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Strategies to Teach Customer Service Skills

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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2017

Abstract

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by

James Ortman

MS, University of Phoenix 2013

BS, University of Phoenix 2011

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Business managers' failure to retain dissatisfied customers leads to millions of dollars in lost revenue. The purpose of this single case study was to explore managers' training strategies to teach sales associates customer service skills. The sample included 3 training managers from the mobile phone industry in Michigan who recorded a 25 % increase in customer retention after implementing customer service training. The conceptual framework for this study was human capital theory. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and training documents. Data analysis entailed using coding techniques and cluster analysis. Member checking applied to clarify the interpretation of participants' responses and reveal missing information. The 3 themes that emerged were mentoring and recruitment, training and development, and customer satisfaction. Mentoring and recruitment surfaced from the managers' need to hire qualified sales associates. Training and development grew from the need to have a strategy to train sales associates in customer service skills. Customer satisfaction emerged from the need to retain customers for a stable business environment. The findings from this study may contribute to social change by showing the training strategies managers use to teach customer service skills to sustain business and mitigate harmful effects of job loss. The data suggested a trained sales force could work to retain customers and provide customer satisfaction. Data from this study may contribute to the prosperity of mobile phone customers from well-educated sales associates that enhance the quality of using mobile phones in the local communities. The beneficiaries of this research include business managers, sales associates, and customers.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my wife, Cindy for the many hours of sacrifice, support, and belief in me. For the times that one did not understand or see the benefits of the end results, thank you.

Acknowledgments

I thank God for the talents he has given me and the opportunity to help others. God has shown me that nothing is impossible. By having faith, one can accomplish many things. I thank the faculty members of Walden University especially my committee members, Chair, Dr. Charles Needham, Member, Dr. Dorothy Hanson, and URR Dr. Neil Mathur for their support, encouragement, as well as the challenges along the doctoral journey.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Business leaders fail to realize the financial effect of dissatisfied customers, costing businesses millions of dollars in profits (Dagger, Danaher, Sweeney, & McColl-Kennedy, 2013). A better understanding of the financial relationship between dissatisfied customers, customer retention, and customer satisfaction will improve the performance of the businesses (Tatikonda, 2013). Sales associates are the first and sometimes the only contact the customer has with the business. Face-to-face interaction is an essential element that continues to repeat in a service environment (Brown, Stevens, & Lam, 2008). The actions and interpersonal skills of the sales associate have an impact on the perception the customer has regarding the business (Arndt, Aaron, Arnold, & Landry, 2006). No sufficient value aligns with the role of the sales associate; consequently, managers have difficulty placing a value on training programs (Melton & Hartline, 2013). Leaders need to understand how customer service skills help sales associates bridge the gap between customer dissatisfaction and customer retention (Boo, Mattila, & Tan, 2013)

Background of the Problem

Business leaders need to understand that training sales associates in customer service skills can bridge the gap between customer dissatisfaction and customer retention (Boo et al., 2013). Leadership may not notice the impact dissatisfied customers have on profits because of accounting practices. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) do not include the lost value of dissatisfied customers or impact on profits (Tatikonda, 2013). Sales associates are the culture of the business and their interaction with customers has an effect on customer satisfaction.

In the service industry, sales associates take pleasure in meeting the needs of the customer (Ford, 2014). Supportive leaders who provide the tools to solve problems can intensify the pleasure. Satisfied employees tend to provide exceptional customer service and encourage other employees (Lages & Piercy, 2012). Frey, Bayon, and Totzek (2013) concluded there is a strong correlation between customer satisfaction and employee job satisfaction and retention. Frey, Bayon, and Totzek (2013) concluded little data exists on customer retention in past studies.

Customer behavior affects the retention and satisfaction of the sales associate. Ford (2014) discussed how the economy is changing from a manufacturing marketplace to a service-oriented marketplace, and the converging of the two disciplines is encouraging customer interaction to enhance the experience. Customer interaction is a phenomenon also called co-production, where the customer wants more control and choices. Review of the literature indicates further research related to the co-production phenomenon and customer retention (Dixon & Walsman, 2014).

Problem Statement

Business managers' failure to retain dissatisfied customers leads to millions of dollars in lost revenue (Dagger et al., 2013). Financial statistics indicate acquiring new customers can cost approximately 10 times as much as retaining dissatisfied customers (Tatikonda, 2013). The general business problem is that business managers are providing inadequate leadership and training of sales associates to retain dissatisfied customers. The specific business problem is some business managers in the mobile phone industry lack strategies to train sales associates with effective customer service skills.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to identify and explore strategies business managers use to train sales associates with effective customer service skills. The target population consisted of three mobile phone business managers with successful training strategies from a company specializing in mobile phones sales located in Michigan. The business managers implemented customer service programs that focused on customer satisfaction and retention by training sale associates in customer service skills.

The implications for affecting positive social change included sales associates developing social behavior skills during training that can reduce fear, distrust, and uncertainty toward customers. Sales associates can help the customer accept, understand the technical operations of the mobile phone, and feel comfortable with the rapidly changing technology. Properly trained sales associates can assist the customer to eliminate the feeling of being overwhelmed and frustrated (Dhar, 2015). The social impact of this study results could influence the satisfaction of the customers leading to sustainable businesses, which in return may save jobs.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative methodology for the study. The strategy is important to use data from the setting of the participants where the problem occurs. Arghhode (2012) described qualitative research as a method in which the participants receive open-ended questions to extract the data. In contrast, Arghhode described how quantitative research includes scientific methods for testing theories, validating results, and analyzing numerical data. Consequently, a quantitative method was not appropriate because the study did not test a theory or a hypothesis. Yin (2014) described how mixed methods research includes qualitative and quantitative approaches making mixed methods research time consuming. No testing of theories or data to refute or support a hypothesis were appropriate for the study.

Three qualitative designs considered for the study were phenomenology, ethnography, and case study. A qualitative phenomenological study is a study of human experience from the view of those living the phenomenon (Robertson & Thompson, 2014), which was not the intent of this study. Gagnon, Carevale, Mehta, Rousseau, and Stewart (2013) described how ethnographers describe or interpret patterns of beliefs, behaviors, values, and language of specific cultural groups. Hence, employing an ethnographic design would not supply the data I needed for my study. A case study design was appropriate for this study because a case study is favorable for understanding how managers within the real-world context of the mobile phone industry develop and use different strategies to teach customer service skills to sales associates to improve customer satisfaction. Yin (2014) described how researchers use data collected through interviews, documents, reports, and observation in case studies.

Research Question

What strategies do business managers in the mobile phone industry use to train sales associates with effective customer service skills?

Interview Questions

The focus of the interview questions was to collect data in providing answers to the research question. Follow up interview questions probed to uncover additional information (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). I designed the interview questions to extract data to understand the strategies business managers use to train their sales associates in customer service skills.

1. What strategies do you follow to evaluate sales associates' customer service skills?

2. What is your strategy to determine what customer service skills sales associates need to achieve customer satisfaction?

3. How do you measure sales associates' performance?

4. What training delivery methods do you use?

5. What proactive strategies do you use for ensuring sales associates meet customers' needs?

6. What is your strategy for continuous education and training to improve customer service skills?

7. What training tools do you use to teach customer service skills?

8. How do you use individualized considerations when teaching sales associates?

9. How do you measure the business success of training sales associates?

10. What additional information can you provide to improve sales associates customer service skills?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study was the human capital theory. Schultz (1961) first postulated human capital theory in the 1960s, suggesting that education or training imparts useful knowledge and skills, subsequently raising workers' future income by increasing their lifetime earnings. Schultz (1961) suggested that increased performance by individuals from investments in education improves organizational performance and efficiency. Establishing strategies for training sales associates gives managers a better understanding of what works and what does not that leads to increased productivity and better customer service (Lassk, Ingram, Kraus, & Di Mascio, 2012).

Khan and Hudson, (2014) discussed key concepts of the human capital theory which include the processes relating to education, training, and other professional initiatives for increasing the level of skills, knowledge, abilities, and values. An increasingly important aspect of this research was the concept of human capital, as an important driver of long-term organizational performance (Schultz, 1961). Improvement in training strategies may lead to satisfaction and increase the performance of employees, as well as increasing business performance (Gamerschlag, 2013). Managers can use human capital theory to develop strategies to train sales associates with customer service skills to improve performance and increase knowledge. As service quality increasingly constitutes a source of competitive advantage for service-sector businesses, frontline employees' interactions skills must align with customers and the organizational processes that facilitate effective service delivery (Aryee, Walumbwa, Seidu, & Otaye, 2016).

Operational Definitions

Corporate culture: Corporate culture*s* are the values, expectations, and beliefs shared by corporate employees (Homburg, Workman, & Jensen, 2012).

Customer-focused organizational structure: A Customer-focused organizational structure is a group of customers with a similar interest in the industry, usage situation, application, or any other non-geographic similarity as the basis for structuring the business (Homburg et al., 2012).

Deviant customer behavior: Deviant customer behavior is a negative customer action against the normal or unwritten rules of conduct in a service setting (Boo et al., 2013).

Halo effect: Halo effects are the perception that one attribute influences the perception of other attributes (Dagger et al., 2013).

Proactive service: A proactive service is a business approach to satisfy and delight the customer with service that exceeds expectations making the experience easy and enjoyable (Mouawad & Kleiner, 1996).

Service encounter: Service encounter is the interaction between the employee and the customer (Keaveney, 2012).

Skills training. Skills training is improving effectiveness on the job rather than with abstract learning concepts (Dagger et al., 2013)

Threshold attributes: Threshold attributes are basic or minimal expectations a customer has for a product or service to be acceptable (Tatikonda, 2013).

Transformational leadership: Transformational leadership is the ability to change expectations, perceptions and motivations of employees to achieve common business goals that shape the culture of the business (Balthazard, Waldman, & Warren, 2009).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Dusick (2014) indicated assumptions are parts of the study the researchers believe true, where no verification exists regarding the theory, phenomenon, methodology, instrument, analysis, participants, power, and results of the study. The assumption in the study was that the participants would answer the survey questions based on what they experience and perceive within the organization. A further assumption was that participants would give accurate strategic information. An additional assumption was that the sample of participants in the study would represent the mobile phone business population throughout the area under study for the purpose of saturation and sufficiency. The research design and methodological procedures would minimize the impact of these potential problems.

Limitations

Limitations are external conditions that restrict the scope of a study or could affect the outcome of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The limitations are factors beyond the control of the researchers including (a) the time constraints, (b) sample size, (c) process of analysis, (d) reporting, and (e) the instrument used in the study (Dusick, 2014). Time limits for the study was a limitation of this study. Participants' busy schedules may limit their participation. The sample size of one mobile phone business potentially limits the single case study, because the sample may not represent the entire mobile phone business population throughout the United States.

Delimitations

Vernon-Dotson (2013) defined delimitations as the characteristics that embody or describe the scope of the research study including the criteria for participant selection, the geographic area, and the organization on which the study focuses. A delimitation of this study was the boundaries of one mobile phone business in Michigan. An additional delimitation of the study was the number of participants who are in management positions who have training experience. I limited the scope to mobile phone business managers who teach customer service skills to enhance employee skills to gain perspective on their opinions, strategies, and differences regarding customer service skills. Limitations and delimitations are weaknesses inherent in the study that potentially affect transferability of the study's findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Significance of the Study

In the competitive mobile phone industry, business managers need strategies to train sales associates in customer service skills. Exceptional customer service can elevate the company's performance above the competition. Dissatisfied customers cost businesses millions of dollars in profits each year (Dagger et al., 2013). Customer satisfaction and retention are difficult for business decision makers to identify in financial reports (Tatikonda, 2013). Providing training strategies for customer service skills can bridge the gap between customer dissatisfaction and customer retention helping business managers increase customer retention and profitability.

Contribution to Business Practice

Minimal information is available concerning strategies managers of mobile phone businesses use for training sales associates in customer service skills. Customers are the lifeline for the competitive mobile phone industry. Returning customers are more profitable for the business than acquiring new customers (Tatikonda, 2013). The results of the study may provide the strategies business managers need to understand how to train sales associates with effective customer service skills. Training sales associates could increase confidence and self-esteem when interacting with customers resulting in increased business profits and improved work efficiency (Dagger et al., 2013).

Implications for Social Change

Managers with training strategies might help sales associates develop social behaviors to reduce fear, cynicism, and uncertainty of customers (Kroll & Moynihan, 2015). Managers that train sales associates effectively provide a framework for affecting employees' beneficial behavior changes (Breevaart, Bakker, Hetland, Demerouti, Olsen, & Espevik, 2014). Sales associates can help the customer understand the technical attributes of the mobile phone using the World Wide Web and other social media mechanisms, and feel comfortable with the rapidly changing technology. Consequently, obtaining strategies to train sales associates with effective customer service skills could lead to training programs that might have positive implications for mobile phone businesses, and affect resultant beneficial social changes within communities. Customers who use mobile phones with greater success can communicate with friends and family members across the globe. A business in decline because of dissatisfied customers affects jobs, families, and communities (Dagger et al., 2013).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The review of the literature for the study includes an extensive range of seminal books, journals, and research studies. In reviewing and conducting the literature review, the primary sources were peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, books, professional websites, and federal government publications. I used peer-reviewed journal articles from Google Scholar and the following Walden University research databases, ABI Inform, Business Source Complete, Science Direct, and the International Security and Counterterrorism Resource Center. I used keywords and phrases, including transformational leadership, customer service skills, customer satisfaction, customer retention, defiant customers, dissatisfied customers, service recovery, and corporate culture for an in-depth review of database searches.

The facilitation of the literature search for the study included a research-based peer-reviewed journal, dissertations, the ProQuest central database, and books. Two hundred and twenty-five sources enhanced this research with 214 peer-reviewed journal articles, 1 dissertations, and 9 books. The peer-reviewed sources in this study included 95.1% of the total sources with a minimum of 60-peer reviewed sources in the literature review. Approximately 90.6% of the sources have a publication date less than 5-years from the anticipated completion date chief academic officer approval (CAO).

Table 1

Reference Table

Publications	Published Within 5 Years of Expected Graduation Date	Older than 5 Years	% of Sources
Books	3	6	.04%
Dissertations	1	0	.004%
Peer-reviewed articles	199	15	95.1%
Government websites	1	0	.004
Total	204	21	
Total %	90.6	9.3	
Total Sources:	225		

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the qualitative single case study was to identify and explore strategies business managers use to train sales associates in effective customer service skills. The target population consisted of three mobile phone business managers from a company specializing in mobile phones sales located in Michigan. The business managers implement customer service programs that focus on customer satisfaction and retention by training sale associates in customer service skills.

Human Capital Theory

Becker (1962) introduced the concept of human capital. Becker defined human capital theory as skills acquisition through training and education. Training is the businesses investment in education by investing time and money into materials things such as books, tuition, and supplies. Businesses invest in human capital for an increase in productivity and financial gain (Bae & Patterson, 2014).

Two leading economists, Schultz (1961) and Becker (1993), established the view that education and training is an important investment in human capital and one that benefits the individual, the organization, and society as a whole. Bae and Patterson (2014) defined human capital theory as business investment in training and development using economic methods and assumptions. De Grip and Smits (2012) described the human capital theory as a basic view that better educated or trained workers are more able to meet the needs of an advanced industrial society. Employees learn from schooling or formal training effective job and productivity-enhancing skills. Business managers should evolve as business environments change to meet the competitive demands of the 21st century. Establishing strategies for training sales associates gives managers a better understanding what works and what does not that leads to increased productivity and better customer service (Lassk, Ingram, Kraus, & Di Mascio, 2012).

