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Exploring Frontline Management Strategies Used to Improve Employee Engagement

Michael P. Wise
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Michael Wise

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Exploring Frontline Management Strategies Used to Improve Employee Engagement

by

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MS, Belhaven University, 2003

BA, Lewis University, 1996

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

July 2017

Abstract

Managers who foster at least 65% employee engagement, based on employee engagement surveys conducted by Hewitt Associates, Inc., provide a 19% higher return to shareholders than managers who do not foster a 65% or higher employee engagement level. The purpose of this single site case study was to identify strategies that frontline managers used to build employee engagement, leading to higher organizational performance. The transformational leadership theory was used as the conceptual framework for this study. Data were collected through semistructured interviews from a purposeful sample of 3 frontline managers at a beverage manufacturing facility in the Midwest of the United States. Data also included performance metrics from the organization to identify the leading facility within the organization. Using data triangulation and Yin's explanation building analysis method, several themes emerged, including the need for open and honest communication, setting and understanding expectations, maintaining professional relationships, and including employees as an important part of the organization. These findings may contribute to social change by enhancing the training for frontline managers. Such enhancements may build employee engagement, decrease workplace stress, and boost work-life balance and quality of life.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my wife, Jill. Throughout the project, my wife provided encouragement, while providing an atmosphere of opportunity and example of perseverance and dedication to reaching a goal. The example my wife sets, on a daily basis, toward accomplishing goals and the importance of such, is the basis of my completing this project. If it were not for her love, support and leading by example, this study would not have been possible. Thank you, Jill, for being strong for me.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Leadership is one of the most important factors in building employee engagement. Focused energy and involvement are required from both employee and manager to be successful at building sustainable employee engagement (Peterson, Walumbwa, Avolio, & Hannah, 2012). The failure to initiate employee engagement comes from managers underestimating the commitment needed to make it work (Tuckey, Bakker, & Dollard, 2012). Organizational managers who have successfully initiated employee engagement reap the benefits for their organizations.

Background of the Problem

Employee engagement is a business management concept in which the employee delivers full potential to the job and organization and still finds meaning in the work he or she does (Cowardin-Lee & Soyalp, 2011; Williamson, 2012). Organizations benefit from creating an atmosphere where employees are committed to the organization and who deliver their best performance for the company every day. Employees potentially benefit from being committed to the organization by enjoying a positive and effective attitude and performance each day while at work.

Employee engagement negatively correlated with workplace deviance and a positive correlation to ethical behavior and enhanced organizational performance (Johnson, 2011). If an employee is committed to the organization, workplace deviance or counterproductive work behaviors are less likely to occur. Negative work behaviors damage the possibility of employee engagement, and engaged employees negate the possibility of having a counterproductive work environment. Destructive leadership

develops counterproductive work behaviors (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Destructive leadership behaviors are those in which an employee of influence exhibits a negative attitude toward employees or the organization's mission, vision, or the organization as a whole (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). These negative behaviors can be that of hourly employees or managers, and employee engagement can counteract the behavior regardless of the source.

Managers have significant influence over employees work experience, health, and psychological well-being (Tuckey, Bakker & Dollard, 2012). Developing employee engagement, enhancing the employees' devotion and commitment to the organization, minimizes counterproductive work behaviors and improves organizational performance (Johnson, 2011). Visionary managers who create a culture of employee engagement foster employee trust, increased performance, job satisfaction, increased retention, and organizational success (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015).

Problem Statement

Employees not engaged with their organization are less productive, because they are not committed to their work (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). According to a 2013 Gallup employee engagement survey, more than 50% of American workers feel disconnected and undedicated to their organizations, creating an annual productivity loss of over \$300 billion (Radda, Majidadi, & Akanno, 2015). The general business problem is poor employee engagement results in low organizational performance. The specific business problem is some managers lack strategies to build employee engagement for improving organizational performance.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single site case study was to identify the strategies that managers use to build employee engagement for improving organizational performance. The targeted population comprised managers in a Midwestern beverage manufacturing company who have responsibility for leading hourly employees and ensuring accountability. The implication for positive social change included the potential to improve the employee's stress level at work, therefore improving the work/life relationship. Access to the information contained in this study may improve the employees work environment by facilitating a more favorable work experience for the employee. Managers could use the information from this study to train managers and improve the needed management strategies to build employee engagement. By improving management strategies, managers could improve organizational profitability, and relieve work-related stress (Breevaart, Bakker, Hetland, Demerouti, Olsen, & Espevik, 2014).

Nature of the Study

I chose a qualitative case study research method to explore what management strategies frontline managers need to build employee engagement. Researchers in qualitative studies aim to understand human problems from different perspectives and provide for a more humanistic approach to the research than the quantitative method would allow (Yin, 2015). In qualitative research, the researcher seeks to understand meanings, phenomena, and processes as understood by the people affected by them (Gergen, Josselson, & Freeman, 2015). Quantitative research methods use designs that

are correlational, quasi-experimental, and experimental (Cokley & Awad, 2013). The quantitative research method is the proper research approach when the researcher starts with a theory or hypothesis and tests this theory for confirmation or disconfirmation (Gibson & Fedorenko, 2013). The quantitative research method was not appropriate for this study because my intent in this study was to explore the frontline managers' strategies needed to increase employee engagement in a beverage manufacturing facility, not to make any correlation or show relationships. The purpose of this study did not include the intent to reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis but to explore the frontline managers' strategies needed to increase employee engagement in beverage manufacturing facilities. Therefore, the study of the employee engagement phenomena was more suited for a qualitative method and not a quantitative method of research. The mixed-method approach combines the qualitative and quantitative research methods and uses both methods in tandem (Caruth, 2013). The inclusion of the quantitative method made the mixed-method approach inappropriate as well.

Qualitative research consists of five main variations of research: (a) case study, (b) ethnography, (c) grounded theory, (d) narrative inquiry, and (e) phenomenological study. Case study research allows a researcher to study a phenomenon in its real world context (Yin, 2015). In case studies, researchers investigate real-life phenomena by focusing on illuminating a decision, the purpose of the decisions, and what resulted from the decisions (Yin, 2014). I focused on identifying strategies used by managers who successfully built employee engagement. Grounded theory research is a systematic methodology, which reveals new concepts throughout data collection (Yin, 2015). This

study did not fit the form of grounded theory because revealing new concepts was not a focus. Management strategies are not systematic and therefore not conducive to the grounded theory method. Ethnographic research is a long, field-based study in which the researcher surfaces everyday norms and rituals (Yin, 2015). This study did not fit the form of ethnography because a field study is not feasible and everyday norms are not an essential factor of management strategies. Narrative inquiry constructs a real-world setting rendition of the findings of the study, giving the reader a sense of being there (Yin, 2015). The sense of being there was not necessary for data presentation of this study on manager strategies. The phenomenological method of research consists of a study of human events, in the form of lived experiences, which resists prior concepts on the issue (Moustakas, 1994). This study about manager strategies consisted of prior concepts. The case study method allows the researcher to explore phenomena in the real world setting making the case study research method the best option for this study on how manager strategies affect employee engagement.

Research Question

The overarching research question for this study was: What strategies do managers use to build employee engagement for improving organizational performance?

Interview Questions

1. What do you do as a manager to increase employee engagement?
2. What do you do to motivate employees to succeed?
3. How do you gauge employee engagement?
4. What do you do if engagement falls short of expectations?

5. If engagement falls short of your expectations, how do you change your interaction with the employees to meet the needs of the employee?
6. What do you do to manage conflict within the workforce?
7. Describe the strategies you consider the most important for front line managers to enhance employee engagement.
8. What steps do you take when you see employees who are not in agreement with your strategies to increase engagement?

Conceptual Framework

The transformational leadership theory developed by James Burns in 1978 provided a foundation for identifying strategies of frontline managers to build employee engagement within an organization (Burns, 1978). The main concept of the transformational leadership theory is effective managers can heighten and elevate the motives, values, and actions of followers (Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership occurs when managers guide their followers to look beyond their own interests and accept the mission and vision of the organization (Bass, 1991). Successful managers possess the skills to modify their leadership in recognition of followers' preferences, anticipating followers' responses, or to bring harmony to the leaders' and followers' motives and values (Burns, 1978).

The transformational leadership theory is comprised of three major typologies of leadership. First, transformational leadership is a style in which the leader elevates the interests of their employees creating employee acceptance of the mission and vision of the organization. Second, transactional leadership is a style in which the manager

focuses on both positive and negative transactions between manager and employee. Finally, laissez-faire leadership constitutes nonleadership due to the lack of transaction between manager and employee (Burns, 1978). These typologies are the basis for developing the strategies needed to be an effective manager. Bass and Avolio (1991) contributed to the transformational leadership theory by expanding on the basis of developing collaborative and secure working relationships with employees. The transformational leadership theory provided the ideal conceptual framework for this study by providing insight into the need for managerial strategies to increase employee's engagement levels, which in turn increases organizational performance.

Operational Definitions

Destructive leadership: Destructive leadership is a process that occurs with time, in which the activities, experiences, and/or relationships of an individual or the members of a group become negatively influenced by their supervisor through hostile or obstructive means (Schyns & Schilling, 2013).

Employee engagement: Employee engagement is an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state in which the employee desires success for the organization as well as for himself (Shuck, Rocco, & Albornoz, 2011).

Transformational leadership: Transformational leadership is leadership in which managers and followers engage in activities that increase levels of motivation and morals (Breevaart, Bakker, Hetland, Demerouti, Olsen, & Espevik, 2014).

Workplace deviance: Workplace deviance is defined as the voluntary acts by managers of an organization that violates significant organizational norms, which causes

the well-being of the organization and its members to be adversely affected (Johnson, 2011).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are things that are unverified, but believed to be true (Grant, 2014). One assumption with this qualitative study was, information relating to employee engagement would be available, and represent honest and unbiased feedback related to the topic (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). Another assumption was that the study group would represent the lived experience of managers who excelled at building employee engagement or lack the management strategies to do so. A third assumption was the interviews would offer an opportunity to explore common themes regarding management strategies and employee engagement. Until the feedback and information collection was completed, there was no sure way to know that the information collected was usable.

Limitations

Limitations are factors beyond the control of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Time constraints to obtain information, access to participants, and the participants own work environment might cause strain on participation within the study, and interpreted as limitations to this study. Another limitation was the potential of being unable to obtain consent from some managers within the target group, therefore, forcing the expansion of the group. Sample limitations for this study consisted of sample size

and availability. The organizational structure of the company was such that the management group is quite small which limits the potential participants.

