-provided documentation data.

Credibility. The concept of data saturation is also relevant to credibility because it helps a researcher address whether a study has an adequate sample to demonstrate content validity (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). The measures undertaken to maintain credible research were alignment of the conceptual framework, research questions, data collected, and conclusions of the study. Synthesizing the data after each interview strengthened the credibility of the study. Synthesizing the data to understand the level of saturation, and having each participant member check the interpretations enhanced academic rigor. When the collection of new information did not lead to the revelation of additional information related to the problem the conclusion was the achievement of data saturation. Contacting each participant for a follow-up meeting to member check the finalized synthesis and to agree the interpretations were accurate, established a higher level of credibility of the in-depth data (Amerson, 2011).

Transferability. Triangulation is a qualitative validity process researchers use to strengthen the findings of a study (Barusch et al., 2011; Yin, 2014). Researchers often perform triangulation of data, which results in contradictory and inconsistent results (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). The researcher has to make sense of the contradictory and inconsistent results for the reader and demonstrate the richness of the information collected from the data (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013).

Triangulating interview data and company documents such as ROI documentation, action trackers, before-and-after pictures, performance indicators, and performance trends ensured appropriate measures to protect from threats to validity. Examining multiple sources of evidence can help achieve triangulation and saturation

(Yin, 2014). Reviewing the data for redundancy ensured data saturation and transferability of the research (Amerson, 2011). The responsibility of the researcher is to provide a thick and rich description for the reader (Houghton et al., 2013). If readers have the opportunity to evaluate the thick and rich description, they can make informed decisions about the transferability of the findings specific to the context of their needs (Houghton et al., 2013; Stake, 2013). The reader can determine if the findings are transferable to another context. Both data saturation and triangulation transpired to achieve a thick and rich description of the findings.

Confirmability. Validity is the exercise of rigor, thoroughness, and consistency that delivers quality and precision to the research method and design (Taylor-Ritzler, Suarez-Balcazar, Garcia-Iriarte, Henry, & Balcazar, 2013). Researchers should anticipate questions that could challenge the credibility and trustworthiness of a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Rigor in research can occur by delineating the researcher's decisions made throughout the research process (Houghton et al., 2013). Delineating the decisions of the research process is a way for researchers to provide a rationale for the methodological and interpretative judgments used throughout the study (Bekhet & Zausniewski, 2012; Houghton et al., 2013; Stake, 2013). Methodological decisions are traceable through detailed explanations of the choice to use a qualitative method, research design, member checking, triangulation, and analysis procedures (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Stake, 2013, Yin, 2014). Readers may not share a researcher's interpretations; however, they should be able to recognize how the scholar arrived at a decision. The use of data analytical tools helps the process of data organization and analysis. The technical features

and attributes of QSR NVivo 10 software served to enhance the rigor of the research. The use of QSR NVivo 10 software was a comprehensive approach to record of decisions made during data collection and analysis (Houghton et al., 2013).

Member checking is also a method researchers use to support the confirmability of a study (Houghton et al., 2013). Following the completion of the interviews, succinct synthesis, and interpretation of the interview data were steps of member checking. The analysis of the interview data and then requesting each interviewee to review the summarized outcomes unique to that participant's responses aided in ensuring the accuracy and confirmability of the data. Each participant received a printed summary of the synthesis of the face-to-face interview data for review during a follow-up meeting to the conduct member checking. The purpose of this step was to have the participant examine the concise synthesis of each interview question by reviewing a two-page summary and validate that the interpretation represented the subjects' answer, or if there was additional information that could enhance the understanding of the response. By utilizing this step there was an opportunity to amend and include additional details not captured during the initial interviews. The member checking process affirmed the interpretations were accurate.

Ensuring the accuracy of collected data and information by reviewing notes and exercising member checking for clarity can help avoid misinterpretations and increase both the dependability and confirmability of the study (Amerson, 2011). Comparing and contrasting participant responses from different cases strengthen the validity of research (Amerson, 2011; Roulston, 2013; Yin, 2014).

Transition and Summary

Section 2 includes an explanation of the method and research procedures for this qualitative multicase study. The outline of Section 2 includes the (a) purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) participants, (d) research method, (e) research design, (f) population and sampling, (g) ethical research, (h) data collection, (i) data organization technique, (j) data analysis, (k) reliability and validity, and (l) summary. In Section 3, I provide results of the research study, recommendations for professional practice and social change, and suggestions for future research.

After the Walden University IRB had approved to proceed to collect data, I identified qualified participants and conducted face-to-face interviews. A summary of the outcomes of the interviews is in Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore the strategies commercial printing managers need to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability. A compelling need for productivity-based change initiatives existed because of economic fluctuations in the commercial printing industry (Davis, 2014), and future trends are likely to demand owners and managers to remain change-oriented (Lamprinakos, 2015). The commercial printing industry has become more than just ink and paper. For commercial printing owners and managers, there is not much of a future in traditional printed materials, and the industry

will continue to struggle as digital media replaces traditional paper products (Levenson, 2016). The commercial printing industry is going through consolidation, and printers are avoiding becoming commodity ink-on-paper businesses (Levenson, 2016; Timson & Hanley, 2016). Rapid technological change has upended both markets and sent the industry into a decline that has caused printing businesses to offer niche services and enhanced production processes beyond printing on paper to remain successful (Davis, 2014; Kamath & Rodrigues, 2014). The dynamics of the commercial printing industry have increased the need for owners and managers to implement productivity improvements through change initiatives that optimize operational efficiency, eliminate waste, and increase profits (Helper & Henderson, 2014).

The physical research sites were two commercial printing operations located in the Midwestern United States. Given the rapid change occurring in the commercial printing industry, both sites were appropriate for research on management strategies needed to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives. The findings may relate to other industries experiencing change. The selection and eligibility criteria included both cooperating commercial printing operations offering confirmation of profitability for the past 12 months. Each business also provided information that proved the implementation of change initiatives resulted in significant returns on investments.

Presentation of the Findings

The data collection process consisted of interviews with four commercial printing managers from the Midwestern United States. Two participants from each cooperating commercial printing company participated. The semistructured interviews led to

managers answering the overarching research question: What strategies do commercial printing managers need to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability? The participants spoke openly about personal experiences in utilizing strategies to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives and had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time; however, no participant withdrew. Participants answered nine interview questions derived from the research questions and major components of Theory Y, notably related to (a) management style, (b) management practices, (c) employee consideration and participation, (d) employee motivation, and (e) intellectual stimulation.

The multiple sources of data contributed equally to findings of the study. All four participants answered each interview question, and data collection continued until no new data or themes emerged. The four participants provided rich details relating to the research question. Nine categories and 70 subcategories emerged from the analysis of the interview responses. After reading, comparing, interpreting, and completing member checking data saturation was evident.

After conducting the interviews, a written two-page summary helped in member checking the interpretations of the data. Participants received the specific two-page summary that coincided with their individual interview. The two-page summary included interpretations of the interview data collected from each participant. After the summary, returning the subsequent analysis and interpretation to each participant in a follow-up meeting helped to confirm and validate concurrence and alignment with the intended meaning of the interviewee's responses. All participants agreed the interpretations were

accurate during the member checking follow-up session. Each participant provided additional information during the follow-up meetings, which added to the concepts that had emerged throughout the initial interviews.

Methodological triangulation was the process used to assure the validity of the findings addressed the research question. Achieving high quality analysis including using study participant interview responses along with the company documents provided by the cooperating commercial printing companies. The company documents included ROI documentation, action trackers, before-and-after pictures, performance indicators, and performance trends demonstrating successful productivity initiatives and employee buy-in. Observations during guided factory tours helped exemplify data collected from the interview responses and company documentation. The data analysis entailed an additional review of the academic literature along with any published articles post-2014 from the PIA and other credible industry reports to identify the extent of similarity and differences from existing collections of work. The five emergent themes from the body of data pertained to constructive communication, leadership behaviors, performance management, employee management, and employee motivation.

Theme 1: Constructive Communication

The first theme that emerged from the data was constructive communication. Communication was the most common theme evident during data analysis, and was the most frequent subcategory of the other four themes identified throughout the exploration. Constructive communication preserves a positive relationship between communicators, while addressing problems (Gandolfi, 2013). Constructive communication as it relates to

this study is between employees and managers. Managers explained constructive communication was a strategy used for coaching or counseling an employee who had a conflict or issue within the work environment, or was seeking clarification of expectations. The type of communication identified throughout the data analysis process aligned with Gandolfi's (2013) explanation that communication with employees is vital to the overall success of a change event. Most of the interview data had views of how frontline employees reacted to leadership's communicated information about change initiatives. When explored further, participants explained responses in detail. Four participants perceived frontline employee responses to productivity-based changes were mostly positive and a result of the organization's culture of direct information sharing. For example, P1C1 stated, "Encouraging communication, encouraging feedback, and encouraging input to what we do is ingrained in our daily routines." Participant P2C1 indicated that daily interpersonal interactions and communication with frontline employees took up at least 70% of their day. The participants described the type of communication as constructive. Constructive communication aligns with the postulations of Theory Y, which may denote managers' tactics to maximize employee buy-in by using appropriate participative management strategies (Mohamed & Nor, 2013). In contrast, Theory X supporters have believed that employees avoid responsibility and require specific direction to deliver expectations (Kilroy & Dundon, 2015; Sager, 2015).