Schultz (1961) discussed human capital as individual's acquisition of skills and knowledge and that these skills and knowledge are a form of capital. Schultz further argued that capital is a product of deliberate investment. Becker (1993) studied investments in human capital regarding the activities that influence future monetary income by increasing resources in people. Becker's research on human capital sought to understand the different types of investments in human resources (e.g., training and development) to explain changes in organizations, societies, and nations.

Becker (1993) focused on the perspective of human productivity regarding the economic exchange. Becker determined the skills possessed by individuals are valuable human capital that employers may use with an expectation that some asset regarding compensation, rewards, or feelings of accomplishment will benefit the individual as well as the organization. The specific occupational skills attained through education or training and possessed by the individual enable the business manages to attain organizational goals.

Schultz (1961) argued that investments in human capital are of value to organizations based on the return on investment over the long term and the innovation and technological progress that accompanies the investment. Based on the positive relationships between education, formal training, and economic growth, the human capital theory is an appropriate theory for this study to understanding managers training strategies.

Effective business managers share visions and empower, influence, and engage followers to be creative and active in their organizations (Al-sharafi & Rajiani, 2013). Sale associates in the mobile phone business experience face-to-face relationships with customers who demonstrate different emotional and behavioral patterns. Managers who use human capital theory can develop strategies with a vision to provide customer service skills that encourage customer satisfaction and retention. As service quality increasingly constitutes a source of competitive advantage for service-sector businesses, much research now focuses on frontline employees' interactions with customers and the organizational processes that facilitate effective service delivery (Aryee, Walumbwa, Seidu, & Otaye, 2016).

The human capital theory is a key view by managers to educate better or train workers in meeting the needs of the advanced industrial society. Employees learn effective job and productivity-enhancing skills from schooling or formal training (Fouarge, de Grip, Smits, & de Vries, 2012). The correct training and skill building are important for a business to achieve success (Rahman & Nas, 2013). Managers who use human capital theory believe a relationship exist between business income and education (Bae & Patterson, 2014).

Transformational Leadership

Mathew and Gupta (2015) discussed the indications of the growing body of research suggesting transformational leaders drive the emotions of their followers. Burns (1978) developed the transformational framework. Bass (1985) expanded the works of Burns. Bass and Avolio (1993) further expanded the theory by establishing how transformational leaders create new processes and visions to improve the organization and transform the culture.

Transformational leaders inspire sales associates to change expectations, perceptions, and motivations to achieve common business goals. Bass and Avolio (1993) further expanded the theory by establishing how transformational leaders create new processes and visions to improve the organization and transform the culture. Transformational leaders influence and shape the culture to develop the culture and are not influenced by the culture (Phipps, Prieto, & Verma, 2012).

Key concepts underlying the theory are (a) individualized consideration, (b) intellectual stimulation, (c) inspirational motivation, and (d) idealized influences (Burns, 1978). Leaders use intellectual stimulation to question the best strategy to improve sales associate’s skills in customer service using innovation and creativity. Leaders use individualized considerations to become aware of sales associates training needs and concerns. Transformational leaders use inspirational motivation when challenging the goals and work of sales associates (Breevaart et al., 2014).

Managers who use transformational leadership traits must use technical skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills that encourage sales associates to transcend self-interest for the sake of the business (Asumeng, 2014). Managers need to have a clear vision for how the learning and development will progress for the business (Rathindran, 2014). An attitude of continuous learning and development, being flexible, and using innovation can help sales associates to react to technology changes affecting the customers' needs and customer service (Randall, 2012).

Action Theory

Yzer (2012) discussed how people could change their behavior to meet dynamical objectives in typical and unusual situations using action theory. Situated and scenistic learning methods create novel situations and include students to act creative to some extent. Contrary to much cognitive and information processing theories, action theory is the behavior and specific working contexts and outcomes. Action theory is the processes involved in the interaction between environmental inputs and behavior.

Yzer (2012) described action theory is a systematic tool for understanding how knowledge of cognitive processes in a performance situation uses the focus, sequence, action structure components (Yzer, 2012), and the foundations of the theory. The action structure is the most important element concerning scenic processes. Through sensitivity to the complexity of the learning process, instructors can manage learner expectations to reduce information overload. When trainees feel more comfortable with the scenistic model, they often try to apply it to other problems in the workplace (Yzer, 2012).

Cognitive Load Theory

The cognitive load that the employee experiences affects to the learning environment, task to perform, and instructional methods that the facilitator uses (Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan, & Willingham, 2013). The cognitive load has a direct effect on the employees working memory. Training strategies that reduce the cognitive load are more effective for the employee with a little amount of knowledge and skill (Carolan, Hutchins, Wickens, & Cumming, 2014).

The need to reduce the cognitive load is lower for the experienced employee (Carolan et al., 2014). Carolan et al. (2014) discovered exploratory learning was suitable when tasks were procedural than problem-solving. Carolan et al. (2014) discussed if giving the employee more active control in the learning process will result in active cognitive engagement with the learning content and transfer process. John Sweller developed cognitive load theory in the late 1980's. Carolan et al. (2014) discussed how to use instructional design to reduce cognitive load on the person who is learning. Cognitive load theory is a basis for predicting the training strategies that demand more cognitive effort while teaching (Carolan et al., 2014).

Constructivism and Experiential Learning Theory

A constructivist learning perspective reflects that many ways exist to improve knowledge and skills (Yardley, Teunissen, & Dornan, 2012). Scenistic methods stress comprehensible real world functions in organizational environments. Managers need to define, demonstrate and comprehend the various aspects of performance when skills building (Yardley et al., 2012). Managers use constructivism to pinpoint gaps and deficiencies in performance in a specific skill area. This dynamic social participation should also accelerate the learning process. The multidisciplinary theory of experiential learning is constructivist and includes psychology, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and cognitive sciences to gain knowledge into the learning process (Yardley et al., 2012).

Scenistic Methods

Situated learning or cognition is a set of processes focusing on situations, events, case studies, and narratives within Scenistic methods (Lyons & Bandura, 2013). Managers can use situated learning or cognition to furnish an accurate setting for performance issues, needs, deficiencies, and scripted actions for particular situations (Norton, Coulson-Thomas, Coulson-Thomas, & Ashurst, 2012). Scenistic methodology is more appropriate for team training than for individual training. The theoretical and conceptual foundation of scenistic methodology includes situated learning, cognition, constructivism, experiential learning, transformative learning theory, and action theory (Norton et al., 2012).

Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow originally developed the transformational learning theory in 1991. Adult learning is the center of transformative learning theory, particularly in the context of post-secondary education (Nicolaides & Dzubinski, 2015). Instrumental and communicative learning are two basic kinds of transformative learning (Nitschke & Malvicini, 2013). Instrumental learning is learning through task-oriented problem solving and understanding the cause and effect relationships. Communicative learning relates to how individuals communicate their feelings, needs, and desires.

Trainees should participate actively in shaping the content and application of learning activities when practicing transformative learning in combination with scenistic methods (Norton et al., 2012). Many adults will accept the possibility of empowerment and participate in decision-making. Personal job satisfaction and commitment are also crucial aspects of this type of empowered learning (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013). Managers can analyze employee creativity and discover the feasibility of decision making and risk taking that affect productivity and motivation in a positive way. A trainee uses discretion, delegation, and participation in decision-making processes when using transformative and experiential learning (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013).

Summary of Theories

Managers using training theories made a significant contribution to understanding the training process (Milhem, Abushamsieh, & Perez Arostegui, 2014). The scenistic method is an important contributor to improving the value and effectiveness of corporate training. Scenistic methods are an alternative to team training and had a significant impact on the workplace (Norton et al., 2012). Milhem, Abushamsieh, and Arostegui (2014) discussed how trainers should choose the type of training model that is the best suited to the nature of the work. A training model has implications for other branches of situated learning or cognition. Managers using situated learning determine the appropriate training processes according to the nature of the trainee's work. Managers' using situated learning also looks at the training process, the type of skills, and ensures that teamwork aligns among trainees (Norton et al., 2012).

The appropriateness of trainees concerning the training process is necessary as well as their contribution to training effectiveness (Milhem et al., 2014). Sales associates depend on their creativity and their ability to enhance their role in decision-making and delegation. Managers use action theory to moderate the behavior of individuals and to achieve training objectives. Theories and literature relating to human resources and human resource management are importance for human capital in organizations. Human capital is the most important form of capital in businesses (Bae & Patterson, 2014). Managers can use human capital theory to provide economic analysis and return on training investment (Bae, & Patterson, 2014). Much evidence exists from various countries to show that an increase in training reflects positively on performance (Bae, & Patterson, 2014).

Related Studies

Four studies related to training strategies supported this study regarding transformational leadership components in investments in employee training. Milhem et al., (2014) discussed the concept of human resource training, strategies, theories, and learning applications. Nicolaides and Dzubinski (2015) discussed transformative learning and loop learning operating on three levels. The focus is on behavioral adjustments in single-loop learning. The focus is on the exploration and potential revision of underlying assumptions of meaning making in double-loop learning. The focus of triple-loop learning or awareness in action is how the intentions, actions, and impacts, align

(Nicolaides & Dzubinski, 2015). Training increases the performance of employees (Bossche & Segers, 2013). The study is qualitative in nature, and the goal was to explore how to achieve the mission and strategic objectives through corporate training. Sun, Hsu, and Wang (2012) discussed their findings based on a dyad survey conducted in 36 Starbucks stores revealing that formal training, coaching, and rewards have positive relationships with frontline service employees' commitment to service quality. A positive correlation exists between the frontline service employees' commitment to service quality, job satisfaction, commitment to the business, job performance, and citizenship behaviors (Sun, Hsu, & Wang, 2012)

Leadership Lens

Business managers review the mission statement and business plan to help develop a training strategy. Managers begin discussions to set goals and objectives for the business and identify the development requirements of the sales associates (Ford & McColl-Kennedy, 2015). Managers are an important part in placing sales associates with the right skills in the right place at the right time (Ford & McColl-Kennedy, 2015). Managers can review previous training files and documents to gain an understanding of experiences. Managers need to understand the gaps that exist between the skills of the sales associates and the goals of the business (Mpofu & Hlatywayo, 2015). Managers can formulate strategies as they gain the knowledge of the performance gaps, and training objectives (Baron & Parent, 2015). Managers need to present their training plans to the leaders to gain support and buy-in for implementation. Managers can address questions and resolve any concerns before the final training plan.

Managers use strategies to adopt long-term plans to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Porter (1980) developed three forms of generic strategy. The strategies are product differentiation, cost minimization, and a focused strategy. Choosing the appropriate strategies is essential for the sustainability of the business. Managers can also use a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis to determine the business long-term plan (Rajarathinam, Chellappa, & Nagarajan, 2015).

The economy is changing from a manufacturing dominate marketplace to a service-oriented market (Ford, 2014). The converging of the two disciplines is encouraging customer interaction to enhance the experience of customers (Ford, 2014). Customer interaction is a phenomenon also called co-production, where the customer wants more control and choices (Dixon & Walsman, 2014). The business model is a break-fix situation, where a customer engagement is reactive on the part of the business manager, and the customer has begun their experience with a negative image of the service or product (Lloret, 2016).

The interaction between the customer, the business, and the sales associate creates lasting impressions of the service experience (Tatikonda, 2013). The actions and interpersonal skills of the sales associates have an impact on the perception the customer has of the business (Frey et al., 2013). A manager must understand how to produce value for the business with a training strategy that meets the business goals (Lloret, 2016). Managers overlooked the role of the sales associate and have difficulty placing a value on training programs (Melton & Hartline, 2013).

Managers may not notice the impact dissatisfied customers have on profits because of accounting practices. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) do not account for the lost value of customer’s dissatisfaction or impact of profits (Tatikonda, 2013). Training sales associates in customer service skills can bridge the gap between customer dissatisfaction and customer retention (Boo et al., 2013).

Business managers need to understand what strategies they need to train sales associate in customer service skills. Creating exceptional customer service is critical to businesses who offer customer service (Frey et al., 2013). Sales associate have an important role in the overall service evaluation the customer forms (Ford, 2014). Transformational leaders create and communicate an optimistic vision and acknowledge that every sales associate has unique abilities and needs. The sales associate is the first and the only contact the customer may have with the business. Sales associates need to have the skills to provide good customer service (Dagger et al., 2013).

A key element that continues to repeat in a service environment is the face-to-face interaction the sales associate has with the customers (Boo et al., 2013). The actions and interpersonal skills of the sales associate have an impact on the perception the customer has of the business (Ford, 2014). Some interpersonal skills include greeting the customer, service recovery, showing empathy, and courtesy toward the customer. Customer service is not tangible. Emotions and behavior of the customer and the sales associate are important variables (Mathew & Gupta, 2015).

Managers drive the emotions of the sales associates to make the correct decisions. Developing customer service skills will help the sales associates interact with the customers (Ford, 2014). A proactive and positive interaction will form a relationship framework. Managers must have a strategy how to teach and implement these skills to achieve the goals of the business. The manager's ability to gather knowledge and then share this with sales associates will result in a competitive advantage (Yilmaz, Varnali, & Kasnakoglu, 2016).

When managers utilize transformational leadership skills such as (a) engaging in training and developmental skills and (b) communicating goals and objectives, the sales associates respond with positive rational and feedback (Senior et al., 2012). The goal to improve the customer's experience, which drives improved business performance, is part of the strategy manager's use (Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2013).

Potential themes I discovered in the literature are managers who provide training increase knowledge, skills, and attitudes in their sales associate. Managers use training to achieve performance levels and carry out the actions recommended for maximizing return on investment from training (Ford, 2014). Managers identify potential delivery options of training programs for the greatest benefit for the business, customer, and sales associate. Training sales associates can lead to themes related to customer retention and satisfaction.

Align Training with Mission Goals

Managers establishing explicit training goals will help to determine the benefits of training (Milhem et al., 2014). To establish these linkages something similar to training needs analysis is required. Managers need to identify the goals and outcomes relating to performance. Managers need to identify the tasks needed to accomplish these goals as well as to determine the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to perform these functions adequately (Milhem et al., 2014). Managers need to define the businesses goals, the training manager's goals, and performance objectives.

Managers need to identify the mission tasks goals to accomplish overall performance targets (Milhem et al., 2014). Managers need to allocate tasks to different groups while determining the functions. Managers should prioritize the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes and identify knowledge and skill gaps. Managers need to prioritize activities, determine execution procedures and problems, and develop an action plan. The organization's mission statement and learning culture benefits both the business and sales associates with positive associations of learning, development, motivation and business performance (Milhem et al., 2014).

Improve Employee's Performance Training

Transferring is taking action of the knowledge learned from employee's performance improvements (Jackson, Schuler, & Jiang, 2014). When a performance gap occurs, the easiest solution in the majority of businesses is training. Managers use performance training to achieve the desired performance levels and carry out the actions recommended for maximizing return on investment from training. Managers need to gather and analyze information to find out the reason for the problem (Buller & McEvoy, 2012). Managers need to identify realistic solutions to fill the performance gap. Managers need to determine the implementation problems, to calculate the direct costs and benefits of possible solutions, prioritize recommendations, and write up an action plan (Jiang et al., 2012).

Reduce Time to Competency

The manager's objective of training programs should develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to fix a performance problem and to achieve business objectives (Milhem et al., 2014). Milhem et al., (2014) discussed the need to determine the benefit of the possibility of using alternative delivery systems by choosing the delivery option with the greatest impact. Managers need to identify future gains and list the possible measurable benefits of reducing time to competency. Managers determine the potential benefits by calculating the expected minimum and maximum benefits for each employee.