Delimitations

The delimitations of a study are the established boundaries of the research study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Only managers within a target beverage company in the Midwest were to be possible participants. Participants did not include leaders from other facilities within the company or leaders from other companies, therefore staying within a single organizational culture.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study includes how organizational managers identified strategies needed by the frontline managers to create employee engagement. Upon gaining this knowledge, organizational managers could develop training programs to enhance the skills of the frontline managers. Employee engagement is a business management concept in which the employee delivers full potential to the job and organization and still finds meaning in the work he or she does (Cowardin-Lee & Soyalp, 2011). When employees commit to their work, they stay emotionally connected to others in the workforce and focused on the direction of the team (Batista-Taran, Shuck, Gutierrez, & Baralt, 2013). Managers of organizations can increase performance and shareholder return by creating a culture of dedicated and committed employees (Johnson, 2011). This study could help to achieve increased performance.

Contribution to Business Practice

There appeared to be a gap in the literature relating to management strategies needed to build employee engagement. Many management strategies abound, all made up of different approaches and skills required by the manager. Transformational leadership may identify certain skills essential to building employee engagement (Kelloway, Turner, Barling, & Loughlin, 2012). This qualitative exploratory case study may improve the knowledge about the strategies needed by frontline managers to create employee engagement, which will lead to improved operational performance and productivity. Organizational managers could use the information from this study to determine if potential supervisor hires possess the needed management strategies, or are capable of developing the strategies. Organizational managers could also use the information from this study to develop training plans for current frontline managers.

Implications for Social Change

The study of employee engagement is critical to increasing performance of organizations. Employees directly affect organizational performance making it important to understand how to develop engagement. Many past studies focused on the importance of engagement but failed to identify the link between management and engagement levels. This study might be instrumental in identifying how to build management strategies needed to develop employee engagement within their organizations. By increasing employee engagement, the employees become involved in an environment of trust and well-being, which carries over to their non-working hours (Kelloway, Turner,

Barling, & Loughlin, 2012). This environment fosters lower stress on employees allowing for a better life outside of work as well.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to identify the strategies used by managers to increase employee engagement for improving organizational performance within a beverage manufacturing facility in the Midwest. The purpose of the literature review is to provide the reader with a critical analysis and review of published research information relating to the topic of the research. The information obtained from the research articles contributed to analyzing the need for employee engagement, actions and a lack of strategies that can destroy employee engagement, and how some management strategies helped in increasing employee engagement.

My search for peer-reviewed journal articles, books, doctoral studies and other documents started by using the Walden University Library totaling 125 journal articles obtained using this source. The search engines I used were Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM Complete, Emerald Management, Academic Search Complete, and PsycINFO. The primary search terms used were employee engagement, leadership, leadership styles, employee well-being, leadership skills in business, and creating employee engagement. The information obtained from the resources highlighted in the literature review show the interaction between managers, leadership styles, organizational cultures, and people or processes detrimental to the success of the organization and its employees. The conceptual framework chosen for this study was the transformational leadership theory. For the literature review, 66 of the 76 articles, or 86%, are peer

reviewed and current to within 5 years of the completion of this study. For the study, 111 of 125 articles, or 89%, used to gather information are current to within 5 years of publication and peer-reviewed.

The majority of authors of the resources used for the employee engagement section of the literature review used the social exchange theory, as well as the job demands-resources model and the job demands-control-support model. Although these three other conceptual models would have worked for this study as well, the transformational leadership theory was better suited for this study due to its focus on management strategies needed for increasing employee engagement. The literature review includes a comparison and contrast of these other theories with the transformational leadership theory.

Literature Review Organization

The first segment of the literature review covers transformational leadership and was the conceptual framework for this study. Transformational leadership, as described by Burns (1978), is moral leadership, which is a reciprocal process in which a manager mobilizes people with certain values and morals in different economic and political situations, to realize goals mutually held by both employee and employer. The first segment of transformational leadership contains a subsection comparing and contrasting other theories used by researchers of employee engagement. The second segment is employee engagement, which focuses on the importance of employee engagement, the difficulties in obtaining true employee engagement, and conditions that foster the creation of employee engagement. The third segment contains ways to predict employee

engagement. Predicting employee engagement by using avenues such as employee surveys helps the organization's managers see the level of current employee engagement and develop strategies for improving employee engagement (Rooy, Whitman, Hart, & Caleo, 2011). The fourth focuses on the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement. The section includes information that shows the relationships that foster employee engagement or a detriment to it. The fifth describes different leadership styles and how those styles affect employee engagement. I discuss several styles including the ability to build professional relationships between managers and employees governed by different leadership styles, which foster different management strategies. The following segment titled workplace deviance contains information regarding management actions detrimental to employee engagement and organizational success, referred to as *workplace deviance*.

Application to the Applied Business Problem

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is one of the most effective leadership styles (Kovjanic, Schuh, & Jonas, 2013). Transformational leaders respect their followers and provide moral leadership and address three main needs of their followers (Kovjanic, Schuh, & Jonas, 2013). The followers' needs addressed by transformational leaders are creating a sense of mastery in the follower's job, creating a sense of belonging and autonomy to think for themselves (Kovjanic, Schuh, & Jonas, 2013). Burns (1978) identified moral leadership as a reciprocal process in which a manager mobilizes people with certain values and morals in different economic and political situations to realize goals mutually

held by both employee and employer. Transformational leadership occurs when leaders guide their followers to look beyond their own interests and accept the mission and vision of the organization (Bass, 1991).

The transformational leadership theory provides a foundation for identifying strategies of frontline managers to build employee engagement within an organization. Burns (1978) developed the transformational leadership theory in 1978. The main components of Burns' transformational leadership theory focus on *end values*. These components are liberty, justice, and equality. Transformational leaders raise their followers to higher levels of morality. The main concept of the transformational leadership theory is good managers can heighten and elevate the motives, values, and actions of followers (Burns, 1978). The followers and leaders would then identify with a collective purpose (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders motivate employees to do more than originally thought possible by both employees and employers, and increases organizational performance (Burns, 1978). Burns (1978) identified moral leadership as a reciprocal process in which a manager mobilizes people with certain values and morals, in different economic and political situations, to realize goals mutually held by both employee and employer. Transformational leadership occurs when managers guide their followers to look beyond their own interests and accept the mission and vision of the organization (Bass, 1991). Successful managers enact strategies to modify their leadership in recognition of followers' preferences, anticipating followers' responses, or to bring harmony to the leaders' and followers' motives and values (Burns, 1978). Management strategies are those in which managers wield power in ways that followers

react positively to the leaders wishes (Burns, 1978). Managers acquire these strategies through everyday experience or in dealing with other managers and followers (Burns, 1978). Gathering data from leaders to see what actions are beneficial to the improvement of hourly employee performance, determine the strategies (Burns, 1978).

The transformational leadership theory is composed of three major typologies of leadership. First, transformational leadership is a style in which the leader elevates the interests of their employees and creates acceptance of the mission and vision of the organization among employees. Second, transactional leadership is a style in which the manager focuses on both positive and negative transactions between manager and employee. Finally, laissez-faire leadership constitutes nonleadership due to the lack of transaction between manager and employee (Burns, 1978). These typologies are the basis for developing the strategies needed to be an effective manager. Bass and Avolio (1991) contributed to the transformational leadership theory by expanding on basis of developing collaborative and secure working relationships with employees.

Managers play an influential part in how employees experience work (Tuckey, Bakker, & Dollard, 2012). Managers also affect employee health and well-being negatively by creating psychological distress but positively by fostering a positive state of mind. Work engagement is a positive and fulfilling state of mind for the employee and leads to positive outcomes for the organization (Tuckey, Bakker, & Dollard, 2012). Tuckey, Bakker, and Dollard (2012) concluded from their multi-formatted study, that in situations where engagement was high, the employees met management demands on employees with resourceful and effective work behavior. Tse and Chiu (2012) provided

a model explaining the underlying process through which transformational leadership influences creative behavior and organizational citizenship behaviors. Tse and Chiu gathered data from a sample of 250 front-line employees and their immediate managers working in five banks in the People's Republic of China. The results show transformational leadership positively affects workforces; however, the results do differentiate based on group identification or individual identification. To have a successful organizational climate, leadership should be based on ethics (Demirtas, 2015). A perceived ethical climate consists of managers communicating with employees and keeping the employees' interests in mind (Demirtas, 2015). An ethical organizational climate positively and significantly affects employee engagement (Collinson & Tourish, 2015).

Transformational leadership increases followers' performance by motivating them to move beyond self-interest (El Badawy & Bassiouny, 2014). Transformational leadership is most effective when the manager interacts with the followers because this physically embodies the vision that the manager is trying to convey (El Badawy & Bassiouny, 2014). Transformational leadership is an inspiring type leadership, which motivates employees to excel, but true interaction is required as well (El Badawy & Bassiouny, 2014). Ishikawa (2012) focused a study on shared leadership within Japanese research and development (R&D) teams use a Team Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (TMLQ). Ishikawa examined the effects of both transformational leadership and gatekeeping leadership of formal managers. Ishikawa found transformational leadership negatively affected shared leadership. Transformational leadership influences the norm

and therefore shared leadership is negatively affected. Ishikawa also found gatekeeping leadership negatively affected shared leadership; however, shared leadership had positive effects on R&D teams. Contrary to Ishikawa's findings, transformational leadership is not only beneficial for individual motivation, but for team motivation as well (Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2013). Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, and Frey (2013) stated for team motivation to hold true, managers must acknowledge the individual values in relation to the team. Transformational leaders can individualize employees and respond to each employees' needs and aspirations (Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2013).

Sang Long, Chin Fei, Adam, and Owee Kowang (2016) performed a study based on health care professionals to identify perceived transformational leadership traits, empowerment, and job satisfaction in two hospitals. The authors used positive sampling and obtained 200 valid samples. The authors acknowledge that the link between transformational leadership and job satisfaction is well documented among in current literature. The data from this quantitative study showed empowerment mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction among health care professionals at the two hospitals studied (Sang Long, Chin Fei, Adam, & Owee Kowang, 2016).

Comparing and Contrasting of Theories

During my research, three main theories used by other researchers of employee engagement emerged. These theories are the social exchange theory, job demands-resources theory, and job demands-control-support theory. All three theories, similar to

the transformational leadership theory, focused on how employee well-being, or the lack of it, affects the employees work engagement.

The social exchange theory has two main features, trust and dependence between leaders and followers (Park, Lee, & Lee, 2015). Trust and dependence are main motivational factors in building a positive work relationship between managers and employees (Park, Lee, & Lee, 2015). Trust is developed by the inclusion of integrity and reliability of the partners. Trust reduces uncertainties and increases the willingness to take needed risks (Park, Lee, & Lee, 2015). Dependence is a factor that refers to the need to maintain the relationship. The behavior of dependence is the motivational mechanism of need.

The job demands-resources model (JD-R) consists of two main processes; the energetic process and the motivational process (DeBeer, Pienaar, & Rothman, 2013). The energetic process, also known as the health impairment process, indicates chronic job demands lead to burnout and ill health effects (DeBeer, Pinaar, & Rothman, 2013). The motivational process indicates job resources lead to work engagement and organizational commitment (DeBeer, Pinaar, & Rothman, 2013).