Both P1C1 and P2C1 emphasized that it was important to allow frontline employees to make decisions. Both participants agreed they welcomed communication and encouraged employees to make discretionary decisions about productivity issues.

P1C1 explained that the management team allows frontline employees to make judgment calls about daily production performance. If employees make decisions incorrectly, the management team gathers to discuss what went wrong, why it was wrong, and how to make a better decision the next time a similar issue arises. The following statement is an explanation from Participant P2C1 about the importance of building trust with frontline employees through communication of expectations.

Management is not around for every decision about issues that occur on the shop floor, in those instances, we have to trust our employees are trained and capable of making the call. Communication is the foundation of encouraging employees to take on that responsibility knowing the consequence will not be a reprimand, but will result in a learning opportunity.

The concept of trust aligns with initial recommendations that positive communication by leadership can offset negative perceptions of employees fearing to make bad decisions, especially during a change initiative (Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011; Sager, 2015). Sager (2015) studied the relationship between managers' Theory Y assumptions and found a positive link between supportive and nonverbally expressive communication styles on employee performance. The following are responses about employee awareness and empowerment to make decisions.

If an employee makes the wrong decision, it is not that you will get a slap on the hand, but we will say that not really the right way to solve the problem; so next time, do it this way. We encourage people not to be afraid of making the

decisions. Then we communicate. We tell them, here is where we are going, so here is your role in the decision-making. (P3C2)

In advanced stages of employee empowerment and engagement, individuals and consequently teams take full responsibility for outcomes, even if they were not the direct result of their actions (Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011; Sager, 2015). Individuals and teams without required input or action by the leader tend to resolve issues and opportunities (Project Management Institute [PMI], 2014). Too much leadership intervention is a form of micromanagement (PMI, 2014). Teams and team members were fully capable of running the daily business as well as developing long-term solutions. During the factory tours, people took full responsibility for results, continual improvement of the operation, and business performance as evidenced by production standards posted on each machine. The leaders' responsibility focused on guiding the group towards the overarching strategy as well as the organization's mission and vision. Leaders minimized or reduced barriers impeding responsibility ownership as employees approached the participants when walking through the factory tour.

Our management team, they challenge employees to find new ways to make decisions quickly. As I said earlier, with identifying employees that make routine decisions we try to push them into making more decisions so they are ready as possible for decisions that can impact a change, financial situation, or quality issue. (P4C2)

From the standpoint of P3C2 and P4C2, simply communicating to employees that they are encouraged to make decisions during a change initiative is not an adequate

strategy. Training employees to be prepared to make decisions when implementing a change is a way to increase their readiness when a situation requires a quick decision (Combe, 2014). Putting employees in everyday situations where they can practice making decisions is a strategy the managers used to prepare employees to make quick judgments during significant changes, such as the implementation of a new multimillion-dollar printing press in the case of Company 1. Mazzei (2014) investigated employees' cognitive reactions to change. Sense-making and situational awareness were two common cognitive methods that researchers confirmed employees use to adapt to, respond to, and cope with change (Maitlis et al., 2013; Mazzei, 2014).

When two of the commercial printing managers explained how the business owner allowed them to communicate a planned strategy, the deliberate tactic included production downtime to allow managers to hold longer meetings, deliver the message, and answer frontline employee questions about the change—implementation of a new printing press. The owner's strategy also included plans to allow the managers to communicate the message in a strategic manner. For example, two managers planned to disclose the implementation of a new printing press during an employee luncheon paid for by the company. The day that the employee luncheon occurred, the participants explained that no external visitors had scheduled access to the factory, which helped in focusing time and energy on the concerns of the employees. The strategy fostered managers to concentrate on one-on-one interactions and following up on employee concerns. When asked the specific question of how frontline employees received the communication, participant responses indicated a positive reaction. P3C2 emphasized

communication strategies help convince skeptical individuals that the reason for a change is for the greater good of the company, as the business would be growing:

We went from 20% to 5% rejected board when implementing the new printing press, so that is a major change. That was a \$235,000 investment with an ROI, which we turned probably within 9 months of the implementation because of the fact the stock costs alone were reduced, and the rejection rate decreased in quantity very significantly. Therefore, that was a big innovation on that end of it. From the implementation of the new press and the changes made on the prepress side, those three items there have given us the opportunity to gain, in 4 years, almost a 40% growth record. Employees did not receive the communication about the change well since it was the first time we implemented a new press in 15 years. Communication about the reason for the change helped ease employees fear about the new equipment. (P3C2)

During the factory tours, the inspirational vision of each company was fully transparent both internally and externally. During the Company 1 tour, a vision statement posted throughout the facility linked the employees and customers to form an identity for the business and the associate teams. The inspirational vision personalized the company to allow employees to identify with the visualization and to feel that they were key contributors to something much bigger than company profit. According to Participant P1C1, associates had input into the vision formation and actualization by sharing examples and stories about the organization. P1C1 stated, "The vision has become who we are." The inspirational vision served as motivation for the frontline employees and

teams serving as a catalyst for discretionary effort as well as a foundation for decision making. P1C1 explained similar efforts to create positive communications:

We bought a \$3.5 million new press. When we came back with the contract and said we had bought it, we explained to the employees from that time on, that the press runs would run at the rate 18,000 an hour, which was groundbreaking for the industry. If you go around the country, you will find that a printer will run the equipment at 80% efficiency. They all thought we were nuts when we bought a new press that would run 18,000 units an hour at 90% efficiency. Therefore, the old school pressmen, when they heard us talk 18, they thought we were just raving mad. Communication, consistent communication of the same thing was our strategy. And once you have said it seven times it starts to sink in, and now today we are leading the industry in cycle speeds for units per hour in our market because we created a vision through the routine of communicating what rate we wanted the equipment to run. Employees now expect the same. In fact, they now get angry when the machine has issues and doesn't allow them to operate at 18 units per minute.

The actions of P3C2 and P1C1 are significant because people are inclined to resist change and prefer to maintain the status quo by adhering to routine and habitual behaviors (Hon et al., 2014; Hon & Lui, 2016; Kotter, 1995; Lewin, 1947). Hon and Lui (2016) emphasized that even in circumstances that favor creative action, people will likely choose familiar behavioral options based on past success, relative ease, or certainty. From a psychological viewpoint, Hon and Lui confirmed that resistance to

change is a common workplace phenomenon, but when associated with greater urgency, pressure, routine, and communication then regular organizational activities employees tend to conform. There were examples from participants that indicated they were attempting positive communication to run the new presses beyond industry standards or capability. P2C1 remarked on the communication of the implementation of the new press by saying,

So I have noticed, many times with operators developing new skills to run a new press you can tell when they have had a bad day. They already know that when you walk up to them. They beat themselves up, because number one, we walk by them every day expecting the press to be running and running at 18 an hour. The employees know they should be running at that rate with no downtime, and they do not really want to hear it from me because they know and expect themselves to achieve the expectations.

The responses from leadership indicated there is a conscientious effort to have consistent and positive communications, despite potentially negative outcomes when implementing new equipment or processes. The strategy aligned with Battilana and Casciaro (2012) and Kuhn's (2012) explanation that effective managers explain to stakeholders why a change needs to transpire, how to implement the change, and the lasting impact the change will have on the business (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012; Kuhn, 2012). Consistent and positive communication between a manager and employee is important because it reinforces the goals and expectations of business results and increases the likeliness of individual's willingness to accomplish goals (Kuhn, 2012).

According to a credible industry source, PMI (2014) posited that consistent and positive communication is constructive feedback that many researchers have proven engages employees. Several researchers found data that show business leaders believe in vertical organizational structures: top-down management, communicating directives, and messaging that instill fear are the most appropriate ways to gain results (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012; Kim et al., 2014; Kuhn, 2012; Lamprinakis, 2015).

Constructive communication was a prevailing theme from the majority of participants' answers. Communication was the dominant strategy that managers utilized in every major theme that emerged from the interview data. Constructive communication with employees can lead to employee advancement and organizational growth (Hynes, 2012). During the factory tours, many employees approached the touring manager asking questions, requesting feedback, and making suggestions. The participating commercial printing managers stated that they use constructive communication in personal responses to employees to deliver information that empowers individuals to make decisions since they are usually subject matter experts. Constructive communication instills confidence and understanding that employees have the authority to make decisions. On the factory tour, observations were consistent with a study that supported constructive communication. Matovic, Koch, and Forgas (2014) illustrated managers who use constructive communication could empower employees to be more productive. As an example, during a tour with participants from Company 2, it was evident that the strategic plan objectives were a part of frequent communications with a high degree of regularity across all communication forums. Participant P3C2 explained that the objective was to

drive awareness and knowledge. Participant P3C2 stated, “When progress is made, associates begin to connect their daily activity to the actualization of the strategic plan.”

To summarize, employees begin to understand how their unique contributions support the long-term realization of the strategic plans and specific change initiatives. The takeaway from the data collected at Company 2 was that managers must seize every opportunity to link associated activities to the bigger picture strategy. Managers are responsible for intentionally building connections between daily work and the long-term strategic plan success.

