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Human Resource Strategies and Sustainability in Small Businesses

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Christopher Rice

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Human Resource Strategies and Sustainability in Small Businesses

by

Christopher M. Rice

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2018

Abstract

Research shows that due to a lack of strategy in managing human resources (HR), small businesses frequently close within the first 5 years of operation. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the strategies that HR managers used to maintain business operations for longer than the first 5 years. The targeted population comprised 2 owners of small business in North Carolina who used HR strategies successfully to sustain their businesses for longer than 5 years. Data collection methods included face-to-face, semistructured interviews and the review of the company documents associated with owners of the businesses and their attempts to remain in operation for longer than 5 years. A modified van Kaam method was used for data analysis. Three key themes emerged from data analysis: (a) effective leadership, (b) organizational structure, and (c) work climate. The results of the study indicated that HR strategies are critical to the sustainability of small businesses. The implications for positive social change include providing guidance to owners of small businesses regarding effective HR strategies that might help to sustain small businesses and their roles in job creation, innovation, competition, and economic growth in the United States.

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Dedication

I thank God first for providing me with the opportunity to complete this DBA journey. I dedicate this doctoral study to my mother, Gwendolyn Moody, and my wife, Crystal Rice, for their encouragement, support, and motivating me to complete this degree. When I felt like giving up, they reminded me about finishing what I started and completing the goal. They provided me with the ideal atmosphere for completing this study and allowed me the opportunity to conduct research, even while on vacation.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Many small businesses within the United States struggle to sustain operations beyond 5 years (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2014). There is a link between small businesses that close within their first 5 years and failures within their human resource (HR) departments. It is important to evaluate management styles and discuss changes in HR that lead to sustaining small businesses beyond the 5-year mark (Albuquerque, Filho, Nagano, & Philippsen, 2016). Some small business owners lack the knowledge, or ability, to create practices that contribute to sustaining their small businesses. Consequently, researching this phenomenon through an assessment on different levels can contribute to the sustainability of small businesses by providing information on successful strategies.

Background of the Problem

Many factors need to be addressed in examining small business owners sustaining their businesses beyond 5 years. One factor relating to the success of small businesses is whether small business owners have prior entrepreneurial experience (Bewaji, Yang, & Han, 2014). According to Bewaji et al. (2014), previous experience is strongly associated with a small business owner's ability to sustain his or her business. Understanding how and where to seek funding, a clear definition of organizational change, and how to implement it also make a difference in small business success or failure (Walizer, 2017). Furthermore, skills development and the use of training have a significant role in determining a business's success (U.S. Senate, 2013). Additionally, lack of education, wealth gaps, and discrimination have adverse effects on small business success

(Albuquerque et al., 2016). Regarding gaps in wealth, research indicates that many small businesses, frequently those associated minority status; fail to succeed if they lack the needed capital to sustain their efforts (U.S. Senate, 2013).

Aside from what can be considered internal factors, there are external factors that can affect a small businesses' success. For example, recent changes made by the National Labor Relations Board, have negatively influenced many small businesses (States News Service, 2017). By altering the definition of *joint employer* for franchises, the National Labor Relations Board interfered with many small business owners' capacity to grow their businesses. The global financial crisis that took place between 2007 and 2012 also affected the successful operation of many small businesses (DeYoung, Gron, Torna, & Winton, 2015). During the global financial crisis, lenders made decisions to limit the number of loans available to small business owners. Out of the 478 thriving businesses, valued at 1 billion dollars or less at the time of the crisis, 411 failed (DeYoung et al., 2015).

Because there are many factors that affect the success of small businesses, it is important to focus on successful strategies that small business owners have used to sustain their business. Therefore, I conducted this study to explore successful business owners' HR strategies. Exploration of small businesses struggling to survive beyond 5 years is necessary to determine how HR strategies impact sustainability.

Problem Statement

Seventy-five percent of small businesses operating in the United States fail to implement effective HR strategies for sustaining small businesses (U.S. Small Business

Administration, 2014). Ineffective use of HR strategies results in 50% of small businesses closing within 5 years (Albuquerque et al., 2016). The general business problem was that some small business owners are not implementing HR practices that contribute to sustaining their operations for long-term success. The specific business problem was that some small business owners lack HR strategies to sustain their small business beyond 5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore HR strategies small business owners use to sustain their small business beyond 5 years. The targeted population consisted of two small business owners from North Carolina who have demonstrated successful use of HR strategies for sustaining their small businesses beyond 5 years. The implications for positive social change include the potential for sustaining small business and providing guidance to new small business owners. Small businesses are important for job creation, innovation, competition, economic growth in the United States, and improving the quality of life within the communities they serve (Shukla & Shukla, 2014). Using effective HR strategies for small businesses can create social change by stabilizing businesses, reducing failure rates, and developing local economies for individual and community prosperity (Oriaku, 2012).

Nature of the Study

Researchers formulate methods for conducting studies based on three established methodologies: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method (Flick, 2014). The qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study because the focus was on identifying the

informational context affecting HR strategies for sustaining small businesses. Using the qualitative methodology for this study enabled me to obtain a rich understanding of the participants' HR strategies. The choice of qualitative method for this study was also appropriate to understand the behaviors of small business owners and strategies small business owners use.

Quantitative research is a research methodology addressing a difficult or complex phenomenon to quantify variables' relationships or differences (Leedy & Omrod, 2013). Researchers who use quantitative methodologies rely on numeric data using instrument-based questions (Yin, 2014). Therefore, the quantitative method lacks the perspective and depth needed in the current study. Mixed-method researchers use both qualitative and quantitative research designs to obtain information for identifying and solving problems (Sparkes, 2014), making it also not suitable for the study.