Managers can gather information, particularly relating to using curricula, target audience, and environmental factors and determine the most efficient delivery options (Milhem et al., 2014). Managers identify realistic delivery options by analyzing the collected information to find out how the options meet organizational, learning, and learner requirements. Managers can estimate the time needed to accomplish the competency solution and determine the required time to write, develop, and deliver the training program for each possible delivery option (Milhem et al., 2014).

Managers calculate the potential benefits to demonstrate the advantages of cutting time to competency (Milhem et al., 2014). Managers can calculate and compare the cost of realistic options, with the net advantage of each delivery option by subtracting expected cost from potential benefit. Managers should draw up recommendations and make a comparison of the cost and benefit of knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes through training. Training has little value if the sales associates cannot apply the learned knowledge to the job and maintain the knowledge over time (Milhem et al., 2014).

Choosing the Correct Combination of Delivery Options

Milhem et al., (2014) discussed the systematic selection process, which gives valuable insight into which specific factors should receive the highest priority. Managers identify delivery options currently by the training department and business personnel. Managers gather information on training content, target audience, and environmental factors to select possible delivery options. Managers divide training programs into modules. Managers identify potential delivery options. Managers make a comparison of the cost of realistic delivery options. Managers consider a mixed delivery strategy. Managers identify possible implementation problems. Managers present their recommendations for approval (Milhem et al., 2014).

Consider Internal Versus External Training Options

Smith, Andras, and Rosenbloom (2012) discussed how outside training consultants could prove cost effective and provide knowledge that in-house training managers may not possess. When managers consider the advantages and disadvantages of each training option, certain requirements are necessary. Managers need to assess the experience and skills of internal training staff, evaluate available material, calculate possible benefits, determine the time to achieve competency, calculate potential benefits, make a comparison of costs and draw up recommendations (Smith, Andras, & Rosenbloom, 2012).

Duplicate Effective Training Programs

Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, and Smith-Jentsch (2012) discussed the strategy for selecting effective training programs and determining the cost, and the needed resources involve comparing different training programs. Managers can duplicate effective training programs and detect problem areas. Managers need to review training program information and allocate privileges to identify who has official access to the information. Managers need to grade and evaluate the information and draw up a priority list of recommendations. Managers then must design an action plan to compare levels of effectiveness (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012). If the purpose of education is to increase organizational effectiveness, then it must have strategic importance to the business (Salas et al., 2012).

Managers use systematic strategies and methodologies to provide a foundation for training plans, to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and provide performance-based measurements. Managers use training programs to help improve performance. Managers training strategies must provide feedback on progress during the implementation phase of the training process. Managers must plan how to measure the achievement of outcomes and the avoidance of random training programs and their negative consequences (Salas et al., 2012).

Determining the Needs, Benefits, and Cost

When managers discover a need, they are looking for a solution to a problem. Problems can happen, and managers need to follow a progression to determine the cause (Holtom & Burch, 2016). Managers can use several root-cause analysis tools. Managers can perform a SWOT analysis to understand the training needs of the business for the sales associates.

As defined by Rajarathinam, Chellappa, and Nagarajan (2015) the SWOT matrix is an important technique that enables management to develop strategic solutions. Matching relevant external and internal factors are the most difficult aspect of a SWOT matrix and include wise judgment. Managers use SWOT analysis to provide a way of pinpointing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

SWOT analysis is a vital tool for successful organizations, which managers depend on for precise analysis of skills, and capabilities. Rajarathinam, Chellappa, and Nagarajan (2015) stresses the strategic importance of exploiting internal strengths and neutralizing weaknesses using a straightforward SWOT analysis. Strategic SWOT factors are vital to a business's future.

The four strategic solutions based on SWOT Matrix (Rajarathinam, Chellappa, & Nagarajan, 2015) are the strengths and opportunities (SO) solution. Strengths and opportunity solutions are internal strengths managers use to take advantage of available opportunities in the organization. The strengths and threats (ST) solution are internal forces to reduce the effect of external threats. The weaknesses and opportunities (WO) solution are opportunities managers use to help deal with internal weaknesses. The weaknesses and threats (WT) solution minimizes weaknesses and avoids external threats, which negatively affect the organization progress.

Using these four SWOT solutions will give the manager a clear understanding of their position and enable management to plan. The information gathered from this analysis provides the manager with a more efficient strategic framework for the business (Abdi, Ashouri, Jamalpour, & Sandoosi, 2013). Human resource management is a relatively new transformation in the human resource management field (Jackson et al., 2014). Managers cannot apply a strategic training plan unless they have a strategic human resource management team (Jackson et al., 2014).

In the competitive mobile phone industry, business managers need to understand the strategies to train sales associates in customer service skills. Exceptional customer service can elevate the company above the competition. Dissatisfied customers cost businesses millions of dollars in profits each year (Dagger et al., 2013). Customer retention and satisfaction are difficult for managers to identify in financial reports (Tatikonda, 2013). Understanding training strategies for customer service skills can bridge the gap between customer dissatisfaction and customer retention helping business managers reduce dissatisfied customers.

Customers are the lifeline for the competitive mobile phone industry. Repeat customers are more profitable for the business than acquiring new customers (Tatikonda, 2013). Training sales associates could increase confidence and self-esteem when interacting with customers (Dagger et al., 2013). Improving customer service skills could affect positive social change by reducing customer problems and increasing customer satisfaction and retention, which could lead to improving the financial performance of the business (Dagger et al., 2013).

Competitive business managers must understand how to create value for sustainability (Lloret, 2016). Customer service skills' training is a holistic approach to improve business performance and the customer experience. Measuring performance solutions and providing innovative learning are important pieces of unprecedented results in customer satisfaction and retention.

Sales associate customer service skills training and development increases the performance and improves the customer service the customer receives and results in greater profits for the business (Mpofu & Hlatywayo, 2015). The sales associate’s knowledge and ability to use this information to improve their skills are an important part of innovativeness (Yilmaz et al., 2016). Managers understand a risk exist when they invest in human capital such as education and training. Not achieving the goals and objectives could result in no return on the investment. Unfavorable results could happen because of outdated skills training, turnover, and changes to the economy, creating an under-investment in human capital (Bae & Patterson, 2014).

Identifying the Gaps

Sales associates must know how to work with the constant changes, technical advancement, and changing market dynamics to be competitive (Williams, McCarthy, Kent, & Kester, 2013). Managers looked to higher education to provide the personal skill sets through formal college courses. Williams et al. (2013) indicated that study results indicated that students have not been well educated coming out of college. College faculty does not recognize the skill set for sales associates.

Service applications are making up over 80% of the economy in the United States, and customers are looking for good experiences (Ford, 2014). Customer interaction is a phenomenon also called co-production, where the customer wants more control and choices (Dixon & Walsman, 2014). Successful businesses are experiencing a competitive advantage over their competition by investing money and time in training their sales associates in skills that teach customer co-production involvement (Ford, 2014). In the mobile phone industry, sales associates need to interact with the customer with hands on devices. The co-production service experiences taught by management need to meet or exceed the customers' expectations (Ford, 2014).

Business managers understand attracting the customer to their establishment is only part of the customer service process (Ford, 2014). Sales associates must help the customer perform the roles in co-production. Managers need to develop strategies to help the employee assist the customers by identifying what the customer has to do to have an exceptional experience and what the customer is capable of doing (Ford & McColl-Kennedy, 2015).

Managers need to understand the employee's suitability for a particular position. Employees may not have the correct role or position resulting in bad behavior and poor performance. Many employees are in positions to fulfill a business need, but the education and knowledge of the employee do not support the conditions (Roessger, 2016). The impact of a bad job assignment can have a negative effect on other employees and customers. Managers need to hire employees who have the skill to do the job and continue to develop of their skills and behaviors (Cappelli, 2015).

Management should welcome the opportunity to gain valuable information of how to improve products and services because of customer complaints (Yilmaz et al., 2016). Complaints can help a manager focus on specific problem areas. A manager can gain an understanding of the root problem, and develop a strategy to facilitate improvements. Service recovery solutions can lead to improved marketplace success (Yilmaz et al., 2016). A customer complaint is an external source of information. Managers can learn about problems and gain knowledge about what the competition is offering. Managers can use this information to develop learning opportunities (Rubera & Kirca, 2012).

The creativity of the sales associates depends on their availability and accessibility to the correct information at the right time and place (Hemsley & Mason, 2012; Hemphälä & Magnusson, 2012). A knowledge management activity has an influence on creativity generation (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015). Managers should also take into account the sharing of others experiences to develop Knowledge-bases resources (Moskaliuk, Bokhorst, & Cress, 2016).

Set Customer Service Goals and Objectives

The customer's interests are the priority for the sales associate (Zeglat, Aljaber, & Alrawabdeh, 2014). Customer-orientated behavior is one of the most important tools for sales associates who are in face-to-face contact with the customer. Sales associates provide answers to customer's questions and needs. Service recovery situations are when the sales associates need the skills, power, and flexibility to engage with the customer (Zeglat, Aljaber, & Alrawabdeh, 2014). Training is a joint effort between the sales associate and the manager who work together developing knowledge, attitude, behavior, and skills (Rahman & Nas, 2013).

Every customer is one of a kind, and every situation may have a different set of circumstances. Managers cannot develop a specific set of scripts or processes to follow that will provide exceptional service every time. Sales associates need to understand they are taking action to create value for the customer (Schwepker & Schultz, 2015). Business managers need to develop specific strategies and gain knowledge for teaching and developing specific skills specialized for the sales associate's environment (Salas et al., 2012).

Managers adopting a proactive training strategy can use everyday events to develop skills by taking advantage of current events and allow for development and growth (Baron & Parent, 2015). Successful business leaders rely on the most up-to-date skills set for the sales associates (Williams et al., 2013). Williams et al., (2013) found that skills sets are the single most important variable a sales associate can possess and assists managers in predicting sales performance.

Successful business leaders use a two-step process for handling customer complaints (Yilmaz et al., 2016). First, the business leader can influence the sales associate's behavior by having an environment that supports shared norms and goals. A customer-focused business culture can help. Second management needs to develop a formal set of rules and procedures for the sales associates to follow to make sure they understand the process (Yilmaz et al., 2016). Ford (2014) discussed the emerging research of subconscious goal setting and the positive effect on the sales associates' job performance. Ford (2014) suggested subconscious goal setting could approve valuable tool for businesses to use in the co-production process with the customer. Ford (2014) discussed the five senses including hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and seeing which cue desired cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses.

When managers hire new employees, they should match the person to the job that best fits their skills. Managers should also match current employees' skill sets to the job they are performing. Employees need an ongoing training program to continue developing their skills and abilities leading to a higher level of performance (Moreland, 2013).

Win Support from Upper Management and Leadership

Managers are facing the challenge of a committed, satisfied, and cooperative workforce (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). Pradhan and Pradhan indicated that previous transactional leadership skills failed to retain and attract the best staff even by offering incentives, higher wages, and benefits. Business leaders are looking for inspiring managers with a vision that allows the employee to engage. Transformational leaders create a greater level of trust, commitment, and inspiration (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015).

Successful transformational leader's lead actively by example and act as good role models from the head of the business through all levels of the hierarchy. Employees take direction from managers and demonstrate behavioral skills that support, help, and show cooperation in the work environment (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). Ford (2014) discussed the importance of putting the customer first by making sure the sales associates and training system meet or exceed the expectation of the customer. When difficult times during financial challenges or product opportunities happen, managers should invest financially in the sales associates, business training, and equipment (Barone & DeCarlo, 2012). A committed leader considers the investment in training and development as vital to remain competitive (Jyoti & Dev, 2015).

In developing a culture on education, the business manager needs to require dedication and support from the top down and the lower levels (Kaufman, 2015). Managers need to refocus from the traditional measures of success to new leading indicators of new action (Kaufman, 2015). Kaufman (2015) discussed the need for managers to ask for new ideas to improve customer service.

Understanding Individuals Learning Style and Abilities

A question many managers ask is how do adults' best learn skills. In obtaining the answer, to the question, the manager may turn to the field of adult education (Roessger, 2016). Roessger (2016) discussed the lack of information supporting how adult learners learn skills. Many scholars including Ford (2014) suggest teachers do the best they can with an unconcerned attitude.

Adults exhibit two kinds of preferred (Chen & Wu, 2015) learning styles: instrumental as cause and effect and communicative or feelings. Learning involves the sales associate to change their meaning structures relating to perspectives and schemes. The change to meaning structures occurs through reflection about the content, process, or premises. Learning can involve how we refine or elaborate about meaning schemes, learning new schemes, transforming schemes, or transform perspectives.

The sales associates' attitude, ability, learning motivation, and instructional approach has an effect on their learning (Chen & Wu, 2015). The learning style of each sales associate has an effect on the learning performance when using multi-media learning environments (Ocepek, Bosnić, Nančovska Šerbec, & Rugelj, 2013). Chen and Wu (2015) discussed the effect of verbal and visual learning styles on the different learning styles. The three multimedia materials are interactive, video-based, and static images. A visualizer, for example, would have a more positive reaction to video and animation than text (Chen & Wu, 2015).

The environment and surroundings of the sales associate along with variables such as motivation and customer behavior affects human behavior (Vermeulen, Van Acker, Kreijns, & van Buuren, 2015). The sales associate's creativity is essential for the manager to foster. The sales associate's motivation is an important part of creativity (Huang, Krasikova, & Liu, 2016).

Positive reframing is the ability to teach the sales associate to view a situation from a different perspective (Baron & Parent, 2015). When managers discuss reframing with other participants, a dialog can open to exploring solutions, ideas, and a plan for action. The encouragement and support from others can help develop new behaviors and fosters new relationships (Baron & Parent, 2015).

Managers moved toward the sales associate owing their learning experiences using the individualized consideration construct in transformational leadership (Burns, 1978). Managers should address different learning preferences and styles. Managers can develop a personalized learning experience that works best for the sales associate. The manager can transform from lecturer to facilitator of coaching and learning.

Training Tools and Techniques

Managers could have the sales associate read a training manual for customer service, but chances are it is out of date and will not build a service culture (Kaufman, 2015). Managers could reword a script to help the sales associate solve a customer problem, but more than likely the technology changed. Customer service training and education will show positive results as sales associates use new principles, new insights, new skills, and new competencies (Kaufman, 2015).

One of the most powerful tools for a sales associate who has a direct face-to-face relationship with the customer is to possess a customer-orientated behavior (Zeglat et al., 2014). The sales associate needs to have the flexibility, ability, and power to engage the customer (Gazzoli, Hancer, & Kim, 2013). Manager's ability to empower the sales associate is one of the most effective tools and skills for customer service (Chiang & Hsieh, 2012). Empowerment is giving the sales associate more discretion and authority to solve problems and address issues (Sun, Zhang, Qi, & Chen, 2012).

Successful managers realize the need to engage the sales associates in the decision-making process. Conducting round-table discussions while sharing current information, problems, and challenges can provide valuable information about the current environment the sales associates are facing with the customers (Men, 2014). Transformational managers can use assessments to create benchmarks to help understand success. The manager can use assessments and match the sales associate with the job based on their skills and knowledge (Jantti & Greenhalgh, 2012).

Business managers are seeking emerging learning technologies to increase sales associate's retention, absorption, and application to help increase and drive business goals and objectives. Printed documents and three ring binders are part of the past for Verizon Communications (Tedrick, 2012). Geographic challenges along with conflicting training priorities have made a traditional approach to training impossible for Verizon's managers. Managers at Verizon Communications believe the use of the latest technology combined with their network is beneficial in training sales associates (Tedrick, 2012). Verizon management's thought process aligns with transformational leadership. Transformational leaders create new processes and visions to improve the organization and transform the culture (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Transformational leaders use technology to stimulate the employee.