In the first theme, constructive communication emerged from the commercial printing manager’s responses. Commercial printing managers described constructive communication that includes positive and empowering language encourages frontline employees to participate in daily decision-making. One action tracker, a memo, and a performance management television on the production floor supported the encouragement of employee participation through suggestion boxes, incentive programs, and positive leadership styles. Observations made during the factory tours validated the communication strategies identified from both the participant interviews and documentation collected existed in business practice. The emergence of this theme reinforced earlier research showing that manager’s communication style at a time of change is necessary. The theme aligned with Smet, Vander Elst, Griep, and De Witte’s (2016) study that organizations should invest in realistic communication, meaning that managers should provide frequent, honest, and relevant information about changes. In the event a manager does not have all the information about what will happen in the future,

management should explain to employees why certain questions cannot be answered and ensure that employees are never intentionally deceived (Smet et al., 2016). The data and findings may suggest that managers should include employees in all phases of communication when implementing change that involves productivity and profitability initiatives.

Theme 2: Leadership Behaviors

The second theme that emerged from the data was leadership behaviors. All four participants emphasized the need for frontline employee participation for success. Participant responses to Interview Questions 2 and 3 composed Theme 2 and aligned with Theory Y. The nodes visible in the QSR NVivo 10 output for this theme were leadership behavior and communication. Leadership behaviors and two-way communication between managers and frontline employees were critical to change initiatives. Prominent subcategories such as employee feedback, team meetings, one-on-one interaction in the work environment, and training emerged from the interview and document collection data. From the analyses of the responses, the participants appeared to have placed significant emphasis on personal experiences with frontline employees and the solicitation of ideas about what would make the productivity based change initiative more successful as an influencing factor to implement decisions. The combination of one-on-one interactions and team meetings that resulted in strategic feedback from frontline employees is beneficial in preparing printing managers to implement successful productivity based changes. Xie et al. (2012) posited that team communication that enhances stakeholder engagement is a mediating factor in

eliminating communication barriers and has a positive impact on the outcomes of the change process. Contrary to the findings of Xie et al.'s study, Gürbüz et al. (2013b) explained that some managers favor management by coercion as the primary factor influencing frontline employees to provide feedback during change initiatives.

Three participants credited adaptations in company mission and business forecasting as the primary reason for pursuing a productivity based change initiative in their printing operations. Two participants associated the need for change with benchmarking industry performance, strategic planning, innovation through creative solutions, and performance management. Participant P1C1 stated,

We are not buying a company, we bought this company 10 years ago, we are not buying a company to sit back and let it die, so we benchmark industry leaders to challenge the competition, obviously. When we decided where we were going, we did that through a strategic planning process by creating a 5-year plan. One, the year ahead is very detailed as to what we do, and the other years, 2 through 5, are more visionary.

There was evidence from interview data, document collection, and factory tours from Company 1 that the goals and objectives of the organization had a balance among metrics, performance standards, and personal development. Frontline employees and managers were part of creating objectives based upon knowledge, feedback, and experience. During the factory tour, observed communication between employees and managers was two-way, with the associates owning development, coaching, and mentoring within the process. The process at Company 2 included individually based

goals that not only aligned with but also supported team and organizational goals.

Personal development, cross training, and education were critical components of the balanced goals and objectives program that emerged from Company 2. Goals and objectives underwent review quarterly, with frequent informal discussions keeping both short and long-term plans visible and current. Participant P3C2 noted, “On the innovation side, you look at a 5-year to 10-year plan” and stated,

It is about the forecasting, and really, with the personnel and the innovation we encourage the personnel to come up with and understand the performance issues and trying to solve those issues to make their jobs smoother and better so that we become a better-aligned company and achieve productivity gains.

Consistent with the results of research conducted by Woisetschläger et al. (2015) on factors motivating employees to pursue innovation, participants valued frontline employees’ ability to develop creative solutions. For example, Participant P4C2 offered, “The first strategy is to be open minded with employee suggestions because they’re the experts, so they normally have the best ideas.”

Three participants described themselves as having an innate desire to interact with employees on a day-to-day basis. Compared to the results of research conducted by Van de Ven and Sun (2011) on organizational change and leadership in the workplace, the participants discussed the traits of employee interaction through interpersonal communication and team-based meetings. Participant P1C1 stated, “Every morning, first thing by 7:30 I’ve said good morning to probably everybody in the company, I hear information that way.” Likewise, Participant P2C2 revealed, “We have daily performance

meetings with each team to discuss results, and when we were implementing the new Omega auto bottoming, machine operators came forth with ideas routinely throughout the day and the management team took immediate action” and “Team meetings were also held multiple times a day.” Participant P2C1 noted, “I think we have a great team, we have an excellent management team as well, we have dedicated employees on the floor, and we have dedicated operators.” P2C1 emphasized the performance of the factory teams attributed to how well and to how frequently it was necessary to communicate on a daily basis. P2C1 stated, “When we produce well, I do not visit the production floor, and I focus on sales, but when the plant is not performing efficiently, I usually am on the floor most of my day to see what is going on.”

Theme 3: Performance Management

The third theme that emerged from the data was performance management. Theme 3 comprised the responses to Interview Questions 2, 3, and 4. The participants discussed a variety of performance management tactics. Performance management tactics consist of the role of the manager, communication, and performance monitoring that highlight characteristics of successful strategies needed to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives for increased productivity and profitability. The role of the manager and communication are critical factors to support employee and company success during change initiatives (Bouckenooghe, 2012; Geertshuis et al., 2015; Hamdi & Rajablu, 2012). Grachev and Rakitsky (2013) and Kemp (2013) examined the implications of how leaders monitor performance and communicate expectations to engage employees to perform at higher levels. When asked to describe their roles during

change initiatives, commercial printing managers' responses varied, ranging from managing through strategic processes, personal leadership styles, monitoring performance, communication, and managing employees.

Three participants described personal leadership styles as forward thinking while making frequent observations and interactions of both the performance of the organization and frontline employees. "I consider myself more of a visionary," Participant P1C1 said. Participant P3C2 stated, "My role is to be a strategic leader" and "As a strategic leader you look ahead at the business plan and evaluate your strategy." Participant P4C2 added, "You have to measure your business performance, observe employee performance, and then understand what their capacity levels are to bring them from one level to the next level of achievement." The participants' responses were consistent with two researchers' findings that demonstrated experienced managers who lack strong critical thinking skills struggle to manage change initiatives (Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). Participant P4C2 described a strategy that is consistent with Oreg et al.'s (2011) and Vakola's (2013) way of understanding employees' cognitive ability to perceive fairness, understand the need for change, and distinguish the potential benefit or harm from the change outcomes.

Three participants described themselves as having a participatory leadership style. Consistent with the results of research conducted by Theory Y activists, Mohamed and Nor (2013) noted that the influence of participative leadership on employee intellectual stimulation is significant. Participants discussed regular involvement with frontline employees and business processes that relate to change management. Participant P1C1

noted, “Receiving input from a variety of frontline employees is critical to implementing change” and “A 25-year-old employee new to the industry is expecting different results than a 55-year-old printing operator.” Participant P1C1 concluded, “When going from an old established printing company to a Google-type, Apple-type technology based firm, looking for profitable results, and seeking various levels of employee feedback is important.” Participant P4C2 added, “I have a supportive and interactive style of managing. It is an open door management style where I want employees to be comfortable to come and talk to me and tell me things.”

The discussion on participatory leadership style highlighted the importance of being approachable and involved at any time as a manager to motivate employees to open lines of communication. Managers who exhibit a participatory management style during times of change can increase involvement and performance of their employees (Mohamed & Nor, 2013). Participant P3C2 explained, “I try to be involved in every aspect of the organization through a lot of one-on-one interaction with individuals or teams so that I can understand what the barriers and the challenges are” and “The key is to identify what is working well, not working well, and addressing and learning accordingly so you can apply new knowledge across the business.” Participant P1C1 noted, “I take strategic direction from the owner and then try to position the strengths of employees in a way that points us in the right direction to succeed.” During the factory tour of Company 2, several employees informally interacted with other leaders on the production floor and the manager guiding the tour. Most employees approached the guiding manager with questions or feedback that aligned with the company’s strategic

plan. Company 2 offered a PowerPoint presentation that explained the company's strategic vision and goals. The business owner developed the vision and goals. The company has reviewed the presentation with employees at the annual review meeting. Participant P3C2 explained that once the frontline employees understand what the goals are, the culture and willingness of the employees to achieve those results becomes intrinsic across the organization.

Two participants described a performance monitoring strategy called management by objectives (MBO). Two participants also described a performance monitoring strategy called visual performance management (VPM). Participants P1C1 and P2C1 worked at the same printing organization and the statements of a performance monitoring strategy of MBO aligned. Participants P3C2 and P4C2 worked at a different printing operation, but their statements about the performance monitoring strategy of VPM also aligned. The consistencies that both participants from the same organization agreed in both cases supported the strategies were established business practices.

Both participants from Company 1 surmised MBO is a process of identifying and communicating specific objectives in an organization, which management can convey to frontline employees as a strategy, then decide on how to achieve each objective in sequence. Participant P1C1 specified, "We have six or seven items or areas that we want employees to concentrate on this year as we implement new prepress equipment. If they achieve the objectives, they get rewards."

