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Strategies for Reducing Professional Turnover in Information Technology

Brett Grosshans
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Brett Grosshans

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Review Committee
Dr. Robert Hockin, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Rocky Dwyer, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Matthew Knight, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
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Abstract

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MS, Jones International University, 2009

BS, University of Iowa, 1984

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The information technology (IT) industry workforce in the United States is expected to increase by approximately 50,000 jobs through the year 2024, creating opportunities for employees to change jobs if they are not satisfied. Replacing talented IT professionals can cost a business as much as 150% of the salary of the outgoing employee. The purpose of this descriptive single case study was to identify strategies successful IT business leaders used to reduce voluntary turnover among IT professionals. The research population was 4 leaders from an IT business in southeastern Virginia, who oversee supervisory and hiring. The conceptual framework was Herzberg's 2-factor theory. The data were collected using semistructured interviews and reviews of applicable organization documents. Yin's 5 phases of analysis were the means to process the data resulting in the 5 themes of flexibility, individual, recognition, team, and work-life balance. Recognition and flexibility were the 2 key themes that made significant contributions to the organizational culture and success for the business. The implications for social change include companies using unspent replacement cost dollars to invest in local communities, improve the local economic growth, and provide incentives for employee quality of life and improved work environment.

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Dedication

To my wife, Christine, you are the light of my life. You have supported me throughout my career and education. I am the luckiest man around to have such a wonderful wife and best friend. The Complex Regional Pain Syndrome/Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy has taken so much from you, yet your smile and love always shine through. Words cannot express my admiration for you, seeing all you have endured. To my daughter, Kat, I am truly honored to be your daddy. You have grown into a fine young lady and I am proud of you. Be true to yourself and you will achieve anything you desire.

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I have to offer a special thanks to the leadership team at Project Manager, Close Combat Systems, whom I have worked closely with while taking on this endeavor. To Colonel Jon Slater, Bill Sanville, Robin Gullifer, and Jim Reinhold, you have all helped me progress during the rigorous and trying times on the road. You knew that after work hours, my priority shifted to my studies. I definitely could not have been as successful without your continued support.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Organizations struggle with the indirect effects of high turnover of their professionals, including those within the information technology (IT) sector. The problems that arise from departing employees also include issues relating to the reputation of the organization, the professional relationships established by the exiting employee, and the decreased productivity due to the gap created (Ghosh, Satyawadi, Jagdamba, & Shadman, 2013). Turnover of skilled IT professionals continues to challenge business leaders and adversely affects the success of the organization (Abii, Ogula, & Rose, 2013). Aisha, Hardjomidjojo, and Yassierli (2013) highlighted how the various employee personal and psychological factors influence employee actions and when leadership understands these factors, they can address employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Employee motivation, job satisfaction, job dissatisfaction, and work-life balance (WLB) all play roles as contributing factors in employee decisions to terminate their employment (Ertas, 2015; Friedman & Westring, 2015; Huysse-Gaytandjieva, Groot, & Pavlova, 2013).

Background of the Problem

One of the fastest growing sectors of all industries in the United States is IT; estimates are it will continue to grow through the next 5 to 10 years (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2015). The IT industry experiences growth, which challenge and influence business owners in different ways. Dissatisfied employees tend to perform at lower output rates than the employees who are satisfied, creating a deficit in overall productivity (Huysse-Gaytandjieva et al., 2013). Business owners who experience high IT employee turnover rates will see an effect in their productivity with the departing employees affecting the organization through a reduction in external relationships, a loss of key liaison personnel to key partners and stakeholders, and losses in human capital (Ghosh et al., 2013). Recruitment costs for these positions can be more than 35% of the annual compensation for the individual whose position is now available, adding to the need to control voluntary turnover (Ghosh et al., 2013). The competition for their critical talent presents leaders with challenges on how to keep them from voluntarily exiting and joining the competition (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2014).

Problem Statement

Employers in the United States are expected to see an increased need for IT professionals through the year 2024 with an additional 50,000 jobs created, increasing the options for talented IT professionals to voluntarily depart their employment (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2015). Business managers within the IT sector need to address the IT professional turnover problem to curb the costs associated with replacing these specialized employees, which can reach up to 2.5 times the annual salary of the departing professional (Gumussoy, 2016). The general business problem that I addressed in this study is turnover among IT professionals is increasing, thereby creating voids in productivity and profitability for IT companies. The specific business problem that I addressed in this study is that some business leaders lack the strategies to reduce experienced IT professional turnover.

Purpose Statement

My purpose in this qualitative descriptive single case study was to explore strategies that business leaders use to reduce experienced IT professional turnover. The target population for this study was four senior IT leaders from a small-sized business in southeastern Virginia who maintain supervisory and hiring oversight responsibilities. These senior IT leaders had to confirm that they have objectively demonstrated their success in addressing strategies to reduce voluntary experienced IT professional turnover. Business leaders may gain an appreciation of their contribution to social change because of the application of strategies reducing voluntary turnover by improving employee job satisfaction, reducing unemployment, and increasing economic stability within the community. Through the publishing of my findings, I will provide business leaders additional options to illustrate ways to reduce experienced IT professional turnover.

Nature of the Study

The three research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method. Barnham (2016) identified a key aspect of qualitative research is the perception of what an individual sees or believes: participants' experiences become the underlying "what" as opposed to the "why" question sought in quantitative methodology. Researchers using the quantitative methodology seek to measure, test, and justify theories with variables to examine variables' relationships or differences (Lach, 2014). Researchers use the mixed-method research methodology when the desire is to conduct a study that can stand alone using one of the two methods as the primary methodology and supplement that work with the other methodology. The researcher uses one complete study, typically quantitative, and then supplements it with qualitative work (Morse & Cheek, 2014). Barnham (2016) highlighted how a quantitative methodology provides researchers the ability to collect data on a specific phenomenon through numerical measurement and analyze that data with mathematically based methods. This was not my intent for this study, so a quantitative methodology was not appropriate. A mixed-method research methodology was not appropriate because it involves using a quantitative methodology as a part of the whole research process. A qualitative methodology was the most appropriate method to provide an opportunity to view the particular phenomenon from the participants' vantage points using open-ended questions (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013).

Researchers use phenomenological designs to explore and understand the participants' perceptions of their everyday lived experiences with a subjective approach (Anosike, Ehrich, & Ahmed, 2012), thus it was not appropriate to explore the strategies implemented or available to leadership. Yin (2014) highlighted how a researcher, using a descriptive case study design, is able to seek an in-depth analysis and exploration of strategies available for use by leadership, so this was most appropriate and was the design for my study.

Qualitative Research Question

The overarching research question for this qualitative descriptive single case study was: What strategies do business leaders use to reduce experienced IT professional turnover?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used to reduce IT professional turnover?
2. Which of the strategies have you implemented in your organization to reduce voluntary turnover?
3. Which strategies did not help in reducing voluntary turnover?
4. How do you determine the effectiveness of the strategies you implement to achieve your goal of reducing employee turnover?
5. What issues, if any, do you see as increasing employee voluntary turnover?
6. What other options or insights can you offer that can enhance my understanding of successful strategies you used to reduce experienced IT professional turnover?

Conceptual Framework

Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman wrote their book, *The Motivation to Work* in 1959, outlining the two sets of factors they believed were the roots of job satisfaction (Sachau, 2007). Herzberg proposed the two-factor theory in 1959 based on the collaborative work with Mausner and Snyderman, highlighting reasons why some employees voluntarily leave their place of employment (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 2017). Employee satisfaction is the basic premise relating to motivation factors, and employee dissatisfaction relating to hygiene factors (Damij, Levnajic, Skrt, & Suklan, 2015; Ertas, 2015).

The conceptual framework for this study was Herzberg’s two-factor theory, which identifies hygiene and motivational factors to influence employee dissatisfaction and satisfaction, respectively. Business leaders may learn the necessary elements of employee needs and employee satisfaction, highlighting opportunities to focus their efforts in reducing voluntary IT professional turnover (Arokiasamy, 2013; Sankar, 2015; Ţicu, 2013). Herzberg (2003) evaluated the influence that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction had on employees and their decisions to depart their employment voluntarily. Herzberg noted business leaders who understand these differences can be actively involved in employee-centric leadership, which can lead to an enhanced and satisfied workforce. As applied to this study, I used the two-factor theory to provide insights into how motivation and hygiene factors influence IT professional employees and their decisions to either remain with their organization or to voluntarily terminate their employment (Aisha et al., 2013).

Operational Definitions

The following terms are in this study.

Extrinsic factors: Those motivational factors providing an individual a sense of personal achievement, recognition, and status while offering challenges in daily work activities (Herzberg, 2003; Herzberg et al., 2017).

Intrinsic factors: Those hygiene factors providing an individual with a sense of purpose such as pay, benefits, company policies, interpersonal relationships, work conditions, and WLB (Herzberg, 2003; Herzberg et al., 2017).

Job dissatisfaction: The factors relating to the context of an employee's job (Herzberg, 1974).

Job satisfaction: An employee's positive perception of the individual's work performance or work experience (Lu & Gursoy, 2016).

Organizational commitment: The commitment associated when an employee directly relates to, identifies with, and when this factor closely relates to voluntary turnover (Welty et al., 2014).

Work-life balance: The ability of the employee to balance the rigors of work and those of the home life (Agarwal & Lenka, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions include those facts within a study not stated but clarification is required so the reader has an understanding of the intent of the study to arrive at the expected conclusion (Gardner & Johnson, 2015). I made four primary assumptions in this study. The first was the participants would answer all questions honestly and completely during their respective interviews. My second assumption was that the qualitative research design was the best method for this research study. My third assumption was that multiple data collection techniques provide the best insights for answers to the research questions. My final assumption was that the participants would share their lived life events relevant to the research questions during their respective interviews.

Limitations

Limitations arise within a study when there are gaps or weaknesses within the study, or conditions that are uncontrolled by the researcher requiring close monitoring (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012). There were three limitations within this study. The first was that I addressed IT professionals in southeastern Virginia. A larger region of study may produce different results. The second limitation was the honesty of the participants in their responses to the research questions. The final limitation was the experience levels of the participants; they were required to provide confirmation that they had objectively demonstrated their success in addressing strategies to reduce voluntary experienced IT professional turnover.

Delimitations

Delimitations refer to the any established boundaries created as a result of the guidelines of the study (Ody-Brasier & Vermeulen, 2014) and the definition or lucidity provided by the researcher on how the study is restricted or confined (Svensson & Doumas, 2013). This study had three delimitations. The first delimitation was the location of the study, southeastern Virginia. The second delimitation was that I studied one company in this descriptive case study. The last delimitation was the sample size of four IT professionals. Robinson (2014) and Royset (2013) both indicated that larger sample sizes might provide different results.

Significance of the Study

The researcher may contribute to better business practices by providing the results and highlighting available strategies to enable a reduction in experienced IT professional turnover, thereby increasing productivity. Dissatisfied employees tend to perform at lower output rates than the employees who are satisfied, creating a deficit in overall productivity (Huysse-Gaytandjieva et al., 2013). Business leaders who experience high IT employee turnover rates will see an effect in their productivity with the departing employees affecting the organization through a reduction in external relationships, a loss of key liaison personnel to key partners and stakeholders, and losses in human capital (Ghosh et al., 2013).

Business leaders have challenges when it comes to IT professionals and their propensity to depart their current positions. The costs associated with recruiting, training, and replacing IT professionals can be more than 35% of the annual compensation for the individual whose position is now available and understanding how to mitigate voluntary IT professional departures is beneficial to leaders (Bandura & Lyons, 2014; Ghosh et al., 2013). Leaders play a key role in how they enable and empower employees to take control of their work and social lives, enhancing themselves and the organization, indicating an increase in job satisfaction leads to a reduction in voluntary departures (Friedman & Westring, 2015). Reducing voluntary employee turnover of qualified IT professionals can increase organizational profitability and sustainment.

Contribution to Business Practice

IT professional employees who depart an organization take with them intellectual property and knowledge, potentially even trade secrets. The business loss of the intellectual property creates a dilemma of ownership (Lobel, 2015). It is also key to note that when an IT professional employee departs an organization, trade secrets and intellectual property become a real concern. The courts determined trademark laws now apply to more than the name or the intent of the original business, bringing with it trade secret laws and highlighting the need to retain talented IT professionals (Lobel, 2015).

IT professional knowledge and experiences are valuable assets for the organization, as well as for the individual. The highly competitive IT industry increases the competition for experienced IT professionals’ critical talents, presenting leaders with challenges on how to keep them from voluntarily exiting and joining the competition (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2014). Researchers can identify strategies necessary to aid leadership, and human resource management departments, to reduce turnover among quality IT professionals (Renaud, Morin, Saulquin, & Abraham, 2015). Leaders may learn from this study options available for use in reducing high IT professionals’ turnover and recommendations to assist in paving the way for increased opportunities for the employees, their workplace performance, and to increase IT professionals’ job satisfaction.