Michael Sunderman, executive director, training and development for Verizon, described several new approaches to technology (Tedrick, 2012). Verizon implemented the use of Webcams to connect trainers live with all sales associates across the globe as if everyone was in the same classroom. Trainers use Webcam technology to observe the physical responses of the sales associates in real-time. The trainers can adjust their delivery of information as they would if they were in the same classroom (Tedrick, 2012).

Verizon management conducted interviews after the training, discovered the learning experience was superior to past traditional webinar (Tedrick, 2012). Verizon managers recognized cost savings as it relates to travel expenses and material cost. Andrew Bishop training manager for Verizon discussed how the use of smartphones put training in the palm of the sales associates hands. Managers discovered the mobile technology for the use of tablets as training devices (Tedrick, 2012).

Managers at Verizon implemented a blended learning approach (Tedrick, 2012). Managers teach sales associates the use of self-paced training, digital user’s guides, and video clips that are on demand. This blended learning approach would not have been possible if the business managers were not willing to embrace change. Managers use special learning programs with predetermined pop-up questions with the option to answer or delay responses for a better time. Incorrectly, answered questions will rotate back into the queue allowing repeat chances to respond to the question correctly. The manager can monitor in real-time the progress of the sales associates training while providing results identifying the areas of strength as well as needs for improvement. Managers can use smartphone technology for real-time feedback on the progress the sales associate is making and provide instant feedback for the sales associate. This real-time approach aligns with how transformational leaders inspire individuals to change expectations, perceptions, and motivations to achieve common business goals (Breevaart et al., 2014).

Bishop discussed how Verizon is utilizing a single platform to centralize the teaching and learning experience. Managers made available a series of specific text, podcast, videos, interactions, and quiz questions accessible in real-time with immediate updates to the sales associate and the manager. Sales associate use online technology to view videos at their convenience, participate in interactive role-plays, and take specific and personal notes for later use (Tedrick, 2012).

The use of real-time technology saves time, reduces tedious tasks, and eliminates the cost of printed materials. Sales associates are happy with the learning experience. Sales associates use online technology for the products they sell and support. Managers find real-time technology much easier to monitor the learning process and provide feedback while in the classroom or studying on their own (Tedrick, 2012).

In 2008, Sprint Nextel Corporation's customer service training was often reactive, problem-solving for specific needs and using a classic classroom training environment (Fogleman, 2013). Fogleman (2013) stated Sprint management recognized the need for change. Within a 4-year period, Sprint management was able to achieve number one status among all national carriers and most improved in customer satisfaction, across all 47 industries according to sources from the American Customer Satisfaction Index. Sprint improved customer satisfaction by efforts through Sprint University's learn and perform training.

Trainers at Sprint University developed specific support tools that enable sales associates to research the correct information and tools in real-time to help the customer immediately (Fogleman, 2013). Sprint University training managers focus on teaching the sales associate how and when to use the patented performance tools to help develop customer relationships. Real-time learning eliminates lecture-based training built around memorization. Sharing information in real-time across business channels eliminates duplicate effort to deliver information and reduces labor cost.

Trainers at Sprint moved to a how to do it system to provide outstanding customer service. Managers moved toward the sales associate owing their learning experiences using the individualized consideration construct in transformational leadership (Burns, 1978). Managers at Sprint use the how to do it system to help address different learning preferences and styles. Managers can develop a personalized learning experience that works best for the sales associate. Personalized learning helps the manager to transform from lecturer to facilitator of coaching and learning.

Video lecturing is a tool in an online training environment. Many organizational employees use video lecturing (Chen & Wu, 2015). Sales associate use video lecturing on demand to view the training material repeatedly, if necessary, to understand the material. Video lectures can enhance the learning experience allowing the sales associate to listen and see as if they were in a classroom. Managers need to understand there are different formats used by trainers for video lecturing. Commonly used video lecture types in online learning environments are voice-over presentation, lecture capture, picture-in-picture, and Khan-style video lecture (Giannakos, Chorianopoulos, Giotopoulos, & Vlamos, 2013).

The instructor using lecture capture type simply records the presentation for online viewing (Chen & Wu, 2015). The video typically contains the instructor's voice, PowerPoint slides, and occasionally a video recording of the trainer with text on a whiteboard. The voice-over presentation synchronizes audio recordings of a lecture to accompanying PowerPoint slides by way of specialized lecture recording software for the trainee to view (e.g., Microsoft Producer or PowerCam). Trainers use the picture-in-picture type to display an instructor's image and lecture slides using the instructor's voice, flash animation, or even subtitles. Khan-style video trainers rely mainly on handwritten tutorials, as produced by using a digital pen and tablet, with an audio voice-over from a trainer (Chen & Wu, 2015). Chen and Wu (2015) determined the voice-over training method be the weakest among the video lecture styles.

Managers could set specific standards for developing sound and idiot-proof strategies that allow new sales associates to assist customers, but this may not solve the customer service problems (Robson, Pitt, & Berthon, 2015). Sales associate have a difficult time adapting to the situation because of rigid standards and strict controls. Service failures occur because the sales associate does not have the flexibility or skills to identify the customers' expectations. The sales associate may anticipate customer response instead of listening to the customer (Robson, Pitt, & Berthon, 2015).

Robson, Pitt, and Berthon (2015) discuss the use of improvisation as a way to train sales associates in problem-solving. Improvisation is a way for the sales associate to deliver customer service without preplanning. Sales associates can learn to improve through role-playing in different customer service situations. When in doubt how to handle a situation the sales associate can invoke the yes and rule. Sales associates use the yes rule, to accept the situation knowing no mistakes exist. The sales associate must appear flexible and adaptable to use improvisation (Robson et al., 2015). Improvisation encourages creativity and flexibility from sales associates (Robson et al., 2015). Improvisation is most successful in a culture that empowers the sales associates to make decisions without discussion with the manager. Improvisation can lead to a better understanding of the customer in real-time (Robson et al., 2015).

Sigala and Chalkiti (2015) discussed the use of social media and its effect on creativity of the sales associate. Creativity is the production of ideas and is necessary for innovation (Jiang et al., 2012). Creativity from sales associates can provide innovative performance for the business (Quisenberry & Burrell, 2012). The sales associates' creative behavior can have a positive influence on the team and personal performance (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015).

A sales associate can use social media to collaborate and communicate with customers. Engaging in social media can facilitate trust and knowledge sharing (Hemsley & Mason, 2012). Social media is the sharing of information and discussing activities while co-creating new knowledge (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015). Sales associates can use social media to gain access to video, audio, and hypertext.

Sales associates need to develop their social media literacy capabilities and skills (Aubke, 2014). The needed social media skills for sales associates are to search and identify information on different social media platforms and know if the information is reliable and authentic (Gottfridsson, 2012). Managers need to take an active role to help the sales associate raise their literacy ability with social media (Rubalcaba, Michel, Sundbo, Brown, & Reynoso, 2012). Managers can influence the organization's culture to support the use of social media (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015).

Knowledge-in-use is a term to describe how to perform in a given situation (Ranucci & Souder, 2015). Knowledge-in-use is a combination of personal experiences and the consideration of others' experiences (Mariano & Casey, 2013). Sales associates need to internalize others experiences to apply proven solutions to avoid making the same mistakes (Venkitachalam & Busch, 2012). Information sharing can help the sales associate to develop personal learning (Kimmerle, Moskaliuk, Oeberst, & Cress, 2015).

Development Program

In a knowledge-based society, people understand the importance of lifelong learning (Kimmerle et al., 2015). The term knowledge-in-use is information of how to do an activity (Matschke, Moskaliuk, & Cress, 2012). Knowledge-in-use is essential for daily problem solving and facing challenges (Ranucci & Souder, 2015). Understanding and managing knowledge-based resources with success is a competitive advantage for business (Mariano & Casey, 2013). Chapman and Randall (2012) indicated that professionals graduating from universities do not have the skill sets managers are looking in employees.

Chapman and Randall (2012) discussed the need for a redesign of business education curriculum. Business graduates need more than theory, and case study knowledge and experience alone does not produce highly skill people (Roessger, 2016). Many scholars view the skills of current business graduates’ as a fundamental relationship to future business success (Chapman, & Randall, 2012). Prospective employees need a skill set that allows for creativity and flexibility (Bridwell, 2013). Several discussions have taken place. However, no curriculum design or the learning processes for students have not met the demand for the current environment (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2012). Chapman and Randall (2012) proposed to change the current curriculum model and integrate Mezirow’s transformative learning theory and Heifetz’s Adaptive Leadership model.

Sales associates face challenges to cultivate their skills (Nicolaides & Dzubinski, 2015) to respond to real-time customer service demands. Changing circumstances in the marketplace is forcing adult education faculty to steer away from current approaches towards a more transformative learning style (Hanson, 2013). Partly in response to the changing circumstances, the field of adult education is gradually undergoing a shift away from modern, instrumental approaches towards more transformative approaches to teaching and learning (Merriam & Kee, 2014).

Loop learning recasts transactional learning through deliberate attention to levels of learning that lead to the transformation of a person's way of knowing, being, and doing (Nicolaides & Dzubinski, 2015). Single-loop learning is the level of learning and behavioral adaptation that brings about performance that is more effective. Single-loop learning means the student would adjust their behavior to achieve a different outcome without having to alter their habits of mind. This level of learning relies on achievements and routinized responses to tasks.

Double-loop learning means the student transform their structure or strategy, not just amend their behavior (Nicolaides & Dzubinski, 2015). Double-loop learning inquiries into the assumptions that guide the development of action; it requires a greater awareness and a more challenging degree of learning to the surface, understand, and revise those assumptions (Nicolaides & Dzubinski, 2015). Triple-loop learning is the most complex, requiring a shift in our attention, intention, or vision. Triple-loop learning involves unpredictable and uncontrolled learning that integrates how individuals seek and make meaning and then act based on values and beliefs that are permeable, to revision action from moment to moment. While single-loop learning might suffice as learning that increases the fund of knowledge and technical knowledge, double and triple-loop learning are necessary in today's complex, uncertain world for adults to adapt and thrive. Transformative learning truly takes place at the levels of double and triple-loop learning for the student (Nicolaides & Dzubinski, 2015).

The development of the sales associates' skills has a dual purpose of achieving the goals of the business and the employee (Rahman & Nas, 2013). Managers design training programs to develop changes at the behavioral, attitudinal, and cognitive levels of the sales associates (Jyoti & Dev, 2015). Managers need to establish an environment where the sales associate can experiment with new skills before using the skills in the real-world situation. This approach of experimentation fosters a culture that is safe and supportive promoting trust and confidence. Establishing a safety net for participants will encourage sales associates to move beyond their comfort zone and explore new abilities (Baron & Parent, 2015).

Managers should not allow the sales associates to bring them problems but encourage them to begin the problem-solving process by recommending possible solutions (Baron & Parent, 2015). Transformational leaders encourage the employee to think creatively, analyze their challenges from a different perspective, and use technology to help solve the problem (Jyoti & Dev, 2015). Gargiulo (2014) discussed a mentoring role with a knowledgeable associate would benefit the new sales associates with less customer service experience and skills. The feedback through communication between the manager and sales associate can further develop opportunities for learning and knowledge development (Shanta & Gargiulo, 2014).

Managers need to reinforce the idea of continuing to improve skills and knowledge (Jyoti & Dev, 2015). Creativity, knowledge, and innovation are critical factors to remain competitive while sustaining the ideas to innovate and learn (Gottfridsson, 2012). The creative behavior of sales associates can have a positive impact on other team member’s creative performance affecting the businesses innovative performance (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015).

The culture of the business can drive the education of customer service skills. Managers can use real-time customer communication to provide specific areas for skill development. Keeping the current information flowing into the training program will allow the managers to keep the sales associates growing in all directions (Kaufman, 2015). Sales associates need two-way open and transparent communication with the customer.

A critical element for success is the service design. The service design is like a road map to follow the faultless and correct service process (Urban, 2015). Service innovation cultivates service development and training (Kostopoulos, Gounaris, & Boukis, 2012). Employees using service design can understand the relationship between the customer, the business, and the market as the business leaders develop ideas and solutions during implementation (Gustafsson, Kristensson, & Witell, 2012).

Managers use service design to understand functionality, ergonomics, ecological integrity, economic feasibility, and aesthetic values, but service design concerns a living product (Urban, 2015). The living portion of the service design is the interaction between the sales associate and the customer and not all the elements defined (Park, Lee, Lee, & Truex, 2012). Managers can use on-the-job training in the workplace during the working day; off-the-job training is off-site and off-line. Off-the-job training is the most common form of training. Off-the-job training accounts for 3 to 6 times more expenditures than that spent on-the-job training (De Grip & Sauermann, 2013).

Unplanned on-the-job training can shorten the breaking-in period for new employee hiring, transfer, and promotion (Jacobs & Bu-Rahmah, 2012). Unplanned off-the-job training can involve in-service training where staff collaborates with their supervisors or colleagues to deal with everyday problems. Managers need to utilize the time spent away from the job with planned off-the-job training. Off-the-job training is useful when a large number of employees have a similar training requirement (Jacobs & Bu-Rahmah, 2012).

Managers, supervisors, and trainers can structure on-the-job training to teach trainees previously determined skill sets. On-the-job training can also involve training that has no significant impact on productivity (Jacobs & Bu-Rahmah, 2012). In on-the-job training, the work itself becomes an integral part of the training (De Grip & Sauermann, 2013). De Grip and Sauermann (2013) reported that on-the-job training has a considerable impact on job satisfaction, employee motivation, and commitment.

Off the job, training can involve group discussions, one-on-one tutorials, lectures, reading, training courses, and workshops (Jacobs & Bu-Rahmah, 2012). Jacobs and Bu-Rahmah (2012) described how off the job training enables trainees to learn and apply new skills and knowledge in a safe working environment. Managers can use off the job training for employees who lack the skills or information to work productively. Providing off the job training when a large number of employees have a similar training requirement is cost effective (Jacobs & Bu-Rahmah, 2012).

Managers can use team training to teach problem-solving more efficiently for groups, using observation and feedback (Siassakos et al., 2013). Specific team training strategies teach cross training, coordination training, leadership training, self-correction, and distributed team training (Ellington & Dierdorff, 2014). The results of the research show that team training functions well in a theoretically driven situation. Managers use team training to concentrates on the necessary skills and give trainees realistic opportunities for feedback (Ellington & Dierdorff, 2014). Mentors can help develop skills and abilities in problem solving, conflict resolution, communication, defining objectives and planning (Brien & Hamburg, 2014). Businesses managers, educational teachers, and military leaders use simulation as a popular way of delivering training (Avramenko, 2012).

Managers use seminars and workshops to focus on a particular topic, with the active involvement of trainees (Börner, Moormann, & Wang, 2012). Managers use seminars and workshops to help sales associates to become more familiar with their job functions and more actively involved. Seminars enable sales associates to handle problems that arise on a regular basis (Börner, Moormann, & Wang, 2012).

Managers use field trips and tours to give sales associates the experience in situations away from the workplace and provide practical information about their job functions (Behrendt, & Franklin, 2014). Few managers use field trips as a component of training because of logistical limitations and shortage of appropriate training materials (Behrendt, & Franklin, 2014). Field trips and tours can help sales associates to get an understanding of job requirements (Behrendt, & Franklin, 2014).

eLearning is the use of information technology to enhance and support education and learning processes. Managers use eLearning to provide a variety of learning strategies and applications to exchange information and acquire skills (Giesbers, Rienties, Tempelaar, & Gijselaers, 2013). People with access to the computer and the internet can use eLearning programs, course material, academic, and non-academic staff. Sales associates use eLearning to obtain high-quality information and qualifications at an appropriate time and place (Wan, Compeau, & Haggerty, 2012).