Hornstein (2014) focused on managers' ability to define and agree on change objectives, whereas Falkheimer (2014) concentrated on the capacity of managers to

communicate strategies when implementing change. In a study of participatory management practices, managers who engaged in active listening had a high degree of success in gaining employee buy-in (Purdy & Manning, 2014). Managers who listened to both the facts and feelings expressed by employees had a better chance of engaging employees in the change process (Day et al., 2014; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). Purdy and Manning (2014) found that employee perception determined the level of influence leaders have on employee behavior and performance. Consistent with the results of research conducted by Parker et al. (2013) on influencing employee behavior through performance management tactics, the four commercial printing managers expressed a desire either to communicate business objectives verbally or visually to influence frontline employee's performance positively.

Participant P3C2 stated, "I share key performance indicators in weekly meetings and display the information on the production floor. This lets frontline employees know the results of their performance, and can even impact their wages." Participant P4C2 noted the importance of visually displaying the results of company, team, and individual performance to help frontline employees understand they are "contributing to a common goal; a goal beyond just showing up for work and doing a job." Similarly, Participant P4C2 explained, "I hope our visual performance management system helps employees see their importance in the organization and the role they play in our success." Parker et al. (2013) asserted displaying performance metrics and communicating business results motivates employees. Participant P3C2 commented, "Most people come to work to do a good job and succeed, and no one wants to fail, so we display our results to understand

what is going on.” Participant P3C2 explained, “Displaying, and more importantly, reviewing and communicating business results with employees across the company allows us to identify issues and put countermeasures in place to eliminate problems.”

Contrary to responses by participants, Hill et al. (2012) and Wittig (2012) asserted that communicating business objectives and performance monitoring are not adequate to encourage positive employee behavior beyond individual goals. Landry et al. (2016) stated that most employees work solely for a sustainable income; therefore, other management strategies do not motivate employees psychologically. Due to the assumption employees place the highest psychological value on money, some managers conclude the average workforce is more efficient under a micromanagement approach because a lack of mutual trust exists (McNeil, 2016).

Theme 4: Employee Management

The fourth theme that emerged from the data was employee management. Theme 4 emerged from Interview Questions 4, 5, and 6. Nodes for this theme were communication, training and development, and the encouragement of employee participation, which described the primary areas participants highlighted regarding management of employees. Commercial printing managers used both individual and team meetings to communicate important company performance. Sharing the business vision, goals, and performance supports high employee involvement and positive perceptions of leadership (Parker et al., 2013). Participant P1C1 stated, “I share the vision of where we are trying to go during a quarterly strategic planning meeting with 12 people, which includes members of the frontline workforce.” Participant P1C1 added, “We decide what

to communicate to the rest of the company and the next objectives to attain over the period of the following quarter.”

Consistent with the results of research conducted by Fuchs and Prouska (2014) on gaining employee buy-in, participants focused on communicating a clear vision and future company goals. Two participants supported open communication through weekly and quarterly meetings. “Employees are given a weekly packet that explains the output goals, the latest performance, and a comparison of where they are compared to goal, where they are compared to other employees, and again, daily meetings cover those topics in depth,” explained Participant P3C2. Participant P2C1 noted, “During staff meetings, I communicate what areas are in need of improvement.” Participant P2C1 said, “So, every day we start the morning with a meeting to see how we are tracking against key performance indicators. Those results are presented to all frontline operators, and they know where they stand on a weekly basis from not only their performance but where we are financially, we tell them what’s going on, we tell them what’s new and what’s not.” Participant P1C1 explained, “We benchmark our performance against 250 other companies around the world. We set performance targets based on the benchmarks and make waste and run speed targets that are communicated to employees.”

All four participants said that they used frequent informal communication when walking the production floor to reiterate discussions from the formal meetings. Informal communication is a strategy to inform employees of expectations and goals. Grosser et al. (2012) explained informal communication is usually more effective than formal

meetings. Formal communication was a second method that emerged during the interviews and factory tours.

Three participants classified formal communication as information and circulars posted on the production floor. Participant P3C2 described, “We have site boards as part of our visual performance management program that displays scrap, productivity, or throughput information, uptime, scheduled production, planned downtime, mechanical downtime, and machine speeds that are out there on our production floor” and “The site board communicates our expectations and goals, and when we implemented the new pre-press operation, we adjusted our goals as the employees gained experience with the new process.” Participant P1C1 asserted, “When people achieve the goals we have set out to accomplish we recognize those accomplishments in our daily meetings by giving high-fives and good jobs, which encourages participation.” Participant P3C2 revealed, “Trended performance results earn employees extended break periods, employee luncheons, and other incentives to encourage them to innovate when we changed our pre-press operation.” Comparatively, Participant P4C2 noted, “We follow documented routines so every employee understands what it takes to be successful, so they can understand how to meet company objectives.” Bouckenooghe (2012) noted formal communication supports employee understanding of goals and expectations. Managers systematically use formal communication structure to manage upward communication and to cascade business initiatives to lower levels of the organization (Shuck & Herd, 2012).

Goal or objective setting was an important concept included in this theme. Three commercial printing managers viewed goal setting as a determinant of employee buy-in. Having the discipline to implement processes that outline goals and expectations for the company and employees is a practice that promotes higher performance (Fugate et al., 2012; Shuck & Herd, 2012). Both host commercial printing operations hold quarterly meetings to review past performance and align on direction setting objectives for the following quarters to align with the annual goals. Both host commercial printing companies held an annual meeting to review 2015 performance results and agreed on 2016 performance goals. Two presentations from each commercial printing operation constituted a part of the documentation gathering process for data collection. To make sure the operation stayed on track of annual and quarterly goals Participant P1C1 explained, “We have daily shift meetings, weekly performance meetings, and monthly recaps to ensure we are on track with goals.” “When we implemented the new Omega auto bottoming machine, I incorporated the ideas of the frontline employees to make sure they were committed and focused on staying on track of our annual projected goals,” said Participant P3C2. Commitment to change is a particular outcome of employees’ beliefs, attitudes, or intent to pursue goals consistent with the success of a company (Vakola, 2014). The degree of commitment is critical when attempting to determine if employees will buy in to a proposed change (Meyer et al., 2012; Nohe et al., 2013).

Employee training and development was a prevalent theme based on descriptions from participants. Employee development opportunities ranged from original equipment manufacturer (OEM) training, to internally developed classroom training and structured

on-the-job shadowing activities. Both organizations also have educational reimbursement programs and internal work structures that supported progressive employee advancement. Research conducted by Ilander, Marques, Jalali, and Ferreira (2016) on the impact of continuous training in industrial firms addressed the importance of providing ongoing opportunities for employees to advance through training and development.

In contrast to Ilander et al.'s (2016) research, training-intensive firms have a more defined strategic approach to the market and are more conscious of business competition. All participants shared the view that training was a key component in promoting positive employee performance that drives business results. Participants explained the training need typically determines the type of development offered to employees. Participant P3C2 stated, "In the event of implementing a new piece of equipment like the auto bottoming machine we would offer specialized equipment training with the OEM." Similarly, Participant P1C1 described, "If an employee approaches us to participate in our tuition reimbursement program we feel that is a long-term commitment the individual is making to develop their overall knowledge and skills" and claimed "We invest in people as long as they make long-term commitments to our company; it has to be mutually beneficial."

All four participants explained the formal training schedules and plans that each commercial printing operation has established. Participant P1C1 described a standardized training structure that includes "a training and advancement program that involves the completion of various levels of in-house training checklists by employees." Participant P3C2 stated, "We have a strategic qualification system where employees must continue

to complete advanced levels of training to demonstrate skill acquisition. Upon acquiring a new skill, the employee could qualify for increased wages or bonus opportunities.”

Participants P3C2 and P4C2 described that 1 day per month each employee reviews training documentation to begin learning the steps for operating a new piece of equipment or process, then employees perform hands-on training by shadowing a qualified trainer. Once the employee is confident, he or she must operate and maintain the equipment or process for the next 30 days to demonstrate having fully acquired the skill or knowledge. Participant P2C1 added, “If employees are not completely successful, I ask myself if there something wrong with the training process that I do not understand so that we can fix the problem.” “Trained employees advance our companies knowledge base,” noted Participant P1C1. Employee development through a progressive advancement system is a similar process as Kopelman et al.’s (2012) as a way to establish knowledge-based learning programs for employees. Because of growth in knowledge-based learning programs, management strategies focused on developing employees are increasingly becoming prevalent (Kopelman et al., 2012).

P3C2 described an informal side of the training process:

Our average tenure of an employee is 15 years, so we have highly skilled operators and technicians. Training employees on new equipment or processes tend to come naturally, and the employees usually are self-directed. They want to learn when change is coming since it is new and not stagnant.

With 35 years’ experience as a commercial printing manager, P1C1 offered,

We operate here with a lot of common sense. And so, a little bit of experience along with seeing a lot of printing companies around the country, and the world for that matter; taking the best of what we have seen in the area of managing employees we have applied it here.

Training documents were one type of data collected. Through observance of the training documentation, Company 1 provides people the knowledge as well as tools and skills to become effective through an employee-manager interaction program. The purpose of the program was to have one-on-one interaction on the production floor between managers and employees. Most importantly, the goal of the program is to grant employees with opportunities to gain experience and confidence. The success or failure was directly proportional to formal leadership's ability to coach and mentor. The downfall of the program was the difficulty to find and develop leadership who truly values and understands the process of coaching and mentoring.