I considered four research designs for the study: (a) ethnography, (b) phenomenology, (c) narrative research, and (c) case study. Researchers use ethnographic research to describe groups or cultures representing complete environments (Yin, 2014). Researchers use phenomenology to explore the meanings of participants' lived experiences (Flick, 2014). Researchers use narrative analysis to investigate how people chronicle their lives and seek to understand the diversity at various levels of participants' stories (Flick, 2014). Finally, researchers use case studies to incorporate a methodological flexibility through diverse paradigms and both types and methods of data collection (Hyett, Kenny, & Kickson-Swift, 2014). The choice of a single case study design was chosen to provide insights into deeper issues concerning small business practices like

exploring HR strategies small business managers use to sustain their businesses. The case study design is beneficial when the focus of the research is to answer *what, how* and *why* questions, unlike other qualitative designs (Yin, 2014). The choice of a single case study approach was appropriate to explore what strategies certain small business owners used to enable their small businesses to survive beyond 5 years.

Research Question

The central research question for this study was as follows: What HR strategies do small business owners use to sustain their small business beyond 5 years?

Interview Questions

I addressed the following interview questions to answer my research question:

1. What human resource strategy or strategies did you incorporate in your small business to sustain operations beyond 5 years?
2. Were there HR strategies needed to assist in sustaining and improving your small business?
3. What major obstacles with human resource practices did you overcome to sustain your small business?
4. What actions have you taken to improve HR functions and sustain your business?
5. How might an interest in using diverse human resources affect the sustainability of your small business?
6. What other information would you like to share regarding strategies that you have developed and implemented to sustain your business beyond 5 years?

Conceptual Framework

Systems theory and total quality management (TQM) are the conceptual frameworks for the study. Systems theory is the study of the theoretical organization of occurrences, independent of the elements, types, or where and when they have occurred (Jenson, Leith, Doyle, West, & Miles, 2016). Von Bertalanffy (1972) first introduced systems theory in 1937 during a talk at the University of Chicago and again in a German journal in 1949. Von Bertalanffy used system theory to explore interactions among multiple components, objects, or events (Von Bertalanffy, 1972). Now, systems theory is used for studying interrelationships rather than individual components and patterns of change (Galea, 2012). System theory is focused on processes instead of structures, relationships instead of components, and interconnections instead of separate operations (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). It was useful to explore how external influences impact business leaders and business systems (see Jenson et al., 2016; see Lee & Green, 2015).

The second conceptual framework for the study, TQM, is a practice used by business and governmental staff to make businesses as competitive as possible while fulfilling an organization's potential by trying to improve the worth of the products produced, the services rendered, the people employed, the processes created, and the environments established (Goetsch & Davis, 2014), which can be done through teamwork. First used in the 1920s, TQM theory was later developed and used in the United States and Japan. TQM is unique because it is team oriented to encourage teamwork, rather than internal competition. However, TQM practitioners focus on customer expectations and satisfaction. TQM practitioners incorporate some of the

principles of transformational leadership to empower and enable employees to produce the best possible outcome for the customer and facilitate changes in small beneficial increments (Åslund & Ingelsson, 2015; Goldman, 2012). Using TQM can provide the customer superior products and more efficient services through an inclusive and comfortable work environment (Åslund & Ingelsson, 2015). Using TQM's approach, in conjunction with systems theory, may expand HR efforts in small businesses to enable them to survive beyond 5 years.

Operational Definitions

The operational terms used in this study are as follows.

Employee engagement: Employee engagement is an approach in the workplace, which allows employees to have an enhanced sense of well-being, have their needs met, be committed to their company's values and goals, and to contribute to the success of the business (Albercht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey, & Saks, 2015).

Employee retention: Employee retention is the ability of a company or business to retain employees (Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, and Pemberton-Jones, 2015).

Inspirational motivation: Inspiration motivation is focused on business leaders who have an inspiring vision and give employees the opportunity to grow. Optimism, providing meaning, and taking risks are associated with this type of motivation (Molenberghs, Prochilo, Steffens, Zacher, & Haslam, 201).

Transformational leadership: Transformational leadership is a type of leadership that inspires change in employees and organization. Transformational leadership is also

intended to create employees who can inspire themselves and others (Menegazzo, Cruz-Ortiz, Ortega-Maldonado, & Salanova, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are critical to conducting a valid and credible study. Researchers must be aware of what factors may or may not be in their control (Marshall & Roman, 2015). Having awareness of assumptions, limitations, and delimitations help support research.

Assumptions

Assumptions are aspects in a study out of a researcher's control (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). An assumption for this study was participants would be honest, truthful, and willing to share their experiences. However, because the participants were small business owners who have experienced small business success beyond 5 years, it was unlikely that participants would have a reason to withhold information.

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses associated with the decisions a researcher makes, in leading a study, that are challenging to control (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). Although a rare occurrence, the participants' capacity to understand the purpose for the study may limit their ability to communicate their thoughts about the topic. Another limitation may be the number of participants; however, I attempted to compensate for this through the data participants provided.

Delimitations

Delimitations are aspects of a study that, are under the control of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). The sample population included two small business owners from North Carolina who have demonstrated HR strategies for sustaining their businesses beyond 5 years. The participants used in this study were only from one region in North Carolina and from a limited number of industries. Thus, their responses may not allow for conclusions about other geographic locations and industries. However, the collection of data using interviews with small business owners may have provided information that can generalize to other HR manager populations.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was to identify strategies to assist small business owners to sustain business beyond 5 years. The study fills a gap in established literature and assists in developing knowledge for HR practices, with emphasis on sustainability. Understanding strategies for HR and business owners can contribute to sustainable business solutions and social outcomes through identifying the weaknesses and improving strengths.