The job demands-control-support theory (JD-CS) is a frequently applied work-stress model (Tastan, 2014). The JD-CS focuses on the human factor in the workplace and how the work environment is humanly constructed and capable of change (Tastan, 2014). The JD-CS theory is almost identical to the JD-R theory. All three theories, social exchange, JD-R, and JD-CS, focus on positive human factors of trust and dependence, as well as how the negative demands of the job lead to lower work engagement and even ill health

of the employee. The transformational leadership theory focuses on the positive effects of moral leadership and how it increases work engagement. All theories focus on the same ideas, but the transformational leadership theory goes further in identifying actions and strategies to increase moral leadership, employee engagement, and, in turn, organizational performance. The deeper focus on strategies and actions is the reason this research study use the transformational leadership theory as opposed to the social exchange theory, JD-R, or JDCS.

Employee Engagement

Saks (2006) identified employee engagement as a relatively new topic yet deemed a hot topic by consulting firms. Although the topic is hot, it has rarely been studied in academia and little is known about its antecedents and consequences (Saks, 2006). There is also a lack of theory or model development on the subject of employee engagement even though employee engagement is the key to an organization's success and competitiveness (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Saks cited a 1990 qualitative study by Kahn in which the researcher studied the psychological conditions of personal engagement using the social exchange theory. Khan interviewed summer camp counselors and organizational members of an architecture firm about their perceived moments of engagement and disengagement. Kahn described three psychological conditions associated with engagement at work: meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Saks, 2006). Workers were more engaged at work when their jobs had psychological meaning, psychological safety, and when they were more psychologically available (Saks, 2006). These three conditions are met when the employee feels (a) like he or she is part of the

organization, (b) safe in his place within the organization, and (c) secure of his wellbeing. Reissner and Pagan (2013) studied employee engagement levels at an organization located in the United Kingdom. The organization was going through a merge and required employees to transfer to the new organization, without physically transferring locations. The organizations' managers saw that to make this transition as seamless as possible, they would need to raise the engagement levels of the employees (Reissner & Pagan, 2013). Reissner and Pagan found that for employee engagement initiatives to be effective, the employees must actively engage in activities offered by the managers. The engaged or committed employee exhibits behavior, which focuses on the improvement of the organization. Organizations with less than 40% of employees engaged have a 44% lower than average shareholder return (Clayson, 2010). Identifying the level of employee engagement, and then putting actions in place to increase the level, is important (Clayson, 2010).

Employee engagement is a strong predictor of organizational performance and shows a two-way relationship between employer and employee (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). Employee engagement is the involvement of self, by the employee, in the work they perform and the commitment they show toward their employer (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). Rayton and Yalabik (2014) performed a study about how psychological contract breach or loss of resources affects work engagement, using the Social exchange theory and the job demands-resources model. Rayton and Yalabik (2014) theorized that employee engagement was a reciprocation of employers exchange content, or supply of needed resources for the employee. Organizational leaders benefit from creating an

atmosphere where employees commit to the organization and deliver their best performance for the company every day (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, (2016). Employees potentially benefit from being committed to the organization by enjoying a positive and effective attitude and performance each day while at work.

Some organizational leaders create employee well-being programs. Yanping, Jia, Yidong, and Xinxin (2014) studied the effect of ethical leadership on the well-being of employees, based on the social exchange theory. The study was prompted by a series of employee suicides within the Foxconn Company in China. The Foxconn Company tragedies are what initiated the interest in employee well-being, originally thought to be of importance only outside the workplace (Yanping, Jia, Yidong, & Xinxin, 2014). Yanping, Jia, Yidong, and Xinxin (2014) submitted questionnaires to 302 employees and 34 supervisors of an organization in China. Yanping, Jia, Yidong, and Xinxin (2014) used hierarchical linear modeling to examine the results of the questionnaires. The results revealed overwhelmingly, that ethical leadership positively affects the well-being of employees within the organization. These organizations try to increase employee engagement by showing an interest in the employee's well-being, health, and inclusion within the organization. Carvalho and Chambel (2014) suggested that work-to-family enrichment and employee well-being work hand-in-hand to positively affect both work performance and family life. Employee engagement and organizational performance can improve by increasing work-to-family enrichment and work-life balance (Carvalho & Chambel, 2014). An inherent need exists among all employees to feel safe and secure

before they can commit to the organization, therefore making employee well-being a precursor to employee engagement.

Shuck, Rocco, and Albornoz (2011) performed a study with participants from a multinational service company described by Forbes as one of the world's most admired companies. The researchers surmised that employees committed to the organization exhibited attentiveness in their work and displayed a deep connection toward the organization (Shuck, Rocco, & Albornoz, 2011). Shuck, Rocco, and Albornoz (2011) discussed the importance for human resource development (HRD) scholars and practitioners to develop research and strategies aimed at the lack of employee engagement in the global workforce. Unengaged employees uncouple themselves from the organization, decreasing enthusiasm, and their emotional link to the organization (Truss, Shantz, Soane, Alfes, & Delbridge, 2013). While employee engagement increases organizational performance, the lack of employee engagement leads to higher turnover and lower customer satisfaction. Organizational leaders are becoming increasingly cognizant of the need to increase employee engagement to remain competitive in their respective industries (Rees, Alfes, & Gatenby, 2013). Market share and added value of the organization are not driven solely by cost and quality of the product, but also by a greater employee commitment to the organization's corporate objectives (Rees, Alfes, & Gatenby, 2013).

One way of increasing employee engagement is by using performance management. Performance management is the framework guiding managers in the development of employee engagement (Decramer, Smolders, & Vanderstraeten, 2013). Performance

management is the act of creating a shared vision among employees, focused on the organizational goals, and helping the employees to understand their part in making it work (Decramer, Smolders, & Vanderstraeten, 2013). More research is needed to understand how the separate sections of performance management individually affect employee engagement.

Biswas and Bhatnagar (2013) gathered data from 246 managers, from six organizations located in India. The study focused on the relationship between perceived organization support (POS), and person-organization fit (P-O fit). POS and P-O fit were antecedents and organizational commitment and job satisfaction were consequences. The findings of the study lead the authors to suggest that when employees perceive a higher level of organizational commitment, employees felt an increased person-organization fit, therefore leading to higher employee engagement and higher organizational performance (Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013). Organizations should maintain an engaged workforce to retain employees, improve productivity, and increase customer loyalty (Arrowsmith & Parker, 2013).

Predicting Employee Engagement

Rooy, Whitman, Hart, and Caleo (2011) suggested that measuring workforce attitudes is a business imperative. Earlier in the decade, prior to 2006 when the economy was better, organizations were focusing on measuring workforce attitudes to gain a better understanding on what engages employees (Rooy, Whitman, Hart, & Caleo, 2011). With the economic downturn, organizations turned away from employee surveys and other measuring tools dealing with employee attitudes because they determined the focus must

be on the corporate bottom line to remain competitive during the difficult times (Rooy, Whitman, Hart, & Caleo, 2011). Rooy, Whitman, Hart, and Caleo (2011) studied the change from employee surveys and other measuring tools, and determined that measuring employee attitudes and promoting positive employee engagement was as critical during economic difficulties and is as effective during this time as well. A downturn in employee engagement during financial downturns is brought on by the organizational leaders' choice to ignore employee engagement during this time and not by the economy itself, therefore concluding that a constant focus on employee engagement during financial crisis will positively affect the organization (Rooy, Whitman, Hart, & Caleo, 2011).

In his 1982 book *Out of the crisis*, W. Edwards Deming described performance appraisals as one of the “seven deadly diseases of management” (Trosten-Bloom, Deines, & Carsten, 2014). Performance appraisals instill fear and only promote short-term performance enhancement (Trosten-Bloom, Deines, & Carsten, 2014). Successful organizations move away from top-down decision making and communication to a more flat communication network, involving employees more (Trosten-Bloom, Deines, & Carsten, 2014). Without performance appraisals, predicting employee engagement becomes more difficult. One way to predict employee engagement is by using core self-evaluations (CSE). Nubold, Muck, & Maier (2013) researched how core self-evaluations (CSE) relate with transformational leaders in terms of its influence on follower motivation and performance. Nubold, Muck, and Maier (2013) found that employees with low self-efficacy levels benefit from transformational leaders. Employees with low

self-efficacy levels also benefited more from self-evaluations and transformational leaders because they had the most to gain. Employees who rate low on core self-evaluations see tasks as nearly impossible and think themselves incapable of performing them. These employees then benefit greatly from transformational leader's motivation capabilities because transformational leaders motivate and inspire. Employees with high core self-evaluations see tasks as a challenge and achievable, and therefore do not benefit as much from transformational leaders.

Many employee engagement models, such as those by (a) Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, & Barrick, 2004, (b) Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002, (c) Kahn, 1990, (d) Macey & Schneider, 2008, (e) Wellins & Concelman, 2006, focus on individual employee situations within an organization (Cowardin-Lee & Soyalp, 2011). Cowardin-Lee and Soyalp (2011) discussed a study by Pugh and Dietz (2008) in which engagement measures were aggregated to unit and subgroup measures to capture social norms. The 2011 study conducted by Cowardin-Lee and Soyalp focused on whether the central or *go-to* employees were the most engaged within the organization and whether employees exhibit different behaviors in different work networks.

Relationship between Leadership Styles and Employee Engagement

Leadership is one of the most important factors in building employee engagement (Cerna, Jaklic, & Skervaj, 2013; Mo & Shi, (2017); Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Building sustainable employee engagement requires energy and involvement from both employee and leader (Peterson, Walumbwa, Avolio, & Hannah, 2012; Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Organizations with a high employee engagement level show a shareholder return of

nearly triple compared to organizations with low employee engagement (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). The failure to initiate employee engagement comes from leaders underestimating the commitment needed to make it work (Tuckey, Bakker, & Dollard, 2012). Organizations who have successfully initiated employee engagement reap the benefits.

Jenkins and Delbridge (2013) identified two main forms of leadership approaches to employee engagement, the soft approach, and the hard approach. The soft approach focuses on building a positive workplace environment and increasing a positive relationship between leaders and employees. The hard approach focuses on improving employee effort to improve organizational performance (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013). Jenkins and Delbridge (2013) studied the two approaches by observing an organization, which used the soft approach and one that used the hard approach. The soft approach, which includes manager's willingness to communicate and build relationships with employees, provided an increase in employee engagement within the organization. The organization using the hard approach saw an increase in disengagement (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013).

In a 2010 IBM survey of over 1500 Chief Executive Officers from 60 countries and 30 different industries, employee creativity is more important to organizational success than management discipline or organizational vision (Gupta & Singh, 2014). Employee creativity accounts for useful ideas needed for the creation and design of organizational products, processes or services (Gupta & Singh, 2014). Leaders have the most influence on fostering employee creativity (Gupta & Singh, 2014). Xu and Thomas (2011) found

that organizations spend considerable resources to measure and improve employee engagement. Leadership is a key antecedent to employee engagement (Xu & Thomas, 2011). Xu and Thomas (2011) also identify the lack of research dedicated to the link between leadership and employee engagement levels. In this article, Xu and Thomas (2011) used the transformational leadership style as a comparison factor to the level of employee engagement within an organization.