Implications for Social Change

One of the fastest growing sectors of all industries in the United States is IT; estimates are that it will continue to grow through the next 7 years, creating an additional 50,000 jobs (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 2015). Talented IT professionals maintain a special skillset, which offers additional opportunities for their employment and professional mobility. Business leaders who understand the complexities of employee needs and desires have the opportunity to realize the importance of those employee contributions, enhancing the prosperity of their business and improving local economic growth. I present, via my study, the contributions of positive social change offered by a healthy work environment, reducing employee turnover, creating more economical stability, and increasing individual employee self-worth, all directly benefiting the community in which the business operates as a whole.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

My purpose in this qualitative descriptive single case study was to explore strategies for business leaders to use to reduce their experienced IT professional turnover. The overarching research question highlighted by this literature review was as follows: What strategies are available to business leaders to reduce experienced IT professional turnover? I will discuss the literature searched and provide a more detailed overview of the conceptual framework. The research sources that I used included but were not limited to the Walden University Library databases covering ProQuest, Science Direct, and EBSCOhost. The search terms were *IT employees*, *IT turnover intentions*, *IT professional*, *job satisfaction*, among others.

My intent for this literature review was to cover Herzberg's two-factor theory, touching briefly on additional theories that parallel the concepts and ideas expressed by Herzberg, factors that comprise employee voluntary departure decisions, satisfaction and motivation factors in closer detail, the effects of organizational culture on employee job satisfaction, and the WLB aspect for employees. The literature that I used to research the IT professional turnover encompasses 159 journal articles, seminal books, and government websites. Table 1 depicts the composition of these sources as 143 peer-reviewed sources, and were published in the last 5 years; nine were not peer reviewed, 12 were older than 5 years; five were seminal works, and two were websites.

Table 1

Summary of Sources Used for the Study

Reference type	Number	Percentage
Peer-reviewed (within 5 years)	143 (145)	89.94 (91.19)
Not peer-reviewed (more than 5 years)	9 (12)	5.66 (7.55)
Seminal works	5	3.14
Websites	2	1.26
Total	159	100.00

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

In their book, *The Motivation to Work,* Herzberg, Mausner, and Bloch Snyderman outlined the factors that they thought were the roots of job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 2017; Sachau, 2007). Herzberg took it a step further and developed a two-factor theory in 1959 based upon the mutual work, focusing on the reasons that employees voluntarily depart their jobs (Herzberg, 1974). Employee satisfaction falls under the motivational factors, whereas employee dissatisfaction relates to hygiene factors (Damij et al., 2015; Herzberg et al., 2017; Jansen & Samuel, 2014).

Herzberg's two-factor theory, often referred to as the motivation-hygiene theory, influences IT professionals within an organization and the policies implemented by those organizations (Agarwal & Mehta, 2014; Jansen & Samuel, 2014). Herzberg (2003) identified motivators as those functions that increase job satisfaction and hygiene as those that increase job dissatisfaction. The satisfier or motivator portion of the theory includes items such as recognition for work accomplished, responsibility, and the work itself, whereas the hygiene factors include things such as company policies, supervisors, and working conditions (Herzberg, 1974; Herzberg et al., 2017; Jansen & Samuel, 2014; Purohit & Bandyopadhyay, 2014). The dissatisfaction or hygiene portion of the theory indicates that when organizations do not pay attention to the work environment then there will be dissatisfied employees, but the inclusion of hygiene factors does not mean the employees will be satisfied (Purohit & Bandyopadhyay, 2014; Vijayakumar & Saxena, 2015). Agarwal and Mehta (2014) noted that organizations cannot lose sight of these details when establishing or modifying their organizational policies.

Herzberg (1974) and Herzberg et al. (2017) chose to evaluate how the characteristics of motivation and hygiene can adversely affect organizations due to the problems identified by employees. Job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction create the basis for the respective organizational atmosphere. Herzberg initiated development of profiles to show how organizational leaders can build their understanding to support their employees. The frequency of occurrence of a particular dissatisfier or satisfier, when compared to another factor, does not accurately represent the importance of the respective factor. Herzberg noted four hygiene organizational profiles and two motivational profiles to identify the issues and contribute to an understanding of how management should mitigate the factors. Management actions in response to the hygiene factors are critical to maintaining a satisfied workforce. Management can overreact to motivational factors, but the overreaction does not have similar adverse effects as seen from the hygiene factors. Organizations with low motivation factors will see employees who are likely to depart the organization or become less productive whereas those with high hygiene factors show employee agitation that creates a possible hostile environment.

Herzberg (2003) evaluated the effects of various factors on the ability of employers to motivate their employees, identifying a kick in the rear as an effective philosophy but with more negative effects than positive ones. Positive kicks such as wages and benefits produce little in terms of long-term benefits for the organization. Herzberg discovered both negative and positive kicks offered only short-term satisfaction but the costs in resources to the organization associated with these initiatives outweigh the benefits.

Job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are not opposites. Herzberg (2003) elaborated on this notion by stating the opposite of job satisfaction is no job satisfaction. Leadership efforts to increase the satisfaction of its employees by offering recognition for performance does not directly offset or relate to a reduction in the dissatisfaction of the employee from poor company policies or interpersonal relationships. Organizational leaders can use the insights and information gained from the knowledge of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction to understand why some employees voluntarily leave their place of employment. The dynamics involved with changing job dissatisfaction to job satisfaction are more complicated than only increasing one’s pay or benefits. Herzberg realized that a better understanding of the differences between motivators and hygiene factors and their influence on satisfaction rates of the employees enables employers in creating their processes and policies to maintain their workforce. Leaders who build employee satisfaction build the organization as a whole. Understanding how a combination of motivation and hygiene factors influence professionals enables the organization to design strategies to improve employee roles and responsibilities within the organization (Jansen & Samuel, 2014). Challenging employees challenges the organization and provides a long-term development plan for all.

Additional Theories of Consideration

Maslow’s motivation theory. Ţicu (2013) identified factors that contribute to employee motivation. Maslow believed in intrinsic and extrinsic factors, that is those elements that are selfgratifying and those that are gratifying due to external rewards, respectively (Ismail & El Nakkache, 2014). Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory stated that every person has needs and the level or hierarchy of those needs are scaled from basic to primary to high needs. Herzberg's two-factor theory generated motivation based upon satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Maslow's hierarchy of needs are psychological, assessment, social, safety, and finally self-improvement (Ţicu, 2013). Herzberg's two-factor theory resulted in the majority having a concern with the hygiene factors over the motivation factors. Both theorists have their own view of the decision making process. Maslow believed the manager would make a decision based upon the needs of the situation. Herzberg proposed the manager would make decisions based upon the need to satisfy the employees.

Social exchange theory. The social exchange theory lens offers a perspective on employee turnover intentions, relationships at work, and the perceived organizational support offered by the business leadership (Madden, Mathias, & Madden, 2015). Leaders offering support structures to their employees to assist in WLB, heavy workloads, and workplace relationships can reduce employee stress and increase the employee job satisfaction. Madden et al. (2015) recognized an active leadership showing that they care about the employees can manage voluntary employee turnover. The leadership then receives an increase in the employee reciprocity, highlighting the exchange. Managers in a high-level exchange relationship with their employees benefit due to their employees showing high levels of selflessness. Social exchange theory pertains to the relationships concerning obligation and trust. Leaders provide certain advantages to those they trust (Abu Elanain, 2014).

Employee turnover increases when exchange between the supervisors and subordinates reduces (Madden et al., 2015). Putting the social relationships into perspective, leaders can adjust their support to employees to reduce their intentions to depart the organization. The employee-employee relationships also are indicative of turnover intentions, where low-quality coworker relations precede high turnover intentions. Organizations with an active role in the social exchanges show support and create an atmosphere where the employee feels supported and a part of the team.

Job characteristics theory. The job characteristics theory (JCT) outlines the relationship between the varying characteristics of the job and the personal feelings of employees toward their job (Ghosh, Rai, Chauhan, Gupta, & Singh, 2015). The JCT further illustrates psychological aspects of favorable work conditions of motivation, satisfaction, and the overall job they maintain and relates to Herzberg's two-factor theory. These relationships provide the requisite insights into employee intentions to remain or leave. The employee perceptions of the characteristics of their jobs play a major role in their turnover intentions. Business leaders who understand this relationship are in a position to influence the intentions of the employees one way or the other.

Inoculation theory. Fagnot and Stanton (2015) identified the inoculation theory as a means to enhance the current attitudes toward change. The inoculation theory treats the threats to change as a smaller threat and enables it to build resistance to further change. The inoculation theory itself comprises the hypodermic needle and the agenda setting theories. The former uses the media to influence the masses by interjecting messages as it sees fit to an unguarded population. The latter suggests the media influences controls onto the population. Both theories are relevant in understanding how the IT field undergoes shortages and highlight the necessity in maintaining current knowledge on all IT related items in the fast-paced and ever changing world of IT.

Leader member exchange theory. Mardanov, Heischmidt, and Henson (2014) noted the connection between leader member exchange and job satisfaction. Employees who are satisfied with their supervisors are more satisfied with their jobs. The quality of the leadership directly affects the quality of the employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction, which directly influences the decision intentions on whether voluntarily departing their employment is an option.

Leader-member exchange (LMX) provides an opportunity for employees to enjoy working relationships with their supervisors or not, depending on the situation. The extent to which leaders develop LMX is indicative of the turnover rates within the organization. Business leaders looking to reduce costs can look to improving their LMX to reduce turnover and the associated costs of replacing the departing employees. The LMX theory pertains to the relationship between supervisors and their employees. Role theory is one of the subsets of LMX to aid in identifying these relationships. Individuals assume social roles and have perceptions and expectations of what they receive depending on these roles. Abu Elanain (2014) supported the theory that LMX, via job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and role conflict, leads to turnover intentions.

Job satisfaction relates to turnover intentions and is the leading factor for determining turnover intentions (Kim & Fernandez, 2015). Controlling job satisfaction therefore controls turnover intentions (Mathieu, Fabi, Lacoursière, & Raymond, 2016). Employee perceptions of negative interactions with poor supervisors are amplified five-fold the negative effects on that employee. Understanding the negative perception leads to an understanding of how to mitigate these effects. Transformational leadership styles present more emotional highs than nontransformational leaders. Mathieu et al. (2016) recognized the advantage created by transformational leaders maintains a positive atmosphere, decreases the likelihood of low job satisfaction, and high turnover intentions. Employee effective commitment to the supervisor directly relates to an intent to quit and supervisor behavior directly influences job satisfaction but not organizational commitment.

Additional theories conclusion. Organizations struggle with the indirect effects of high turnover relating to the reputation of the organization, the professional relationships established by the exiting employee and the decreased productivity due to the gap created (Ghosh et al., 2013). High turnover rates continue to plague businesses (Lu, Lu, Gursoy, & Neale, 2016). The employee who voluntarily departs creates added stress for those remaining in the organization, increases organizational costs to find and replace that departed employee, and takes the knowledge and experiences with them when they leave. Organizational leaders following fair practices and processes within their businesses lead to a reduction of costs at the same time maintain satisfied employees due to an increase in trust in the leadership and the organization. Leaders who understand the effects of voluntary turnover can implement steps to aid their employees by increasing training opportunities, professional development paths, and by creating a welcoming atmosphere. Managers, who show an active dedication to their employees and their own jobs, present a positive work environment that rubs off on their subordinates. Managers who lead with ethical practices will position themselves and their organizations to gather talented professionals by providing policies and practices to enhance issues such as self-esteem, whereas managers with low ethical standards tend to drive employees to voluntary turnover intentions (Babalola, Stouten, & Euwema, 2015).

The organizational leaders must find the balance between turnover costs and the turnover itself (Ryu & Lee, 2013). An organization with an overall poor performing workforce will tend to have a higher turnover that actually enhances the performance of the organization in the end. Leaders rely upon innovative ideas such as policies and technologies to manage their organizational performance and turnover rates. Understanding how to influence turnover by implementing strategies to manage performance will enable business leaders to manage stakeholder expectations.

Employee Decision Factors

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment have an influence on turnover intentions (Alshammari, Ayed, Qaied, Al-mawali, & Matalqa, 2016). Eckhardt, Laumer, Maier, and Weitzel (2016) went beyond previous research and broke down the roles of IT professionals into separate groups, evaluating the types of personalities each exhibit. The four groups are consultants, programmers, system administrators, and system engineers. IT professional talent is not readily available due to reduced enrollments in college programs and the challenges associated with maintaining qualified IT professionals.

Increased turnover within the IT professional field is a concern necessitating a look into potential mitigation strategies for leaders. Eckhardt et al. (2016) realized grouping IT professionals into a single group is not sufficient to determine accurate satisfaction rates due to the numbers of available personnel in each category. Employees who desire to quit because of dissatisfaction may not be able to do so if there is no adequate employment elsewhere. Job satisfaction is essential to ensure the employee does not feel the need to seek other employment. The personality traits identified are openness to experience, extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, and are all factors in consideration for employee turnover intentions.