Human Resource (HR) departments use eLearning to provide very specific learning that efficiently directly benefits learners and the business (Giesbers et al., 2013). Trainees use eLearning to adapt training to their daily lives. eLearning is less expensive than other kinds of training. Trainees use eLearning for self-paced learning. Managers like eLearning because it is easy to manage and control for large numbers of people, and can assist business employees in enhancing performance (Giesbers et al., 2013).

Much academic and corporate training environments around the world are currently employing eLearning management systems. Managers use eLearning to enhance existing training methodologies with the introduction of virtual and mobile learning environments (Giesbers et al., 2013). Business managers plan to increase the amount of training delivered by way of virtual classrooms, self-paced eLearning, simulations, and new collaborative training systems (Milhem et al., 2014).

Hiring the Right People

For a business to have sustainability, managers need to engage in better hiring practices. Managers need to identify the skills needed by sales associates to provide good customer service (Taheri, & Gharakhani, 2012). Taheri and Gharakhani (2012) discussed that managers should seek employees with friendly and courteous personalities because they demonstrate a high level of customer orientation. If a business needs friendly and courteous service, the manager must hire friendly and courteous people (Tang & Tang, 2012). Training employees with the technical skills are appropriate for managers. Teaching employees to act in a friendly way and caring is difficult for managers (Taheri, & Gharakhani, 2012).

Knilans (2015) discussed how first impressions make a lasting impression, and managers need to hire the right person. Many times people work in a position with little or no knowledge of the skills needed. The goal should include finding the person who best fits the situation (Knilans, 2014). Many managers hire people based on the technical skills of the applicant. Managers should consider the problem-solving skills, technical skills, and soft skills of the candidate. Managers can develop a hiring strategy that includes a benchmarked assessment system (Graham-Leviss, 2012).

An evaluation system is a part of a good hiring strategy. Evaluation systems must include measurable data and a high degree of accuracy in understanding the soft skills and problem-solving skills of each employee (Graham-Leviss, 2012). The right assessment system will have the capability of creating a meaningful benchmark for success. An evaluation system aligns the soft skills and problem-solving skills with the specific sales job. Can data not only align with the selection process but also can align in the development stage to maximize employee potential and performance. Creating a hiring strategy that includes assessing candidates' abilities to perform the job, with the addition of soft skills and problem-solving skills will enable businesses to match top candidates to job requirements (Graham-Leviss, 2012).

Follow-up, Feedback, and Measuring Success

Sales associates will evaluate their environment and respond to the manager based on their leadership style. Managers find sales associates are more open to a transformational leadership style of management (Epitropaki, Sy, Martin, Tram-Quon, & Topakas, 2013). Sales associates who view their managers, as transformational leaders believe the feedback from managers about job performance and decision-making are at a higher level (Gillet & Vandenberghe, 2014).

Managers need to provide an open line of communication with the sales associate to allow for sharing of information and open discussion. Business managers should conduct frequent evaluations with the sales associate and develop a plan to adjust to the slightest challenges (Shanta & Gargiulo, 2014). Managers can use assessments to create benchmarks to help understand success. Managers use assessments to provide a history of the sales associate performance and continue to evaluate if the job is still a good fit for both the business and the sales associate. Managers use assessments to help with placement of people as the job requirements change (Clements & Cord, 2013).

The manager needs to define the job in quantifiable terms and review the descriptions on a regular basis. Managers can use a behavioral assessment to create benchmarks and determine success. Managers can gain a better understanding of the job and track performance to evaluate the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to meet the goals and objectives of the business (Moreland, 2013).

Managers would look for evidence of critical reflection regarding content, process, and premise when using transformative theory (Nicolaides & Dzubinski, 2015).

Content reflection consists of a curricular mapping from the sales associate and manager perspectives. Managers use process reflection to focus on best practices, self-efficacy measures, and literature-based indicators (Moreland, 2013). Managers would consider both content and process reflection to develop recommendations.

Conclusion

After review of the literature related to training strategy, I have a better understanding the importance of developing a training program in parallel with business strategy to achieve the desired objective of the training program. Training theories may help professionals adopt the right approach to training (Milhem et al., 2014). Managers need to understand the importance of choosing the correct training delivery method best matched to the employee and business objectives. Managers need to understand why successful businesses invest more in training than their competition. The evidence is sufficient that training leads to positive business and individual outcomes (Milhem et al., 2014). Management must have more focus not only because the training activities are expensive but also because the effects of training are vital to the business and to the employee at the same time.

Transition

Section 1 included the foundation of the study, the background of the problem, problem statement, and purpose statement. The foundation of the study is how managers need to understand how customer service skills help sales associates bridge the gap between customer dissatisfaction and customer retention. Background of the study involved the problems faced by business managers to understand if training sales associate in customer service skills can bridge the gap between customer dissatisfaction and customer retention. The purpose statement included the purpose of the study, descriptions of research method and design, population, setting, and the contributions of the study towards business practices and social change. Additional sections included the nature of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, the significance of the study, and literature review.

The nature of the study included descriptions of chosen methods and designs and the reasons for choosing the preferred method and design. Section 2 included the purpose of the study, a role of the researcher, the participants, methods and designs, population, sampling, and ethical research. This section also included the data collection process, study instruments, data collection technique, data organization approach, data analysis, and validity of instruments, processes, and study. The purpose of the study included a method, design, population, setting, and social impact.

Section 3 included the results of the study, a detailed commentary on the empirical evidence, and the conceptual framework relating to the research question. Section 3 included the findings and recommendations from the review and analysis of the interviews. Section 3 included the discussion regarding implications for social change, research recommendations, and research reflections.

Section 2: The Project

In this study, I focused on exploring strategies managers use to train customer service skills to sales associates. This section contains details on data collection, data instruments, data collection techniques, and data analysis. Furthermore, the section includes discussion of the reliability and validity factors of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to identify and explore strategies business managers use to train sales associates with effective customer service skills. The target population consisted of three mobile phone business managers with successful training strategies from a company specializing in mobile phones sales located in Michigan. The business managers implemented customer service programs that focused on customer satisfaction and retention by training sale associates in customer service skills.

The implications for affecting positive social change included sales associates developing social behavior skills during training that can reduce fear, distrust, and uncertainty toward customers. Sales associates can help the customer accept, understand the technical operations of the mobile phone, and feel comfortable with the rapidly changing technology. Properly trained sales associates can assist the customer to eliminate the feeling of being overwhelmed and frustrated (Dhar, 2015). The social impact of this study results could influence the satisfaction of the customers leading to sustainable businesses, which in return may save jobs.

Role of the Researcher

My focus of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies business managers use in the mobile phone industry to teach customer service skills to their sales associates. Data receive analyzing from interviews and business documents. Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) indicated the person conducting the research becomes the primary instrument for data collection in a qualitative study.

The person conducting the research facilitates the flow of communication, identifies cues, and sets participants at ease (Yin, 2014). Houghton et al. (2013) posited that researchers carry a larger part of responsibility regarding the outcome of the data collection process and have diverse roles for many reasons. My role in this research effort was to create the research interview guide, contact the potential participants, collect data through face-to-face interviews, and analyze the results through computer software. Other roles were identifying themes from the patterns in the data collection and presentation of the research results in section 3. I have no experience in the mobile phone business. However, my work experience in retail business sales for 30 years has provided exposure to various customer service training and learning situations.

The Belmont Report dates to 1979 by a U.S. government commission that includes guidelines for involving vulnerable research participants, including minority populations (Rogers & Lange, 2013). The Belmont Report includes protections against the misuse of individuals or groups without consent or any likelihood of benefit in research. The Belmont Report also includes protection of people with mental challenges and the vulnerability of unjust research. In this study, I purposefully selected participants to eliminate humans that would be vulnerable in line with the Belmont guideline of the groups identified. Purposeful sampling is useful to researchers for seeking information-rich cases for in-depth studies. Participants identity received protection, and only I listened to the audio tapes and read transcripts.

Shalini and Arora (2012) stated biases are the designs of the human mind and are a tool to make sense of the information to reach a decision. Chenail (2011) indicated that bias management is a significant challenge for qualitative researchers who employ interviews as a data collection method. Chenail also described the proper process for researchers to test the quality of their interview protocol and for identifying potential researcher biases is the pilot study. For this study, a pilot study was not necessary because I used member checking after the interview process. Using member checking, the participants read the interpretation of interviews to ensure credibility and accuracy of the data (Houghton et al., 2013).

A reason for an interview protocol is the facilitation of interactions that create the context to encourage participants to share rich data regarding their experiences (Whiteley, 2012; Xu & Storr, 2012). Whiteley (2012) discussed how the person conducting the research facilitates the flow of communication, identifies cues, and sets participants at ease. I performed as a discovery-oriented research instrument and constructed a study-specific set of open-ended questions. Open-ended questions allow participants to contribute their perspectives with little or no limitation (Yin, 2014). Another reason for an interview protocol is to insure consistency, validity, and credibility of the findings.

Participants

The criterion for selecting participants in this study included previous teaching and training experience in the mobile phone business. I reviewed information from the American Customer Satisfaction Index to identify businesses in the mobile phone industry that exceed in customer service. The participants eligible for the study included three managers of a mobile phone business in Michigan. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) recommended at least three interviewees for case studies based on the principle of data saturation. Yap and Webber (2015) stated that a key component of qualitative research is to identify the appropriate participants for the study. For qualitative case studies, participants must have knowledge of the phenomenon of interest (Yin, 2014).

Lenters, Cole, and Godoy-Ruiz (2014) suggested searching through Google is useful for the identification of names and contacts for possible participants. Mansumitrchai and Chiu (2012) discussed obtaining participants by way of Facebook and LinkedIn as another reliable alternative way to make contact with participants. Social networking is a part of globalizing the world economy, with some people using social network sites (Mansumitrchai & Chiu, 2012). Amerson (2011) described how researchers achieve success using social networks such as Facebook to locate participants.

Contacting local mobile phone businesses managers by telephone was another means to gain access to participants for the study. The contact took place in person to request an interview with the manager. The next step was the introduction of the proposed research and purpose, provisions of the criteria to participate, and explanation of the confidentiality and informed consent process. Following the introduction, I exchanged e-mail addresses with the participants so I could e-mail a consent form if the managers met the criteria and agree to participate voluntarily.

E-mail based communication in a globalizing world transforms into a universal form of interaction among people (Al-Alwani, 2015). Lenters, Cole, and Godoy-Ruiz (2014) used e-mail to recruit participants with a mix of gender, region of origin, year of participation, and level of training in their exploration of networking. E-mail communication is an appropriate method of communication when participants need clarification (Back, 2013). E-mail was useful for me to schedule the interviews, but not for interviewing participants in the study. The next step involved obtaining consent from participants to establish a time and place for an interview.

Small samples are appropriate and acceptable for case studies (Geist & Hitchcock 2014; Molenberghs et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). The population for this study included managers in a mobile phone business in Michigan. Shalini and Arora (2012) argued that the focus of data collection should reflect on the subjectively relevant segments of the population. The participant population came from a local mobile phone business in mid-Michigan. Marshall et al. (2013) maintained that data collection and the size of the participant pool enable the exploration and understanding of the research questions within a study.

Managers in the population must have experience in customer service training for sales associates. Managers in the population sample without training experience will not take part in the study. I established a working relationship with each participant through consistent phone communication, personal visits, and e-mail once participants agreed to participate in the study.

Research Method and Design

Research is a process of collecting relevant materials and data for increasing the knowledge of the researcher (Petty et al., 2012). The three forms of research inquiry are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Wahyuni, 2012). Yin (2014) discussed the research question will determine the research method. I used a qualitative, single-case study design to study managers training strategies. In qualitative research, the design of the study emerges as the study develops. Yin (2014) indicated that a case study research design gives the researcher the ability to collect evidence to explore a focused research subject.

Research Method

I used a qualitative research method to understand the strategies mobile phone managers use to teach customer service skills to sales associates. Yin (2014) discussed how a research method provides a particular direction and approach before proceeding with the research design. Rowley (2012) discussed how research methods address the type of questions asked, how the data is the collected, data analyzation, the interpretation of the data, presenting the findings, and validation. Qualitative methods can include the actions and interactions of participants (Coenen, Stamm, Stucki, & Cieza, 2012). Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie, and Green (2012) described how conducting qualitative research could produce rich data from a natural environment and focus on the meaning of observation. The qualitative method includes responses of participants in their words to express personal categorizations and perceived associations (Petty et al., 2012). Trotter (2012) discussed, in qualitative research, researchers collect data while asking open-ended questions in interviews, analyzing recorded audio-visual data, and observation. Based on the insight into participants' reflections and the organizational context sought, qualitative research is the optimal choice to enhance the overall strength of the study. In comparing methodologies for this study, I selected a qualitative research method. A qualitative method aligns better for the study because quantitative, and mixed methodology methods did not match the exploratory nature of the study (Yin, 2014).

Before selecting the research method, I reviewed three research methods for conducting the research. The research methods considered were quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies (Rowley, 2012). Petty et al. (2012) indicated quantitative researchers test theories or relationships by evaluating numbered data to explain variables. Deductive analysis occurs during a quantitative study, generating a numeral summary that allows the researcher to reject or accept the null hypothesis. Instruments are for measuring qualitative variables and using statistical models (Trotter, 2012). Unlike quantitative methods, the qualitative method includes responses of participants in their words to express their personal categorizations and associations (Coenen et al., 2012).

Mixed method is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Trotter (2012) indicated that mixed method is useful to researchers for integrating quantitative numerical data with the qualitative meaning and understanding of participants’ experiences. Petticrew, Refuess, Noyes, Higgins, and

Mayhew (2013) concluded that mixed method is for synthesizing approaches, with the integration of quantitative and qualitative data in a single study. Mixed method did not meet the needs of a qualitative study when the desire is to fill the gap where mixed methods tend to include only a little or no allowance for competing interpretations to coexist (Vergne, 2012).

Research Design

The research design is the process, sequence, or blueprint to explore what questions to consider studying, what data is relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyze the findings (Arghhode, 2012). The research question for data collection and analysis is part of the research design that leads to the conclusion of the study (Yin, 2014). Trotter (2012) indicated that the research design is appropriate for a researcher to keep the focus on the research question.

The research design for the study was a single case exploratory design to gain insight into strategies business managers use in the mobile phone industry to train sales associates in effective customer service skills. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) described how the case study design includes a preference when studies involve unique and revelatory cases related to the study of an individual, event, or program. The review of qualitative designs reveals a case study design is better suited comparing to a narrative research for reasons of abstraction (Yin, 2014). Alex, Näslund, and Jasmand (2012) stated using a case study provides a method to collect specific details regarding the research subject enhancing the validity and reliability of the design. Therefore, case study design is better for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data using an inductive process for this study.

I selected a case study design as the most appropriate for this study. Yin (2014) described three types of case studies, exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory, which give the researcher options on the study objective. I considered three qualitative research designs: ethnography, phenomenological, and case study. Pratt (2015) described ethnography as an attempt to study a human group by understanding how the group forms and maintains a culture. Lambert, Glacken, and McCarron (2013) indicated that researchers who use ethnography studies use a variety of data collection methods and immerse themselves into the culture for an extended period. Lambert et al., (2013) discussed ethnographic study designs are more suitable for examining the beliefs and behaviors of culture-sharing groups. Ethnography was not an optimal choice for the study. Ethnography is the investigation of everyday behaviors of participants necessary to identify the cultural norms, beliefs, patterns, and social structures.

Bevan, (2014) indicated that researchers use phenomenological studies to explore individual lived experiences through multiple in-depth interviews with people of interest around a specific phenomenon. Bevan (2014) stated that researchers use phenomenological design to collect data from interviews but do not allow for the gathering of information from publicly available documents. Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, and Herber (2014) concluded phenomenological studies align on the wholeness of experience and the search for essences of experiences. The phenomenological design approach was not a suitable research design for this study because I explored individual strategies and included business documents for data collection and triangulation.