Leaders possess the ability to create or destroy employee engagement. The relationship between leader and employee must be strong to build or maintain engagement. Farrell (2013) suggested that poor leadership or mistakes made by leaders could lead to organizational failure. Failure to communicate a vision, maintain integrity or failing to make timely decisions were all examples of leadership mistakes (Farrell, 2013).

Job satisfaction is a predictor of work engagement (Yalabik, Popaitoon, Chowne, & Rayton, 2013). Organizational commitment and work engagement are directly correlated, and based on a valued exchange of content from their employer (Yalabik, et al, 2013).

Mo and Shi (2017) suggested that leaders who display ethical behaviors would affect employees' attitudes and work behaviors. The authors tested a model, which suggested that work engagement acts as a mediator between ethical leadership and employee initiative. A value driven form of leadership such as ethical leadership affects the beliefs of their followers as well as their motivation, attitudes, and behaviors. Michie and Zumitzavan (2012) studied the relationship between manager's learning, and leadership

styles and organizational outcomes. The study was conducted on firms in Thailand. The role of leadership has always played a key role in organizational outcomes. Michie and Zumitzavan (2012) found that learning by leaders significantly correlated with how they acted as managers. Managers who engaged in four learning styles, action, thinking, feeling, and assessing others, also engaged more frequently in a greater variety of leadership styles such as challenging, inspiring, enabling, modeling, and encouraging. In this quantitative study, Michie and Zumitzavan (2012) concluded that the effect of learning styles on organizational effectiveness was mediated by learning styles. Leadership is an outward focus with a future vision, and management is an inward focus on immediate needs (Yu-Chi, 2017).

Authentic leadership is a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes the positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate. Authentic leadership fosters increased self-awareness, an internalized morale perspective, balanced process of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders, fostering positive self-development (Jiang, H. & Men, R.L. (2017). The authors studied how authentic leadership promotes positive employee attitudes and contributes to organizational performance. There is a link between authentic leadership and employee positivity in extreme contexts, such as police and military organizations (Peterson, Walumbwa, Avolio, & Hannah, 2012). The authors found that authentic leaders increased employee positivity, or engagement. Authentic leadership is a higher order construct composed of four dimensions; internalized moral perspective, self-awareness, relational transparency, and balanced processing. The trust earned by the authentic leaders prior to stressful

situations is critical to how employees perform. Wang and Hsieh (2013) studied the effect of authentic leadership on employee engagement through employee trust by gathering data from 386 employees from the top 1000 manufacturing companies in Taiwan. The results showed that both supervisors' consistency between words and actions as well as their moral perceptions positively relate to employee engagement. The authors suggested that the most important component of effective leadership is that leaders treat their employees' authentically. In recent years, the focus on the topic of authentic leadership has gradually increased in both practical and academic fields (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). A reason for the increased focus on authentic leadership is that authentic leadership is acknowledged as a root construct of all positive forms of leadership, and it plays a vital role in addressing organizational and societal problems (Wang & Hsieh, 2013).

Townsend, Wilkinson, and Burgess (2014) examined managerial strategies toward employee relations in three organizations from the hotel sector located in Australia. The three organizations were actively pursuing activities to increase employee engagement. One organization focused on individualized engagement efforts, one on engagement increased through collaborative efforts across the entire workforce and the third had a conflictual relationship with the workforce while trying to increase engagement (Townsend, Wilkinson, & Burgess, 2014). The organization focused on building engagement on a personalized basis showed increasingly higher engagement levels than the other two organizations, therefore suggested that individualizing, and personalizing relationships between leaders and employees increases engagement (Townsend,

Wilkinson, & Burgess, 2014). In both good times and in bad, organizations can foster positive organizational productivity by fostering a culture of engaged employees (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015). One way to create that culture is to have people at the top who inspire belief in the organization's future.

Hunter, Neubert, Perry, Witt, Penney, & Weinberger (2013) studied the effects of servant leadership upon the employees, and whether the employees respond positively to it. Servant leaders model the behavior expected of their employees, thereby teaching them how to serve (Hunter, Neubert, Perry, Witt, Penney, & Weinberger, 2013). The employees of servant leaders exhibit higher servant employee engagement.

Procedural fairness interacts with empowering leadership to promote employee organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Van Dijke, De Cremer, Mayer, & Van Quaquebeke, 2012). The authors focused on two empowering leadership types, encouraging self-development, and encouraging independent action. Van Dijke, et al (2012) found that leaders who encouraged self-development made employees desire information regarding their value to the organization. Leaders who encouraged independent action decreased employee's desire for this type of information (Van Dijke, De Cremer, Mayer, & Van Quaquebeke, 2012). These results showed that leaders who encourage independent action develop employees who do not need procedural fairness to be engaged.

Zhang and Chen (2013) investigated three levels of self-identity in the workplace: self-determination, supervisor identification, and organizational identification, for their mediating effects on developmental leadership and organizational citizenship behavior.

Zhang and Chen (2013) gathered data from 469 employees in two Chinese firms. Zhang and Chen (2013) found that the strongest mediator was supervisor identification, second was self-determination, and third was organizational leadership. Zhang and Chen (2013) also found that positive citizenship behaviors were a result of strong psychological bonds with their supervisors and the feel of autonomy at work, not because of a feeling of allegiance to the company. Full employee engagement includes a connection to the organization as well.

Kim (2014) studied the effect of coaching on 234 employees of a private conglomerate in South Korea. Managerial coaching is defined as a managerial tactic that improves employee learning and effectiveness (Kim, 2014). The majority of organizational leaders use to develop their employees (Kim, 2014). Coaching, rather than directing by leaders, shows an interest by leaders in the personal development and success of employees, therefore building a relationship between leader and employee. Kim (2014) investigated the factors that shape followers' initial reactions to leaders. The author hypothesized that followers' self-concepts, such as self-esteem and self-construal, would predict their conceptualization of an ideal leader, which would then predict followers' preference for specific leadership styles. The author found that self-construal, a perception about their thoughts, feelings, and actions in relation to others, was a bigger factor than self-esteem in how followers react to leadership styles (Kim, 2014). All leadership styles contain the power to influence others. Goncalves (2013) focused his research on various techniques of gaining power within an organization and how one would use these powers when managing organizational behavior. The leadership of a

corporation can be in jeopardy when little attention is given to how power is used. The leadership process itself can become bland or unsuccessful when divorced from the mission of the organization, its people, and the culture (Goncalves, 2013).

Batista-Taran, Shuck, Gutierrez, and Baralt (2013) discussed the findings from *The Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference*, which addressed the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement in the workplace. The competitive global marketplace is forcing organizations to look beyond the typical focus of employee motivation and towards having an engaged workforce (Batista-Taran, Shuck, Gutierrez, & Baralt, 2013). Many organizations looked at cash flow, investments, capital expenditures, etc. to gauge their performance, but over the years, businesses have added employee development and performance management as a strategic business priority to improve employee engagement and their competitive advantage.

Leadership Styles' Influence on Employee Engagement

Mario Buble (2012) performed a study on the interdependence between organizational culture and leadership styles in organizations within Croatia. The original thinking was that organizational culture and values were separated from employees. Buble (2012) found through his research that organizational values and culture had a large influence on individual employees and that the culture significantly affects the success of the organization. Buble (2012) used a quantitative research method for the study, and concluded that bureaucratic and formalized cultures of organizations in Croatia are further developed than other types. Buble (2012) also concluded that the

dominant leadership style used by managers in Croatia is authoritarian, with the exception that the managers were receptive to employee suggestions.

Servant leadership is a style of leadership in which the concerns of employees, ethical fortitude, and employee engagement are at the forefront (Carter & Baghurst, 2014). Employees are viewed as one of the greatest assets of the company and leaders focus on how to help employees reach their potential (Carter & Baghurst, 2014). Carter and Baghurst (2014) performed a study, gathering data from two focus groups, as well as direct observation of approximately 100 employees from restaurants in the Dallas, TX area. The results showed that employees within environments run by servant leaders felt their opinions were valued, and felt strong ties to their organization (Carter & Baghurst, 2014).

Burke, Koyuncu, Fiksenbaum, and Tekin (2013) studied the antecedents and consequences of work engagement, gathering data from 549 participants who worked in the hotel industry in Turkey. Frontline workers at these hotels worked long hours, for low pay. The data gathered from the participants reflected a low engagement level, based on low work-family balance, and poor job satisfaction (Burke, Koyuncu, Fiksenbaum, & Tekin, 2013). Those employees who felt their voice was heard by their leaders, and had a relatively decent work-life balance showed higher levels of work engagement (Burke, et al, 2013). Respect, optimism, and trust figure as one of the most prominent characteristics of what defines effective leadership (Stander, de Beer, & Stander, 2015). Authentic leaders become moral agents who bring positivity to an organization and its employees (Stander, de Beer, & Stander, 2015).

Authentic leadership is the use of a greater self-awareness and positive behaviors to create an atmosphere for employees of trust, hope, and optimism (Azanza, Moriano, & Molero, 2013). Owusu-Bempah (2012) tested his theory that the authentic leadership construct varied in different settings. To test this theory, the author compared leader and follower constructs of authentic leadership among public and private organizations in Ghana. Owusu-Bempah (2012) surveyed 30 leaders and followers in two organizations, one in each private and public organization. The author concluded that some attributes of authentic leadership were common among the organizations. Those attributes were leader goal-orientedness, good listening skills, leader respect for followers, objectivity and justice, inspirational teaching and leader commitment, God fearing, leader fairness, and leader flexibility. These traits help in building employee engagement (Owusu-Bempah, J. 2012).

Choudhary, Akhtar, and Zaheer (2013) performed a study using 155 participants from a service sector within Pakistan. The study was a comparison between the transformational and servant leadership styles. Servant leadership evokes emotion and employee behaviors in a positive way, while transformational leadership is an inspirational style, which motivates employees to care about the organization at a higher level (Choudhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013). Transformational leadership was found to be more useful in increasing organizational learning, which in turn increases organizational performance, making transformational leadership a more effective style for increasing organizational performance than servant leadership (Choudhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013). Transformational leadership evokes more pride in an employees work

and pride in the organization (Choudhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013). When workers feel pride in their work and the people they work for, workers enjoy work at a much higher level (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). Mishra, Boynton, and Mishra (2014) suggested that open communication is key to instilling pride in employees' work. When the direct manager presents the open communication, employee pride is increased (Mishra, et al, 2014). Bates and Weighart (2014) suggested that executive presence, not just direct management communication, is essential to building employee engagement. Bates and Weighart (2014) conducted a pilot study with 100 leaders at 20 different organizations. More than half of the participants were senior executives and the rest were mid-level executives. Bates and Weighart (2014) found that all executives had strengths and areas for improvement. All executives had revealed, the skills that had taken them to their current management level were not still a part of their leadership styles at their new level (Bates & Weighart, 2014). The executives had abandoned the skills that propelled them to new levels, in favor of skills they thought were more important at the new level, therefore alienating them from the workforce (Bates & Weighart, 2014).