Job appraisals. An uncertain economy and increased competition within the IT industry have resulted in retention issues for organizations, creating a need to modify the focal points toward retention of quality employees. Agarwal and Mehta (2014) looked into identification of employee appraisals as factors in the job satisfaction for those same employees. Three variables, job satisfaction, performance appraisals, and the work environment, were potential factors working with or against each other in predicting employee turnover intentions. Employees who are satisfied with their positions tend to remain loyal and stay at that position or with that organization (Alshammari et al., 2016). An employee who has positive ratings or values of job satisfaction will be less inclined to terminate employment. A positive work environment does not directly equate to an inclination to terminate but it does help to ensure the employee remains at the organization for a longer duration (Agarwal & Mehta, 2014).

When managers use performance appraisals incorrectly they create negative results. Leaders have the ability to highlight an employee or drive that employee from the business, depending on the use of the appraisals (Agarwal & Mehta, 2014). Managers who manipulate the appraisal system to motivate employees did not see the desired effects on the intention to stay by those specific employees. Agarwal and Mehta noted performance appraisals and the work environment add some validity to Herzberg’s two-factor theory, a consideration when looking to reduce turnover rates. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment have shown positive relationships whereas job satisfaction and turnover intention have shown negative relationships. Negative performance appraisals or the perception of negative consequences, were shown to result in lower job satisfaction rates and higher intentions to terminate employment voluntarily (Agarwal & Mehta, 2014). Employees who exhibit job satisfaction are less likely to terminate their employment voluntarily. There were no direct relationships found between appraisals and job satisfaction or work environment and job satisfaction, concluding there are internal and external factors associated with the IT industry that account for the higher turnover rates. The added workloads associated with maintaining currency with technology may be contributing factors, as well as the intentions of the employees to seek work that is more challenging (Agarwal & Mehta, 2014; Fagnot & Stanton, 2015).

Pay and compensation. Cohen, Blake, and Goodman (2016) noted employee intention to quit had a distinct separate set of factors as actual turnover, including position or title, pay, and workload. Management can influence employee satisfaction and aid decisions relative to monetary compensation, a large motivator for employee voluntary exit. The turnover intention did not have as much of a direct relationship to actual turnover as most researchers believed without other considerations as factors. Cohen et al. further noted surveys are typically anonymous and may not tell the actual story when intentions are weighed due to the inability to cross-check the results with actual turnover.

Professionals can weigh professional development, organizational culture, and supervisory styles as factors to consider whether they should remain with the organization or seek employment elsewhere (George, 2015). Some professionals have noted factors that may influence their decision to a lesser extent such as compensation, relationships with peers and supervisors, and the WLB. When one looks at these factors individually they do not present a clear determination or indication of employee intentions on leaving their employment. When an employee combines multiple factors, there is a propensity to make a decision one way or the other. Compensation is one factor often thought to be the leading factor in determining intent to depart, but there is limited evidence of this. Compensation and workplace environment were key indicators of whether an employee would remain or seek employment elsewhere (Abii et al., 2013). There are varying ways to compensate employees to include time off, bonuses, etc., to leverage and manage employee compensation satisfaction. George (2015) found the factors relevant are both organizational and job related, emphasizing a need for leaders to understand how each plays a role in the retention strategies for the employees.

Anvari, JianFu, and Chermahini (2014) noted the inverse relationship between pay and turnover, stating higher wages result in lower turnover. Employee turnover consistently creates challenges for business leaders with voluntary turnover being a major problem for many countries. Employee pay and benefits top the list as reasons for employee dissatisfaction and subsequently their departure from the organization. Leaders who have an understanding of how pay and turnover relate to each other will be in a position to mitigate the high turnover rates. Employee voluntary turnover associated with differences in pay is increased when other businesses offer closer pay differentials and employees can readily move from one business to another (Wang, Zhao, & Thornhill, 2015). Human resource (HR) professionals can also work to tailor the benefits package to the employee as applicable. Some HR departments focus their attention on the recruiting skills associated with gaining larger numbers of talented personnel.

The uncertainties in IT create a need to modify the focal points toward retention of quality employees.

Other employee decision factors. Abii et al. (2013) looked into the factors that affect the decisions of employees to leave their employment and they are either organizational or personal. Previous researchers focused on the factors for employees to remain with their organization. Lo (2015) identified factors that may influence employee decisions in regard to voluntary turnover as either job related or organizational related. A job related factor is one where the employee is satisfied with the environment, peers, and supervisors and then outperforms those that are not satisfied. The level of satisfaction varies but the lack of performance is an indicator leadership should recognize that there is a need to initiate discussions on how to improve the satisfaction levels. Leadership can take into account how they influence the workplace environment and then relate that to opportunities to lower turnover rates.

Arshadi and Shahbazi (2013) highlighted the underlying causes of intent to turnover versus the actual action of turnover itself. Employee intention to turnover often results in the actual turnover as outlined in the attitude-behavior theory, which highlights a close connection between the predictor and the action. Employee emotional exhaustion helps to define what it means when an employee is burnt-out. An emotionally exhausted employee is less likely to have job satisfaction, resulting in a propensity to depart the organization. Job security is a key to reducing stress and helps to reduce emotional exhaustion.

Employee stress results in workplace dissatisfaction and can aid in leading to voluntary turnover (Deery & Jago, 2015). Leaders and managers who are aware of the workplace stressors can implement processes to mitigate some of these stressors. Job security, co-worker relationships, and trust in supervisors are all stressors for employees. Leaders who are aware of these stressors can implement strategic measures to reduce the adverse effects on the organization. Grzenda and Buczynski (2015) then highlighted variations in turnover types as they relate to age, education, and sex, which leaders must consider if they are to understand how these variations lead to an employee decision to terminate their position.

Shih-Tse Wang (2014) identified emotional labor as an effort by an individual to control his or her feelings in order to portray an observable feature or desired persona. Workers who interact directly with the public on a routine basis rely on this form of control. Employee positive emotional display creates a positive atmosphere and increases the perception of a positive work environment. Translating this emotion to a peer-to-peer relationship increases the likelihood of continued positive employment. A stressor that detracts from the emotional labor and normative commitment is emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion turns the positive environment and atmosphere into a negative one, increasing the propensity to leave and decreasing work output. Employee emotional exhaustion negatively influences the overall performance of the organization (Shi-Tse Wang, 2014).

Employee decision factors conclusion. It is necessary for organizational leadership to understand how the various employee motivations influence employee decisions on turnover (Aisha et al., 2013). Employee motivation in the workplace is a key contributing factor as to whether an employee will remain or look to terminate their employment (Ertas, 2015). Employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs tend to underperform, become disengaged with the workforce, and resort to voluntarily leaving their employment (Huysse-Gaytandjieva et al., 2013).

Leaders must understand the ramifications of negative emotional labor, normative commitments to the organization, and how emotional exhaustion affects the employee to create a positive work environment. Employee bonds between normative commitment and emotional labor enable positive marketing and present the best relationships within the organization. Positive employee relationships create lasting commitments to the organization and fellow employees. Leaders may realize the need to implement a shift in policies or operations taking into account the changes in the industry to reduce turnover rates and maintain quality employees (Agarwal & Mehta, 2014).

Satisfaction Factors

Smith and Shields (2013) highlighted how Herzberg and his associates developed and identified a means to determine worker satisfaction based on the factors of motivation and organizational maintenance. Herzberg also believed job satisfaction and dissatisfaction come from two separate sets of factors, motivation and hygiene (Sithole & Solomon, 2014). The hygiene and motivation factors have a positive relationship to job satisfaction (Alshammari et al., 2016) with Smith and Shields noting job satisfaction has a positive relationship to both organizational commitment and performance.

Motivation factors are those leading to an increase in satisfaction where hygiene factors lead to a prevention of dissatisfaction in the workplace. Motivators include such things as achievements, personal recognition, and increased status within the organization (Sithole & Solomon, 2014). Hygiene factors include human relations, incentives and the physical working conditions at the place of employment, but these factors alone will not lead to job satisfaction. In fact, hygiene factors alone can tend to lead to employee dissatisfaction if the pay and working conditions are poor (Jansen & Samuel, 2014). Employers who use the concepts within the two-factor theory can enable employee motivation and satisfaction and bring about a reduction in voluntary turnover.

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory influences policies implemented by the organizations. If organizational leaders do not pay attention to the work environment of their employees, the dissatisfaction or hygiene portion of the theory will lead to dissatisfied employees. Organizations cannot lose sight of these details when establishing or modifying their policies. One may ponder whether there are causes of turnover that can be mitigated by operations or policies implemented by the organizations that could increase retention. There are internal factors within the organization that lead to the increased turnover and reduced retention (Sithole & Solomon, 2014).

Job satisfaction is the ultimate objective of employees and bringing meaning to the job builds the satisfaction with the employees (Bailey & Madden, 2016; Ghosh et al., 2015). Employee perceptions of their jobs reflect their psychological feelings, which in turn become a predictor of intent to remain or terminate their employment (Ghosh et al., 2015). The extent to which the employees remain happy with their positions leads to their respective performance within those positions (Aisha et al., 2013). The employee perception of their accomplishments leads to meaningful fulfillment with employees identifying with five factors or elements to help explain how they were able to achieve meaningfulness in the employment and they include episodic, personal, poignant, reflective, and self-transcendent (Bailey & Madden, 2016). The employees then exhibit meaningfulness, responsibility, and a knowledge of results, indicating they understood the importance of the job-enriching skills and their overall relevance within the organization (Ruiz-palomino, Sáez-martínez, & Martínez-cañas, 2013). Employee satisfaction in their jobs is a precursor to intentions to remain or terminate (Ghosh et al., 2015). Understanding how these employees relate to their jobs will benefit the organization as they look for ways to retain their services. Employers who fail to recognize the critical role each employee plays in the overall organizational construct negatively influence the organization with meaningless opportunities and tasks. The individual jobs are parts of the larger organization. Satisfying the individual leads to satisfying the organizational goals (Bailey & Madden, 2016).

Job satisfaction of an employee is a critical factor in determining whether the employee will depart or remain with the organization (Bandura & Lyons, 2014; Brandis et al., 2016) and more importantly for millennials as they are entering the workforce to replace those retiring (Ertas, 2015).

Dissatisfaction causes. Dissatisfied employees tend to perform at lower output rates than satisfied employees do (Huysse-Gaytandjieva et al., 2013). Some contributing factors for departures include a lack of job security, a lack of benefits or compensation packages, and working relationships within the organization. Employees leave an organization due to factors relating to other employment opportunities, dissatisfaction with supervisors or management, a lack of adequate training or development, and unequal compensation as compared to the industry standard (Bandura & Lyons, 2014). Employees who are actively engaged in work-related activities have a propensity to remain with their employer (Lu et al., 2016). Other researchers have noted employee involvement generates a stake in the organization and aids the employee in feeling they are a valued entity of that organization (Supanti, Butcher, & Fredline, 2015). Leaders who understand how these factors contribute to workforce satisfaction or dissatisfaction will be in a position to enable employees the opportunity to seek assistance via counseling or job placement within the organization, furthering the development of an engaged workforce. Employees who are demonstrating the desire to be actively engaged in the job increase the overall positive work environment, increasing the desire to improve others and their job satisfaction (Lu et al., 2016).

Satisfaction factor conclusion. Uruthirapathy and Grant (2015) identified challenges in retention among IT professionals as compared to non-IT professionals. Job satisfaction is a key factor in determining whether an employee will remain or depart. The IT professional looks for fair opportunities, promotions, and the ability to interact or participate in the decision processes. The non-IT worker does not exhibit any of these traits. Therefore, it is important for leadership to understand the distinction between IT and non-IT in employment engagements and activities. Business leaders are seeing an increase in the number of retirements due to the aging baby boomer workforce and a lack of sustained millennial workforce to replace these workers (Ertas, 2015). The aging workforce is causing a strain on organizations as their talented employees are leaving, employee commitment is not what it was in years past, and the new employees are not as skilled (Ryan & Harden, 2014). Leaders must understand what it takes to influence the younger workforce. Retention gaps within the IT professional field will require attention due to increases in retirements of qualified professionals and a shortage of skilled replacements (Fagnot & Stanton, 2015).

Motivation Factors

Jansen and Samuel (2014) noted how Herzberg found a combination of the factors achievement, progression opportunities, recognition, and responsibility increased the employee motivation and improved their individual performance. Damij et al. (2015) explored how a motivated employee is more likely to do more tasks without procrastinating or complaining than those that are not motivated. Organizations that increase the motivating factors will see a direct increase in employee motivation.

Leadership influences. Employee reactions to the effects of job motivating potential (JMP) and supervisor ethical leadership (SEL) and how each influences work performance. Job satisfaction goes up when the employee achieves pay satisfaction. When employees observe pay equity among employees with the same jobs and skills, there is a perceived fairness amongst these employees and their job satisfaction goes up (Ruiz-palomino et al., 2013). SEL as observed and perceived by the employees increases the satisfaction, perceived fairness across the board, therefore JMP positively influences pay satisfaction, and SEL increases the opportunities for employees to benefit from these positive influences.