Contribution to Business Practice

In this study, I evaluated the strategies small businesses use to develop HR procedures for business sustainability. HR principles have changed under the expansion of corporations (Ulrich, Brockbank, & Yeung, 2013), and leaders making strategy choices must rely on effective theories to reduce potential negative impacts. For small and medium enterprises, owners focus on operational aspects of the business to include

HR practices and strategies (Weisner & Millett, 2012). However, negative results such as stress are caused by increased production (Wiesner & Millett, 2012). This study was intended to help small business owners with developing HR practices to sustain a small business beyond 5 years.

Implications for Social Change

HR practices are critical to small businesses and their ability to serve local communities. Implementing effective HR practices to increase the sustainability of small business could improve the quality of life for employees, families, and communities (Ilies et al., 2017). Small businesses are important for job creation, progress, and for promoting economic growth in the United States (Shukla & Shukla, 2014). Sustaining small businesses can produce positive effects on the local economy, which can lead to further positive societal changes.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the HR strategies managers use to sustain their organization beyond 5 years. The targeted population consisted of two small business owners from North Carolina who have demonstrated HR strategies for sustaining their businesses beyond 5 years. The implications for positive social change include providing guidance to new small business owners that can help sustain small businesses. A review of the literature provided information regarding strategies small business owners can use to sustain their businesses. Exploring HR strategies used to promote successful approaches grounded this study and allowed for the

discussion on the different strategies used by small business owners to sustain their organizations beyond 5 years.

Search Strategy

A review of articles from journals, books, dissertations, and any other applicable material from the Walden University Library directed this literature review. Business, HR, and management databases allowed for the identification of applicable materials. The specific databases used were EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and SAGE Publications. The search criteria included the words and terms *business success*, *employee engagement*, *employee retention*, *inspirational motivation*, *leadership*, *organizational structure*, *resistance to change*, *systems theory*, *TQM*, and *transformational leadership*. The document consists of 93 references, 65 of which make up the literature review. Out of the 65 references, 90.5%, or 59, have a publication date within the last 5 years.

Organization of the Literature Review

The literature review served to introduce theories used to explain strategies some small business owners use to sustain their businesses. The literature review was used to explore business success and the structural components used by organizations. The structural components included how resistance to change can interfere with success and concepts such as effective leadership through transformation and inspiration. Employee retention and engagement was also focus of this study. Finally, the literature review includes the recent literature on HR strategies managers use to sustain their organization beyond 5 years. The review addressed the following areas regarding the study problem

statement: (a) systems theory, (b) TQM, (c) organizational structure, (d) resistance to change, (e) effective leadership, (f) transformational leadership and inspirational motivation, (g) employee retention, and (h) employee engagement.

Systems Theory and Total Quality Management

Systems theory and TQM were the conceptual frameworks for the study. Von Bertalanffy (1972) first introduced systems theory in 1937, using it to explore ventures between multiple components, objects, or events. Now systems theory is used for studying interrelationships rather than individual components and patterns of change (Von Bertalanffy, 1972). System thinkers focus on processes instead of structures, relationships instead of components, and interconnections instead of separation (Lee & Green, 2015). System thinking is a complex holistic network of interacting, reinforcing, and balancing processes (Goetsch & Davis, 2014), making this theory appropriate as the conceptual framework for this study. Accordingly, systems theory is useful for exploring the effects of an environment on an organization or system, which was useful for exploring how external influences impact both business leaders and business systems (see Jenson et al., 2016).

Systems Theory

Systems theory is an academic viewpoint used to analyze a whole phenomenon, rather than just the sum of its elements (Chikere & Nwoka, 2015). Additionally, the theory allows researchers to examine the interactions and relationships between each part of the system and posits that the functioning of a single autonomous element changes when the element interacts with other elements. Where business management is

concerned, the systems analyzed using the theory are independent, different, and interrelated elements working together to reach a (commonly shared) objective (Chikere & Nwoka, 2015). Businesses are typically comprised of various departments within which individuals and groups operate. Although each department carries out its part of the work independently, it is the interaction, action, and combined efforts of each department that allow the organization to turn its vision into reality.

Systems theory can be used to identify and understand the nature of internal subsystems, which are typically numerous and part of the organizational management system (Chikere & Nwoka, 2015). The degree to which these subsystems align with one another dictates organizational outcomes (Chikere & Nwoka, 2015). Subsystems become more complex as businesses expand, demanding an increased need for coordination between subsystems to take inputs and transform them into outputs (Lee & Green, 2015).

Additionally, more modern system theories, such as social system theory, are valuable because they help describe how businesses function (Von Schlippe & Frank, 2013). Social system theory shifts the way in which people are viewed in a system (Von Schlippe & Frank, 2013). Rather than viewing individuals as the elements within the system, social systems theorists posit that the system consists of processes, communications, and relationships that provide structure and create the patterns (Von Schlippe & Frank, 2013).

Another type of systems theory is work systems theory, which an organization can use to examine a business' functioning (Alter, 2013). Using work systems theory can reveal hidden connections between managerial and technical perspectives on business

process management (Alter, 2013). Another defining characteristic of work systems theory is its description of the business process within the overall structure of the organization. According to work systems theory, the business process is one of several work system elements found within an organization. Other elements of the system include participants, technology, products and services, customers, environment, and strategies, all of which are part of a life cycle that evolves as planned and unforeseen changes take place (Alter, 2013).