Workplace Deviance

Employees disconnected with their organization provide lower productivity, higher absenteeism, and present retention issues within organizations (Radda, Majidadi, & Akanno, 2015). According to a 2013 Gallup employee engagement survey, over 50% of American workers feel disconnected and undedicated to their organizations, creating an annual productivity loss of over \$300 billion (Radda, Majidadi, & Akanno, 2015). Johnson (2011) suggests that there is an abundance of research regarding the relationship

between employee engagement and business performance but very little about the correlation between ethical behavior and employee engagement. Workplace deviance is counterproductive work behavior. Johnson (2011) defines workplace deviance as voluntary acts undertaken by employees who violate the well-being of the organization and its members. Johnson (2011) found, during her phenomenological study, that as overall organizational ethical behavior increased, counterproductive work behavior by the employees decreased. Johnson (2011) also identified three predictors of workplace deviance behavior: (a) personal ethics, the degree to which individuals believe the organization empowers employees to have input into decisions, (b) self-interest, the degree to which individuals concern themselves with only their own well-being, and (c) employee focus, the level of concern the organization's leaders show toward the employees.

Schyns and Schilling (2013) focused on the effects of destructive leadership. Schyns and Schilling (2013) found that there was a higher correlation between destructive leadership and high turnover, resistance, and counterproductive work behavior, than there was with the relationship between effective leadership and positive attitudes toward the leaders, and employee well-being. Destructive leadership has a bigger impact on an organization than effective leadership does (Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter, & Tate, 2012). Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter, and Tate (2012) researched destructive leadership and its significance on the work-force, as opposed to the typical study of how effective leadership affects the workforce. Destructive leadership results in

failed organizations, and this type of poor leadership has caused immense economical and financial losses (Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter, & Tate, 2012).

Transition

Employee engagement remains an important construct needed to increase organizational effectiveness and profitability (Reissner & Pagan, 2013). In section 1, I identified the specific business problem as the lack of strategies by front line managers, to build employee engagement. Without strong management strategies to create employee engagement, the organization's managers will struggle to meet the full potential of the organization. Section 1 also includes an in-depth review of research related to the construct of employee engagement, along with background of the problem, and the methodology and the purpose of this research.

Section 2 of this study presents the methodology clarifying the focus of this study and the research design used to understand the creation of employee engagement within organizations. Section 3 provides the vehicle to present the findings of the study and its implications to global business practices.

Section 2: The Project

Higher levels of employee engagement lead to increased return on assets, higher earning per employee, higher performance, greater sales growth, and lower absenteeism (Xu & Thomas, 2011). Managers who foster at least 65% employee engagement, based on employee engagement surveys conducted by Hewitt Associates, Inc., provide a 19% higher return to shareholders than those managers who do not foster a 65% or higher employee engagement level (Clayson, 2010).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single site case study was to identify the strategies managers use to build employee engagement for improving organizational performance. The targeted population comprised managers in a Midwestern beverage manufacturing company who have responsibility for leading hourly employees, and ensuring accountability. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to improve the employee's stress level at work, therefore improving the work/life relationship. Access to the information contained in this study may improve the employees work environment by facilitating a more favorable work experience for the employee. Managers could use the information from this study to train leaders and improve the needed leadership skills to build employee engagement. By improving leadership skills, managers could improve organizational profitability, and relieve work-related stress (Breevaart, Bakker, Hetland, Demerouti, Olsen, & Espevik, 2014).

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is to understand the lived experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). As the researcher, I recruited participants from a beverage manufacturer located in the Midwest. I collected data, explored new knowledge, and reported all data collected. I have a prior working relationship with some of the potential participants; therefore, extra precautions were taken to remain unbiased and adhere to high ethical standards throughout the research study, and ensure transparency throughout the research study. When using people to gather data and information, it is of the utmost importance to adhere to high ethical standards and use precautions to ensure an unbiased study (Yin, 2015). A strong ethical standard will ensure the avoidance of bias (Yin, 2015). I adhered to the following set of rules throughout the project. Retrieved data was coded using letters instead of names, therefore, while compiling the data the names were hidden and therefore easier to dismiss the personal aspect in the data and concentrate only on the data at hand.

To help maintain an unbiased state, I used member checking. Member checking is a technique in which the interviewer summarizes the data collected, restates it to the participant and solicits feedback from the participant as to the accuracy and validity of the information received (Yin, 2015). I also have a relationship with employee engagement. As a manager, I was tasked with leading, motivating, and directing both hourly and salaried employees within a manufacturing setting. Being a part of a management team introduced me to many different types of leadership styles and

management techniques, which brought out different reactions and commitments from the employees. My experiences enticed me to study employee engagement.

When performing research in which data gathering is performed using human subjects, it is of utmost importance to ensure the research is performed using the highest of ethical standards (The Belmont Report, 1979). People used in research studies deserve respect and protection. As a researcher, I also had the responsibility of beneficence, or the responsibility to refrain from harming the participant and maximizing the possible benefits from the data provided by the participant (The Belmont Report, 1979).

To ensure this research was performed with the highest of ethical standards, I ensured full disclosure of the use of the data collected for this research project to the participants. I used only the participant codes and not the names of the participants. I also ensured that any information within the study relating to participants was identified by participant codes and not names. I maintained anonymity for all participants and provided copies of the data collected from each participant for them to keep, if they requested such information. I have also keep the data in a file on my computer, which is password protected.

To gather data, I used an interview protocol. An interview protocol provides for a guided conversation with the participants (Yin, 2015). The interview protocol is important because it guides the researcher during interviews to keep focused and on topic. The protocol serves three purposes: as a guide for the researcher during the interview organization process, a prop during the interview to keep the interviewer on track, and as a prop in which it gives the appearance of a more formal inquiry to the

participant, helping the participants to be more forthcoming with information (Yin, 2015). The protocol for this study consisted of sending a set of interview questions to the participants via email (see appendix A). I then conducted a phone interview with each individual participant. Following the initial phone interview, I used a second phone interview to conduct member checking and gather additional information as needed, followed by more member checking. Member checking is the act of summarizing the information gathered from the participant, synthesized and restated back to the participant soliciting feedback as to the accuracy with which the data is presented (Yin, 2015). In addition to member checking, the participant was given a copy of the transcript from the interview to ensure full disclosure and allow the participant to see that the information gathered reflected their ideas and information.

Participants

Participants for this study were purposefully chosen and consisted of 3 managers who have are directly responsible for creating, supporting, or limiting employee engagement within a beverage manufacturing facility. Yin (2015) stated purposeful sampling allows the researcher to choose those participants who will provide the most relevant information, therefore I used purposeful sampling to choose the participants for this study. The managers were selected to be participants because, according to company line performance metrics, they successfully built employee engagement for improving organizational performance. Line performance is a measure of operational efficiency. The performance rate is calculated by taking the overall scheduled minutes (OSM) minus total downtime minutes (TDM) equals total run minutes (TRM). Calculate TRM divided

by OSM times 100 equals the performance percentage for that production line. This calculation is standard company-wide to establish performance for each production line in the company.

As suggested by Dworkin (2012), each participant was assured of his privacy, providing strict confidence of all information provided by the participant. Morse, Lowery, and Steury (2014) suggested a researcher must remain flexible to allow the participant enough flexibility to provide the response they wish to share, so I followed this recommendation. Email addresses and phone numbers of participants were located in the corporate employee database for accessibility. I sought permission to contact the potential participants, via email, from the Director of Manufacturing of the beverage manufacturing site chosen for this study.

As suggested by Wang (2013) and Kral (2014), I created a working relationship with the participants by explaining the purpose of the research, how the participants can benefit, and how the organization can benefit as well. I explained the interview process upon their acceptance so that they were comfortable with the process. Kallio, Pietil, Johnson & Kangasniemi (2016), suggested explaining the entire interview process to ensure participants comfort level with it, so I complied with this suggestion.

Research Method and Design

I used a qualitative case study research design with purposeful selection of participants. In qualitative studies, researchers study phenomena in its real world context to understand human problems from different perspectives, and provide for a more humanistic approach to the research (Yin, 2015). Case study research focuses on

illuminating a set of decisions (Yin, 2015). I focused on decisions such as; (a) why a manager chooses a way of interacting with employees to increase employee engagement, (b) how the manager changes the interactions to meet the needs of the employees, (c) what a manager does if his/or her directions are not followed, and (d) if treated the same, how some employees may react differently to the same interaction. I also focused on why decisions were made, and what resulted from the decisions, as well as investigating real-life phenomena (Yin, 2014). The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format.

Research Method

I used the qualitative research method to conduct my study. In qualitative studies, researchers aim to understand human problems from different perspectives, and provide for a more humanistic approach to the research than the quantitative method would allow (Yin, 2015). In a quantitative research approach, the researcher quantifies results and highlights problems (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). To understand employee engagement and the management strategies needed to create it, understanding the human perspective of it is critical. The quantitative approach would not account for this humanistic need. A study looking at the effectiveness of an intervention would be a good fit for a quantitative method, whereas a study assessing the nature of that intervention and the purpose for its implementation would require a qualitative approach (Yin, 2015). In this study, I explored the management strategies needed to build employee engagement within a beverage manufacturing facility in the Midwest. The identification of management strategies needed for increasing employee engagement included the soft side of

management, including the relationships and interaction between managers and employees, therefore the qualitative approach was a more fitting approach for this research.

Research Design

Case study research provides the avenue for a researcher to study a phenomenon in its real world context (Yin, 2015). In case studies, the researcher focuses on illuminating a decision or set of decisions, why the decisions were made and what resulted from the decisions, as well as investigating real-life phenomena, which made the case study method the best choice for this study over the four other qualitative methods. Using an ethnographic study involves an extensive and lengthy field study to identify everyday norms, rituals, and routines in detail (Hallett & Barber, 2013). This research project did not benefit from rituals and routines, and would have taken the research in an unintended direction. In grounded theory research, a researcher builds theory from data, studying the natural occurrence of social behavior over a long period of time (Hall, Griffiths, & McKenna, 2013). This design was not conducive to studying the phenomena of creating employee engagement and identifying the strategies to do so, and therefore was not considered. In narrative inquiry, the researcher constructs a narrative rendition of findings from a real-world setting, a study of experience providing a sense of being there (Kahlke, 2014). Narrative inquiry can prove disastrous if the researcher fails to identify his or her own theoretical stance, therefore instilling bias in the findings (Kahlke, 2014). This design did not conform to this study's focus to identify the frontline management strategies needed to increase employee engagement in beverage manufacturing facilities.

Phenomenological study designs focus on studying human events and lived experiences, as experienced in real-world settings (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological design allows for resistance of prior concepts that could distort the understanding of the events (Yin, 2014). Using the case study design provided the opportunity to understand prior concepts, such as self-efficacy, follower preferences, and Machiavellianism, and how they correlate to the phenomena (Yin, 2014). A single case study design was correct for this study.