Herzberg’s two-factor theory was the basis for showing that an increase in job-enriching skills increases the perception for an increased JMP (Ruiz-palomino et al., 2013). The employees then demonstrated job satisfaction, the goal of leadership. Increasing employee understanding of how their jobs fit within the success of the organization can lead to highly motivated employees. When the employees demonstrate a satisfaction with an equitable compensation plan, they perform better and are willing to remain with the organization. When the employees perceive a discrepancy in pay, they are less willing to perform and more apt to consider voluntary termination.

Incentives. Aisha et al. (2013) sought to measure the effects of incentives, motivation, working ability, and working conditions on employees and their performance. The relationships between the variables indicate strong connections on the performance from the view of incentives, motivation levels, and working conditions. The employee could receive financial incentives to increase the performance, but the motivation from a financial incentive is short-lived. Additional considerations are low pay, less challenging work, and limited professional development. Employees with a high public service motivation are less inclined to terminate their employment, which provides leaders an opportunity to evaluate how they can influence employee perceptions and increase retention (Ertas, 2015).

Motivation factor conclusion. The more supervisors and leaders understand the perception of their ethical and moral actions, the more employees feel content and desire to remain with the organization. The SEL as demonstrated by leadership has a profound influence on successful employee actions (Ruiz-palomino et al., 2013). Millennials seek job satisfaction and without it, they are more inclined to quit (Ertas, 2015). The long-term benefits of bettering the working conditions and employee motivations provide higher payouts for the organization as a whole.

Organizational Culture

Turnover among IT professionals is higher than most other industries, but not all turnover creates a bad situation (Lo, 2015). IT professionals remain cognizant of other opportunities available to them within the industry as their organizational leaders seek areas to reduce staffing. IT occupational culture encompasses the operational interactions between employees, the communication skills and terminology utilized by these employees, and the values these employees place on their work (Jacks & Palvia, 2014).

Supervisor behavior influences small, medium, and large enterprises similarly (Mathieu et al., 2016). Turnover intentions have a direct relationship to organizational commitments where employees remain in their jobs not because of the organization but due to the relationship with their superiors (Mathieu et al.). Inadequate supervisor behavior equates to high employee turnover.

Organizational commitment relates to the working environment, where the employer treats the employees fairly and conditions are conducive to the performance of their jobs (Agarwal & Mehta, 2014). An employee working in a positive work environment creates more productivity leading to satisfaction for the employee WLB and translates to better retention opportunities. Organizational commitment theory encompasses personal values that align with organizational values, economic and social costs associated with leaving an organization, and the obligation to the organization due to time and resources invested (Agarwal & Mehta).

The organizational culture and leadership define the work environment and influence employee productivity and satisfaction (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014). Employee turnover creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and reduced productivity, creating gaps within the workforce. Leaders should understand how the culture of the organization plays a role in employee satisfaction and longevity within the organization. The employees who value the culture are those that aid the organization to obtain the strategic goals.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is proving to be a key attribute for the retention of employees and there is a connection between CSR and job embeddedness (JE) (Ghosh & Gurunathan, 2014). CSR and JE affect society by creating opportunities for employees to participate in community activities creating an environment where there is a togetherness, giving to the community while serving the organization. The relationships between CSR and the community and CSR and the customers build the involvement of employees as ambassadors for the organization. Employees who experience this are less likely to quit. The organization is building a community bond and increasing the strength of its organizational commitment. The more the employees give or sacrifice their time, the less likely they are to seek employment elsewhere. The overall success of the organization to give to the community and create a positive exchange increases the retention by the employees feeling or exhibiting a sense of belonging.

Employer tools. Employer socialization tactics to increase new hire comfort and a sense of embeddedness are keys to reduce the turnover and create a cohesive workforce. Allen and Shanock (2013) identified employee perceived organizational support (POS) and the development of a sense of organizational embeddedness as cornerstones to the relational cohesion theory. Ertürk (2014) further depicted how HR practices found POS and LMX as two of the major factors studied for turnover intentions, with trust in the organization (TIO) and trust in the supervisor (TIS) as additional components. Leaders who understand these factors and how they influence employee intentions to terminate their employment will lead to a reduction of turnover and an increase in job satisfaction.

Businesses look for ways to stay competitive both from a fiscal point of view and from a technology point of view. World economics is undergoing a major transformation. The leaders of the past are no longer in a position to remain at the head of the pack. The IT arena worldwide raises the competitive bar between nations and organizations as companies seek to continue to be profitable (Brown, & Brandt, 2014). There has been an increase in outsourcing parts of the IT mission but that brings with it concerns about security, privacy, and the overall confidence the outsourced organization is fulfilling its obligation (Agrawal, 2014).

The world of IT system management is a global solution. The new technology brings with it challenges of security and reliability as the organization is now, in a way, under the control of policies of governance of the cloud provider (Nanavati, Colp, Aiello, & Warfield, 2014). IT system managers can use the cloud as a way to reduce internal labor costs, providing a means to address retention of IT professionals. The organizations are finding out the costs may now be their reputations, depending on the provider and the security of their systems. System managers who choose to use outsourcing as another option find there are concerns that need consideration such as the monitoring of the outsourced organization. Managers can use innovative means to benefit the individual employee at the same time as maintaining a quality staff, but they may find a need to shift to different policies for different employees (Nanavati, et al.).

Leaders can modify their recruiting procedures to seek higher qualified candidates to improve the organizational culture fit of these candidates. The organizational culture and employee fit historically reduces turnover rates and reduces the replacement costs for those that quit (Alshanbri et al., 2015). Organizational leaders can also increase employee job satisfaction by promoting employee work-related development and training, increasing employee engagement to increase the effectiveness of the organization when managed at both the employee and organizational levels (Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, & Courtright, 2015). Employees who share values and ideas of the organization and the leadership can then collectively support the organization. Employees who do not share ideas will not function as a team nor will they willingly provide their best work efforts.

As the level of work engagement increases, the level of job satisfaction or organizational commitment decreases, resulting in an increase of employee intentions to terminate their employment (Caesens, Stinglhamber, & Marmier, 2016). However, the increase in work engagement did provide a strong increase in performance output by the employees but only to a point. There is a decline of work engagement following the peak of performance and the dissatisfaction or desire to quit begins to increase (Caesens et al.). Leadership must be aware that increasing the workload too much will result in a reduction of productivity and an increase in turnover intentions.

Talent management (TM) pertains to the means to assess employee qualities and capabilities to perform and progress within the organization and their position (Craig, 2015). Leaders who understand TM can focus attention toward mitigation strategies to curtail employee turnover by safely assigning an employee to a task and have the confidence in task accomplishment. The organizational cultural fit enables higher performance output and an increase in employee job satisfaction.

Employee options. The ease of movement refers to the amount of energy and effort needed to move to another job (Lo, 2015). Employee turnover intention revolves around two basic principles, the desire to leave and the perception of how easily the employee can obtain employment elsewhere or ease of movement. Employee voluntary turnover revolves around a decision by an employee to terminate employment for personal reasons similar to a lack of job satisfaction or job-related stress (Arokiasamy, 2013).

New employees need to feel they are important and a member of the new organization. The ability of the new employee to adjust to the new role and position is key to the successful adaptation into the organization and a reduced employee voluntary turnover rate (Allen & Shanock, 2013). Employees fall into different generational categories creating a mindset where the organizational leaders feel the need to recruit, manage, and reward their employees differently based upon these categories (Becton, Walker, & Jones-Farmer, 2014). The loyal employee staying 20 plus years with an organization is no longer the norm. Employers who are seeking to create a work atmosphere with the intent to satisfy employees and accomplish the mission must understand how the generational differences within their organization need addressing. Employee views, professional commitment, and organizational composition all relate to generational differences and leaders must understand these relationships (Singh & Gupta, 2015).

Organizational-citizenship behavior (OCB) enables employees to incorporate organizational values creating a buy-in to enhance the work environment and increase the performance of employees (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2014). Leaders engage the employees to understand their perceptions of the culture of the organization. The organization-employee cultural fit is essential to increased performance and longevity within the organization. Leaders who use socialization tactics are not likely to drive new employees to quit, but these tactics will aid the new employee to perceive the supportive structure and the organizational embeddedness (Arokiasamy, 2013). Employees who receive positive and favorable treatment by supervisors and the overall organization are more willing to commit time and effort into the new organization and to fit into it. Arokiasamy (2013) noted the negative relationship between socialization tactics and turnover highlights a potential tool for leaders to reduce turnover.

Researchers have noted the connection between quit rates and the labor market is a positive correlation. The positive correlation means the higher the quit rate, the stronger the labor market. The stronger labor market then means those looking or considering voluntarily leaving are doing so with other employment or excellent prospects already identified (Bruneel, Juneau, & Wang, 2014).

Employees who voluntarily leave their employment almost doubled between 2012 and 2013 (Cascio, 2014). The rise in voluntary exits is a concern for organizational leaders who seek strategies to reduce this trend. The negative publicity creates a problem for leaders. Performance management is a means to attain the organizational goals to reduce turnover and increase job satisfaction as regular or ongoing activities to assure employee needs. Communication, feedback, and employee professional development are the essential elements for performance management (Cascio, 2014).

Commitment is critical, but it can come at a high cost financially and organizationally (Quaadgras, Weill, & Ross, 2014). Leadership integrating commitments at every level intend to show business value, an understanding of the path forward for the organization, and financial stability. Commitment strategies are costly, but showing the employees leadership is committed to the people as much as they are to the organization, pays dividends in reduced turnover.

Organizational leaders have the opportunity to mitigate some of the detrimental effects facing them following employee turnover by implementing processes to provide for redundancies within the IT workflow and storage arenas (Pee, Kankanhalli, Tan, & Tham, 2014).

Leaders have another option available to them is creating succession plans for personnel to step in as soon as practicable to minimize gaps in knowledge and processes.

Organization culture conclusion. HR managers implement practices used to increase organizational commitment that include participation in decisions, sharing in the information flow, fair distribution of rewards, and positive recognition. Employees receiving recognition is a leading contributor to decreasing turnover along with high POS and LMX relationships (Ertürk, 2014). People-oriented supervisors are more likely to have lower turnover rates than supervisors who are task-oriented (Mathieu et al., 2016). Supervisors use performance management to help ensure achievement of employee needs during regular or ongoing activities. Communication, feedback, and employee professional development are the essential elements for performance management (Cascio, 2014). Organizational leaders working to implement or increase their respective performance management objectives have to consider actively engaging employees. Leaders look to increase the dialogue on performance and development, outline the specific requirements and expectations for promotions, raises, and terminations, review their legal requirements for evaluating and documenting employee performance, and provide higher rewards to their high performing employees (Hunt, 2015). Leaders who fail to recognize the differences in generational needs and capabilities will see a negative workplace environment leading to decreased productivity and increased turnover (Becton et al., 2014).

Leaders can use talent management as an effective tool to reign in rising voluntary employee turnover (Craig, 2015). Leadership can assess where the organization stands within their respective industry and apply TM to maintain the organizational talent. Employees should feel comfortable that leaders will support them by investing in their professional development and their WLB, instilling job satisfaction. Management not engaged with their employees demonstrate a lack of professional support and will continue to see rising voluntary turnover (Craig, 2015).

Employees who partake in excessive work engagement may exhibit a negative relationship to turnover intentions (Caesens et al., 2016). Underworked and overworked employees show negative intentions, thus leading to a non-linear progression and regression of turnover intentions. Leaders must look at the negative influence of increasing employee workload and then evaluate whether the increase inadvertently pushes the employee to consider departing their employment.

Work-Life Balance

Herzberg's two-factor theory worked well when developed in 1959, but the changes in technology and the expansion of a global presence today, virtually and in reality, present different factors that may need investigation to accommodate these changes (Damij et al., 2015). Herzberg's hygiene factors only provide for short-term gains where the motivation factors are more personal and the employee seeks long-term commitments. Herzberg's factors, the inhibitors and the motivators, are contributing factors for employee decisions. Employees today can benefit from working environments such as that of a WLB because it provides latitude to the employee and plays a larger role in employee satisfaction (Damij et al., 2015). Employee WLB offers the employee the ability to manage the day-to-day activities at the office and maintain a comfortable social and personal life away from the office (Deery & Jago, 2015).

One of the major benefits associated with the implementation of flexible working conditions is employees with a feeling of adding value to the organization. Employers who recognize the personal participation and involvement of their employees will see an increase in organizational output (Kar & Misra, 2013). The overall net worth of the organization grows in relation to that of the involved employee, benefiting all.