Finally, a specific type of system theory, often applied to the operations of businesses, is open systems theory. Open system theory is used to consider the relationships between businesses and the environments within which they operate. Part of the focus of open system theory is a business's capacity to adapt to changing environmental conditions (Polese, Mele, & Gummesson, 2014). Open systems theories relate to the second conceptual framework for the study, TQM.

Total Quality Management

TQM is a business practice used to make businesses as competitive as possible while attempting to improve the worth of the products produced, the services rendered, the people employed, the processes created, and the environments established (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). TQM is unique in that it is team oriented to encourage teamwork, rather than internal competition. TQM also places focus on customer expectations and satisfaction, as it helps provide the customer improved processes, better products, more efficient services, and an inclusive and comfortable work environment (Åslund & Ingelsson, 2015). TQM is an innovative process that can meet the needs of customers if

more businesses follow it (Loghmani & Dadashpour, 2015). TQM uses some of the principles of transformational leadership, which empowers employees to produce the best possible outcome for the customer as well as the employee and allows changes to occur in continuously improving increments (Åslund & Ingelsson, 2015).

TQM contained eight principle elements: (a) it is customer focused, (b) it incorporates total employee investment, (c) it is process-centered, (d) it is an integrated system, (e) it uses a strategic and systematic approach, (f) it continuously seeks to improve, (g) it uses science and facts to make decisions, and (h) it emphasizes communication (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). The first element, customer-focus, refers to how the customer is the ultimate decision-maker surrounding whether effort is worthwhile. Second, total employee investment occurs when all team members have empowerment and no one is in fear of job security or competition, resulting in a common goal. The third element, being process centered, TQM ensures that all inputs from suppliers are continuously transformed into viable outputs. Fourth, the integrated system element focuses ensures consistency and unification across function because of many different functional specialties in an organization. The fifth element, strategic/systematic approach, is synonymous with strategic planning, or management that holds quality as its most essential component (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). The sixth element, continual improvement, refers to continually improving such as using creativity and innovation to meet the clients' expectations (Loghmani & Dadashpour, 2015). Additionally, regarding the seventh element, using science and facts to make decisions provides an opportunity to understand how well the organization is performing and to make informed decisions

about the future. Finally, without communication, employee morale can suffer (Loghmani & Dadashpour, 2015). Although all aspects of TQM are essential for making this type of system work, creativity or innovation is a critical component.

Creativity is necessary for a company to achieve maximum productivity. For company success, creative thinking and strategic planning come from an emphasis on acknowledging and embracing the unique importance of people as capital (Åslund & Ingelsson, 2015). This often means the adoption of new leadership styles as a strategic response to the effective management of human capital (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). Historically, companies have operated as top-down, bureaucratic organizations, which discount what the employee has to offer the organization (Åslund & Ingelsson, 2015). Having a more transformational-type approach can allow businesses to have more creativity and innovation. Making a company or organization more flexible as a part of their strategic planning approach can allow for different ways of managing and using employees (Gerhart & Fang, 2015).

In addition to productivity and managing employees, business development needs creativity and innovation to improve on previously developed ideas, products, and processes. Organizations need to use validated models when using TQM principles (Strategic Innovation Consulting, 2015). However, there are numerous examples of poor strategic planning lacking creativity. The failure to use the creative element of TQM is evident through the decline of businesses such as Sears and RadioShack (Strategic Innovation Consulting, 2015). Alternately, Google and Apple demonstrate an organizations' capability to lead in product innovation, creativity, and market growth

(Galea, 2014). Leadership styles, such as TQM, are being used more frequently to use creativity as a strategy to manage human capital. The likelihood that creativity will occur in a company is measured by assessing the business approach being used. When TQM is successfully employed, creativity and business success are the natural consequences.

The conceptual frameworks of systems theory and TQM provide a lens through which to understand the context of the research (see Galea, 2012). As local, state, and federal economies comprise the foundation of the economy, the concept of systems theory can help explore which parts of an environment are necessary to stabilize and support HR in small businesses. Using TQM's innovation, in conjunction with systems theory, can help expand HR efforts in small businesses to enable these businesses to survive beyond 5 years.

Organizational Structure

A significant relationship is evident between the organizational structure and leadership structures in a company in which HR is essential in the management of leadership functioning (Lee & Green, 2015). Organizational structure expresses a company's culture through practices, values, and norms that define the way in which leaders and employees perform and conduct the business (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). Managing an organization's structure is important for facilitating organizational change (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). Consequently, the effective management of a company's structure is essential for the management of employee performance by HR (Lee & Green, 2015).

HR is a major factor for creating innovation within an organization. The environment in an organization is constantly changing, and small business owners must be involved in meeting market and customer needs and expectations. To be successful in innovation, managers need to support, plan, and foster the appropriate culture to allow for innovation, and small business owners must be involved in the future of the organization (Maier et al., 2014). Small business owners must work within a business to identify leaders and talent, to hire innovative people, and create new ideas, services, and products to help the company remain competitive forward (Longenecker & Fink, 2013).

Additionally, HR can help the company gain a competitive advantage through ways such as staffing for success, progressive HR thinking and planning, talent development, results-oriented performance management and appraisal systems, aligned compensation and incentive systems, and fostering an ethical culture (Longenecker & Fink, 2013). It is important to take HR beyond administrative activities to improve a business's ability to create competitive advantage through its people. HR practices can lead to stronger company performance and greater use of HR assets (Brad et al., 2014).