Referencing routines in the operation, Participant P1C1 explained, "Communication, consistent communication of the same thing day in and day out is my favorite training tool. And, once you have established a powerful enough routine it starts to sink in." For example, Participant P1C1 explained that during his 7:00 a.m. walk around he would ask the press operators what the run rate was every day. After the first week, the press operators would respond with "18 cycles per minute boss" before Participant P1C1 could even ask the question. The routine of communicating his expectations ingrained the objectives into each employee. P1C1 explained that is what motives employees to become independent learners. Al Saifi, Dillon, and McQueen

(2016) explained that consistent communication is a powerful training tool when used in routines and as a follow-up strategy in manufacturing environments.

Theme 5: Employee Motivation

The fifth theme that emerged from the data was employee motivation. Hill et al. (2012) reported that employees' motivation came from the perceptions of their leaders or managers' leadership style. Similar opinions were prevalent in the data of this study. Many of the participants indicated that positive leadership style influenced the culture, performance, and motivation associated with employees. Participant P4C2 explained that the small, yet intimate, nature of printing operations allows people to get to know each other; however, it takes a leader to set direction, instill confidence, and motivate employees to do well.

P4C2 commented on the leadership strategies to set direction, instill confidence, and motivate employees to do well.

I use communication to pump people up about what's going on, and it lets them know that we have a chance to bring in more work if we do really well. Then, it lets us know when we are doing really bad too. We challenge each other a lot. Our management team and employees, we are good at finding new ways to challenge each other . . . Like I said earlier, I know one employee does not like public speaking, so I try to push her to speak in front of groups during team meetings as much as possible, so she gains confidence and is as ready as possible for that.

Participant P4C2 discussed a management style that fell outside the construct of Theory Y, but the manager experienced results that many Theory Y leaders obtain.

Participant P4C2 described coercing an employee to speak in front of others in team meetings even though it was outside the individual's comfort zone. Even though it was a coercive leadership behavior, which is more aligned with Theory X leadership traits, it motivated the employee to participate regularly in meetings. After the interview, the manager introduced me to an employee who openly described a fear of communicating in front of people because of the insecurity of how personal responses would be perceived. The employee confirmed that the manager had instilled confidence, and the individual is now more comfortable presenting to customers, factory visitors, and management.

Motivation was a significant focus for most participants. Three of the commercial printing managers described behaviors that aligned with a Theory Y style of management. One of the participants explained a leadership style that was not consistent with a Theory Y management style. Theory Y assumptions and management style includes the provision that managers who have an optimistic view of employee behavior can yield positive responses through coercion but consists of encouragement (Coleman, 1996; Şahin, 2012). McGregor's (1960) views confirmed the provision of coercing employees is acceptable if the higher priority is to improve the individual's psychological state before achieving company objectives.

Reward and recognition programs (e.g., cash, gifts, and incentives) were popular strategies managers used for boosting employee motivation. Participants P1C1 and P3C2 described rewarding goal achievements with incentives had motivated their employees and production teams to challenge each other. Participant P3C2 noted that the use of

incentives helped drive a faster realization of ROI when implementing a new pre-press operation. Participant P3C2 stated,

Our incentive program challenged each team to self-monitor their throughput gains when we implemented the new pre-press operation. Through our visual performance management program, once employees see a visual bar graph of their performance, they understand how they compare to other team members on different shifts.

Participant P1C1 noted the ineffectiveness of an existing paid time-off incentive program but followed with the success of monetary and gift strategies; “We have tried to do a paid time-off program if employees learn new processes they get days off with pay, but the employees prefer the materialistic gifts and cash programs we offer.” Contrary to the results of research conducted by Caza, McCarter, and Northcraft (2015) on financial and nonfinancial incentive programs, Participant P1C1 highlighted that employees appear to increase motivation with financial incentives.

Two participants discussed incentives motivate employees differently. Participant P2C1 stated, “Understanding what motivates each individual is important.” Participant P2C1 offered comments about incentive and wellness programs.

We offer a free wellness program too, if employees perform to expectations. In the beginning, we had maybe 20 people participating in the wellness electives, and now we have up to 75 people that are choosing to participate in our free wellness programs over receiving gift cards or prizes.

Participant P2C1 further explained,

The wellness program consists of 30, 60, 90-day local fitness center memberships, water bottles, bicycles, roller blades, and so on. We incorporate company performance incentives with fitness gifts and employees personal health goals. For example, we have an ongoing, companywide challenge where employees choose fitness goals and track their results. Employees earn points for achieving fitness goals outside of work, and they earn points good work performance that they can cash in for fitness related equipment, gear, and so on.

Participant P1C1 provided the following description of motivation and involvement in the design of the wellness program:

So, employees get to make suggestions and choices to improve the wellness program. Those choices that they make will also help with their health and wellness and motivate them to perform to earn the prizes. We allow them to be a part of that decision-making. An example is 3 months ago an employee suggested they preferred roller blading for exercise outside of work to biking. Therefore, we introduced roller blades into the fitness prizes. I can guarantee you the employees that like roller blading are now doing things at work to try to earn a chance to win a \$200 pair of rollerblades.

Even though the wellness incentives for Company 1 are a new endeavor, the newly identified incentive program is similar to the recommendations of Caza et al. (2015), who identified and recommended that employees should have the option to choose the reward of their choice for good performance. According to Caza et al., reward choice can

increase performance up to 40% but only if the available choices are attractive to employees.

Incentives can encourage higher levels of motivation and performance among employees in the work environment; motivated employees increase productivity (Caza et al., 2015). Even with the uncertainty of implementing a new printing press, all participants said that frontline employees were motivated to continue to do their jobs and even other job functions to make the change successful. Motivation, performance, and the effectiveness of implementing change relate to how well managers handle the process, but not all employees appear motivated by incentives (Caza et al., 2015; McGregor, 1960).

Constructive communication, performance management, employee management, and employee motivation play a role in the success of implementing productivity-based changes that can contribute to overall profitability (Combe, 2014; PMI, 2014). P3C2 stated, "There is always more opportunity and work to do, but we make the effort to engage employees." P2C1 was a frontline employee 7 years ago and has seen how the company, management strategies, and culture have changed. The motivation of employees can be an indication of the management strategies utilized to instill a cohesive culture (Bond & Seneque, 2013; Kumar et al., 2014). Three of the four participants indicated that despite the number of recent changes within the organization they felt compelled to place their customers first, employees second, and performance of the company third. With this strategy, the assumption made is that the printing operations of this study have placed value on concepts beyond pure profit.

The commercial printing managers who participated in this study answered questions openly about the subject of employee motivation. P2C1 indicated that there was little resistance to uncertain roles during the implementation of a productivity-based change. P3C2 spoke of engaging the frontline workforce to have the autonomy to make decisions that could affect business results with little guidance. Managers who do not have to focus on micromanaging frontline employees can focus on new and strategic areas of the business. The flexibility in management style and confidence that managers instill in employees facilitates the type of self-fulfillment and autonomy that Urtasun-Alonso et al. (2014) determined would motivate the workforce. McGregor (1960) and Mohamed and Nor (2013) explained the most successful employee motivation strategy in the workplace is to encourage workers to exercise mental and physical capacity that are self-fulfilling and gratify individuals beyond earning money.

Managers in Kopelman et al.'s (2012) and McGregor's (1960) studies indicated employees seem motivated by the idea of amiable team relations, stimulating jobs, and inclusive participation in the decision-making process during change. P3C2 addressed the question of how managers encourage employees to exercise their physical and mental capacities to support productivity improvement related change initiatives with the statement.

We're all a team; we are all going to rise up or fail as a team. So, developing a team environment and then pull in your subject matter experts to help when in need is how I encourage employees to really participate when they are challenged with one of those ongoing or very challenging issues. (P3C2)

During the factory tour and through review of company documents, Company 2 had a high level of trust for the leadership group, and all the company performance metrics and minimum targets were visible throughout the factory. After reviewing several reward and recognition documents, it was evident employees drive to find ways to surpass and exceed the performance standards. The culture had become one of teamwork, where teams will support one another to beat the standards and set new records of performance. Associates had input in the development of the performance, which also attributed to their buy-in when dealing with the implementation of new production equipment. The employees understand what good performance looked like and they had enough business knowledge to participate in the development and reestablishment of new performance metrics. P3C2 indicated the company culture has a lot to do with the motivation of the employees who perform the work:

It is a lot to do with culture and a lot to do with giving the employees the autonomy to work freely and to interact with the business in a way that they would feel engaged to participate in whatever may be going on in the daily operation.

The findings of this research align with Bisel et al.'s (2012) and Rafferty et al.'s (2013) assessments that employee engagement and willingness to support change improves when there is a high level of involvement in decisions. The responses by the participants indicated concurrence with views expressed in literature that developing employee empowerment and encouraging employees to be productive are successful strategies to gain buy-in.

Participant P1C1 discussed using the 80/20 rule, stating, “Understanding what motivates each individual, is difficult, but important. If you can figure out what 80% of your employees want, that majority influence usually sways the remaining 20%.”