Factors involved with WLB. The WLB of an employee has become a topic of research to minimize turnover and increase job satisfaction (Agarwal & Lenka, 2015). Researchers noted WLB included push and pull factors; push factors encompass job dissatisfaction, family finances, family health, and family education whereas pull factors include job recognition, self-esteem, the opportunity to make more money, and the chance to be the boss (Agarwal & Lenka, 2015). Employee WLB has almost become the new standard in organizations finding ways to maximize the work output of their employees at the same time as offering the benefits that come with flexible work hours, ultimately keeping their valued employees (Sauvain-dugerdil, 2014). Employee WLB is critical to successful retention of employees and the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment helps to reduce employee turnover among professionals (Friedman & Westring, 2015).

Employees look to WLB as the relationship between personal or social life and their work life (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2016). The employee work-life attitude attributed to the highest voluntary turnover is a higher salary, with the opportunity to work for a brand-name organization as a close second. Employees have contrasting views of social attitudes as their priority listed the brand-name of the organization as their highest reason to depart, followed by larger portfolio opportunities, and then an increase in salary (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2016).

As the age of the workforce increases, organizations find the technical skills of those looking to replace the older employees actually possess better and more sophisticated skills

(Warmerdam, Lewis, & Banks, 2015). IT systems and technologies advance quickly and the younger employees are able to adapt and increase their value added to the organization. Leadership and those from the older generations grew up with a different work ethic. Millennials are more apt to seek other employment when they perceive they are not receiving the appropriate recognition or pay. Relationships with peers is a valued commodity for this generation. Almost one-quarter of new hires within the millennial generation leave their positions within the first 2 years.

Talent management is the overarching principle to obtaining and retaining talented employees. The framework of talent management consists of organizational and industry attributes, WLB, employee attitudes, personal employee dimensions, and organizational strategies (Deery & Jago, 2015). Long work hours, low compensation, organizational culture, stress, and heavy workloads all contribute to job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction. Without job satisfaction, employees have a propensity to depart the organization.

Methods to increase WLB. The workforce of today is realizing there are advantages to flexible work schedules, time off, and remote work location, thus increasing the WLB of employees (Idris, 2014). Leadership can take advantage of these opportunities to increase productivity and reduce turnover. An effective WLB brings about challenges for the employees and the employer. The employee satisfaction and comfort will result in an increase in productivity, an increase in the focus on family values and time, and it will reduce the extra stress of employees worrying about family matters on the job. The overall increase in a positive work environment and an organization showing value in its employees will keep their talented professionals (Kelly et al., 2014). Employers who understand the concepts associated with WLB will help to ensure the employees benefit and see their own success (Kar & Misra, 2013). Adding flexible working conditions provides leaders an additional option to maintaining talented employees who may be dissatisfied and who will eventually begin their look for employment elsewhere. Corporate thinking and corporate culture must adjust to the changes seen within the IT community to ensure employee desires and overall organizational success (Idris, 2014).

Work-life balance conclusion. Organizational leaders who consider WLB may be able to retain their talented workers longer than those leaders who ignore the WLB needs of their employees due to their insights on the needs of the employees. Strategies to mitigate departures and ultimately to increase job satisfaction must be considered by leadership if they intend to increase retention within their organization (Deery & Jago, 2015). Employers who provide hope to employees help to reduce their stressors and reduce turnover intentions. Another tool employers have to aid their employees is to increase opportunities for professional development and advancement. Organizational leaders have the ability to modify policies for incorporation of WLB initiatives to reduce turnover and increase job satisfaction, ultimately increasing retention. Leaders who understand they can manage their voluntary turnover rates by managing employee WLB and maintain their qualified and talented employee base (Kar & Misra, 2013).

Transition

Within Section 1 of my study, I highlighted information relevant to the main research question and the problem statement. I began with a presentation of some of the background information associated with voluntary IT professional turnover, setting the foundation for the rest of my study, covering the purpose statement, identifying the nature of the study, the conceptual framework, selecting relevant operational definitions, assumptions, limitations and delimitations, and finishing with the significance of the study. The intent was to seek information on strategies to reduce the IT professional turnover in southeastern Virginia. The review of applicable academic and professional literature highlighted the base conceptual framework, Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory, covering the aspects of employee decision, satisfaction, and motivation factors, as well as organizational culture and WLB.

In Section 2, I outline the purpose statement and then bring into play the role of the researcher, the participants, the qualitative research method, the case study research design, the population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments and techniques, data organizing techniques and analysis, and the reliability and validity of the study. The culminating section of my study, Section 3, will contain the findings, the applicability to professional practice, the implications for social change, the recommendations for action and further research, the reflections and the conclusion to the study.

Section 2: The Project

In the Section 1 literature review, I focused attention on Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation and hygiene, Maslow's theory, social exchange theory, job characteristics theory, inoculation theory, and the leader member exchange theory, with each theory touching on linkages I sought to business leaders' lack of strategies to reduce voluntary experienced IT professional turnover. In Section 2, I repeat my purpose statement, the role of the researcher, the research method and design, the research question, the sample population, the data collection to include tools and analysis, and the reliability and validity of the study. I then present how the data in Section 2 address the interpretation of the findings as I answer the business question: What strategies do business leaders use to reduce experienced IT professional turnover?

Purpose Statement

My purpose in this qualitative descriptive single case study was to explore strategies that business leaders use to reduce experienced IT professional turnover. The target population for this study was four senior IT leaders from a small-sized business in southeastern Virginia who maintain supervisory and hiring oversight responsibilities. These senior IT leaders must provide confirmation that they have objectively demonstrated their success in addressing strategies to reduce voluntary experienced IT professional turnover. Business leaders may gain an appreciation of their contribution to social change because of the application of strategies reducing voluntary turnover by improving employee job satisfaction, reducing unemployment, and increasing economic stability within the community. Through the publishing of the findings, I will provide business leaders additional options to illustrate ways to reduce experienced IT professional turnover.

Role of the Researcher

Pezalla et al. (2012) identified the researcher as the primary instrument of the qualitative study, functioning as the data collector, interviewer, and compiler of findings. The researcher, as the primary instrument in qualitative study interviews, must be an intent listener, adapt to responses to probe further as applicable, and maintain ethical principles (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The role of the researcher evolves with the determination of the type of instrument used, the interviews, or the surveys as applicable. Doody and Noonan (2013) further outlined a key attribute to aid the researcher to achieve success during the interview process is careful planning. The researcher outlines the path forward to focus on the research question, laying the groundwork for success by developing a plan or protocol with an applicable strategy to conduct the interviews (De Ceunynck, Kusumastuti, Hannes, Janssens, & Wets, 2013). The researcher must be cognizant of any personal bias or a perception of bias so carefully outlining the questions and following the protocol will help to mitigate bias (De Ceunynck et al., 2013; Lamb, 2013a).

Harvey (2015) outlined a successful path forward for the qualitative researcher as being an active listener as well as collecting the data. Understanding the responses and actively participating in the responses builds a rapport with the interviewees and demonstrates the desire to live the experiences of the participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The researcher is in a position to observe participant nonverbal communication exchanges such as proxemics or control of the surroundings, kinesics or control of one’s posture and expressions, chronemics or controlling the length of the responses, and paralinguistics or the control of one’s tone of speech, all of which will aid in building the findings (Mealer & Jones, 2014).

Condie (2012) offered the need to follow a protocol that includes items such as consent, description of the interview, the background leading to the interview, the report itself, and the summary of the interview to name a few. Researchers can gain confidence when practicing questions and seeking assistance as available to fine-tune and develop the interview process (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). Benia, Hauck-Filho, Dillenburg, and Stein (2015) also highlighted the importance of researchers using an interview protocol to increase their ability to gather additional details concerning participant experiences.

Cugini (2015) highlighted the need for institutional review boards (IRBs) as a means to ensure ethical principles when researching with human beings. The *Belmont Report* outlines three guiding principles: beneficence, justice, and respect for persons (Miracle, 2016). Researchers must take the necessary steps to ensure confidentiality of the participants, their information, and ensure secured custody of signed consent forms. The IT realm of today creates a need to update the *Belmont Report* accordingly to comply with the evolving health care climate. All researchers shall adhere to the requirements of the IRB approval before any interactions with human beings relating to interviews take place.

Participants

The study participants were volunteers who signed consent forms granting their permission and concurrence to continue the interview process. Consent forms provide relevant details of the intent of the interview and the proposed questions (Brown et al., 2013; Doody & Noonan, 2013; Harvey, 2015; Robinson, 2014). Elo et al. (2014) discussed the need to have participants who present the best knowledge on the research topic. During the initial discussion with each participant, each provided their previous experiences with addressing voluntary IT professional turnover, highlighting their fulfillment of the following criteria: (a) maintaining supervisory and hiring oversight responsibilities and (b) confirming that they have objectively demonstrated their success in addressing strategies to reduce voluntary experienced IT professional turnover. Not all proposed participants met the above criteria on past performance.

Gaining Access

Planning is a key aspect of preparing for the interview phase. During planning, it is important to develop the interview protocol or the guide that lays the foundation for the necessary steps to enable the researcher to progress through the interview. The researcher must ensure the research question is the focus of effort and the interview protocol is detailed and thorough (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Irvine, Drew, and Sainsbury (2013) noted the need to notify the participants of the intent of the study, the minimum criteria, and the proposed general questions and guidelines.

Marshall and Rossman (2016) identified necessary considerations when a researcher seeks elite leadership as potential participants. The organizational leadership authorized elite leadership participation. The initial contact with the organization provided the opportunity to expand on the intent of the study, the study protocol, and how the study can benefit both parties (Cronin, 2014).

Building Rapport

Building rapport with the participants is essential to gaining the desired information from the interviewing process (Barratt, Ferris, & Lenton, 2014; Doody & Noonan, 2013; Harvey, 2015; Lamb, 2013b). Building a relationship with the participants to help them feel at ease and more willing to open up during the interviews leads to a valuable experience for all, creating a connection to current and past experiences (Cronin, 2014). The relationship between the researcher and the interviewees builds trust and establishes an open flow of responses from the interviewees, more honest representation of their accounts, and permits the researcher to gain insights to information that would not be available without the trust (Cronin, 2014).

I used the fictional name ITT1 for the company and PT1 to PT4 to identify the participants, maintaining privacy and confidentiality (Miracle, 2016). NIH Office of Extramural Research (2010) noted the importance of voluntary informed consent to ensure all participants are willing to participate and understand the expectations of participation. All participants signed informed consent forms noting their willingness to participate and providing exceptions and limitations to the certificate of confidentiality (Check, Wolf, Dame, & Beskow, 2014). All participants maintained the right to refuse further participation in the study and could withdraw completely without prejudice, once they contacted me via email, personal conversation, or telephone. I will protect all data collected for a minimum of 5 years with the use of a password-protected computer and fireproof safe to hold applicable transcription items. I will destroy all data at the completion of the 5 years. The researcher must take an active listening role to convey his or her interest in the interview and build a relationship with the interviewee, remaining cognizant and vigilant of potential negative reactions (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Rossetto, 2014).

Research Method and Design

In this next section, I detail the research method, the applicable justification for the research method, and the research design chosen for my study. Qualitative research interviews are a means to identify with the lived lives of participants via the interactions and emotions observed (Mealer & Jones, 2014). A qualitative case study provides the opportunity for the researcher to immerse oneself in the phenomenon in question (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015). I used the specific business problem and the main research question as guiding tools to achieve the intent at finding strategies to reduce voluntary turnover within the IT professional ranks.

Research Method

De Ceunynck et al. (2013) and Barnham (2016) identified a key aspect of qualitative research is adding the different venues to explore the participant experiences, finding the underlying *what* as opposed to the *why* of the quantitative methodology. Researchers using the quantitative methodology seek to measure, test, and justify theories with variables to examine the relationships (Lach, 2014; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Researchers use the mixed-method research methodology when the desire is to conduct a complete study that can stand alone using one method and supplement that study with the other methodology, but one that lacks merits to stand alone (Morse & Cheek, 2014). A quantitative methodology was not appropriate because I did not seek textural or numerical data. A mixed-method research methodology was not appropriate because I did not seek to use a quantitative methodology as part of the whole process.

Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, and Robertson (2013) outlined the constructivist approach of Stake where the qualitative methodology provides the researcher insights into the truth via perspective and the ability to grasp the essentials of the phenomenon, leading me to choose the qualitative methodology. According to Doody and Noonan (2013), open-ended questions provide the details necessary for researchers looking for exploratory qualitative methods. Qualitative researchers use the key attribute of maintaining a system for controlling the large data materials presented to enable a broad understanding of the findings of the study (Houghton et al., 2015).

Research Design

Yin (2014) highlighted how a researcher, using a descriptive case study design, can seek an in-depth analysis and exploration of strategies available for use by leadership, so this will be the design for the study. The researcher using a descriptive case study seeks to understand the specifics of a particular case or phenomenon (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012; Verner & Abdullah, 2012). A descriptive case study permitted me the opportunity to explore and understand the shortcomings of some business leaders in their use or lack of use of strategies to reduce voluntary turnover among their IT professionals.