Data saturation is the point in data collection in which no new or relevant information is possible (Dworkin, 2012). The importance of data saturation is to give the full value of the information one wishes to provide through the research (Gergen, Josselson, & Freeman, 2015). Data for this research study was gathered from all pertinent participants within a beverage manufacturing site in the Midwest. Interviews with participants continued until no more new data was gathered from the participants. When the data becomes repetitive, saturation is achieved. Data saturation is key to performing first-rate qualitative research (Morse, Lowery, & Steury, 2014).

Population and Sampling

The population for the study was managers and supervisors working in a beverage manufacturing facility in the Midwest. The managers at this facility were chosen because the corporate performance documentation shows this facility to perform the best in the company. The sampling method was typical case purposeful sampling using the criteria that the participant was involved in the management or supervision of employees in the beverage manufacturing facility, and experienced success in improving employee

engagement. Purposeful sampling plays a key role in qualitative research for the small selection of participants for the study (Yilmaz, 2013). Purposeful sampling is appropriate when participants with a certain set of characteristics are important to the researcher (Jones, 2014). Valerio, Rodriguez, Winkler, Lopez, Dennison, Yuanyuan, and Turner (2016) suggested using a snowball method to increase the number of participants if needed to ensure data saturation; however, this case study did allow for increasing the number of participants because all available managers at the facility chosen for study were participants. I targeted 7 individuals to participate in interviews and received acceptance from 3. According to the company employee directory, the 3 participants represented 57% of the entire management team at the selected facility. According to Yin (2015), member checking is used after the interview by presenting information back to the interviewee to ensure accuracy of information. I used member checking individually, after each interview and after data analysis to ensure data saturation and accuracy of information gathered during the interviews. Data saturation occurs when the participants can no longer offer any new insights into the questions asked (Dworkin, 2012). Data saturation is a decision point of the researcher, in which the researcher decides there is no more need to continue the data collection activity (Oberoi, Jiwa, McManus, & Hodder, 2015).

Each participant was interviewed over the phone. The geographical location of the potential participants, juxtaposed to mine, makes face-to-face interviews difficult and creates the need to perform phone interviews with the participants. To perform phone interviews, I ensured I had access to a phone charger and outlet to eliminate phone

interruptions, and requested the participants to do the same if they choose to use a cellular phone. The participants were encouraged to find a comfortable and quiet area to participate in the interview. Interviewing in a private area can provide the participant with confidence of confidentiality.

Ethical Research

Researchers have a duty to produce knowledge from the actual research and to uphold ethical principles when doing the research (Gibson & Fedorenko, 2013). Maintaining high ethical standards is critical when performing research, especially when dealing with human subjects (Yin, 2015). A researcher must get informed consent from the participants prior to conducting the research. Informed consent occurs when the participant gives the researcher written consent to gather data relating to the participant (Yin, 2015). A standard form was used to gather and verify the consent provided by the participants, via email. Each participant was told they could withdraw from participation at any time during the research project. There will be no incentives offered to the participants for this study.

Maintaining integrity throughout the study is paramount to conducting ethical research (Yin, 2015). Research integrity means that everything a researcher does and says can be trusted and represents truthful positions and statements (Yin, 2015). To assure the ethical protection of the participants, I ensured their confidentiality by referring to them in the paper as P1, P2, etc., instead of using their names. The letter P was used to signify a participant along with a number 1-3. Participants are referred to as P1 or P2, and so on throughout the process. I also do refer to the particular facility at

which they work so no one will be able to assume the identity of the participants. I also provided a written transcript of the interview to each person, via email, for his approval prior to submission if requested. Therefore, they are assured that their words were not misconstrued or misrepresented. The name of the organization is protected by referring to it as organization X, instead of using the real name.

Data gathered for the research study should be held in a secure place for 5 years (Yin, 2015). Data gathered for the study is saved in corresponding folders on my computer which is password protected, and on a flash drive, so that the same information is saved in two different locations, decreasing the opportunity for loss. The database saved on the flash drive is locked away for a minimum of 5 years, and the information saved on the password-protected computer is saved for an equal amount of time and then destroyed. IRB approval was obtained from Walden University IRB prior to conducting this study. The Walden IRB approval number for this study is 03-10-17-0319660 which expires on March 9, 2018.

Data Collection Instruments

As the researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument. I obtained performance metrics for the time-period that I am interviewing the participants. I used a semistructured interview format to obtain data for this study. The use of interviews and company performance metrics ensured data triangulation and provided a second form of data to be analyzed for this research. According to Yin (2014), data collection methods should entail more than interviews, adding another source of data increases validity in the research. According to Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) collection

procedures should not be routine and interviewers should take advantage of any unexpected opportunities. Fassinger and Morrow (2013) suggested standardization of the interview process establishes consistency when using interviews for data collection. Standardization is good, but the researcher should be prepared, and allow the participants to ask for and receive clarification of questions to ensure full understanding before answering (Gibbons, 2015). I was prepared to handle unexpected opportunities, but used an interview protocol to stay organized during the interview process. An interview protocol provides a guide to the interview process (see Appendix A). Using an interview protocol ensures to cover the investigative areas (Yin, 2014). To verify the accuracy of the data collected, I used member checking via the phone call. Member checking ensures the accuracy of the data collected during interviews (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Houghton, Dympna, & Shaw, 2013). Member checking is performed by restating or summarizing the participant's responses and asking the participant to verify the accuracy of the information (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Cope, 2014). In addition to member checking, a transcript of the interview was sent to the participant upon request, to ensure full disclosure.

Data Collection Technique

For an interview to be successful, a researcher must choose the correct technique and plan for all aspects of the process (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Yu, Abdullah, and Saat (2014) suggested that data collection techniques could be challenging when large amounts of data lead to assorted information. The data for this study was collected using a semi-structured interview for each participant, as well as performance documentation

for the facility. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via telephone. The performance documentation showed the facility performance based on company results for the selected facility. The advantage of using multiple data collection methods such as interviews and company documentation is that it provides the opportunity for addressing a broader range of issues, and more importantly the opportunity to develop converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2014). Researchers using only an interview for data run the risk of inadequate results (Yu, Abdullah, & Saat, 2014). However, researchers preferring different types of inquiry sometimes misunderstand qualitative research techniques (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). According to Yin (2014), the disadvantage of multiple data collection methods is that it creates more complexity to data analysis; however, using 2 data collection methods in this research study increased reliability of the findings.

To verify the accuracy of the data collected, I used member checking after the interview, as well as after data analysis. Member checking is the action of summarizing the information gathered from the participant, and requesting the participant's feedback on the accuracy of the information (Yin, 2015). I asked the participants for corrections if any, to ensure a completely accurate representation of their information. Member checking is similar to debriefings used in other investigative areas (Darawsheh, 2014). Member checking ensures the accuracy of the data collected during interviews and ensures that data saturation will be reached by the researcher (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Member checking is performed by restating the participants' responses and asking the participant to verify the accuracy of the interpretation of the

information gathered, and ensure they have provided all pertinent information (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Member checking is important to determine if the information gathered by the researcher accurately reflects the views of the participant (Yilmaz, 2013).

Data Organization Technique

To remain neutral and mitigate bias, I used a reflective journal. A reflective journal is a form of bracketing and it increases the researchers' ability to remain neutral toward the study (Ponterotto, 2014). Using a reflective journal assists the researcher in mitigating bias and personal beliefs during research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although the reflective journal helps to mitigate bias, completely detaching oneself from personal perceptions is impossible (Yu, 2014). Before approaching potential participants, a consent form must be approved by the IRB. The participants received an email with a consent form attached, describing the intent of the study. All questions about the study from the participants were answered prior to commencing with the interviews. All information and forms are kept in a locked file and on an electronic thumb drive, which is locked in the file as well, for 5 years. After the 5-year timeline has expired, all forms will be shredded and the thumb drive erased.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves the exploration of reoccurring themes and patterns, and clearly interpreting them (Berger, 2013; Cope, 2014; Nassaji, 2015). During the data analysis phase, I listened for themes developing within the data gathered from the participants. I wrote down the themes, and repeatedly listened to the recordings of all the

interviews to ensure accurate representation of all themes identified during the analysis phase. The themes were analyzed to ensure they correlate with the overall research question.

Data triangulation means the researcher gathers data from a variety of sources, allowing the researcher to gain more knowledge (Graue, 2015). Yin (2014) described four types of triangulation used in the analysis of data within a case study. The four types consist of data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. To analyze the data collected for this research project, data triangulation was selected. Data triangulation consists of obtaining data and information from two or more sources, corroborating the same phenomena (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Yin, 2014). The sources of data triangulation for this study consisted of interviews, and company documentation.

I used the explanation building analysis method for data analysis. The explanation building analysis method is a type of pattern matching (Yin, 2014). Explanation building analysis is the act of building an explanation about the study (Yin, 2014). As explained by Yin (2014) building an explanation is to explain causal links, which in turn explain the *how* and *why* something happened.

Data was analyzed using the NVivo 11 software. This data analysis software helps to code and categorize large amounts of text (Yin, 2014). Each participant was identified using a code used instead of a name to protect the participant and provide anonymity to eliminate bias. The letter P will be used to signify a participant along with a number 1-3. Therefore, a participant is referred to as P1, P2, or P3.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity of qualitative research is made clearer through a strong framework (Sousa, 2014). Taking appropriate steps to ensure reliability and validity of the research helps in mitigating bias (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Reaching data saturation is another way to ensure reliability and validity of the research. Data saturation is the point in which no new information is possible (Dworkin, 2012).

Reliability

The reliability of case study research can be maximized by following three principles; use multiple sources of evidence, create a case study database, and maintain the chain of evidence (Yin, 2014). The use of multiple sources of evidence allows the researcher to explore a broader range of issues (Yin, 2014). Developing a case study database provides an avenue to better organize collected data. Data that is better organized is easier to use and analyze, therefore providing a better study. Maintaining the chain of evidence is critical for the study. This notion is similar to that used in forensic investigations (Yin, 2014). Each step taken by the researcher should be capable of being tracked, and proven to be free of tampering to provide a reliable study (Yin, 2014).

Dependability

Dependability of the research data is maximized when the process of selecting, justifying, and applying research strategies is clear (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lishner, 2015). Using member checking is also a way of maximizing dependability by ensuring

the data gathered is represented correctly, logically, and clear as what the participant meant to convey (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013).

Validity

The validity of a project is very important, although it can be seen as a weakness in qualitative research (Mangioni & McKerchar, 2013). Internal and external validity tests ensure a quality case study. External validity addresses the generality of the study's findings beyond the current case study (Yin, 2014). External validity addresses whether the results can be applicable to another similar case. Case studies rely on analytical generalizations in which a researcher strives to generalize a set of results to a broader theory (Yin, 2014).