Data saturation is an elusive concept and standard in qualitative research since few concrete guidelines exist (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Marshall et al. (2013) stated data saturation is the point when information within the data becomes repetitive, and no new information or themes are observable. Data saturation is a concept that lacks standards for sample size (Coenen, Stamm, Stucki, & Cieza, 2012). Estimating adequate sample size relates to the concept of saturation, the point when participants do not provide additional value and data is at the point of diminishing returns (Marshall et al., 2013). Factors that can influence sample size needed to reach saturation include quality of interviews, the number of interviews per participant, sampling procedures, and researcher experience (Gupta & Hodges, 2012). To ensure data saturation, three semistructured interviews occurred with follow-up interviews until no additional information materializes. The participants received the results of the information for verification. Fusch and Ness (2015) concluded data saturation is not the number of participants or sample size, but the focus should align with the quality of the data as opposed to the quantity and methodological triangulation can help in obtaining data saturation. Data would meet saturation when no new data emerges, no new information, no new themes, and the ability to replicate the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Fuss and Ness (2015) noted that data saturation is quicker in a case study because the boundaries are clear and fixed through the scope of the study.

Population and Sampling

The use of purposeful sampling techniques is to identify key managers with full knowledge of training activities in the business and history of past training development in obtaining key participants for the study (Wilson, Barrenger, Bohrman & Draine, 2013). Purposeful sampling is the technique to obtain a non-representative subset of a larger population to serve a specific purpose (Pirlott, Kisbu-Sakarya, DeFrancesco, Elliot, & MacKinnon, 2012). Farrokhi and Mahmoudi-Hamidabad (2012) stated that convenience sampling is a kind of nonprobability or nonrandom sampling in which members of the target population are appropriate for the purpose of the study if they meet certain practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, easy accessibility, or the willingness to volunteer. A purposeful participant selection for this study was the participants demonstrating the ability to train sales associates with skills in customer service. I purposefully selected participants from a chosen business with a proven record, who are managers of a mobile phone business to ensure the participants have adequate experience regarding the phenomenon under study.

Estimating adequate sample size relates to the concept of saturation, the point when analysts gain no new data and no new information from existing data emerging (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Shabankareh and Meigounpoory (2013) posited that a sample size is justifiable with the concept of saturation. Fusch and Ness (2015) concluded data saturation is not the number of participants or sample size, but the focus should align quality of the data as opposed to the quantity. Data would meet saturation when no new data emerges, no new information, no new themes, and the ability to replicate the study

(Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). Fuss and Ness (2015) noted that data saturation is quicker in a case study because the boundaries are clear and fixed through the scope of the study. I followed the concept of saturation and interviewed three participants with the expectation that data saturation occurs by the third interview.

The criteria for selecting participants included current managers of a mobile phone business in mid-Michigan. Lewis (2015) suggested participants must have a willingness to participate in the face-to-face interview process for approximately 60 minutes. Cleary, Horsfall, and Hayter (2014) suggested participants who did not meet the criteria are not eligible to participate in the study. The interview setting should take place in a comfortable and non-threatening environment that enables participants to respond with open and honest personal experiences. The face-to-face interviews are at the participants' convenience (Javalgi, Granot, & Alejandro, 2011). Interviews took place at public places such as public libraries or other comfortable locations agreeable to the participant. Participants should select a setting that minimizes interruptions for interviews lasting for 60 minutes to avoid redundancy (Lewis, 2015).

Ethical Research

Informed consent is a process that protects participants from any research ethical problems that may arise during an interview process (Judkins-Cohn, Kielwasser-Withrow, Owen, & Ward, 2014). Informed consent is important to ensure that the person giving consent has sufficient information and the capacity to understand to make decisions without duress (Lambert & Glacken, 2011). Confidence, information, and voluntariness are three elements to ensure the person giving consent can understand, and have sufficient information of the valid informed consent (Guillemin, Gillam, Barnard, Stewart, Walker, & Rosenthal, 2016). A copy of the consent form is in Appendix E.

I completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research Training and obtained a certificate verifying compliance in ethical consideration for study participants. Bogdanovic, Dowd, Wattam, and Adam (2012) described the concept of information privacy includes the protection of personal data. Risk exists concerning a breach of confidentiality when participants in a small community know each other (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012). Institutional review board members serve as an essential role in the protection of human participants in research and help ensure that research complies with safe and ethical standards (Goldman, Dixon, Berlant, Dulit, Hackman, & Valenstein, 2010).

Lambert and Glacken (2011) posited that participants have the right to refuse, withdraw at any time without penalty. The invitation to participate included an explanation for withdrawing from the study. To exit the study, the participant only needs to send an email or make a phone call to me, in order to withdraw. Each participant has the option to withdraw from the study at any time without question or recourse. Zeugwu, Laird, Mullins, Saluja, and Winston (2011) suggested offering incentives to participants in the study is a common practice. Participants received no incentive to take part in the study. Secured access and coding of data ensured the privacy of the participants. Hanson, Balmer, and Giardino, (2011) recommended respect for the participants and research locations when collecting data. To establish trust with the participants, I kept the names of participants confidential at all times as required by IRB regulations. The assignment of numbers and initials to participants and data were the appropriate measures necessary to maintain the privacy of participants in this study.

I followed Walden University protocol and made sure the data was secure and stored for a period of 5 years. As outlined in the Walden University protocol, data will receive destruction after the IRB critical time-period to protect participants' privacy. Data savings will remain on a computer thumb drive in a safe at my residence. Final publication of the study should not include participant names or the names of organizations (Alex, 2012). The Walden IRB number is 09-16-16-0479719.

Data Collection Instruments

Qualitative inquiry is critical research with text and image data through experiences of the participants (Yin, 2014). Data collection sources include interviews, focus groups, documents, observations, videos, existing documents, and artifacts (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013). Houghton et al. (2013) discussed how the researcher becomes the instrument for data collection in a qualitative case study.

Houghton et al. (2013) discussed how case study researchers commonly include interviewing for data collection. Using in-depth interviewing allowed participants to provide answers to the research questions. Peredaryenko and Krauss (2013) described how qualitative research includes the researcher as the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing the data. Chakraverty and Tai (2013) stated the researcher is the primary collection instrument and needs to guard against any bias and assumptions that might influence the data collection and the data analysis of a study.

Stewart, Polak, Young, and Schultz (2012) suggested the use of an interview protocol to ensure the same data collection technique for each interview. I used semistructured interviews with open-ended questions within an interview protocol to standardize the questions. I followed an interview protocol located in Appendix D, by setting a time, date, and location convenient to the participant. Interviewers use written guides to help them elicit in-depth responses from the participants in their terms (Houghton et al., 2013). Most questions in semistructured interviews are open-ended, and the interviewer uses follow-up questions to probe participants' responses. Conducting a semistructured interview process becomes essential to ensure accurate data from participants (Rowley, 2012). The interview protocol included 10 open-ended questions (see Appendix A).

Yin (2014) addressed validity and reliability in case studies and the required use of different methods at distinctive stages of the research process. Construct validity confirmation in the study involves member checking (Morse, 2015). To enhance dependability in the study, participants had 24 hours to check and approve any aspects from the interpretation of the data during the interviews. The participants' approval through member checking is a way to determine whether the data is in alignment with the participants' experiences (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Fusch and Ness (2015) described that member checking is an opportunity to correct any misunderstandings and word choices.

Data Collection Technique

To collect data from the targeted population, I used semistructured face-to-face interviews. Before starting the interviews, participants received a copy of the questions for their review (see Appendix A). Arghhode (2012) suggested in semistructured interviews, use open-ended questions, and observe the participants in the setting where the problem occurs. Open-ended interview questions encourage the participant to offer in-depth answers freely (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Yin (2014) suggested the use of open-ended questions allows the researcher to collect information in a nonbiased manner. Participants had an opportunity to ask additional questions or pose concerns about the study for which they were participating.

Hyden (2014) suggested the researcher should review instruments during the interview to ensure proper operation and hold back personal comments or facial expressions. I conducted the initial interview and took notes on verbal and nonverbal expression, comments, and used member checking to reach data saturation. Tellado, Lopez-Calvo, and Alonso-Olea (2014) suggested data collection through a transcription of interpreted interview or member checking process until saturation. Morse (2015) suggested ample time to get to know the interviewer is necessary for semistructured interviews to yield thick and rich data.

Kendall and Kendall (2010) suggested the advantages of open-ended interview questions include the participant feeling at ease. Open-ended interview questions may allow the researcher to identify the participant’s habits, attitudes, and beliefs; and the questions may facilitate detailed answers regarding the questions asked. Lewis (2015) suggested using open-ended interview questions are opportunities for the researchers to ask follow-up questions. Kendall and Kendall (2010) discussed the advantages to open-ended interview questions are helpful to researchers because the questions are not scripted, and open-ended interview questions enable participants to express thoughts freely. Yin, (2014) indicated that open-ended interview questions are opportunities for the researcher to ask extra questions.

Kendall and Kendall (2010) described the disadvantages of semistructured interviews are time consuming and expensive, and participants may have less interest to discuss sensitive topics. Yin (2014) indicated pilot studies are studies, such as business records in which researchers usually position themselves as a test of their proposed research design. Yin (2014) described how researchers use pilot studies to test and refine research questions. Pritchard and Whiting (2012) indicated that pilot studies are not necessary for qualitative approaches in which researchers have the flexibility to learn on the job. For this study, a pilot study is not necessary as a test of the proposed research design or refined research questions.

During member checking, I provided a printed copy of the succinct synthesized data for each interview question to the participant for review, and asked if my interpreted synthesized data represent their answers. The member checking process continued until no new data or themes appear to reach saturation (Carroll & Huxtable, 2014). Morse (2015) suggested that methodological triangulation assists in the data analysis stage. Hussein (2015) suggested a methodological triangulation technique would help to compare the data reviewed from multiple sources such as business training records and business web site. Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested that triangulation technique is a good way for the researcher to substantiate the study findings. Methodological triangulation was appropriate in corroborating the responses of the participants or provided alternative interpretations.

Data Organization Technique

Organization techniques assisted me in keeping the chain of evidence reliable for the research study using computer software Microsoft® Excel and Word to transcribe the interviews. Yin (2014) suggested the protocols for data collection is to use multiple data sources to collect the data, organize the data, and document the data. Gibson, Benson, and Brand (2013) suggested that the researcher achieves confidentiality and anonymity of each participant by assigning generic codes to help identify each participant for subsequent correlation. Irvine, Drew, and Sainsbury (2013) suggested that properly formatted, labeled, and categorized interview notes are appropriate in the data analysis. The research questions received labeling in a sequence generically to ensure confidentiality of the participants.

Davies, Reitmaier, Smith, and Mangan-Danckwart (2013) suggest reflective journals while thinking of various concepts, events, or interactions over a period for gaining insights and learning. Hayman, Wilkes, and Jackson (2012) described how journals are valid methods of accessing rich qualitative data that researchers use as a method of data collection. Reflective journaling is appropriate for the study to permit the potential exploration of further experiences from participants (Davies et al., 2013; Hayman et al., 2012).

Marshall and Rossman (2014) discussed the need for an easy retrieval system to collect data for analysis and the need to adapt pre-defined categories during the analysis phase. Ritholz et al. (2011) discussed the need to properly format, label, and categorize interview notes. A file-containing interview notes during the interviews, in categories and descriptions from interview responses, will remain secure in a password-protected file for 5 years after the completion of the study and then destroyed. Bazeley and Jackson, (2013) suggested saving all relevant documents in labeled file format and categorize the files using identifiers to differentiating identifiers. Data will remain on an external thumb drive for 5 years. Upon completion of the transcription and approval of the study, I will continue to maintain the electronic data for 5 years and then delete the data to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

Data Analysis

Yin (2014) described that data analysis of case study evidence depends on rigorous empirical thinking. Lawrence and Tar (2013) discussed how data analysis is exploring the data through themes to categorize the data, which allow the researcher to explore meanings. One way to explore the meaning of the data is to use mind mapping to assess the reoccurring themes to gain a clear view of the entire picture for analysis. Houghton (2013) indicated that focusing on incorporating a series of broad themes during the semi-structured interview might assist in directing the conversation toward the topics and issues that will help in answering the research questions in the study. Secondary source material can enhance the data in the semi-structured interviews.

Yin (2014) described coding for the discovery of themes within transcripts and include data to reach saturation to ensure reliability, validity, and creditability. I began by organizing, breaking down, synthesizing, and searching for patterns in the data. Lawrence and Tar (2013) described the data analysis will identify what is critical and what is relevant for the study. I labeled folders with unique identifier codes to ensure efficiency during data gathering, transcribe interview notes into Microsoft Excel and Word, and confirm the interpretations by way of member checking. Analyzing the information from the participants will provide the researcher emergent themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Failing to obtain data saturation causes quality and validity issues (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Methodological triangulation is a way to review for consistency of findings by several data collection methods (Denzin, 2012). The appropriate data analysis process for the research design in the study is methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation involves using more than one type of method to study a phenomenon (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). The multiple methods of data collection in methods triangulation are important in articulating the comprehensive view of a phenomenon (Cope, 2014). Houghton et al., (2013) discussed when using methodological triangulation; researchers use multiple methods to collect data, including interviews, and an analysis of a company's internal and external documents. I conducted interviews and reviewed company documents for triangulation.

Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014) stated that methodological triangulation is a tool for validation and understanding using more than one kind of method of data collection to study and strengthen the validity of the data. Hussein (2015) described how researchers use triangulation to facilitate validation of data, and methodological triangulation to determine more than one way to study the data.

Methodological triangulation is beneficial to provide confirmation of findings, more comprehensive data, increase validity, and enhance understanding of the studied phenomena (Denzin, 2012; Walshe, 2011, Fusch & Ness, 2015). Yin (2014) suggested that qualitative research consists of data analysis through preparation and organization of raw data converting into codes and later themes. In the qualitative single case study, I used methodological triangulation by utilizing more than one data source; interpret interviews and member checking follow-up interviews, corporate documents, journal notes, and annual training reports.

Reliability and Validity

The quality of empirical social research is the ability of the design to withstand logical tests of reliability and validity (Yin, 2014). Reliability in qualitative research is the dependability, consistency, and repeatability across researchers and studies (Morse, 2015). Noble and Smith (2015) describes validity as the process of how the researcher ensures the accuracy of findings through the implementation of specific procedures in qualitative research and case study design. Morse (2015) described that throughout a research project; researchers must actively anticipate and address variations in the planned protocol, which can affect reliability and validity. Reliability and validity is consistency and accuracy such that the results may expand the body of knowledge.

Reliability

Reliability is assurance that the approach is consistent and replicable at different points in time (Yin, 2014). Morse (2015) indicated that consistent procedures and interview protocol will yield reliable and dependable results that are repeatable by other researchers subsequently revealing similar results. Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested member checking would ensure the interpretations of the participant interview statements are accurate. I ensured dependability by performance consistency of the processes throughout the study as described in the interview protocol in Appendix D. I tape-recorded and took notes during the interviews to limit errors.

Validity

Validity is the measure or degree to which inferences in the study are accurate (Morse, 2015). Data collected from semi-structured interviews will form the primary basis for data analysis (Morse, 2015). Additional data collection will come through document review (Yin, 2014). Member checking will ensure the accuracy of interpretation of the participant interview statements (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I reviewed the data collection analysis concurrently and repeatedly until saturation occurred and no new themes emerged.