Other qualitative methodologies include ethnography and phenomenology (Houghton et al., 2015; Uluyol & Akçi, 2014) but were not appropriate for the study. Researchers looking into participant perspectives through first-hand experiences use ethnographical designs (Ryan, 2017). Researchers use phenomenological designs to explore and understand the participant perceptions of their everyday lived experiences with a subjective approach (Anosike et al., 2012). Therefore, I used neither the ethnographical design nor the phenomenological design to explore the strategies implemented or available to leadership.

The use of a descriptive single case study facilitates the opportunity for the researcher to focus on the single phenomenon, while collecting data through interviews, and following up with member checking and validation of the transcripts involved (Yin, 2014). Fusch and Ness (2015) noted the criticality of data saturation to ensure validity. The researcher reaches data saturation through a thorough collection of data via interviews and organizational documentation resulting in no new insights and the data findings are reproducible in future research (Fusch & Ness). The research design permits the flexibility to follow the interview protocols, ethical guidelines, and seek the strategies for reducing involuntary turnover of IT professionals.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study was a small sized business in southeastern Virginia with a sampling of four senior IT leaders who maintain supervisory and hiring oversight responsibilities. The sampling included senior IT leaders who demonstrated a successful approach to voluntary IT professional turnover in the past. Qualitative researchers use purposive sampling so the researcher can observe the different perspectives of the interviewees as they relate to the phenomenon in question from their position or work category (Harper & Cole, 2012; Robinson, 2014). Dworkin (2012) highlighted saturation as a key to the resources of the researcher, which can drive the number of participants if resources are not available. Researchers use purposive sampling to gather rich data to help achieve data saturation. Interviewing a smaller number of participants in detail and following with member checking will provide a means to obtain data saturation. The interviewees chose the time and location for their respective interview with the intent to cause little disruption to the normal business activities of the organization and provide a comfortable atmosphere with access to refreshments and so they do not feel trapped or cornered for questioning.

Ethical Research

The Walden University IRB approval number for this study is 07-23-18-0653119, it expires on July 22, 2019, and indicates research can commence with data collection. Cugini (2015) highlighted the need for an IRB as a means to ensure ethical principles when research involves human beings. Upon receipt of the approval, I requested permission from a small IT business in southeastern Virginia, to conduct the interviews with their employees. The participants fulfilled the criteria for participation. After receiving permission from the business, I followed my study plan to ensure submission of the planning considerations to include the criteria required for inclusion, a survey assessing their willingness to voluntarily participate, and the informed consent form. The participants maintain their right to refuse any further participation in the study and can withdraw completely without prejudice, once they contact me via email, personal conversation, or telephone (NIH Office of Extramural Research, 2010). Participants received a $15.00 gift card for their participation in the study.

I will store and maintain all interview notes and electronic data collected on a password-protected flash drive and it will remain secured in a locked safe until the completion of the fifth year, at which time I will destroy it all to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. I will destroy all data pertaining to all withdrawn participants upon request. The participants maintained their right to withdraw throughout the study, even upon the conclusion of the data collection process.

I followed the established ethical standards set forth by Walden University and also followed the guiding principles per *The Belmont Report*, of beneficence, justice, and respect for persons (Miracle, 2016). Protecting the privacy and confidentiality of participants is essential to ethical research. I used a coding system with alphanumeric identifiers of PT1 through PT4 instead of other identifying information to help ensure confidentiality and for tracking purposes to protect their privacy. No organizational names, individual names, or any other identifying information will be used as they might identify those participants. It is critical the researcher not infringe upon participants' rights and privacy, maintaining an ethical approach to research dealing with human participants (Klitzman, 2013).

I discussed with each participant the measures to ensure confidentiality noting I will not use any personal information outside the confines of this research study. I will maintain all informed consent forms and interview recordings on a password-protected flash-drive and within a locked storage cabinet for security. I will destroy all consent forms, interviews recording, and transcribed data by electronic wiping of the password protected flash drive.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) provides a means for researchers to review the applicable materials required to obtain and maintain a certification of proficiency for ethical research. Appendix A contains the letter of cooperation. Appendix B contains the data use agreement.

Data Collection Instruments

In this qualitative descriptive single case study, I was the primary data collection instrument. Pezalla et al. (2012) and Yilmaz (2013) noted the researcher is the instrument in the semistructured interview technique, enabling the researcher to sway the collection of data. I asked open-ended interview questions to collect the lived experiences of the participants, and then I compared my notes and available company documents to formulate business strategies in reducing the high turnover among IT professionals (Yilmaz, 2013).

Open-ended questions permit the interviewer the opportunity for flexibility to expand upon responses to the research questions, helping to ensure the researcher achieves saturation during the interview process (Benia et al., 2015; O'Keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozovic, & Sinha, 2015). The researcher achieves data saturation when there is no new information or insights and there is enough data to reproduce the findings of the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Madill and Sullivan (2017) and Petty et al. (2012) highlighted a key to the most efficient means to review the interviews is via member checking. I used member checking to ensure I captured the intent of the responses, offering the participants the opportunity to assess the credibility, reliability, and validity of my transcriptions and my understanding of their responses.

Data Collection Technique

The Walden University IRB granted approval prior to me commencing my study. I sent out invitations via electronic mail to proposed participants outlining the intent of the study. Upon receipt of approvals from the respective participants for their participation, I provided them with informed consent forms and an explanation of the privacy and confidentiality of the study. Upon approval of the consent form, the participants acknowledged the confidentiality and protection of their rights in the study (Check et al., 2014).

The first task was to select the qualified, consenting participants who met the criteria of the study. Next, I coordinated with each participant the desired interview location, date, and time as applicable, focusing on a 30-45 minute time slot for the interview for each participant. I completed a review and rehearsal of the interview protocol to ensure my plan was adequate as a starting point (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The interviews were semistructured with open-ended questions (see Appendix C) following the interview protocol (see Appendix D).

An advantage to using open-ended questions is the ability of the researcher to receive responses from the participants to understand the lived experiences and create an opportunity to question further as needed (Yilmaz, 2013). The researcher asks the questions and takes notes using the interview protocol as a guide. The participant should feel comfortable and open in the responses to the questions (Barnham, 2016).

A big disadvantage to an interview is the lack of experience of the researcher in asking the questions and collecting the data (Benia et al., 2015). The researcher must provide adequate time to plan, prepare, and practice the interview prior to engaging the first participant. Using a rehearsed interview protocol can reduce mistakes during the interview process and increase the quality of the interview.

I used member checking with my interviewees to ensure my interpretation of their responses matched their intent and to add validity to the process. Member checking is where the participants review the transcript, evaluate the accuracy, and confirm the researcher's interpretation of the intended responses to ensure the analysis and themes are correct (Madill & Sullivan, 2017; Yilmaz, 2013). I ensured participants were aware of the intent of the study, their rights, and the expectations following the interview to include need for the member checking process to validate the transcripts and perception of responses.

Data Organization Technique

Cope (2014) noted the importance of qualitative researchers using a reflexive journal as a means to capture the data from the various interviews and interactions while creating a venue to compile thoughts and ideas on the relevant topics. Everett (2013) highlighted the significance of journals to provide a means for easy access and to detail rich data in qualitative research. I used a journal during each of the interviews, following the same script to ensure repetition of procedures and questions. Journals are valid methods of accessing rich, qualitative data, which researchers use as a method of data collection. Researchers who use reflexive journaling maintain the ability to track data, compile that data into confidential folders with all identifiable data from each of the interviews, and then present the information as an instructional or learning device (Davies, Reitmaier, Smith, & Mangan-Danckwart, 2013). Each participant received an individual generic code to ensure they remain confidential and their participation remains private (Gibson, Benson, & Brand, 2013).

I will store and maintain all interview notes and electronic data collected on a password-protected flash drive. Marshall and Rossman (2016), noting the ease with which electronic servers are hacked, indicated storage on this medium is not advisable to retain privacy and confidentiality. The flash drive and any paper copies of collected data will remain secured in a locked safe. I will be the only person with access to the safe to ensure privacy. I will retain the security of all materials in accordance with Walden University IRB requirements and after the fifth year, I will destroy the hard copies by shredding and the flash drive by smashing to physically destroy and prevent access.

Leximancer software was the program of choice to decipher the information and sort through the associated themes with applicable coding to understand how the data is organized (Yin, 2014). Use of this software aided in maintaining the privacy of all participants and their data. Organizing the data with the use of the software enables the researcher to group the data and maintain an electronic trail for accuracy and review (Hoque, Covaleski, & Gooneratne, 2013).

Data Analysis

My purpose in this qualitative descriptive single case study was to explore strategies that business leaders use to reduce experienced IT professional turnover with the overarching research question: What strategies do business leaders use to reduce experienced IT professional turnover? I used Yin's five phases of analysis as the means to process my data for this qualitative descriptive single-case study (Yin, 2011). Cope (2014) and Fusch and Ness (2015) highlighted how qualitative researchers can garner the necessary information to build a comprehensive view, aid in the understanding of the phenomenon in question, enhance the reliability of the study, and help to achieve data saturation.

After each interview and the data collection, I transcribed the information to enable me the opportunity to send it out for member checking. The next step was to triangulate the data from the interviews and collected company documents. Yin (2015) presented the five-phases for analysis of the data collected. The analysis phases begin with compiling the collected data, followed by disassembling the data, then reassembling, interpreting, and finally concluding with the analysis of the study. Researchers use the data collected from field notes, interviews, interviewer observations, and reflexive journal entries to help achieve data saturation (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Cope, 2014).

Doody and Noonan (2013) and Yilmaz (2013) highlighted how researchers use open-ended interview questions within qualitative semistructured interviews to expand the questioning beyond the initial questions in Appendix C based on the responses of the participants. The interviewer then seeks additional information or clarity on responses to ensure the information collected contains as much detail as able. The questions listed in Appendix C were designed to address and cover the overall intent of the study but were not all-inclusive. Performing the questioning during face-to-face interviews followed up with triangulating the data enabled the opportunity to understand the applicable themes generated from the main research question.

Following the interviews I transcribed all and provided to the interviewees for member checking. I next analyzed the data for themes and codes with Leximancer software. Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Le (2014) highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of two different software programs for data analysis. Leximancer provides the qualitative researcher additional algorithms to aid in the coding process and help in reducing researcher bias. The Leximancer software creates additional keywords, highlighting the software developer's advances to aid qualitative researchers during the analysis phase of the study.

I ran the transcript data through the software program multiple times to generate and refine the codes in an effort to ensure unique codes were accounted for and evaluated to achieve data saturation. Hoque et al. (2013) highlighted how qualitative analysis software enables the researcher to reduce the time necessary to code the data and it incorporates a feature that will further categorize the data.

Researchers who incorporate a data analysis process build credibility and rigor to qualitative research (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). The data collected included interviews, company documentation, and other related sources discovered online and through discussions with leadership. I focused my data analysis categories on leadership, pay, growth opportunities, WLB, organizational culture, and work conditions.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability accounts for the consistency to replicate the measurement. The researcher should look for consistency in his or her findings as they relate to previous studies on the topic to double check and establish reliability (Cope, 2014; Grossoehme, 2014; Yilmaz, 2013). Reliability in research includes reviewing the transcripts for mistakes to ensure there are no code changes and to crosscheck the data (Aust, Diedenhofen, Ulrich, & Musch, 2013). Reaching dependability relies on completion of member checking to ensure the data is complete and accurate (Elo et al., 2014). Some of the tools available to the researcher to ensure data dependability include debriefing and member checking (Carter et al., 2014). I used member checking, reflexive journaling, and triangulation during my study to ensure dependability. Triangulation as it pertains to research deals with using more than one approach to address the questions for the research (Heale & Forbes, 2013). Another way of looking at this is permitting researchers the opportunity to access different data collection methods to gather the information to document consistency (Heale & Forbes, 2013). Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) highlight the need to include the analyzed data for member checking as often the collection of the data occurs over an extended period. Birt et al. further emphasized the need to determine the relevance of the member checking to obtain the desired findings.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research addresses the credibility of the study and refers to the accuracy of the research data (Grossoehme, 2014; Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014; Yilmaz, 2013). Reliability included member checking and triangulation so I added data saturation as a means to increase the validity of my study. Qualitative validity encompasses conformability, credibility, data saturation, and transferability (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Cope (2014) further identified trustworthiness as a key to validity in qualitative research. I used interview protocols, member checking, and triangulation to enhance the credibility of my study.

Confirmability defines the extent to which the study results are what the researcher found during the study and do not contain his or her personal bias (Petty et al., 2012). The researcher then demonstrates confirmability by tracking the processes via an audit trail. Transferability refers to whether the findings are related or relevant to other studies or situations (Cope, 2014; Petty et al., 2012). Rich details and descriptions of actions, contexts, events, and the settings lend to demonstrating transferability (Yilmaz, 2013). Establishing transferability and conformability with the triangulated data will enhance the findings and provide the rich details required (Harper & Cole, 2012).

The researcher achieves data saturation by following the interview protocol and the planned collection and analysis techniques to arrive at repetitive responses or when there is no new information provided from the participants (Houghton et al., 2015). Data saturation is the key to qualitative research when compared to quantitative research, establishing the rigor by providing the rich data through replication and adherence to the established protocols (Morse, 2015).