Internal validity is mainly a concern for when a researcher is explaining how an event led to another event. A concern of internal validity is inference (Fan, 2013). Researchers infer that a particular event occurred due to an earlier event. Kahlke, (2014) suggests the biggest threat to validity and credibility is subjectivity on the part of the researcher. I focused on internal validity in this study, using the explanation matching method for data analysis.

Credibility

Credibility means that the participants find the results to be true (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). To ensure credibility of the study, I used member checking throughout the interviews. Member checking ensured that the data gathered was truly that which was intended by the participant, which ensures credibility of the study (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016).

Transferability

Transferability occurs when statements within the study can transfer to other populations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Yilmaz (2013) stated that transferability takes place when findings or methods are transferable to other qualitative studies. In case study research, only methods are transferable due to the small sample size. The findings are not transferable because the findings in a case study can be different even if the same sample is used several months later. Mangioni and McKerchar (2013) suggested that the perceived weakness in qualitative research is the validity or robustness of the findings, and the ability to replicate such studies. To ensure transferability, I carefully documented and described the entire process of data gathering.

Confirmability

Confirmability of the data is an important factor for validity of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described confirmability as an impartiality of the findings due to the interest of the researcher and the participants. To ensure confirmability, I used member checking throughout the data gathering process to ensure the information was correct. Member checking ensured that the data gathered was truly that which was intended by the participant, which ensured credibility of the study (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). I also used data triangulation to ensure confirmability. Data triangulation means the researcher gathers data from a variety of sources, allowing the researcher to gain more knowledge (Graue, 2015). I supplied a copy of the interview transcript to the

participant, if requested, so the participant could confirm that the data gathered is that which he intended.

Data Saturation

Data saturation is the point in data collection in which no new or relevant information is possible (Dworkin, 2012). The importance of data saturation is to give the full value of the information one wishes to provide through the research (Gergen, Josselson, & Freeman, 2015). I reached data saturation for this research study by gathering data from all pertinent, available participants from the beverage manufacturing site within the Midwest of a certain beverage manufacturing organization. I phone interviewed the participants to understand their strategies for increasing employee engagement. Follow up interviews commenced until no more new data gathered from the participants was obtained, and the data started to repeat, showing that saturation was present. Data saturation is key to performing first-rate qualitative research (Morse, Lowery, & Steury, 2014).

Transition and Summary

This study was conducted using a qualitative case study. Participants for this study were purposefully chosen, and consisted of 3 managers who have a direct responsibility for creating, supporting or limiting employee engagement within a beverage manufacturing facility. When using human subjects, a researcher must stick to the highest of ethical standards to protect both the participants and the data. This research will serve as information for other manufacturing organizations to increase their employee engagement and by doing so, increase organizational efficiency and revenue.

Section 3 provides the vehicle to present the findings of the study and its implications to global business practices. Data gathering and analysis took place. The data was organized and placed in folders for protection and the findings presented within this section.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single site case study was to identify the strategies that managers use to build employee engagement for improving organizational performance. Employee engagement directly affects organizational performance, as well as employee motivation and satisfaction (Barros, Costello, Beaman, & Westover, 2015). When employees leave a company, the majority leaves because of their manager, not the company as a whole (El Badawy & Bassiouny, 2014). This solidifies the assumption that managers play a large part in building employee engagement.

To identify strategies, managers use to build employee engagement, I interviewed managers within the highest performing facility of a Midwestern beverage manufacturing company. I used company performance documentation, conducted semi-structured interviews with follow-up questions, and member checking, until I achieved data saturation. Data analysis was performed using the NVivo 11 software, in which I identified several themes identifying strategies used by the managers. The main themes identified were maintain open and honest two-way communication, set expectations and ensure understanding, maintain a professional relationship, and include employees to feel they are an important part of the company.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was: What strategies do managers use to build employee engagement for improving organizational performance?

I formulated the interview questions to glean an understanding of the strategies used by the frontline managers to build employee engagement that increased organizational performance at the selected facility. I expected the initial participant size to be five; however, only three agreed to participate. To ensure a sufficient collection of data, I added three follow-up questions to the last interview and performed member checking during this follow up interview as well. Upon analysis, I identified four themes: maintain open and honest two-way communication, set expectations and understanding, maintain a professional relationship, and inclusion of the employees so they feel they are an important part of the company. Singh (2016) stated actions such as those detailed by these themes, bring on intrinsic motivators created by a culture of respect, recognition, trust, and autonomy. The themes identified in this study can be categorized under the cultural themes of respect, recognition, trust, and autonomy.

Table 1

Major Themes Identified

No.	Major themes	% of participant response	No. of participant response on theme
1	Open and honest communication	100	3
2	Set expectations and understanding	100	3
3	Maintain a professional relationship	100	3
4	Inclusion as an important part of the company	100	3

Theme 1: Open and Honest 2-Way Communication

Each of the participants discussed the need for effective communication between manager and employee (see table 2). Successful organizations move away from top-down decision making and communication to a more flat communication network, involving employees more (Trosten-Bloom, Deines, & Carsten, 2014). Kovjanic, Schuh, and Jonas (2013) suggested employees need to feel a sense of belonging and autonomy, which transformational leaders automatically provide for their employees. Jenkins and Delbridge (2013) identified in their research, the soft approach to creating employee engagement, which includes manager's willingness to communicate and build relationships with employees, provided an increase in employee engagement within the organization. Participant 1 stated, "so many things revolve around communication, and making yourself available to employees." Employees must feel that their managers hear what they have to say and that you are available to them when they need you. Participant 2 said when decisions are to be made, the employees' ideas are heard first, because their opinion is valued. The ideas of the employees are valued, and placed at the top of the priority list when making decisions because when employee ideas are used, and valued, employee buy in and engagement increases. Participant 3 acknowledged a process of soliciting ideas from the employees on how to solve issues. All participants described an importance of open and honest communication as a top priority for building employee engagement. Communication is essential in connecting employees and leaders and enabling organizations to reach the goals set by the organizational leaders (Musah, Zulkipli, & Ahmad, 2017).

Table 2

Theme 1: Frequency of Responses

	Participant responses (N = 3)	Participant responses %
P1	42	7.91
P2	28	10.16
P3	29	11.28

Theme 2: Set Expectations and Ensure Understanding

Each participant explained the need for employees to thoroughly understand their expectations. Without expectations, employees cannot know what it will take to succeed at their jobs, and without full understanding of those expectations, they may as well not have expectations at all. Tay, Lees, and Dar (2016) stated when managers clearly state the expectations of for their employees, the employees tend to give their best effort. Clearly stated expectations were considered important by all three participants of this study. Participant 1 stated when he sees employees not performing their job to the best of their ability, or seemingly not performing the correct tasks, he takes the employee aside and initially ensures the employee understands what is expected of him or her. This way, the performance can be corrected and both employee and manager walk away happy with the results. If expectations are clearly understood by all, the conversation takes a different tone, that of initial discipline. Participant 2 takes the time to walk through

important steps of a job with the employee, before the work commences to ensure the employee starts off correctly and clearly understands the end goal. Clear understanding of employee job expectations goes hand-in-hand with transformational style leadership in that transformational leadership inspires employees to do their best and focus on the good of the company (Chadhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013). Without expectations, the employee cannot see a way to succeed, therefore undermining the effects of transformational leadership (Chadhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013). Participant 3 follows a similar process as Participant 2 in that he asks the employee to walk him through the steps the employee is taking to perform a task. Any revisions to the steps are identified and clearly stated to move the employee onto the correct path.

Table 3

Theme 2: Frequency of Responses

	Participant responses (N = 3)	Participant responses %
P1	38	6.34
P2	22	2.97
P3	27	4.21

Theme 3: Maintain a Professional Relationship

Professional relationships were said to be very important by all participants. Creating relationship gives a sense of camaraderie, but they all agreed the relationship should remain professional and not personal. Personal relationships can give a sense of

entitlement and make it more difficult for managers to discipline when needed. The relationship between leader and employee must be strong to build or maintain engagement (Farrell, 2013). Professional relationships breed trust. Certain types of employee-manager relationships can inspire employees to provide creative and innovative solutions to problems (Jia, Shaw, Tsui, & Park, 2014). Participant 1 stated how you interact with employees is critical. Taking time to have conversations with employees, not just about work, helps to build trust. Participant 2 stated the employee must have trust in you as a manager, and have faith in you, feeling that he or she can come to you about anything. A good professional relationship builds this type of trust. Respect, optimism, and trust figure as one of the most prominent characteristics of what defines effective leaders or effective leadership (Stander, de Beer, & Stander, 2015).

Table 4

Theme 3: Frequency of Responses

	Participant responses (N = 3)	Participant responses %
P1	32	5.97
P2	27	4.23
P3	25	3.81

Theme 4: Inclusion of Employees to Feel an Important Part of the Company

The participants mentioned a need to include employees in decisions by listening to their ideas and allowing them autonomy. All participants mentioned that, as autonomy

is important, coaching them to make good decisions is imperative. Coaching, rather than directing by leaders, shows an interest by leaders in the personal development and success of employees, therefore building a relationship between leader and employee (Kim, 2014). Participant 2 stated the most important thing a manager can do to build employee engagement is to let the employee know that he or she are on the same *team*, and their opinion and voice are critical to the success of the business. Participant 1 said a manager must make himself available to the employees, and take the time to hear their issues and address them immediately. Creating a team environment is beneficial for the success of an organization as well as the success and fulfillment of employee's needs. A team is a group of employees with complimentary skills, focused on similar path to completing a goal (Tabassi, Roufechaei, Bakar, & Yusof, 2017). Team environments led by transformational style leaders breed inclusion, trust, and organizational and personal success (Tabassi, Roufechaei, Bakar, & Yusof, 2017).

Table 5

Theme 4: Frequency of Responses

	Participant responses (N = 3)	Participant responses %
P1	40	7.21
P2	28	4.73
P3	35	6.16

In summary, four themes emerged from the data gathered from the interviews: open and honest communication, setting expectations and understanding, maintaining professional relationships, and inclusion of employees to feel a part of the organization. These four themes are identified throughout the literature review, and included with the findings. Trosten-Bloom, Deines, and Carsten (2014), along with Kovjanic, Schuh, and Jonas (2013), and Jenkins and Delbridge (2013) identified communication as critical to the success of the organization, as well as the individual. Jenkins and Delbridge (2013) identified in their research, the soft approach to creating employee engagement, which includes manager's willingness to communicate and build relationships with employees, provided an increase in employee engagement within the organization. Chadhary, Akhtar, and Zaheer (2013) stated expectations are critical for the success of the employee. Without expectations, the employee cannot see a way to succeed, therefore undermining the effects of transformational leadership (Chadhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013). Farrel (2013) identified professional relationships necessary employee engagement. The relationship between leader and employee must be strong to build or maintain engagement (Farrell, 2013). Professional relationships breed trust. A good professional relationship builds this type of trust. Respect, optimism, and trust figure as one of the most prominent characteristics of what defines effective leaders or effective leadership (Stander, de Beer, & Stander, 2015). The fourth theme, inclusion, was identified by Kim (2014) as important for the development of excellent employees.