Past research has also shown the significance of HR practices in retaining employees and improving organizational outcomes. For example, Mulabe (2013) investigated strategic HR practices, the impact of these practices on employee retention and satisfaction, and to establish the joint effects of HR strategic orientation, organizational factors, and employee functioning on corporate performance and found a positive and statistically significant relationship between human resource management (HRM) strategic orientation and corporate performance. The findings of this study, as

affirmed by other studies (Kidombo, K'Obonyo & Gakuu, 2012; Maier et al., 2014), demonstrate the valuable role of HR in enhancing organizational outcomes. It is important to understand the significance of systems of HRM practices in enhancing firm performance and employee outcomes, as they are critical to the survival of any organization (Kidombo et al., 2012). Along similar lines, quality and durability of alliances is contingent on effective performance evaluation, communication, and positive relationships with customers, a necessity in sustaining any business (Wood, Dibben, & Meira, 2016).

Organizations devise HR policies and practices to retain employees based on furthering company commitment (Kidombo et al., 2012). For example, Estrada, Martin-Cruz, and Perez-Santana (2013) provided guidance for the implementation of innovative techniques related to team climates and its effect on innovation, noting that building successful businesses depends on including the human element in company decisions and in promoting open communication.

Resistance to change. Resistance to change impedes progress (Bellah, Zelbst, & Green, 2013). The organizational culture and the failure of leadership to engage stakeholders in buy-in contributes to resistance to change. Successful organizational change involves having an increased sensitivity toward the practices and processes of change. Anderson (2015) proposed an analytical approach to change, which requires examining the processes of change initiatives as opposed to the product or result alone. Anderson proposed that leaders should be proactive in identifying and responding to obstacles such as resistance to change, which can negatively affect the change process.

There are three phases of change process, which include a) mapping of work processes and organizational culture, identifying pitfalls and bottlenecks in the value stream; b) measuring activities for the selected pitfalls and bottlenecks; and c) targeting the implementation and continuous evaluation of measures chosen (Anderson, 2015). However, change is difficult for many different reasons. Some of the most common fears (on one or multiple levels) are experiencing a loss of control and power, coping with uncertainty, and anticipating more work (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). Regardless of the fear involved, fear of change is detrimental to the business process (Bellah et al., 2013). Managers who are resistant to change prevent needed cultural shifts from taking place in a business, and resistance to change makes managers less effective such as forgetting the voice of the customer.

Resistance to change and TQM. To successfully use TQM, business owners must address fear of change and create a cultural shift. To effectively create change, the focus cannot be on short-term benefits, as many businesses function with an outdated, bureaucratic culture that requires longer changes. TQM requires flexibility, quick and positive responses, respectful treatment of others, inclusion, and an expectation that the change will occur slowly (Radziwill, 2013). Additionally, TQM requires operating without fear; the application of a fearless TQM culture is multifaceted and involves a long-term approach (Radziwill, 2013). Shifting a company to a TQM culture takes place through an evolutionary process and requires patience, care, and sensitivity. If an advocate for change has a consistent willingness to grow and change, then creating a TQM culture is possible (Goetsch & Davis, 2014).

Business owners must institute practices that dispel fear regarding the effectiveness of their managers. It is the responsibility of management to have a positive attitude regarding the changes required to implement a TQM culture, or the changes will not be successful (Bellah et al., 2013). A managers' effectiveness becomes apparent in situations involving change, regardless of whether they are working away from or toward the change. Within any business it is necessary to address both fear and resistance to change in a constructive manner to hear the voice of the customer. When management listens to the voice of the customer the generation of both improved products and new approaches are introduced into the process (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). In their cross-sectional survey, Bharadwaj et al. (2012) discovered that when a business is customer-focused it hears the voice of the customer, which is critically important to business success.

Business owners need to encourage managers to find the variables, such as fear, that obstruct the implementation of a customer-focused change, and seek to remove them (Bharadwaj et al., 2012). Market leaders that use TQM to focus on the voice of the customer report that it works (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). Listening to the customer means moving past any resistance to change, which requires small business owners, especially those involved with TQM, to work through their resistance. A cultural shift must take place, to hear and honor the voice of the customer if true change is to occur. Only in this manner, can leadership move to the next level and effectively promote the success of businesses (Goetsch & Davis, 2014).

Effective Leadership

In analyzing the literature available, many theories were presented that focused on understanding behavior. Leadership as an idea connects individuals and businesses, affecting the procedures used by HR management to work with both employees and the company as a larger entity (McCleskey, 2014). Leadership is a set of behaviors HR leaders use to assist employees in reaching a common goal (Avolio and Yammarino, 2013). To achieve those aspects necessary to performance effective small business owners use leadership concepts to ensure that employees maintain a fully functioning and efficient system (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013).

Leadership style refers to how management relates to the organization and the form of collaboration used to lead and manage the organization effectively. Furthermore, business performance and smooth operation refer to the ability of a group to reach goals and objectives, and is an indication of the production level of those within the company (Rowitz, 2013). Understanding different leadership strategies can provide insight into the link between the behavior of small business owners and an organization's overall performance.

An understanding of the effects of leadership style on small business success allows for a broad view of the relationship between leadership strategies and performance in a small business setting. Given the changes in technology and global environments leadership is a more complex topic than in the past (Akerlof & Snower, 2016). The way leadership functions within a business setting is impacted by (a) ease in accessing information, (b) new technologies, (c) the variety, diversity in the talent available, as well

as shifting politics, all affect the way leadership functions within a business setting (Stoller, 2013). Stoller (2013) characterized traditional leadership as bureaucratic and transactional in style.

Traditional transactional leaders tend to evaluate and measure employee and organizational performance through supervision, analysis, and control, often leading to ineffective leadership practices (McCleskey, 2014). In the today's business world, managers and leaders need to redefine outdated policies and strategies to respond to the changing nature of the business and global landscape (Chemers, 2014). As changes take place, either within a company or in response to an external event, new challenges arise, creating the need to use leadership strategies that will improve communication, diversify approaches, and transform the company to instigate business success (Stoller, 2013).