Morse (2015) discussed the use of a clear audit trail relating to raw data, interview notes, and summaries will ensure dependability. Additionally, the clear audit trail of documents, data, and notes will confirm the unbiased opinions of the researcher (Morse, 2015). Generative mechanisms through affordances establish a framework for critical realist data analysis (Bygstad, Munkvold, & Volkoff, 2016). Using the qualitative approach will seek out the participant's personal experiences in real world settings as they occur (Yin, 2014). The participant personal experiences will form the basis for strategic training development in the workplace. The manager can evaluate the skills the sales associates have and determine the need for additional skills to provide customer service.

The consistency of findings across the different data collection methods can come using methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978). Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested the use of methodological triangulation to analyze the business document data. Potter, Mills, Cawthorn, Wilson, and Blazeby, (2013) suggested using multiple semi-structured interviews, member-checking interviews and follow-up interviews to ensure data saturation. The findings of this qualitative project aligned specific to the mobile phone industry. Transferability of the results of qualitative research to other disciplines can appear difficult and may require a broader context (Morse, 2015). I will leave the transferability of the findings to the reader and future researchers.

Dependability

Houghton et al. (2013) indicated that dependability is comparable to the concept of reliability in quantitative research, where the qualitative researcher uses dependability to connote the stability of the research data. Dependability is the constancy of data to comparable conditions (Polit & Beck, 2012). A study is dependable when another inquirer coincides with the decision trails at each stage of a research process (Cope, 2014). Replication of the findings involves using appropriate process and descriptions with similar participants in similar conditions.

To address dependability, an audit trail of field notes, memo writing, and reflexive notes is appropriate (Houghton et al., 2013). An audit trail is a clear documentation of all research decisions and activities that readers may use to examine narrative accounts and attest to dependability (Cope, 2014). Audit trail rigor through outlining the decisions made throughout a research process is a basis for the achievement of methodological and interpretative judgments of an inquirer (Houghton et al., 2013). In qualitative research, an audit trail is appropriate for keeping careful documentation of all components of a study for external auditing (Yin, 2014).

Keeping observation field notes, interview notes, journals, records, calendars, and various drafts of interpretation are all parts of creating audit trails (Yin, 2014). Member checking is an opportunity for participants to approve particular aspects of the interpretation of the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Member checking is a process of discovering whether the data analysis is congruent with the participants' experiences (Carlson, 2010). For the study, I provided interpretations from the participants' narrative contributions during the interview sessions and ask participants to verify the accuracy and provide member checking.

Reilly (2013) described member checking as the process which involves testing the data, analyzing categories, interpretations, and conclusions with participants who supply the data as an important process to ensure truthfulness and authenticity. Participants for the study reviewed the interpretation of the interview to insure trustworthiness and credibility and make sure no gaps exist in understanding the phenomenon (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Carlson (2010) suggested participants for the study have access to the interpretations of their narratives to verify reasonableness in line with the concept of member checking.

Credibility

Qualitative research becomes credible when the participant believes the results (Cope, 2014). The participant who verifies the truth of the data (Polit & Beck, 2012) determines credibility. Credibility aligns with the value and believability of research findings (Houghton et al., 2013). A qualitative study is credible when individuals share the same experience immediately recognizing the descriptions of human experiences from their point of view (Cope, 2014). A process involved in research to enhance credibility includes conducting the research in a believable manner within the environment of the participant (Houghton et al., 2013).

Prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking are valuable to enhance the credibility of a study (Black, Palombaro, & Dole, 2013). Prolonged engagement involves spending adequate time during interviews in the participant's settings to understand the phenomenon. The appropriate way to ensure credibility in the study is through triangulation and member checking. Using member checking, the participants reviewed the interpretation of the interviews to ensure credibility and accuracy of the data (Houghton et al., 2013). I used the technique of asking open-ended questions. Enhanced credibility will come by describing personal experiences and verifying research findings with the participants. To support credibility when reporting the study, I demonstrated engagement, methods of observation, and audit trails by documenting stages of the study starting from identification of research problem and reflecting the key research methodology decisions. In a study, participant transcript reviews establish creditability (Cope, 2014; Yin, 2014). I did not use transcript reviews.

Transferability

Transferability is the findings that can apply to other settings or groups (Houghton et al., 2013; Polit & Beck, 2012). In qualitative research, generalizability is the process of whether the research results are transferable (Houghton et al., 2013). Polit and Beck (2012) indicated that research results are transferable when researchers can extend to a wider context, have theoretical generalizability, empirical applicability, practical usefulness, contextual generalizability and constructive generalizability. Severe threats to the transferability of a qualitative study may occur from selective plausibility (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). Ihantola and Kihn (2011) suggested that severe threats to transferability are when a researcher fails to reconnect empirical findings of the study to other cases and fails to explain how new evidence enhances the understanding of the research questions.

The lack of comparison between empirical findings and previous theoretical contributions can lead to far-sighted conclusions. Polit and Beck (2012) found claims regarding the discovery of something already demonstrated in other studies. Most rigorous research methods possible are important in high-quality research (Goffin, Raja, Claes, Szwejczewski, & Martinez, 2012). Goffin et al. (2012) indicated that the conventional criteria researchers use for evaluating methodological rigor are internal validity, external validity, construct validity, and reliability. The four conventional criteria applies to both quantitative and qualitative research. Consequently, better criteria for evaluating qualitative research are confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability (Goffin et al., 2012).

Cope (2014) indicated that the basis of transferability aligns with the intent of researcher to discover the topic or phenomenon. Polit and Beck (2012) concluded that transferability in referring to findings that can apply to different settings or groups. Houghton et al. (2013) confirmed that scholars use transferability to refer the transfer of the findings from the completed study to another similar context or situation while still preserving the meanings and interpretation. Transferability is the scope to which people realize a specified effect of a particular treatment in a different research environment (Cambon, Minary, Ridde, & Alla, 2012).

Cope (2014) determined the basis of transferability is important if the study results are to have meaning for individuals and readers that did not participate in the study. Black et al. (2013) stated how researchers enhance transferability through thick descriptions that allow readers to evaluate relatedness to the individual circumstances. Conforming to the concept of transferability involves providing enough information regarding participants and research environments to enable readers to assess the findings for adequacy and transferability (Cope, 2014). The evidence of transferability includes using a chain of evidence, accurately recording actions, and documenting the use of assumptions in the study.

Black et al. (2013), Cope (2014), and Houghton et al. (2013) addressed transferability by adequately describing the original context of the study. Houghton et al. (2013) discussed how future researchers make informed decisions regarding the transferability of the findings to any specific settings. Provision of sufficient information on the participants and research setting is the avenue for readers to assess the findings fitness or transferability (Cope, 2014).

Confirmability

Cope (2014); Polit and Beck (2012) indicated that confirmability is the ability of the researcher to demonstrate that research data represents the participants' responses and not the researchers' biases viewpoints. Houghton et al. (2013) described how researchers closely link confirmability to dependability in referring to the neutrality and accuracy of the data. Cope (2014) suggested that confirmability lies in the report of interpretations, conclusions, and illustrations that the finding is directly from the study data.

Confirmability in the study is through a detailed audit trail, triangulation, and reflexivity. Reflexivity is the practice of making personal biases and roles known (Black et al., 2013). My association with study topic is working as a manager training sales associates with over 30 years in the retail industry. Confirmability during the report of the research findings will come with quotes from participants to depict each emerging theme (Cope, 2014). Houghton et al., (2013) suggested the confirmability is through audit trail rigor achievable by outlining the decisions made throughout the research process. I used an audit trail to establish rigors of the study by providing the details of data analysis and some of the decisions that led to the findings.

Data Saturation

Saturation is the point at which the research data becomes repetitive and reveals no new data during the coding process for any of the categories (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Habersack and Luschin (2013) discussed the point of data saturation is an assumption that data collection is a capture of everything important in a study. Saturation in data analysis occurs when additional information does not result in a new phenomenon structures, interpretive models, and reaction typologies (Fusch & Ness, 2015). For the study, I reached saturation by collecting data until no new information was obtainable and data begins to replicate. Denzin (2012) discussed the point of data saturation comes through careful observation to the point of diminishing returns. Data saturation ensured through observations to identify the point of diminishing returns when more data did not lead to more information.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of the qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies managers use to teach customer service skills. Section 2 included the method and research procedures useful to conduct qualitative case study research. The outline of section 2 included the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, and the research method. Section 2 also included the research design, population and sampling, ethical research, and data collection. Additionally, the outline of section 2 included the data organization technique, data analysis, reliability and validity, and summary. In section 3, I provided the results of the research study, recommendations for professional practice and social change, and suggestions for future research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of the qualitative single case study was to identify and explore strategies business managers use to train sales associates with effective customer service skills. The target population consisted of three mobile phone business managers with successful training strategies from a company specializing in mobile phones sales located in Michigan. The store manager received consent forms and a schedule for interviews after I received approval from IRB at Walden University for data collection to take place. In an email to the participants, the purpose of the study was to describe in the consent form. After receiving consent from the participants, semistructured face-to-face interviews took place within participant's environment. The data came from three manager semistructured interviews and company documentation at one mobile phone store in Michigan. Member checking ensured the accuracy of interpretation of the participant interview statements. Methodological triangulation came by conducting interviews and reviewing annual training reports. The data received organization and analyzed using NVivo 11 qualitative analysis software to find insights for patterns and themes. The findings showed strategies the managers used to train their sales associates to provide better customer service. All participants agreed the sales associate is the most valuable asset for the business. The results of the study revealed that customer service training, motivating with reward and recognition, and adoption of affordable technologies are key strategies for sales associate development.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was: what strategies do business managers in the mobile phone industry use to train sales associates with effective customer service skills? Business managers' failure to retain dissatisfied customers leads to millions of dollars in lost revenue (Dagger et al., 2013). Establishing strategies for training sales associates gives managers a better understanding of what works and what does not that leads to increased productivity and better customer service (Lassk, Ingram, Kraus, & Di Mascio, 2012).

The participants received an email including a copy of the consent form that described the purpose and background of the study, which received approval by the IRB staff from Walden University. Participants answered 10 questions pertaining to the study. The semistructured face-to-face interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. Follow-up member checking took 15 minutes. The names of the participants were replaced and labeled as participant one, participant two, and participant three to keep confidentiality.

The managers contacted agreed to participate thus achieving a census sample for this single case study. Each manager met the requirements for the study. Coding the interview transcripts from the three participants' uncovered categories and established themes until data saturation. No new data or themes emerged confirming data saturation. Data information received recording in a codebook for future reference. Additionally, organizational documents from the training department and human resources were appropriate to establish a baseline of sales associate development within the business and to triangulate and confirm participant inputs through member checking.

Member checking confirmed that the data interpretation was correct. NVivo 11 is a software program used for qualitative data analysis, to extract keywords, phrases, and statements from the interview transcripts. This evaluation continued until no new codes emerged. The analysis identified 126 codes of which was reduce to 71 codes after further analysis. Three main themes emerged. The strategies managers used for training were mentoring and recruitment, training and development, and customer satisfaction and retention.

Three themes emerged from the analysis of the data. Mentoring and Recruitment identified the need for managers to consider the previous experience, specialized skills, and skills development of the sales associate. Training and development theme identified the use of certified testing, role-playing, shadowing, and hands-on training. Customer satisfaction theme identified customer satisfaction, listening and understanding the needs of the customer, and product selection.

Emergent Theme: Mentoring and Recruitment

For a business to have sustainability, managers need a strategy to engage in better hiring practices. Managers need to identify the skills needed by sales associates to provide good customer service (Taheri, & Gharakhani, 2012). Taheri and Gharakhani (2012) discussed that managers should seek employees with friendly and courteous personalities because they demonstrate a high level of customer orientation. If a business needs friendly and courteous service, the manager must hire friendly and courteous people (Tang & Tang, 2012). Training employees with the technical skills are appropriate for managers. Many times people work in a position with little or no knowledge of the skills needed. The strategy should include finding the person who best fits the situation (Knilans, 2014).

The three participants stated that their strategy is to seek out sales associates with previous customer service experience. Training strategies are in place to develop the skills of sales associates with no experience. All participants stated that a friendly and courteous personality would aid the new sales associate.

Table 2

Mentoring and Recruitment

Subthemes	Number of responses	% frequency of occurrence
Previous experience	4	3.0
Specialized skills	3	2.0
Develop skills	4	3.0

Emergent Theme: Training and Development

The next theme to emerge from the collection of data was management's strategy for training the sales associates in customer service before the sales associates engaged the customer. This training took approximately 2 weeks and included face-to-face training, shadowing, and hands-on development. The sales associates had to take several certification tests before working on the sales floor according to all participants. This training aligned with Schultz's (1961) human capital theory, which states that increased performance of individuals through investment in education improves performance and efficiency. Khan and Hudson (2014) stated that skills, knowledge, and experience in combination with effort, behavior, ability, and time invested are a direct result of investment in the sales associates of the business.

Successful managers use a strategy to engage the sales associates in the decision-making process. Conducting round-table discussions while sharing current information, problems, and challenges can provide valuable information about the current environment the sales associates are facing with the customers (Men, 2014). Business managers are seeking emerging learning technologies as a strategy to increase sales associate's retention, absorption, and application to help increase and drive business goals and objectives. Managers believe a strategy to use the latest technology combined with their network is beneficial in training sales associates.

> Participant 2 emphasized the training strategy of shadowing the sales associate. When the new sales associate observes a sales associate with customer service training, real-time learning takes place. The new sales associate can ask questions how or why this technique improves customer service. Shadowing can help the sales associate see how to apply the learned information from the certified testing in the classroom. During shadowing the sales associate can use hands-on and role-playing techniques as teaching aids. The strategy to develop the customer service skills of the sales associates is a daily activity that each manager takes seriously and reinforces with the sales associate.

Table 3

Training and Development

Subthemes	Number of responses	% frequency of occurrence

Certification testing	12	28.0
Role play	8	8.0
Shadowing	7	9.0
Hands-on	7	9.0

Reviewing the business training documents confirmed the strategy a new sales associate must undergo two weeks of customer service training before they can engage with a customer. Managers use a strategy that current sales associates must continue with certification training and pass regular testing. Each sales associate completes on average 53 hours of customer service training each year. The training included initial training, recurring training, hands-on/field training, shadowing, and role-play.

Emergent Theme: Consumer satisfaction

Many of the interview answers from the participants touched on the strategy of customer satisfaction. All three participants suggested that customer satisfaction is the priority for all sales associates. Bengesi and Roux (2014) concluded, manager's who have strategies that focus on customer needs, tend to have the most success.

> Participant 1 stated a strategy we use is to have a third party contact the customer the day after their visit to the business to help evaluate the service the customer received. We need to find out if we met the customer's expectation. We have a strategy to teach the sales associate to verify the customer's needs before they leave. During the follow up with the customer, we have the opportunity to correct any problems. In return, we use this information with the sales associate for additional training.

Table 4

Customer Satisfaction

Subthemes	Number of responses	% frequency of occurrence
Customer satisfaction	15	15.0
Listening to the needs	5	5.0
Understanding the needs	6	7.0
Correct products	4	3.0

Effective business managers have a strategy to share visions and empower, influence, and engage followers to be creative and active in their organizations (Al-sharafi & Rajiani, 2013). Sale associates in the mobile phone business experience face-to-face relationships with customers who demonstrate different emotional and behavioral patterns. Managers who use human capital theory can develop strategies with a vision to provide customer service skills that encourage customer satisfaction and retention. As service quality increasingly constitutes a source of competitive advantage for service-sector businesses, much research now focuses on frontline employees' interactions with customers and the organizational processes that facilitate effective service delivery (Aryee, Walumbwa, Seidu, & Otaye, 2016).