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I outlined an in-depth view of my study, the applicable method and design. I restated the purpose statement to reaffirm the intent of the study and described the role of the researcher, the research participants, a description of the research method and design, the population and sampling for the study, the ethical research, the data collection instruments and techniques, data organization techniques, and finally the reliability and the validity of the study. I used qualitative Leximancer software for gathering and analyzing the data. Once I received the Walden IRB approval, I began preparing for the data collection and analysis phases.

In Section 3, I include all applicable interview data, documents, findings, and interpretations of findings and patterns. I also include the applicable organizational and professional practices, strategies, implications for social change, and recommendations as appropriate for further study on the topic of IT professional voluntary turnover.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

My purpose in this qualitative descriptive single case study was to explore strategies that business leaders use to reduce experienced IT professional turnover. The data included in the study come from face-to-face interviews with managers and supervisors and from applicable company documents from an IT professional organization in southeastern Virginia. Park and Park (2016) noted that qualitative methods rely upon observations and interpretation of the data to discover their respective findings. The findings from this study provide proof or confirmation that recognition is key to maintaining talented and qualified IT professionals. Within Section 3, I present the findings, the application to professional practice, the implication for social change, recommendations for action and future research, reflections, and my conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this qualitative descriptive single case study was: What strategies do business leaders use to reduce experienced IT professional turnover? Recognition was the primary theme that emerged from my analysis of interviews. During the analysis of the data, I found five major themes: recognition, individual, team, flexibility, and WLB. The strategies used by the organization became a part of the findings and they indicate what these business leaders used to increase IT employee retention and improve organizational profitability. Member checking was a major part of compiling and organizing the data, with all participants providing concurrence on their respective interview. I reviewed the available company documents to compare policies and history of IT professional turnover. The most important item from the review of these documents was the fact recent IT professional turnover was minimal and dealt with personality conflicts between employees. I had anticipated I would see some history of dissatisfaction with leadership or policies but this was not the case.

Theme 1: Recognition

Tangible and intangible rewards are necessary in the work environment of today. Not all employees relate to tangible rewards such as financial incentives (Yoon, Sung, Choi, Lee, & Kim, 2015). It takes a creative leader to come up with intangible rewards that are not necessarily readily measurable but receive attention. Intangible rewards can benefit from both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The work Yoon et al. (2015) did on rewards relates to my study because the authors discuss options for leaders.

One of the most out-of-the-box thinking ideas that have garnered support throughout ITT1 is the ability of recognition via a social media reward program. PT3 discussed the difference with the IT professional or artist mentality of recognition where, “If they do not get acknowledged for what they have done, the paycheck means nothing to them.” All of the employees in the company have the ability to recognize other employees for their specific contributions to tasks or projects. The program, a peer bonusing system, offers all employees the ability to see, via the social media program, who has received recognition and some details behind the actions. The employees are excited about participating each month and see the value added with only a few dollars here or there. The extrinsic factors relating to personal achievement and recognition increase employee satisfaction and reduce their potential to quit (Herzberg, 2003; Herzberg et al., 2017). The organization benefits from the increased satisfaction generating an increase in employee motivation (Damij et al., 2015). The employees of ITT1 realize the benefits of this type of recognition and their eagerness to be recognized provide increased participation in daily activities.

The organization sought ways to increase buy-in with its employees at the 1-year mark of employment with a profit sharing opportunity. The majority of the employees fall into the millennial category and the senior leaders soon came to the realization that the added benefit of profit sharing is an expected part of working for this company. Perceived organizational support (POS) and perceived supervisor support (PSS) both have a positive influence on job satisfaction and an employee commitment (Smit, Stanz, & Bussin, 2015). When the employee has POS and PSS, then there is a reduction in the intention to terminate employment. The profit sharing idea did not provide the excitement within the employee base that the leaders thought, so this was not a successful strategy. POS outlines the state of effort the organization recognizes employees for their contributions to the team (Ertürk & Vurgun, 2014). High job satisfaction, better relations with superiors, and more money are positive factors in motivating employees and keeping talent. Leaders who recognize active leadership shows they have employee interests at heart are able to manage voluntary employee turnover (Madden, et al., 2015). The leaders of ITT1 realized the money added to the employee benefits did not create the fervor anticipated, so they took steps to adjust their policies. The employees realized that the leaders were attempting to reward them and, even though it was not directly beneficial, the employees understood they were of value to the organization.

Reward management is a leadership tool to recognize each individual accordingly (De Gieter & Hofmans, 2015). Some employees relish the monetary benefits of the typical rewards from years past, whereas younger employees seek recognition from their peers (Ertürk &

Vurgun, 2014). Leaders must recognize the differences in reward types and how each influences, both positively and negatively, their employees and is critical to successful reduction of a dissatisfied employee base (De Gieter & Hofmans, 2015). The leaders of ITT1 recognized rewards and recognition were not amenable to all employees the same. Reward management permitted company policy changes to account for the needs of all employees.

Theme 2: Individuals

The organization cannot succeed without the participation and engagement by all individual employees. Demirtas (2015) outlined the value of the organization is in its people and leadership has the responsibility of treating all employees fairly, and thus contribute to the intrinsic factor of interpersonal relations. Creating an environment where the employees trust that the leadership supports them is essential to the success of the organization. The leaders of ITT1 set the example, lead from the front, and establish clear visions for their respective divisions, all a part of ethical leadership. Every employee contributes at work, but the leaders also realize the implications on the individual when their personal lives are affected. The leaders set the tone for how the team behaves and works together. Employee strong feelings of trust empower employee engagement, result in more satisfied employees, and help to establish a better team (Ugwu, Onyishi, & Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2014). Trust works both ways, organization to employee and employee to organization. Neves and Story (2015) outlined the criticality of ethical leadership in the employee organizational relationship, which in turn creates an employee base reluctant to stray far from what is ethical and moral. The leaders of ITT1 indicated they have not seen a need to treat their employees any different. The internet access is not restricted or limited, and every employee has a third computer monitor for their use at their discretion. The employees realize leadership has trust in them and they perform accordingly.

The extrinsic factors outlined by Herzberg (2003) indicate building the skills necessary to increase the competency or professional development of the employees is key to reducing their dissatisfaction. The leaders of ITT1 work on building trust and job quality with the flexible work schedules but they are concerned with developing the managers for the future. The IT industry is a fast-paced industry that can lead to employee burnout if not monitored closely. Connell, Gough, McDonnell, and Burgess (2014) covered considerations for leaders to build competencies, increase recognition for the work, and the need to increase learning for the new developing technologies and capabilities. Leaders instilling greater autonomy and involving employees in open discussions on policies and their growth potential creates a stronger workforce who is willing to support the organization and trust leadership.

Theme 3: Team

The ITT1 leaders realize the importance of building teams within their respective divisions. PT2 outlined his stance on team development as “building engaging relationships, being involved, and caring about their personal lives.” The team concept helps to build trust both up and down the leadership chain. PT4 added “building a stronger culture” as a key element to the organization. An organization that desires to build a team cannot use the same template for every situation (Warrick, 2014). The leaders of an organization must understand team composition requirements and desired capabilities before attempting to develop a new team. Developing a team and developing a team well are different concepts (Warrick, 2014). ITT1 leaders have the correct ideas and knowledge to make the right decisions. PT3 stated having authentic relationships with the employees is a “game changer” in the development of his team. Understanding the individual employee helps to ensure his or her skills complement the team. Also, getting to know each team member helps leadership manage and react to stressors as they are developing.

Overall, talent management goes beyond finding the correct individual to fill a gap in the roster (Smit et al., 2015). Understanding how motivation, rewards, challenges, and how to keep the current talent requires a dedicated effort by leaders. Madden et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of active organizational involvement to support employees and ensure they are a part of the team. The leaders were able to create a process for addressing junior engineer dissatisfaction by bringing senior engineers into the proposed solution.

Organizational culture and the working environment build on the team concept within the company. The values displayed and followed may vary slightly but are all in line with Herzberg’s intrinsic factors. Motivational or intrinsic factors alone cannot create satisfied employees but they do reduce the level of dissatisfaction. Understanding how to combine the efforts of flexible schedules with senior support in the office to back filling on a moment’s notice, all play key roles in job satisfaction (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). Identifying the needs of the employees and coupling them with the job requirements will help to build a successful organization.

Theme 4: Flexibility

The ITT1 leaders realized early on that rigidity in schedules could no longer support the needs of the younger employees. The employees have the opportunity to adjust their work schedule depending on their life schedule. An example is one employee stays up late at night and has trouble arriving at work at the prescribed time. Rather than fire the employee, leadership decided to discuss a work schedule timeline that may work with the personal life of this employee. If leadership had chosen the option to fire the employee, they then would incur additional costs and training for an unknown replacement. PT1 stated,

> If folks have to leave to get to a class or arrive late because they need to drop off a child at daycare, we are very flexible here. We are a hard company to get fired from. We try to take good care of everyone and give them every chance to succeed.

The important part of understanding schedules and the influences on employees is the realization a talented employee is worth the extra effort to determine what fits to be successful. The intrinsic factors identified by Herzberg et al. (2017) offered leadership the opportunity to make the necessary adjustments to ensure they reduced the potential for dissatisfied employees while increasing the opportunities for the employees to be successful. The means to be flexible is not strictly a schedule item. Flexible leave, job sharing, and telecommuting are additional considerations to offer flexibility to an employee to achieve satisfaction and a healthy work environment (Idris, 2014). Flexible work schedules are an option to increasing employee satisfaction and play a role in job satisfaction for employees (Joseph, Gautam, & Bharathi 2015). ITT1 realizes work schedules are not plug-and-play and there are benefits of remote schedules to the organization in a reduction of workspaces. PT2 stated the company is benefitting from a reduced footprint, reduced overhead in the office, and more satisfaction in the employees.

Luse and Mennecke (2014) identified three principles for organizations to remain competitive; they need to (a) monitor change externally to their organization and adjust strategies as necessary, (b) optimize the organization to adapt and implement changes when necessary, and

(c) allow the organization to explore and exploit all advantages within the organization to stay competitive and relevant. The leaders within the organization recognize change is required to ensure their employees are satisfied and they work sufficiently to remain competitive. The practice of remotely working from home and flexible scheduling builds trust from the employer to the employee and back. The work environment is where the employer creates a welcoming atmosphere for the employees (Agarwal & Mehta, 2014). As long as there is successful progress toward the mission completion, this will continue to be a mainstay within ITT1.

Theme 5: Work-Life Balance

The organizational leaders saw their best way to get to employee satisfaction was to work on the WLB. The flexible work schedules and remote work opportunities generate a desirable work environment. Not all employees are satisfied with the same work schedule (Joseph et al., 2015). Employees can benefit from healthy work environments via flexible schedules to increase their WLB and increase employee satisfaction (Damij et al., 2015). The flexible working environment may not always be the most conducive considering conflicts at home, but offering the employees the option to make their own decisions shows trust. A quote from one of the interviewees was, “Work is an activity, not a place.” This adage creates a comfort within the organization and an understanding they can contribute regardless their work location. The IT professional of today is in a situation where jobs are plentiful if the current employer does not satisfy the needs of the employees. Increasing the employee intrinsic factors of work conditions and WLB creates a less dissatisfied employee. Technology in the IT industry today permits remote operations, reduces office space requirements for the employer and provides for a happier employee. Engaging the millennial needs to assure their WLB receives appropriate attention adds to their retention and satisfaction (Deery & Jago, 2015).

Another change implemented by leadership was the ability to modify the on-call policy for the weekends because the majority of the employees wanted to spend their time with their peers. The employees felt punished when they were on-call during the weekend. The employees saw the restrictions for response times as limits to their weekend enjoyment. Company documents were specific enough to outline the requirement to maintain the ability to respond to client needs at all time. Leadership did not constrain themselves on the specificity to accomplish this, leaving those decisions to managers as needed. The organizational leaders added senior engineers to the roster to take the majority of the calls to determine the emergency status and the level of company involvement. The lower level engineers are more willing to do a little extra after seeing the leadership take a proactive role. The bottom line is the leaders sought ways to ensure the WLB of all employees by offering flexible work schedules, even permitting employees an opportunity for remote work from their home. ITT1 leaders realized there was a need for a modification with their policies concerning the on-call rotation. Junior engineers felt the brunt of obligations for the weekends, reducing their free time and ability to engage in personal activities with friends. Senior engineers recognized they could benefit on an organizational level if they gave up some of their personal time to assist the junior engineers.

The senior engineers realized that they were accountable for making some changes of their own in an attempt to take control of their situation and that of the junior engineers. Friedman and Westring (2015) discussed employees taking an active part is correcting a disagreeable situation. The junior engineers became more engaged on a daily basis and their satisfaction levels and performance increased. The organization benefits by the active involvement of its employees, increasing satisfaction and net worth of the organization.