Participant P4C2 offered, “I try to be a watchful and attentive manager, and I am a very attentive listener. The incentive programs motivate some employees, but others react to well to simple personal conversations.” Having a flexible management approach to individual motivation is important since everyone reacts differently. In a study of participatory management practices, managers who engaged in active listening had a high degree of success in gaining employee buy-in (Purdy & Manning, 2014). Managers who listened to both the facts and feelings expressed by employees had a better chance of engaging employees in the change process (Day et al., 2014; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). The wide array of findings of this study indicated that the motivational influences and factors of employees range from formal companywide strategies to informal one-on-one interactions.

Findings Relatable to Existing Literature on Effective Business Practice.

There is value in the conclusions of this study for managers who manage commercial printing operations in the Midwestern United States and implementing change initiatives. The five emergent themes from the body of data pertained to constructive communication, leadership behaviors, performance management, employee management, and employee motivation. Some researchers have identified the lack of buy-in of the frontline workforce during change initiatives can be a primary reason for unsuccessful improvements (Fuchs & Prouska, 2014; Helper & Henderson, 2014).

McGregor (1960) promoted Theory Y as the foundation of good management practice and pioneered the argument that workers are not simple components of the organization but strive to be vital assets who have needs and aspirations that align with company goals. Theory Y represents an optimistic view of employee behavior in the workplace (Kopelman et al., 2012). Understanding managers' strategies to gain frontline employee buy-in that supports change initiatives can influence business results (Kopelman et al., 2012).

To promote company success, commercial printing managers should focus on frequent interaction using a variety of strategies and individualized communication with each employee or team. Managers subscribing to the Theory Y philosophy, work to inspire teamwork, PDM, and decentralization of authority throughout an organization (Coleman, 1996; Gürbüz et al., 2014; Russ, 2013b). Three participants expressed a commitment to having a positive influence on employee behavior. PDM is the process of involving employees in making important organizational decisions, especially during change initiatives (Russ, 2011). PDM improves job performance, job satisfaction, mitigates resistance to organizational change, enhances organizational commitment, and increases employee support (Russ, 2011). When reviewing studies on leadership style, organizational commitment, and change recipients' commitment researchers agreed effective management strategies include communication, employee teamwork, trust, and coordination (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012; Hamdi & Rajablu, 2012; Oreg & Berson, 2011). One commercial printing manager reported involving employees in strategic planning. All participants supported providing training opportunities to employees.

Theory Y leaders attributed high importance to placing employees training and development higher in priority than company objectives encourages positive employee performance (Tasseey, 2014; Urtasun-Alonso et al., 2014). Four participants discussed using a blend of formal and informal performance management strategies in combination with formal and informal communication tactics.

Understanding how all the different components of an organization work together strengthens the ability to optimize employee productivity; however, managers need to be able to use knowledge about employee productivity to create effective strategies. Managers who manage frontline employees with flexibility make full use of personal creativity, judgment, and experience (Urtasun-Alonso et al., 2014). If managers work together with frontline employees, the resulting levels of motivation, receptiveness, and continual improvement far outweighs the costs of building stringent accountability structures (Hill et al., 2012). Commercial printing managers and owners can use the results of this study to improve how to manage employees, gain buy-in, and implement effective change.

The method and approach to message delivery and its effect on an organization have a huge impact on the outcome of the organizational success (Neves & Eisenberger, 2012). The ability of managers' ability to deliver a clear message and sensitivity to employees' well-being are strategies that can foster successful productivity-based changes (Davis, 2014). Data forming the themes of this study are an indicator that policy changes by ownership or management might lead to the improved success of productivity-based change initiatives for increased profitability.

Commercial printing managers must commit to managing the organization and employees, to influence overall performance (Bond & Seneque, 2013; Davis, 2014; Kwon et al., 2014; Li & Xu, 2014). Participant responses supported this idea, as four participants described consistent involvement in managing company strategy, operations, and employee needs. Maintaining a company culture centered on Theory Y management traits, performance management, employee involvement, flexibility, and creativity could support positive employee performance (Tassey, 2014; Urtasun-Alonso et al., 2014). Three participants highlighted positive performance from employees in environments designed to promote employee participation, openness, monitoring of organizational results, and clear communication of expectations. Empowered employees performed at higher levels, subsequently supported positive company performance, and aligned with Theory Y (Edgar et al., 2015; Kilroy & Dundon, 2015; Russ, 2011).

Applications to Professional Practice

Emerging or existing commercial printing owners and managers could utilize the study findings to gain insight into how performance monitoring with increased meaningful interaction with employees could affect the implementation of productivity-based change initiatives. Theme 1, constructive communication, was the most predominant theme and was a common subcategory of the other four themes. Four participants recognized the importance of communicating business objectives, performance results, and interpersonal and team meetings to deliver feedback. According to responses to Theme 2, leadership behaviors, three participants acknowledged the importance of forecasting and strategic planning. Three participants recognized one-on-

one and routine interpersonal interaction that displays caring behaviors inspire trust and participation within the workforce. The perception of leader behavior plays a vital role in supporting employee confidence and performance (Mohamed & Nor, 2013). Pihlak and Alas (2012) studied how employee perceptions of leadership communication could prompt uncertainty and stress. Managers who communicated the specific expectations necessary to achieve change implementation success were more efficient at reducing employee uncertainty and stress (Pihlak & Alas, 2012). As noted in Theme 5, most participants believed employees responded favorably to a participatory and inclusive environment by exhibiting increased commitment to the organization and engaging in decision-making processes. For example, in a study of charisma and organizational change, employees negatively perceived leadership commitment and provided less support if managers did not clearly communicate the need for change, display charisma, and foster team performance (Nohe et al., 2013). Researchers discovered that managing levels of employee commitment to change is an effective tool for reducing employee resistance to change (Fugate et al., 2012; Hill et al., 2012; Shin et al., 2012). Change initiatives often suffer when the communication strategies fail (Bouckenooghe, 2012; Geertshuis et al., 2015; Hamdi & Rajablu, 2012). Sufficient communication could lead to reduced stress levels and teamwork among individuals experiencing a changing work environment (Ruck & Welch, 2012). Effective communication is essential in maintaining employee buy-in to change (Mazzei, 2014).

The discoveries and findings of this study may positively contribute to existing literature on the topic of Theory Y management styles in the commercial printing

environment, as the knowledge from it may indicate the importance of preparing employees for change initiatives. The study involved a deeper understanding of how commercial printing managers gained employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability. Theme 4, employee management, included the discussion communication, training and development, and the encouragement of employee participation. Two participants favored open communication to share relevant company information and encourage high employee involvement and positive perceptions of leadership. Three participants discussed goal setting and posting individual and business performance is an effective tool to develop clear expectations for employee performance. The same three participants opted for routine daily, weekly, quarterly, and annual meetings to discuss performance. Customized formal and informal training programs were a prevalent theme. The study results coincide with findings from Kopelman et al.'s (2012) explanation that Theory Y management traits are increasingly becoming the managing style of choice. The printing industry is an advanced manufacturing environment where the use of Theory Y management styles, innovative technology, and employee-centered processes are the foundations for improving products or manufacturing methods (Davis, 2014; Kamath & Rodrigues, 2014).

Exploration of Theory Y management traits in the commercial printing environment revealed the integration of managing both daily operations and the frontline workforce could influence employee buy-in during change initiatives. Three of the participants supported employee buy-in during change initiatives that improve productivity and profitability. The following strategies to facilitate employee buy-in

during change initiatives: (a) constructive communication, (b) frequent interaction and interpersonal work environment, (c) flexible management strategy, (d) cooperative goal setting and communication of expectations, and (e) consistently seeking to, inspire and motivate employees. Commercial printing managers must invest in and develop performance monitoring standards and interpersonal relationships with employees to gain buy-in during change initiatives (Timley & Hanley, 2016). Gaining employee buy-in through positive feedback and participation during change initiatives are widely considered practices that will solidify sustainable business results (Bouckenooghe, 2012; Keyton et al., 2013; Timley & Hanley, 2016; Shin et al., 2012).

Implications for Social Change

The success of productivity improvements often depends on how managers influence the way frontline employees perceive, value, and accept a change initiative (Greve, 2013; Russ, 2011). Frontline employees who buy in to change can influence the success rate of the productivity initiatives (Harris et al., 2014). Unsuccessful change initiatives implemented to increase productivity and profitability in commercial printing companies can affect organizations, employees, and local communities in a negative way.

There are approximately 35,000 commercial printing businesses in the industry (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The top profit leaders, printers in the top 25% of profitability, are concentrating on the following strategies: (a) more focused strategy development and business models, (b) spending more on education and training for employees, (c) investing more in technology, and (d) mixing more value-added services with existing printed products, giving them more

pricing power (Davis, 2014). When taking into account the print-related media sector of the commercial printing industry, sales are likely to decline over the next 10 years because of pressure from online media and companies expanding beyond simple printing operations (Davis, 2014). The reason why adding print-related media into the economic outlook for commercial printing businesses causes overall sales to decline is that this sector accounts for approximately 50% of total industry sales (Davis, 2014). Participant PIC1 offered, “We have concluded further than 2 years ago that the printing industry is not dead, nor is it dying. But if all you do is ink on paper, you probably don’t have much of a future, and you probably will be dying.” Success for commercial printers in the future will involve supplemental value added services beyond printing on paper. The successful printing organization of the future is likely to move beyond producing printed products to ancillary services, such as increased manufacturing capability, marketing services, communication solutions, and print management services (Davis, 2014). Consumers are increasingly favoring digital alternatives, such as online media, over printed materials. Printed text has become too slow and costly to produce.