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is a business approach gaining value as a way in which to understand and explore leadership (McCleskey, 2014). Researchers have discovered that employees tend to respect and follow transactional leaders given their dynamic value systems, and in turn, transactional leaders are generally open-minded, tolerant, and innovative (McCleskey, 2014). Transformational leadership inspires trust in employees, and proponents of the model approach achievements in work to attain greater personal and organizational goals (Menegazzo et al., 2015). Transformational leaders inspire motivation, creativity, and innovation in their employees. Transformational leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to employees and their approach results in higher returns and increased satisfaction for organizations and customers (Menegazzo et al., 2015).

In the study by Ghasabeth, Soosay, and Reaiche (2015), they sought to investigate the effectiveness of transformational leadership, among other styles, as the ideal form of leadership. The researchers' goal was to ascertain if transformational leadership enabled businesses to accomplish sustainable competitiveness as they operated in global markets (Ghasabeth et al., 2015). The authors argued that it was impossible for any organization to be successful within the business world without the implementation of effective leadership. The transformational leadership model is best suited for promoting longevity within competitive and highly innovative businesses, because managers who use this model facilitate innovation and learning, which creates a shared vision that propels an organization toward the future (Ghasabeth et al., 2015). Ghasabeth, et al.'s study was useful to explore as it augments the conclusions of other findings encountered in this review and effectively supports the versatility of the transformational leadership model in satisfying the needs of the organization and the company.

Another study, by Mokhber, Khairuzzaman, and Vakilbashi (2015) expanded the body of knowledge regarding the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational innovation at the organizational level. Based on the findings of their study, the authors posited there was a direct positive effect from transformational leadership on organizational innovation. Although Mokhber et al. argued that many positive characteristics have a statistically positive relationship with organizational innovation, individualized stimulation and inspirational motivation were most highly related. The authors concluded that transformational leadership not only facilitates innovation within an organization, but it also ensures market success (Mokhber et al., 2015).

Relating to a leader's personality, authors Deinert, Homan, Boer, Voelpel, and Gutermann (2015) explored how the elements of transformational leadership connect to a leader's personality and performance. To improve the understanding of the transformational leadership model, the authors argued that different personality trait permutations can lead to different leadership behaviors (Deinert et al., 2015). In this study, Deinert et al. analyzed 58 studies, and discovered that the transformational leadership model will further widen a readers' understanding of the influential power of the leadership style. A leader's behavior and performance dictates how members of an organization respond to change and can trigger behavioral outcomes in subordinates that can lead to negative or positive behavioral patterns (Deinert et al., 2015). The longevity of an organization rests upon solid and open-minded leadership and it is important to explore the projection of certain behaviors and outputs on the organization as a whole (Deinert et al., 2015).

To further connect transformational leadership and behavior, Avolio and Yammarino (2013) noted four different behavior types: intellectual stimulation, charismatic leadership, individual consideration, and inspirational motivation (Stoller, 2013). Intellectually stimulating behavior results in employees who benefit by having the freedom to think creatively and create. In this environment, leaders encourage levelheadedness, diversity, problem-solving techniques, and frame of mind as the best method to approach a topic (Stoller 2013).

Secondly, charismatic leadership involves engaging employees in believing in a certain vision, and employees benefit from taking pride in their work and in their

accomplishments. Leaders who exhibit charismatic leadership often obtain considerable respect and trust from their followers, resulting in a focus on a goal that stresses the benefit to individuals and businesses (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). The third characteristic noted within transformational leadership, is individual consideration. The focus of individual consideration leadership relates to skillfully training employees and personally developing the individual (Deinert et al., 2015). Managers frequently use this basic form of leadership to boost employee development through mentoring and coaching, while at the same time remaining cognizant of individual styles and preferences (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013).

The fourth characteristic, inspirational motivation, is the process in which a leader demonstrates functioning at a high level of optimism and vision. Hence, inspirational motivation sets the standard of the behavior for the employees and is extremely useful, as employees tend to respect inspirational leaders (Gilding, Gregory, & Cosson, 2015). Leaders often use charismatic and inspirational leadership skills interchangeably as they have certain attributes in common, while inspirational leaders have charisma and are focused on the greater good of their organizations, charismatic leaders inspire their followers with a relationship structure focused on the leader (Ebrahimi & Azmi, 2015; Renko, El Tarabishy, Carsrud, & Brännback, 2015). Inspirational motivation leadership is different from charismatic leadership in that inspirationally motivating leaders introduce a sense of higher purpose to their followers, and the communicating of clear objectives and expectations encourages employees to perform their best (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). All four behavior types associated with leadership hold value for the

transformational leadership approach, and can provide small business owners the tools they need to promote dynamic change in a business setting, but inspirational motivation may be the most powerful form of transformational leadership (Gilding et al., 2015).

Inspirational motivation. Inspirational motivation is a trademark of most inspirational or transformational leaders. According to McKibben, Umstead, and Borders (2017), transformational leaders exhibit the 4-factor characteristics of (a) inspirational motivation, (b) individualized consideration, (c) idealized influence, and (d) intellectual stimulation. Idealized influence empowers leaders to act as positive role models to those they are inspiring, while through inspirational motivation, leaders and followers make a positive connection with examples and symbols (McKibben et al., 2017). Furthermore, intellectual stimulation enables leaders to awaken the creative capabilities of those they lead, while at the time using individualized consideration to recognize and harness the power of individuality within team members (Moriano, Molero, Topa, & Mangin, 2014).