The human capital theory is a key strategy by managers to educate better or train workers in meeting the needs of the advanced industrial society. Employees learn the effective job and productivity-enhancing skills from schooling or formal training (Fouarge, de Grip, Smits, & de Vries, 2012). The correct training and skill building are important for a business to achieve success (Rahman & Nas, 2013). Managers who use human capital theory believe a relationship exist between business income and education (Bae & Patterson, 2014).

The conceptual framework for the study is the human capital theory. Schultz (1961) first postulated human capital theory in the 1960s, suggesting that education or training imparts useful knowledge and skills, subsequently raising workers' future income by increasing their lifetime earnings. Schultz suggested that increased performance by individuals from investments in education improves organizational performance and efficiency. Establishing strategies for training sales associates gives managers a better understanding of what works and what does not that leads to increased productivity and better customer service (Lassk, Ingram, Kraus, & Di Mascio, 2012).

Khan and Hudson, (2014) discussed key concepts of the human capital theory which include the processes relating to education, training, and other professional initiatives for increasing the level of skills, knowledge, abilities, and values. An increasingly important aspect of this research is the concept of human capital, as an important driver of long-term organizational performance (Schultz, 1961). Improvement in training strategies may lead to satisfaction and increase the performance of employees, as well as increasing business performance (Gamerschlag, 2013). Managers can use human capital theory to develop strategies to train sales associates with customer service skills to improve performance and increase knowledge. As service quality increasingly constitutes a source of competitive advantage for service-sector businesses, frontline employees' interactions skills must align with customers and the organizational processes that facilitate effective service delivery (Aryee, Walumbwa, Seidu, & Otaye, 2016).

The participants in the study understand the importance of customer service and the impact service has on the operations of the business. Some business managers in the mobile phone industry lack strategies to train sales associates with effective customer service skills. Business managers who provide inadequate leadership and training of sales associates lead to dissatisfied customers. Business managers' failure to retain dissatisfied customers leads to millions of dollars in lost revenue (Dagger et al., 2013). Financial statistics indicate acquiring new customers can cost approximately 10 times as much as retaining dissatisfied customers (Tatikonda, 2013).

Managers who have strategies that focus on developing and training sales associates also found it important to focus on performance. Reviewing the sales numbers and comparing the results to the goals of the business helps to evaluate performance. Many managers find it important to conduct follow-up discussions with recent customers to measure satisfaction.

Applications to Professional Practice

One primary role of management is to understand the strategies and business practices require for success (Bae, & Patterson, 2014). The objective of the study was to explore participants' experiences surrounding training strategies for sales associates in the mobile phone industry. This research is meaningful to managers in the mobile phone industry in multiple ways. The customer service training has been an increasing concern for managers as they challenge human resource professionals to develop learning environments and learning cultures in the workplaces (Cseh, Davis, & Khilji, 2013). Khan and Hudson (2014) findings of the human capital theory indicated that managers require effective training strategies to develop sales associates. As mobile phone managers review results of this study, the results may assist managers in developing effective training strategies for current and future managers within the mobile phone industry.

Participant 1 noted that sales associate training strategies should foster an environment where future sales associates are equipped to take advantage of training opportunities to advance their competencies, skills, and experiences through educational training courses, mentoring, and challenging assignments. By implementing strategic human resource practices, managers may achieve an environment that ensures success as it relates to recruiting, retaining, and mentoring tomorrow's sales associates. As noted by participant 2, successful organizations have strategies that require diversity related to hiring future sales associates from backgrounds that are more diverse across the community and ensuring that all sales associates receive the same opportunities to succeed in the business.

Applying a managers training strategy related to recruiting, retention, and mentoring may assist the business in developing a diverse group of human capital across the business. Business managers should develop and implement essential recruiting, retention, and mentor plans that support sales associate development. These training strategies relate to the human capital theory as discussed by Schultz (1961), Khan and Hudson (2014), and Gandhi and Kumar (2014). Through the implementation of these strategies, managers could cultivate and develop diverse pools of talent based on the changing demographics of the region as noted by participant 3. Additional participant responses supported management strategies related to recruiting, retention, and mentoring seek to embrace the various human capital across the community in the business resulting in a more successful business by creating a level of knowledge and confidence that encourages growth and retention of future sales associates.

Developing a sales associate training strategy related to training and technology might amplify the use of technology as it relates to training and alleviates budget pressures. A linkage exists between budget and training available. The participants stated training should occur throughout a sales associate's career. The participant's statement solidified the empirical data in that training should continue as an ongoing process. Fiscal constraints did confirm impacts of budgets on training providing that fiscal constraints influence factors inside and outside the business related to the numbers and types of training opportunities offered.

Developing a managers training strategy that leverages technology could enhance professional development through a collaborative network of mobile phone businesses training programs providing managers with growth in understanding related to technology, tools, and the number of opportunities thereby increasing limited resource impact. The research of Savolainen (2014) and Weide (2014) also confirmed instructional technology and innovative teaching technology transforms managers training opportunities and integrating these technologies into the overall training strategy for use in the mobile phone industry. Management training strategies for sales associates should incorporate best practices and current experience rather than rehash tired, traditional approaches to sales associate training (Baden & Parkes, 2013). Through continuous professional development, the human capital of the business develops and perfects itself thus contributing to the evolution of the business.

After reviewing the literature review in section two in conjunction with the results of the study in section three, I found significant supporting data amongst multiple studies that confirm the results of this study. Previous research by Shultz (1961) shows increased performance of individuals through investments in education can improve business performance and efficiency. Research by Khan (2014) revealed similar findings related to the positive effects sales associate development and the associated impacts of collaborative and organizational learning on sales associate training strategies within businesses.

Implications for Social Change

The knowledge gained can provide managers of mobile phone businesses mechanisms for social change by providing managers with new strategies for developing customer service training. This knowledge can also provide managers with new ideas for training sales associates. From the findings of the study, a comprehensive management training strategy encompassing mentoring, recruiting, and retention along with training, technology, and strategic partnerships might represent a total investment in the individual sales associate of the future as it relates to the human capital theory.

As the sales associate becomes proficient in the use of the mobile device, they can teach the customer how to use the mobile phone to meet their individual needs. People rely on the mobile phone for the security of family members by using the device as a way to stay in continuous contact. People interact with others around the world removing borders by using a mobile phone. Customers learn from sales associates the functions of their mobile phone. People can us the mobile phone to connect with social media for real-time communication. People can gain knowledge by attending conferences and school through social media (Roessger, 2016). Customers can use their mobile phone for shopping and access services that were not available to them.

Satisfied customers provide stability for the mobile phone business with repeat business. Managers of successful businesses can employ sales associates and provide a meaningful lifestyle. Informed customers with mobile phones can bridge gaps in local, regional, and distance communities. Customer service training extends and develops the knowledge of sales associates.

Recommendations for Action

The continued challenges present in workforces stimulate managers to seek new ideas for integration and successful implementation. As 10,000 new Baby Boomers retire each day (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012), 40 million Millennials will enter the workforce in the next few years (Ferri-Reed, 2012). This phenomenon results in Millennial workers at 50% of the total workforce by 2020 (Ismail & Lu, 2014). Effective training strategies must be a part of sales associate development.

Business managers should view multigenerational workplaces as a challenging problem and implement proactive measures. The findings of this study are relevant to not only managers, but human resource practitioners, and senior and corporate officials. The application of effective training strategies may assist all groups in successfully improving productivity, customer service, and long-term company financial viability.

Current and future managers of mobile phone businesses should consider the recommendations from this study. The following steps emerged, (a) develop and implement mentoring and recruitment programs on hiring sales associates with previous experience; (b) develop training strategies utilizing technology, shadowing, role-play, and hands-on; and (c) develop customer service skills.

The first recommendation from this study is to develop a training strategy for sales associates. Developing a training strategy that encompasses mentoring and recruiting will ensure training at all levels of the organization. By providing the training opportunities to sales associates from initial entry and throughout their career, the manager will ensure the skills, tools, and competencies are in the sales associates as well as influencing the behaviors necessary to achieve success.

The second recommendation is to leverage technology solutions wherever possible to enhance training capabilities and further advance the skills of the sales associate from an individual perspective. Active learning through shadowing, role-play, and hands-on will provide real-time feedback for the sales associate. Utilizing certification test provide the feedback for the sales associate as a way to measure the knowledge gained (Roessger, 2016).

The third recommendation is managers should ensure customer service skills are yielding satisfied customers. Communication with the customer can provide valuable information how effective is the training of sales associates (Ford, 2014). Customer comments also provide a training opportunity for the sales associate.

Scholarly journals and business publications are vehicles to disseminate the study information to business managers and professionals. Seminars and training courses are vehicles also to share the study findings. The opportunity as a faculty member exists to share this study with other members of the business school sections of the university.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings from this study warrant additional exploration of training strategies for managers. The workforce landscape is changing to customer service, and business managers must address the challenges to ensure efficient operations and business success (Rajput et al., 2013). Further studies need to explore other training strategies not covered in this study to address limitations and delimitations. The inclusion of specific data from people of different ethnicity, race, and gender could provide additional data not discovered in the study. Exploring information from interviewing actual customers might generate new material. Customers could share observations and perspectives not considered in the study. Since this study reflected on mobile phone business in Michigan, I recommend expanding research to include other geographic areas. I further recommend the exploration of manager's training strategies for teaching customer service skills with companies providing a bigger sample size or larger organization.

Conducting a study to compare manager's training strategies of independent versus chain or national companies may uncover different strategies. Further research is needed to compare management styles with results. The findings from this study warrant further exploration to examine essential training strategies managers need for success.

Reflections

Walden University Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) Program was a challenging and rewarding experience. At the beginning of my journey, I was enthusiastic to begin the process and willing to face challenges as well as opportunities. Several relationships developed with doctorates, instructors, and colleagues who will remain with me beyond graduation. At times, I felt overwhelmed and faced some challenges. With continued encouragement from my wife, a group of colleagues, and personal faith to persevere, I pressed through struggles and overcame adversity.

I have over 40 years of management experience in the retail and service industry and customer service is of personal and professional interest. Businesses are not successful without good customer relations (Ford, 2014). Training a salesforce in customer service can be challenging. Many business managers do not have or understand the strategies they need to teach customer service skills (Tatikonda, 2013). The focus of interest on this subject came early following enrollment in the DBA program. Continuing with the core DBA studies, the title for the research became clear and evolved to *Strategies to Teach Customer Service Skills*.

The findings of this study influenced me to look differently at the workplace and value the employee as the most valuable asset a business can possess. Many times little value reflects on the employee and investment is not made for sufficient training. Interaction with the participants enlightened the challenges managers and sales associates face in the work place to meet the customers' needs. A manager needs to have a training strategy to help subordinate employees achieve the business goals.

Completing the doctoral study was a great learning experience that contrasts but complemented prior skills. A doctoral degree would support a career change to begin teaching. I am currently an adjunct professor at Cleary University. The findings from the study include new skills and approaches to enable growth with an advantage over other faculty members in academia.

Conclusion

Through continuous professional development, the human capital of the business develops and perfects itself thus contributing to the evolution of the business. Business managers' failure to retain dissatisfied customers leads to millions of dollars in lost revenue (Dagger et al., 2013). Business managers' need to question why the customer is dissatisfied. The problem could be the type of products or services offered. The problem could be with customer service and the expectation of the customer.

Financial statistics indicate acquiring new customers can cost approximately 10 times as much as retaining dissatisfied customers (Tatikonda, 2013). A loyal customer will provide more revenue for the business than new customers (Dagger et al., 2013). Misinformed managers may have a lack of understanding how unsatisfied customer influences the business. Improving customer retention by 5 %, can add from 25% to 85% to the bottom line (Tatikonda, 2013).

Some business managers are providing inadequate leadership and training of sales associates to retain dissatisfied customers (Dagger et al., 2013). Some business managers in the mobile phone industry lack strategies to train sales associates with effective customer service skills. Having a training strategy that includes customer satisfaction and retention can bridge the gap for retaining dissatisfied customers. The results of this study could help managers improve training strategies that could promote sustainability and growth.

Three themes emerged from the analysis of the data. The first theme was the need for managers to consider the previous experience, specialized skills, and skills development of the sales associate. The second theme was training and development use for certified testing, role-playing, shadowing, and hands-on training. The third theme was identifying customer satisfaction, listening and understanding the needs of the customer, and product selection.

Previous research by Shultz (1961) shows increased performance of individuals through investments in education can improve business performance and efficiency. Research by Khan (2014) revealed similar findings relating to the positive effects sales associate development has on the business. Training strategies influence the collaborative and organizational learning of sales associate within the business.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Time of the interview: [redacted]

Date: [redacted]

Place[redacted]

Interviewer James Ortman (researcher)

Interviewee (P01)

The purpose of this study is to explore the best business strategies required by entertainment managers to inhibit the replication of products and improve sales profit.

Questions

The following are the interview questions.

1: What strategies do you follow to evaluate sales associates’ customer service skills?

2: What is your strategy to determine what customer service skills sales associates need to achieve customer satisfaction?

3: How do you measure sales associates’ performance?

4: What training delivery methods do you use?

5: What proactive strategies do you use for ensuring sales associates meet customers’ needs?

6: What is your strategy for continuous education and training to improve customer service skills?

7: What training tools do you use to teach customer service skills?

8: How do you use individualized considerations when teaching sales associates?

9: How do you measure the business success of training sales associates?

10: What additional information can you provide to improve sales associates customer service skills?

Appendix B: Invitation Letter

Dear [redacted]

My name is James Ortman. I am currently pursuing a Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) through Walden University in Minneapolis. My doctoral study project is “Leadership Strategies to Teach Customer Service Skills” I am interested in exploring the best strategies used by managers of cell phone businesses to address the replication of teaching sales associates customer service skills.

As a manager in the industry, you are well placed to help me with this study because you are in charge of training. The interview will be limited to 30 minutes and will be scheduled at your convenience. Your participation and information will be protected consistent with Walden University’s confidentiality guidelines. Your participation will be instrumental in providing the required data to best analyze the strategies required to inhibit training strategy replication. If you decide to participate, I will send you a consent form via email that dictates your rights during the process and the purpose of the doctoral study. I will conduct your interview through face-to-face or telephone.

At the end of this study, I will share results and findings with participants, scholars, and other stakeholders. Participation in the interviews will be voluntary, and the right to decline to take part or stop at any time during the interview will be respected. Please advise if you have any questions or require any additional information. My contact information is 989-640-5997.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

James Ortman (Walden University DBA student).

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interview: Mobile phone business Managers

A. I will introduce the interview and set the stage at a location convenient to the participant.

B. The face-to-face interview will begin with introductions and an overview of the topic.

C. I will advise the participant I am sensitive to their time and thank them for agreeing to participate in the study.

D. I will remind the participant the interview is recorded and will remain confidential.

E. I will turn on the recorder; announce the participant's identifying assigned code, as well as the date and time of the interview.

F. The interview will last 30 to 60 minutes to obtain responses to 10 interview questions and follow up questions.

G. During the interview, I will watch for non-verbal cues, paraphrase as needed, and ask follow-up probing questions to get more in depth data.

H. After verification of responses recorded to the satisfaction of the participant, the interview will conclude and wrap up with a thank you for participating in the study.

I. I will explain member-checking, schedule a follow-up member checking interview to ensure each question is thoroughly explained, confirm the answer the participant provided, transcribed as intended by the participant, and emailed to the participant to verify accuracy of the collected information within 5 days.

J. After I have concluded the study, transcribed and recorded findings, I will share a succinct synthesis of the individual questions.

K. I will bring probing questions related to other information that I may have found noting the information related to adhere to IRB approval.

L. I will walk through each question, read the interpretation, and ask: Did I miss anything? Or, What would you like to add?

M. At the conclusion of the study, I will provide the participant with a synopsis of the study findings.