Implementing change initiatives specific to improving productivity and profitability in the commercial printing industry can lead to improving the living standards of employees and create business growth that generates economic benefits for local communities. Economic benefits could include pay increases, job creation, or local business growth (Baily & Bosworth, 2014; Demeter et al., 2011). Effectively managed printing companies can provide communities and employees with secure employment

opportunities and avoid becoming obsolete or inept to change with the industry trends (Baily & Bosworth, 2014).

The results of this study may (a) contribute to the understanding of how managers should engage employees through constructive communication, (b) indicate how leadership behaviors influence employees, (c) demonstrate the performance management strategies used to increase company and individual results, (d) show the employee management tactics used to obtain employee participation, and (e) provide the strategies successful firms have used to increase employee motivation. The findings indicate a greater chance of successful implementation of change initiatives exist when frontline employees feel committed to the overall process.

Organizations, business owners, managers, employees, and local communities may benefit from the results of this study on the strategies commercial printing managers need to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability. Some managers lack the knowledge required to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies used to influence employee participation in tasks that align with organizational change (Knight, 2014). Successful managers possess the ability to monitor the progress of change implementation and provide the necessary feedback to employees when progress is lacking (Day et al., 2014; Langlely et al., 2013). Managers should adjust change management strategies throughout the lifecycle of a change event to ensure the objectives of a project are relevant to current implementation challenges (Langlely et al., 2013).

The results of the study, stemming from responses by the participants through in-depth interviews, the collection of relevant documentation supporting the research topic, and observations made during factory tours, could aid management in the understanding of how to implement change initiatives, while being cognizant of the human behavior aspects of frontline employees. Engaged employees are motivated to participate in change initiatives, leading to organizational success. Organizational success can lead to local communities and direct stakeholders of commercial printing operations benefiting from having successful organizations. As indicated by the interviewees, there is a strong need for gaining frontline employee buy-in during the enactment of change management strategies.

Recommendations for Action

There is an increasing need to implement change initiatives to improve the speed and effectiveness of new machinery and production processes that increase productivity and profitability in the commercial printing industry. The effect of unsuccessful implementation of change can lead to downsizing, buy-outs, or factory shutdowns that displace commercial printing owners, managers, and employees, which increases unemployment rates and affects the economies of both local and country-wide communities. The findings from this study may serve to convey that it is important for commercial printing managers to understand the adverse effects of failed change initiatives and the impact it has on internal and external stakeholders. The results of this research confirmed the strategies frontline managers use to gain the buy-in of frontline

employees are imperative to implement successful change initiatives through motivated employees that participate in decisions that reach the goals of the organization.

Commercial printing managers are encouraged to pay attention to the behaviors of frontline employees and openly communicate using effective tactics. As commercial printing managers implement change initiatives, a greater amount of employee buy-in can spread equal work and responsibility across the organization and could increase the value each individual adds to organizational results. Distinguishing the stimuli of employee resistance to or support for a change initiative could help refine strategies to influence frontline employees to buy in to the implementation of productivity improvements (Hon et al., 2014). Frontline employees often buy in to change if managers provide positive insight when emphasizing the benefit an initiative could create (Shin et al., 2012). Gaining employee buy-in through positive feedback and reinforcement during organizational change are widely considered a practice that will solidify sustainable results (Bouckenoghe, 2012; Keyton et al., 2013; Shin et al., 2012).

Effective communication is essential in maintaining employee buy-in to change (Mazzei, 2014). Based on the results, the most predominant theme of constructive communication between management and employees can create an understanding of what motivates employees to buy in to change. Business owners, managers, and channels of academia can publicize the results of this study through business literature and may provide information that scholars could incorporate in future studies concerning gaining frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives. In fulfillment of the dissemination of research that may benefit different stakeholders in the printing industry, each host

commercial printing company and participants received a one or two-page summary of the study results. I will pursue publication in scholarly and practitioner journals that relate to the topic of this research while identifying opportunities to present the study findings at relevant business meetings, conferences, events, and training activities.

Recommendations for Further Research

In this qualitative multicase study, the two main limitations were the location of the businesses in the Midwestern United States and the number of data sources used for analysis. Future research may include a larger sample size from other geographic locations. There may be difficulty in generalizing the findings from this study to other industries or organizations; however, the principles uncovered in the management of change may apply to all fields of human endeavor associated with managing change. The primary sources of data included interviews with four commercial printing managers, the collection of documentation relevant to the study, and observations made during factory tours.

The use of multiple sources of data adds to the in-depth understanding of themes identified through data collection (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Thematic data analysis is an effective method for summarizing information from multiple sources of evidence (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Triangulation of the data involved a deliberate process of evaluating the analysis of interview responses and the collection of company documentation against theoretical and other propositions. Additional sources such as observations made during guided factory tours, newly published articles from the PIA, and other credible industry reports added more to the results and rigor of the research.

Harris et al. (2014) focused on frontline employees and revealed that involvement could influence the success rate of the productivity initiatives. Even though researchers in different industries have focused on organizations outside commercial printing industry, they showed that higher levels of engagement and propensity of frontline employees to participate in company objectives contribute to organizational success. Future researchers can focus on the strategies of commercial printing managers and the effects on frontline employees buy-in to support change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability.

Reflections

Experience in the Walden Doctorate of Business Administration program has given me a better understanding of the importance and the strategies needed to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives. As a researcher, I followed safeguards to avoid bias and conducted interviews using the appropriate protocol. The protocol involved no prior affiliations with participants previous to requesting participation. Strong professional and personal relationships developed during this process will continue to contribute to experiences and ideas associated with future research related to the topic of this study. The learning process and the magnitude of the research process was a rewarding endeavor. This study was challenging and expanded knowledge to new levels that have deepened ability to learn from fellow students, faculty, researchers, and business professionals.

The research process consisted of a first-hand view of the management of productivity improvements and successful strategies used in the commercial printing industry that engage frontline employees to buy-in to imminent changes. Participants

represented the commercial printing industry, held over 75 years of successful managerial experience, and came with a broad range of practices and strategies geared towards productive employees and business performance. Understanding what employees go through during the process of change can lead to a richer understanding of employee behavior and ultimately business profitability.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this doctoral study was to explore the strategies commercial printing managers need to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability. Four commercial printing managers located in the Midwestern United States participated in interviews to explore this topic. The research involved face-to-face interviews to facilitate data collection.

When beginning a change initiative with the intent to improve productivity and profitability, both commercial printing owners and managers can consider strategies to bring about buy-in for the frontline workforce. The analysis of the data collected revealed five themes: (a) constructive communication, (b) leadership behaviors, (c) performance management, (d) employee management, and (e) employee motivation. The identified themes included descriptions of commercial printing manager's strategies to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives, and illustrated engagement, participation, trust, and commitment in commercial printing environments are critical to success. Participant responses confirmed the relevance of frontline employee buy-in for commercial printing business performance during change initiatives to achieve improved productivity and profitability.

Implementing change initiatives in an industrial manufacturing environment with the intent to improve productivity and profitability requires consideration of the frontline employees who must live with the outcomes. While specific themes emerged in this study, the four managers held a different interpretation of the concepts. The commercial printing managers offered responses that indicated all five themes were important, but the perception of the topics that emerged as thematic findings varied slightly. For instance, one manager saw visual performance management and communication as the best ways to manage employees through change, whereas two of the managers preferred a management by objectives approach. All four commercial printing managers saw the value of fostering strong relationships with employees through constructive communication. The managers' daily interpersonal interactions with employees were, in fact, evident while touring each factory. The findings highlighted the importance in the development of a flexible culture that ingrains timely and excellent communication, consistent training, coaching, and opportunities for growth and empowerment as key elements of management to frontline employee relationships. Commercial printing managers could guide employees to higher levels of performance through the invocation and active use of Theory Y principles and ultimately experience sustained success in organizations in the ongoing quest for successfully managing change, which has positive implications on profitability.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Managers

The purpose of this protocol procedure is to establish that each face-to-face interview follows the same exact set-up process. Further, the document ensures that all steps required for preparation that are necessary for each interview follow a set process at the beginning of each face-to-face meeting. The interviewees will consist of managers who have successfully used strategies to obtain employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability.

Informed Consent Form Completed:

Time of Interview:

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

Protocol:

1. Complete introductions.
2. Present consent form, go over contents, answer questions and concerns of participant(s)
3. Give participant copy of signed consent form.
4. Turn on Livescribe Echo Smartpen and backup iPhone recorder devices.
5. Introduce participant(s) using a pseudonym/coded identification; note exact location, time, and date.
6. Begin the interview with question # 1; continue through to the final question.

7. Follow up with additional questions.
8. End interview sequence; discuss methodological triangulation documents and member checking procedures with the participant(s).
9. Obtain a copy of the company documents. Thank participant(s) for their participation in the study. Discuss contact numbers for any follow-up questions and concerns by participants.
10. Turn off Livescribe Echo Smartpen and backup iPhone recorder devices. End protocol.