According to Gilding et al. (2015), inspirational skills include having the knowledge, talent, and ability to motivate, as well as being able energize individuals or groups through speech, action, or conduct that propels individuals to pursue a compelling vision of a defined future. Inspirational motivation includes the ability to teach the skills required to empower, provide direction, communicate about a shared purpose-driven goal, and develop a vision toward defined collaborative endeavors (Guinote, 2017). There is a relationship between inspirational motivation and inspirational leadership as the presence of one always signifies the availability of the other in the same individual (Qu, Janssen, & Shi, 2015). Further, both are founded on trustworthiness, require a passion for

teams, promote active listening, and express positive communication that is based on obtaining a clear objective (Qu, Janssen, & Shi, 2015).

Inspirational leadership involves the provision of resources, development of excitement, motivation to change, and facilitation of the necessary momentum to spur employees and stakeholders in an accountable and responsible manner (Farzin, Kahreh, Hesani, & Khalouei, 2014). As noted by Farzin et al. (2014), the ability to inspire is part skill and part gift; the gift aspect is the genetic intelligence that people acquire at birth, while education and training constitute creating a balance related to obtaining skills (Higgs & Dulewicz, 2016). A person's ability to attain inspirational motivation occurs through a series of stages and focuses on an awareness of one's self, one's environment, one's upbringing, and the training, and education one receives (Molenberghs et al., 2015).

The initial stage is the preparation period, in which one begins to be conscious of the limitations around them and begins to nurture visions regarding how to foster change that influences others (Higgs & Dulewicz, 2016). The second, or incubation phase, follows the preparation period and is when managers begin working on a model of change based on their observations of what is taking place within an existing organization, by developing mental pictures of an idealized version of their organization and (Higgs & Dulewicz, 2016). The third stage of inspiration is the illumination phase, at which point managers communicate their visions to others about events driven by factors in their environment (Liang, Hsu, & Chang, 2013). The characteristics of this period are manifested through an elevation of positive emotion, backed by the frequency of

repetition, and learned admiration of oneself (Higgs & Dulewicz, 2016). The fourth and final stage in the adoption of the inspirational method is the verification phase, likened to a stage of persistence in which managers, with minimal resistance, motivate, communicate, and energize their teams toward a shared vision of the future (Liang et al., 2013).

In an article by Camisón and Villar-López (2014), the authors studied important and associated aspects relating to success within organizations. One of the main topics discussed in the article was innovation. Camisón and Villar-López asserted that businesses experience success by creating innovative policies and pay structures, and that these practices improve employee morale. Leadership was an underlying issue addressed in the HR of these businesses, as initially HR did not have the support of leadership to institute the needed changes (Camisón & Villar-López, 2014). Nevertheless, HR ultimately received the support they needed from management and the company was able to make a complete turnaround (Camisón & Villar-López, 2014).

Managers develop inspirational leadership skills through the conscious effort to build trust in teams through the adoption of inclusion and mentoring as a standard practice, and the alignment of people to the vision, mission, and values of their organizations (Paillé, Chen, Boiral, & Jin, 2014). The ability of managers to inspire their followers depends on the leader's knowledge of their employees' capacities, their respect for an individual's dignity, their ability to establish a culture of openness and fairness, and their ability to encourage honest feedback (Consiglio, Borgogni, Di Tecco, & Schaufeli, 2016). Inspiring leaders thrive because they facilitate change, they empower

employee growth, they delegate tasks to enhance their followers potential, and they adopt mentoring strategies with their mentees (Consiglio et al., 2016).

Inspirational leaders also foster group cohesion and encourage shared purpose and engagement through their ability to communicate and energize their employees and through their ability to teach collaboration (Consiglio et al., 2016). Inspiring leaders generate enthusiasm and excitement, and obtain commitment from their employees by translating the vision, mission, and values of the organization into terms relevant to the work employees perform (Jyoti & Dev, 2015). Inspirational leaders are committed to continued success and transformation; they lead others by example toward strategies that culminate in reaching their desired destinations, they encourage and foster innovation in their organizations, and they work towards reducing resistance to organizational processes (Madison, 2015).

In a further exploration of inspirational motivation, Panagiotakopoulos (2014) examined the concept in relation to the way a leader demonstrates sensitivity toward employees. For example, the leader supports an employee's beliefs, engendering trust through self-sacrifice, which motivates and stimulates employee performance (Jyoti & Dev, 2015). In one study, Panagiotakopoulos noted that, based on the findings, 87% of active leaders believed motivation centered on the traditional reward and punishment model, while only 13% of the leaders believed in involving staff in the decision-making process and providing recognition, a main principle of inspirational motivation.

The data gathered for Panagiotakopoulos' (2014) quantitative study included 30 CEO's and 143 employees, of which 113 participated. The focus of the protocol was to

draw attention to the motivational techniques used by the participating leaders to facilitate the examination of the impact the techniques had on their employees (Madison, 2015). The organizational benefits stemming from the adoption of inspirational motivation out-weighed those produced by fear-based motivation in the end (Panagiotakopoulos, 2014). Despite the smaller number of leaders engaging in the use of the inspirational model, the employees displayed much higher levels of performance, loyalty, staying power, enthusiasm, and overall satisfaction (Panagiotakopoulos, 2014). Although the study had a smaller sample size than other quantitative studies, it was still useful for deepening the readers understanding of the benefit and impacts of transformational leadership model on organizational performance (Panagiotakopoulos, 2014).