Applications to Professional Practice

The findings of this study outlined how the leaders of the organization demonstrated they had a grasp of some of the required changes necessary to be successful due to the generational differences within their organization. The IT industry is a fast-paced industry where many employees have the option to quit and work elsewhere. The findings help to identify common areas of interest that may require additional attention to retain talented IT professionals. The organizational culture, understanding of the team concept, and innovative ways to recognize their talented employees will offer IT business professionals the opportunity to review and implement as necessary strategies to retain their talent. The publication of this study will offer insights on recognition, flexibility, and WLB that may benefit many businesses.

Implications for Social Change

The IT industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the United States. The opportunities for employees to change jobs readily create a need for business leaders to understand how they can change to keep their talents. The cost to a business to replace just one IT professional can be as much as 150% of the salary of the outgoing employee (Ertürk & Vurgun, 2014). Research has shown it is time consuming and expensive to replace IT professionals. Companies can use those dollars to invest in their communities and work towards improving the local economic growth. The retention of these dollars could also translate into incentives offered to their employees who in turn would increase their quality of life and that of those around them.

Understanding the complexities of the varying needs of the employees creates a benefit to business leaders by helping them attain richness in their lives and knowing they are creating a healthy and prosperous work environment. Presenting these findings may offer the opportunity for other business leaders to see successful strategies to enhance their organizations. Reducing IT professional voluntary turnover is achievable and the retention of talented employees can have a lasting impression on them, their families, and their local communities.

Recommendations for Action

My study helped to inform how the retention strategies of the past are not relevant to the IT professionals of today and tomorrow. The recognition and WLB aspects of the findings iterate the need for business leaders to rethink their processes and organizational policies if they desire to reduce IT professional turnover. The result will be a healthy work environment, satisfied employees, and an increase to the social and economic benefits for the community. Kar and Misra (2013) highlighted how the growth of the organization depends on the individual employees and when the leadership creates an atmosphere conducive to employee satisfaction, they will have a desire to work and help to achieve the organizational goals.

The findings indicated flexible work schedules are key to the younger generation of IT professionals. Leaders who recognize their actions directly influence employee reactions will benefit from this study, as they already understand the importance of trust and recognition. The WLB considerations go beyond time off and work location. The leaders in the study realized adjusting policies to share responsibilities increased the work-life of the junior engineers and created a healthy work atmosphere for all employees.

The lessons learned from my study are easy to understand and incorporate within the confines of normal operations. There are no special tools or instructional classes required to achieve similar results. Business leaders need to evaluate how they perceive their support to the employees and address the employee needs as an individual and not all encompassing. Job dissatisfaction, family conflicts, and interactions with friends outside working hours all play key roles in individual employee WLB (Agarwal & Lenka, 2015; Friedman & Westring, 2015; Sauvain-dugerdil, 2014). Recognition for work accomplishments within the IT industry is critical. The younger employees do not perceive monetary rewards as significantly adding to their happiness. Peer recognition means more to these professionals.

My study may be beneficial to business leaders as they investigate their own shortcomings on IT professional voluntary turnover. I will distribute a summary of the results to the participants via e-mail and will engage organizational senior leaders if requested to offer potential solutions or considerations. I will engage in open dialogue, lectures, and training venues as appropriate within my current place of employment.

Recommendations for Further Research

The focus of my qualitative descriptive single case study was to explore strategies that business leaders use to reduce experienced IT professional turnover in southeastern Virginia. The previous research was predominantly quantitative in nature. I looked at it qualitatively and noted there are opportunities for further research to gain insights into how business leaders can capitalize on their talented IT professionals.

The themes most relevant were flexibility and recognition in the workplace. The growing IT industry brings with it challenges in the form of ever-changing technology, employees with a different mindset than senior leaders, and the increased job market adding to job opportunities. Future research into IT professional turnover should explore how the advances in technology shape the workforce of tomorrow, how the younger generation develops professionally and socially, and how the increasing job market offers numerous opportunities for growth and employment.

Future researchers may not accept the findings outlined in this study due to the limitations. First, I only addressed IT professional voluntary turnover in southeastern Virginia. Initial assumptions would lead one to wonder if the results were transferable to other regions of the country. I would offer southeastern Virginia is one of the largest military per capita regions in the nation. The technological advances because of government and military involvement play key roles in the commercial industry.

The second limitation was the small sample size. I looked at a successful business within the region with a proven record. A successful business was key to understanding how to get strategies to reduce IT professional turnover. Some may offer there are larger businesses who could offer some of the same insights, and I would not disagree. Experience is critical in determining how to help the IT professional workforce.

Reflections

My research sought to explore strategies that business leaders use to reduce experienced IT professional turnover by using the lived experiences of senior IT leaders. The qualitative descriptive single case study design permitted the opportunity for me to interview participants in their environment to understand the problems associated with IT professional voluntary turnover.

The data collected during the interviews and the supporting company document revealed the breadth of the efforts the business leaders use to curtail IT professional turnover.

I had a few preconceived notions of how to offer healthy work environment from my personal experiences and the lessons learned from my literature review. However, I did not envision the magnitude of generational differences as they relate to pay and incentives. The added flexibility the organization offers its employees to ensure they are satisfied at the same time as fulfilling their obligations to the organization, I did not believe possible. I was pleasantly surprised by the experiences and successes detailed during the interviews. Most importantly, I learned every individual is indeed an individual but his or her contribution to the organization goes beyond the walls of the place of employment. The employees work closely together, covering for each other when needed with technical and personal support. I was prepared to hear stories of employees quitting and working for the competition, reducing the competitive edge by taking the knowledge gained with them. I was surprised the leaders were more concerned with just taking care of their people in the daily activities associated with doing business.

Conclusion

Ghosh et al. (2013) identified high IT turnover rates and accompanying reductions in productivity. The added costs to recruit new employees vary from as little as 35% (Ghosh et al.) to as much as 150% of the salary of the outgoing employee (Ertürk & Vurgun, 2014). These figures alone had me thinking how much of a concern this is to business leaders considering the increased availability of IT professional jobs.

The themes that rose to the top of my data analysis were not concerns for replacing costs but rather ways to retain the desired talent currently employed. Businesses must consider additional options when offering rewards or incentives. The findings of this study outlined the IT professional employee base cares more about their perception to others than to the money in their paycheck. Herzberg's two-factor theory is applicable today to the IT professional industry as leaders seek strategies to reduce employee dissatisfaction during the same time as increasing employee satisfaction as outlined in previous research (Sithole & Solomon, 2014; Smith & Shields, 2013).

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Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

Company

5 June 2018

Dear Brett Grosshans,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled *Strategies for Reducing Information Technology Professionals' Turnover* within the Company. As part of this study, the Company will assist you with identifying potential interviewees of IT managers who:

1. Have supervisory and hiring responsibilities;
2. Who have objectively demonstrated their success in addressing strategies to reduce voluntary experienced IT professionals' turnover.

You will be authorized to interview the participants at our location or the location as determined by the participant. Any follow-up questioning or reviews can be conducted at our location if determined to be in the best interest of the participant. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include:

1. An office for the interviews as appropriate;
2. You will be authorized to have access to and make copies of company documents relevant to IT professionals' turnover to include the backgrounds, turnover rates, and exit surveys of IT professionals;
3. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

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,

CEO
Company 1

Appendix B: Data Use Agreement

This Data Use Agreement ("Agreement"), effective as of 5 June 2018 ("Effective Date"), is entered into by and between Brett Grosshans ("Data Recipient") and Company 1 ("Data Provider"). The purpose of this Agreement is to provide Data Recipient with access to a Limited Data Set ("LDS") for use in research in accord with the HIPAA and FERPA Regulations.

Definitions. Unless otherwise specified in this Agreement, all capitalized terms used in this Agreement not otherwise defined have the meaning established for purposes of the "HIPAA Regulations" codified at Title 45 parts 160 through 164 of the United States Code of Federal Regulations, as amended from time to time.

Preparation of the LDS. Data Provider shall prepare and furnish to Data Recipient a LDS in accord with any applicable HIPAA or FERPA Regulations

Data Fields in the LDS. **No direct identifiers such as names may be included in the Limited Data Set (LDS).** The researcher will also not name the organization in the doctoral project report that is published in Proquest. In preparing the LDS, Data Provider or designee shall include the **data fields specified as follows**, which are the minimum necessary to accomplish the research:

a. Background of IT professionals;
b. Turnover rates of IT professionals;
c. Exit surveys of IT professionals.

Responsibilities of Data Recipient. Data Recipient agrees to:

Use or disclose the LDS only as permitted by this Agreement or as required by law;

Use appropriate safeguards to prevent use or disclosure of the LDS other than as permitted by this Agreement or required by law;

Report to Data Provider any use or disclosure of the LDS of which it becomes aware that is not permitted by this Agreement or required by law;

Require any of its subcontractors or agents that receive or have access to the LDS to agree to the same restrictions and conditions on the use and/or disclosure of the LDS that apply to Data Recipient under this Agreement; and

Not use the information in the LDS to identify or contact the individuals who are data subjects.

Permitted Uses and Disclosures of the LDS. Data Recipient may use and/or disclose the LDS for its research activities only.

Term and Termination.

Term. The term of this Agreement shall commence as of the Effective Date and shall continue for so long as Data Recipient retains the LDS, unless sooner terminated as set forth in this Agreement.

Termination by Data Recipient. Data Recipient may terminate this agreement at any time by notifying the Data Provider and returning or destroying the LDS.

Termination by Data Provider. Data Provider may terminate this agreement at any time by providing thirty (30) days prior written notice to Data Recipient.

For Breach. Data Provider shall provide written notice to Data Recipient within ten (10) days of any determination that Data Recipient has breached a material term of this Agreement. Data Provider shall afford Data Recipient an opportunity to cure said alleged material breach upon mutually agreeable terms. Failure to agree on mutually agreeable terms for cure within thirty (30) days shall be grounds for the immediate termination of this Agreement by Data Provider.

Effect of Termination. Sections 1, 4, 5, 6(e) and 7 of this Agreement shall survive any termination of this Agreement under subsections c or d.

Miscellaneous.

Change in Law. The parties agree to negotiate in good faith to amend this Agreement to comport with changes in federal law that materially alter either or both parties' obligations under this Agreement. Provided however, that if the parties are unable to agree to mutually acceptable amendment(s) by the compliance date of the change in applicable law or regulations, either Party may terminate this Agreement as provided in section 6.

Construction of Terms. The terms of this Agreement shall be construed to give effect to applicable federal interpretative guidance regarding the HIPAA Regulations.

No Third Party Beneficiaries. Nothing in this Agreement shall confer upon any person other than the parties and their respective successors or assigns, any rights, remedies, obligations, or liabilities whatsoever.

Counterparts. This Agreement may be executed in one or more counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

Headings. The headings and other captions in this Agreement are for convenience and reference only and shall not be used in interpreting, construing or enforcing any of the provisions of this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, each of the undersigned has caused this Agreement to be duly executed in its name and on its behalf.

DATA PROVIDER	**DATA RECIPIENT**
Signed: ______________________________	Signed: _______________________
Print Name: __________________________	Print Name: ___________________
Print Title: ___________________________	Print Title: ____________________

Appendix C: Semistructured Questions

1. What strategies do you use to reduce the turnover rate among IT professionals?

2. What are the key strategies you have used to improve employee engagement?

3. What are the key strategies you have used to increase job embeddedness?

4. What are the key strategies to decrease work-life conflict?

5. What strategies or critical factors do you use to retain IT professionals?

6. What strategies are least effective / most effective in retaining IT professionals?

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

I will conduct my interviews with managers and supervisors within an IT company in southeastern Virginia. These managers have experience in strategies for hiring and maintaining talented IT professionals. I will use a semistructured face-to-face interview style with each participant at the participant's desired location, either at the company or at a comfortable setting to relax the participant. The same open-ended questions will be asked of all participants following this protocol for each participant:

1. I will begin by introducing myself, noting I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University, and I will outline the purpose of the study and the intent of the interview.

2. I will provide a copy of the informed consent form prior to the interview and will answer any questions pertaining to the form.

3. I will inform each the interview will be audio-recorded and will take approximately 30 minutes but will last no longer than 45 minutes.

4. I will assure each that no personally identifiable information will be included in the study and I will destroy all data collected after 5 years to help ensure confidentiality.

5. I will at this time ask if there are any questions before the interview begins.

6. The recorder will be started and the interview will begin.

7. Each participant will receive the exact questions in the same order to maintain consistency.

8. The recorder captures the voice data, questions and responses, while I observe the non-verbal actions of each participant while responding, taking notes in a journal.

9. The interview will conclude with the completion of all questions and securing the recording device.

10. Each participant will receive instructions on the member checking process. I will cover how I will transcribe and provide my interpretation of the responses, which I will e-mail within seven days so they can review the accuracy information. The participants will have seven days to review, comment, and confirm as applicable, then return to me via e-mail their concurrence.

11. If there are any questions or concerns, each participant will receive my contact information.

12. I will ask one final time if there are any questions before thanking the participant for the time to provide the responses and will present their gift card.