Interview Questions:

1. What types of change initiatives have you and your organization implemented to improve productivity?
2. What is your role as a production manager in promoting employee participation and gaining buy-in during change initiative to improve productivity?
3. What strategies do you use to succeed in gaining frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity?
4. How do you communicate expectations and goals to employees when implementing change initiatives to improve productivity?
5. How do you identify and address the individual training and developmental needs of your employees, so they are prepared for productivity improvements?
6. How do you encourage employees to exercise their physical and mental capacities to support productivity improvement related change initiatives?

7. What rewards or recognitions do you use to get employees to feel loyal and committed to productivity-based changes?
8. What other strategies do production managers use to achieve frontline employee participation and buy-in to implement change initiatives to improve productivity?
9. What else might you like to share about your experiences of gaining frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity?

Appendix B: Permission Request to Conduct Research on Premises

To: XYZ Company
From: Charles James IV, Walden University Doctoral Candidate
Date: 05/29/2016
Subject: Permission to Perform Research on Premises

Permission to Perform Research on Premises

Dear Business Owner:

My name is Charles James IV. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Business and Administration at Walden University. I am currently in the final stages of my doctoral program, which involves performing research and completing my dissertation. My dissertation focuses on understanding the strategies managers need to gain frontline employee buy-in when implementing change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability.

My purpose in writing is to request your approval to conduct research on the premise of your business. Research at your facility will include contacting participants for this study. Specifically, the study involves administering interviews to management level employees at your manufacturing site and access to review company documentation that supports your organization has implemented successful productivity related change initiatives. If you choose not to allow me to review company documentation, a factory tour while making documenting field notes could be an alternative. All information, interviews, or data collected remain confidential at all times.

Your permission would include allowing access to seek volunteers to participate in the study, access to company documentation or a factory tour while taking field notes that align with the topic of the study. As the owner of the company, you reserve the right to withdraw your company from the study at any time if circumstances change. Management staff participation in the study is voluntary, and informed consent forms will be issued and signed by each participant if they choose to participate.

The results of this study could be of benefit to your business as realistic management strategies that could improve the rate of productivity based change initiatives, and employee buy-in could be identified. These tactics could be used in an effort to improve and encourage frontline employee involvement and engagement in change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability. If this arrangement is agreeable, please confirm your approval via a return letter of cooperation with your signature. Thank you in advance for your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,
Charles James IV

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study that is aimed to understand the strategies managers need to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability. I am inviting any manager for interviews. Participants must be at least 21 years of age and are (a) working in the commercial printing industry in the U.S. Midwest, (b) directly managing frontline employees, (c) experience as a manager for a minimum of 5 years, and (d) implemented strategies within the last 2 years successfully.

A researcher named Charles (Chuck) James IV, who is a doctoral candidate at Walden University, is conducting this study.

Background Information

The commercial printing industry consists of approximately 35,000 companies employing an average of 20 or fewer people and earns estimated revenues of \$3.5 million per year (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015a; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The demand for change initiatives involving productivity improvements in commercial printing is increasing (Davis, 2014). Managers are frontline leaders in a manufacturing setting that implement change initiatives to close a productivity gap (Kwon, Balogun, & Vaara, 2014; Li & Xu, 2014). The success of productivity improvements often depends on how managers influence the way frontline employees perceive, value, and accept a change initiative (Greve, 2013; Russ, 2011). Frontline employees who buy in to change can influence the success rate of the productivity initiatives (Harris, Brown, Mowen, & Artis, 2014).

Procedures

1. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked 9 interview questions in an approximate 30 minute, face-to-face interview.
2. In addition to the interview, I will perform member checking. As part of member checking, I will present to you a 1-2 page summary of my interpretations of the interview data. After the interview, the interview narrative is summarized into a text format and participants will review the summary to ensure it was accurately interpreted.
3. Interview location and time will be at the discretion of the participant.

4. The researcher will conduct interviews using a Livescribe digital recording device to gather and store data at the time of interview.
5. Respond openly and honestly to interview questions.
6. Before leaving the premises, I will ask the commercial printing owner to share documents as part of the research. If the owner does not approve access to company documentation a review of public records, company websites, and factory tour through the work environment will be requested. I will take field notes during the factory tour.

Sample questions:

1. What types of change initiatives have you and your organization implemented to improve productivity?
2. What is your role as a production manager in promoting employee participation and gaining buy-in during change initiative to improve productivity?
3. What strategies do you use to succeed in gaining frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity?

Voluntary Nature of the Study

You were invited to participate in this study because you meet the predetermined participant criteria needed to answer the research question. Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to participate in the study. If you decide to volunteer for the study now, you can decide not to participate at any time. If you believe you are strained during the study, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions you believe are personal or that you may not have a response to.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

There are no known risks in this study beyond the normal discomforts of daily life, such as becoming upset or being asked to recall unpleasant work experiences.

The results of this study could contribute to social change and business practice enhancements in not only the commercial printing industry but also enhance the understanding of how to gain frontline employee buy-in during change initiatives to improve productivity and profitability.

Incentives

There will be no incentives for participating in the study. Each participant will be interviewed during normally scheduled work hours.

Confidentiality

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. The researcher will not include your name or anything other information retrieved during this process, which could identify you in any reports of the study. The data collected during the research process will be stored by the researcher (Charles James IV) on a personal password protected computer and locked safe. Data will be stored for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. Data will be destroyed after 5 years.

The interview questions are not worded in a manner that would solicit illegal behavior. Absolutely no questions ask for personal information. However, if illegal behavior is found, it is my personal obligation to contact the proper authority.

Contacts and Questions

If you have questions at any time, please contact the researcher, Charles (Chuck) James IV, at his personal cell phone number: (740) 604-2393. Information related to this study can be obtained at Walden University Institute Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions pertaining to how the study was conducted or concerns with any part of the process, please contact the researcher and the university's Research Participant Advocate, Dr. Endicott's at -800-295-3368 Ext. 3121210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 06-15-16-0365149, and it expires on June 14, 2017.

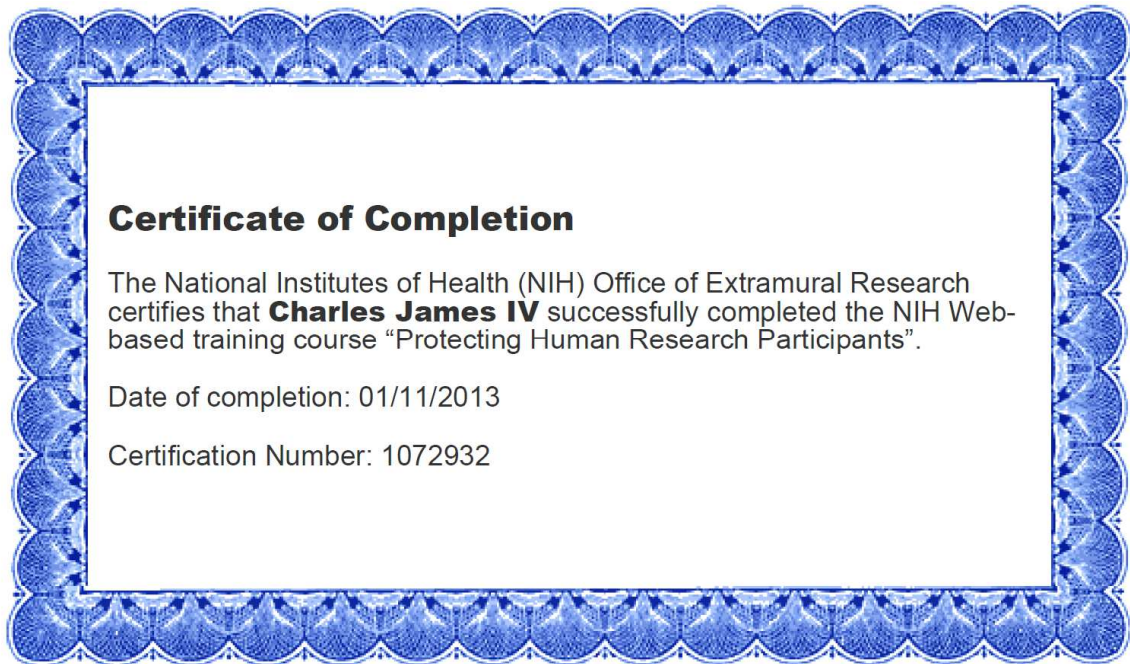
Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information, and I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I agree to the terms described above and know that I am not being asked to waive personal legal rights in this consent form.

Printed Name of Participant	
Date of consent	
Participant's Signature	
Researcher's Signature	

A copy of this consent form will be given to each participant.

Appendix D: Protecting Human Subject Research Participants



Appendix E: Permission Letter of Cooperation

Name of Corporation
Corporation Contact Information

Date

Dear Charles James,

Based on my review of your research proposal and the request for cooperation, I give permission for you to conduct the study in the (Name of Corporation). As part of this study, I authorize you to select and interview as many participants as needed based on the criteria of the research proposal.

Interviews may be audio recorded as long as all information and individuals remain confidential and research data is used only for research purposes. I further authorize you to communicate with selected participants throughout the duration of the research study for research purposes only. In addition, I authorize access to company related documentation, a factory tour, and permission to take field notes when touring the facility. A summary of the research study must be provided at the completion of the research study for our benefit.

We understand individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. We also reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change. I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting. I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without joint permission from me and the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Authorization Official
Contact Information

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