The framework for this study, transformational leadership, was represented throughout the results. Transformational leaders respect their followers and provide

moral leadership and address three main needs of their followers (Kovjanic, Schuh, & Jonas, 2013). The followers' needs addressed by transformational leaders are creating a sense of mastery in the follower's job, creating a sense of belonging and autonomy to think for themselves (Kovjanic, Schuh, & Jonas, 2013). The main components of Burns' transformational leadership theory focus on *end values*. These components are liberty, justice, and equality. These three transformational components are included in the data results: communication, expectations, professional relationships, and inclusion.

Applications to Professional Practice

There appeared to be a gap in knowledge relating to management strategies needed to build employee engagement. There are many different management strategies, all made up of different approaches and skills required by the manager. Transformational leadership identifies certain skills essential to building employee engagement (Kelloway, Turner, Barling, & Loughlin, 2012). This qualitative exploratory case study may improve the knowledge about the strategies needed by frontline managers to create employee engagement, which could lead to improved operational performance and productivity. The transformational leadership style acts as a road map to guide the manager's actions and follow strategies that build employee engagement. The main concept of the transformational leadership theory is effective managers can heighten and elevate the motives, values, and actions of followers (Burns, 1978). The followers and leaders would then identify with a collective purpose (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders motivate employees to do more than originally thought possible by both employees and employers, and increases organizational performance (Burns, 1978).

Organizational managers could use the information from this study to determine if potential supervisor hires possess the needed management strategies, or are capable of developing the strategies. Organizational managers could also use the information from this study to develop training plans for current frontline managers. Employee engagement is essential to the success of organizations and the data from this study revealed important strategies used by frontline managers to build employee engagement.

Implications for Social Change

The implication for positive social change included the potential to improve the employees stress level at work, therefore improving the work/life relationship. Access to the information contained in this study may improve the employees work environment by facilitating a more favorable work experience for the employee. Managers could use the information from this study to train managers and improve the needed management strategies to build employee engagement. By improving management strategies, managers could improve organizational profitability, and relieve work related stress (Breevaart, Bakker, Hetland, Demerouti, Olsen, & Espevik, 2014). By increasing employee engagement, the employees become involved in an environment of trust and wellbeing, which carries over to their non-working hours (Kelloway, Turner, Barling, & Loughlin, 2012). This environment fosters lower stress on employees allowing for a better life outside of work as well.

Good group cohesion at work lowers work stress (Guchait, Pasamehmetoglu, & Madera, 2016). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggested problems at work are more associated with health issues than are financial or family problems (Cotti,

Haley, & Miller, 2016). Over one third of Americans live with some sort of cardiovascular disease, of which one of the major causes is stress (Wang, Hernandez, Newman, He, & Bian, 2016). The annual total cost of cardiovascular disease in 2011 was \$444 billion (Wang, Hernandez, Newman, He, & Bian, 2016). There are many other diseases and illnesses caused by stress. This all contributes to higher costs, lower GNP, and decreased social and community involvement by those afflicted (Wang, Hernandez, Newman, He, & Bian, 2016). Regardless of illness, work related stress makes it difficult to fulfill other required roles such as those related to family life (Mansour & Tremblay, 2016). Decreased stress benefits not only the organization, but also the individual and the community in which the employee works.

Recommendations for Action

The findings from this study merit additional exploration of strategies frontline managers use to increase employee engagement. The synthesis of themes derived from this case study interviews support the identification of four recommended actions that frontline managers should take for increasing employee engagement. The first recommendation is frontline managers should ensure good communication with employees. Communication is critical to individual and organizational success. The second recommendation is frontline managers should detail complete expectations of employees and ensure full understanding. I recommend monthly one-on-one meetings with employees to explain any changes to expectations and ensure complete understanding. Communicating expectations will also show commitment to employees' success. The third recommendation is frontline managers should develop a professional

relationship with the employees. Professional relationships build trust and respect between employees and managers (Stander, de Beer, & Stander, 2015). The fourth recommendation is to include employees in day-to-day decision making when possible. At minimum, keep employees informed of decisions and the reason for them. By including employees in decisions, the employee is more apt to accept the decisions and strive for success of the decision.

The themes identified by the participants support the four recommendations mentioned earlier. Frontline managers are essential to building employee engagement, however all levels of management within organizations, stakeholders, and community leaders should heed the recommendations of this study. Employee engagement directly affects all. I will present the results of this study to the beverage manufacturing organization from which the participants came. Learning results of the study will allow that organization the ability to continue building the employee engagement they have started already.

Recommendations for Further Research

The primary limitation for this qualitative single site case study was the small population size. Other limitations for this study were access to participants, and the participants own work environment that might have caused strain on participation. Fortunately, the work environment was not a limitation after all as the interviews were conducted over the phone in which the participants were in a quiet room of their own house during interviews. Access to the participants was reasonable as well.

Recommendations for further study include conducting future research with a larger organization or making the research a multi-case study. This will give the researcher an opportunity to interview more participants. A second recommendation would be to conduct a phenomenological study. Moustakas (1994) indicated that in phenomenological studies, researchers are focused on the study of human events, based on lived experiences. The results of a phenomenological study could uncover details about lived experiences of the employee, adding a broader context to the body of knowledge and understanding of management strategies to build employee engagement.

Reflections

Prior to conducting this doctoral research study, I never conducted research at this level. My initial understanding of the doctoral study process led me to believe I could complete this study in similar fashion to the MSM level research conducted for my master degree. I was incorrect. The doctoral process is more involved, detailed, and time consuming. My preconceptions about collecting data were incorrect as well. I expected the process of finding participants would be easy. I emailed seven potential participants, followed up with phone calls and then followed up again with both emails and phone calls. In the end, only three of the seven potential participants agreed to participate

The interview process went well. The participants were understanding, making it easy to set up times for the interview with each participant. Follow up calls were as easy to set up as well. The participants were excited to be a part of the study. I am grateful to each of them for sharing their accomplishments with me and providing strategies for increasing employee engagement. I conducted the interviews following an interview

protocol (see Appendix A) to ensure consistency. All participants responded to each question and were fully engaged during the interview. I recorded each interview and used the NVivo software to help me decipher and code the data. Learning the software took much more time than I anticipated as well.

The study findings were similar to my expectations. Of the four themes identified, three were similar to my leadership style. The participants were able to give more detail as to why they manage employees the way they do. The strategies identified during this study, and hearing the results of those strategies from the participants, convinced me to adjust my leadership style to incorporate the findings from this study.

Summary and Study Conclusions

This study adds to the literature on strategies of frontline managers to increase employee engagement. Employee engagement is a business management concept in which the employee delivers full potential to the job and organization and still finds meaning in the work he does (Caesens, Stinglhamber, & Marmier, 2016; Cowardin-Lee & Soyalp, 2011). Organizations benefit from creating an atmosphere where employees are committed to the organization and who deliver their best performance for the company every day. This study included conducting semi-structured individual interviews with frontline managers of a beverage manufacturing facility in the Midwest. Many organizations promote employees to frontline manager levels due to their performance at the current level. To succeed at the frontline manager level, the skills needed are critical to the success of the organization and the employees they lead. To ensure success, each organization should have direct, focused training to ensure the

manager has or obtains the needed skills and strategies to be successful. The training of these managers should focus on building skills based on: communication, setting expectations, professional relationships, and employee inclusion. Including training for all frontline managers will help ensure the success of the entire organization.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview: Exploring the leadership skills needed to build employee engagement in beverage manufacturing employees in the Midwest.

1. The interview session will begin with greetings and a review of the research topic.
2. Appreciation will be shown for taking the time to participate in the interview process for the study.
3. A review of the consent form will occur to ensure full understanding of the process.
4. The participant will be told that the interview will be recorded. Start time and end time will be noted. A unique identifier will be applied to the recording for confidentiality.
5. The coding of the interview will be revealed to the participant and documented on the consent form and interview sheet.
6. The interview will begin.
7. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.
8. The interview questions will be asked in sequence, probing questions will be included.
9. At the end of the interview, the participant will be thanked again for participating in the study.

Interview Questions

1. What do you do as a manager to increase employee engagement?
2. What do you do to motivate employees to succeed?
3. How do you gauge employee engagement?
4. What do you do if engagement falls short of expectations?
5. If engagement falls short of your expectations, how do you change your interaction with the employees to meet the needs of the employee?
6. What do you do to manage conflict within the workforce?
7. Describe the strategies you consider the most important for front line managers to enhance employee engagement.
8. What steps do you take when you see employees who are not in agreement with your strategies to increase engagement?

Appendix B: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study about strategies used by frontline managers to build employee engagement to improve organizational performance. The researcher is inviting frontline managers from one of the top performing facilities within your organization to be in the study. I obtained your name/contact info via the company email database upon approval from the Plant Manager. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Mike Wise, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You might already know the researcher as a maintenance manager or production manager within your organization, but this study is separate from that role. Declining to participate in this study, or withdrawing at any time during the study, will in no way affect the relationship between researcher and participant.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to understand what strategies or methods are used by front line managers to build employee dedication and performance.

Procedures:

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

- Set up a time to be in a private area to accept a phone call to participate in a phone interview. This interview will last between 30 to 60 minutes
- Provide feedback at another time after the interview to provide feedback to the researcher to ensure the data gathered is in fact what you wished to convey. This could take up to 30 minutes.
- Participate in another phone interview to ensure all data and information is conveyed about the topic. This second interview could take up to 30 minutes.

Here are some sample questions:

1. What do you do as a manager to increase employee engagement?
2. What do you do to motivate employees to succeed?
3. How do you gauge employee engagement?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

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

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

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

This study might benefit frontline managers and organizations by providing insight to the strategies used to build employee engagement. By increasing employee engagement, organizational performance is increased, as well as employee well-being.

Payment:

There is no form of payment for participating in this study. However, your participation will be greatly appreciated as it could provide important information for the understanding of the strategies needed to increase employee engagement.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by storing data on a password protected computer as well as a flash drive which will be kept locked in a safe. Codes will be used in place of names throughout the study to ensure anonymity within the study. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. After 5 years, the data will be erased.

If any criminal activity is revealed during this research study, the researcher is obligated to report the activity to the proper authorities.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via **cell phone at 615-655-4268**, or email;

michael.wise@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **03-10-17-0319660** and it expires on **March 9, 2018**.

Please print or save this consent form for your records.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about it, please indicate your consent by **replying to this email with the words, "I consent"**

Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation

02/07/2017

Dear Michael Wise

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled **Exploring Frontline Management Strategies Used to Improve Employee Engagement** within the _____ facility. As part of this study, I authorize you to request participation from operations and maintenance supervisors.

This participation will consist of phone interviews, member checking, which is a form of confirmation of the answers from the supervisors. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in Proquest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Please sign, scan form and email to: Michael.wise@waldenu.edu