In another study, Breevaart et al. (2013) added to leadership literature by examining the daily influence of transformational leadership, contingent reward, and active management-by-exception on followers' daily work engagement. The authors compared the unique contribution of these leadership behaviors in the work environment to examine *how* these leadership behaviors influenced the followers' daily work engagement. To conduct the study, 61 naval cadets, travelling by sail ship, filled out a diary questionnaire for 34 days (Breevaart et al., 2013). Multilevel regression analyses revealed after controlling for followers' work engagement the previous day, cadets were more engaged on days their leader demonstrated leadership more aligned with the transformational model and contingent reward (Breevaart et al., 2013). Breevaart et al. found active management-by-exception to be unrelated to followers' work engagement.

As predicted by Breevaart et al. (2013), transformational leadership and contingent reward contributed to a more favorable work environment (more autonomy and support), while active management-by-exception resulted in a less favorable work environment (less autonomy) for the cadets. The study highlighted the importance of daily leadership for the followers' daily work engagement (Breevaart et al., 2013). Finally, the relationship between inspirational motivation and organizational innovation informs dynamic strategies proposed by leaders in providing an environment that can boost creativity and reduce employee turnover (Mokhber et al., 2015).

Employee Retention

Regarding employee retention, Cloutier et al. (2015) conducted an empirical study to explore strategies that business leaders can employ to increase employee retention. Cloutier et al. acknowledged that employee turnover impacts organizational performance and increases costs, and, as such synthesized articles by various authors regarding employee retention to explore how various companies reduced voluntary turnover (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014). Cloutier et al. (2015) theorized the main factors used to improve employee retention included: (a) person-organization fit, (b) communication, (c) employee diversity, (d) the assessment of employment candidates, and (e) employee training and development. The authors determined organizational leaders could increase employee retention by encouraging the use of effective communication, hiring a diverse workforce, selecting the appropriate candidates based on skill level and organizational fit, and by offering employee development and training programs (Cloutier et al., 2015). Cloutier et al. (2015) contributed significantly to the issue of increased employee

retention, and included useful recommendations in relation to strategies for improving employee retention.

In another study relating to employee retention, Inabinett and Ballaro (2014) conducted a quantitative study and used correlation to examine the relationship between corporate culture and individual values to determine the impact on employee retention. With permission from their organizational leadership branch, the researchers conducted surveys with members of the Missouri Society of Certified Public Accountants (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014). Each member surveyed was an employee of a small to midsized businesses, and Inabinett and Ballaro (2014) obtained 229 useable surveys. In gathering information for the data provided, the investigators hypothesized that matching individual values to organizational culture significantly improves employee retention; however, the results demonstrated only a slight correlation between the variables (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014). Ultimately, Inabinett and Ballaro revealed nearly 55% of participants agreed that matching the two variables was significantly related to personal job satisfaction and the decision to stay with employers, which is enough to grant validity to their study. Through their study, Inabinett and Ballaro provided valuable information regarding strategies small business owners could use to increase employee retention. The authors included useful information and realistic strategies that business leaders can use to increase employee retention, and highly stressed the importance of identifying the fit between potential job candidates and the organization (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014).

To address the rising concerns about staff retention, and the increased importance attached to individuals' career adaptability, Coetzee and Stoltz (2015) explored how

career adaptability related to employees' satisfaction with factors that organizations regard important for retention. The authors conducted an established correlation analysis with a sample of 321 employees operating within the South African automotive industry (Coetzee & Stoltz, 2015). Coetzee and Stoltz's (2015) results revealed that career adaptability, especially career concern, significantly explained the participants' level of satisfaction with their experiences of the career opportunities, work-life balance, training and development, and characteristics of the jobs offered by the company. Similarly, to Inabinett and Ballaro (2014), Coetzee and Stoltz's (2015) findings suggested that employees' career concerns, goals and plans, and how these related to retention practices, were important for retention.

Given that turnover of high-performing workers is costly to an organization, Voigt and Hirst (2015) conducted a quantitative study to examine the relationship between an employees' intention to leave a company, and their motivation and commitment. Voigt and Hirst used questionnaires to survey 1,030 employees of a large retail banking institution in Australia, to which 784 individuals responded. The researchers used the regulatory focus theory to determine how a prevention and promotion focus regulates an individual's behavior in attempting to achieve a goal (Voigt & Hirst, 2015). Other researchers, in concert with Voight and Hirst (2015), theorized that motivation and affective commitment increase for high performing employees, as recognition influences a positive and fulfilling work experience (Gilding et al., 2015). Voight and Hirst (2015) also hypothesized that performance influences the relationship between a promotion focus and the intention to leave. Therefore, a stronger correlation

exists between these two factors for high performers compared to low performers (Voigt & Hirst, 2015). The results of both studies revealed that a promotion focus and affective commitment are negatively related to the intention to leave for high performers at a given company (Gilding et al., 2015; Voight & Hirst, 2015). However, the researchers did not uncover a significant relationship between the factors for lower performing employees, suggesting that the relationship was weaker for workers not receiving positive reinforcement (Voigt & Hirst, 2015).

Similarly supported by the findings associated with employee retention was the work of Stoilkovska, Ilieva, and Gjakovski (2015), which revealed that respected employees retain their positions. The authors further reviewed the issues associated with equal employment opportunities as they relate to employee recruitment and selection (Stoilkovska et al., 2015). The issues addressed included potential discrimination based on origin (national and social), gender, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, and others (Stoilkovska et al., 2015; Voight & Hirst, 2015). Coetzee and Stoltz (2015) defined equal employment opportunities as the process used for employees to access jobs, promotions, training, and other opportunities within an organization. Organizations stipulate equal employment opportunities in advertisements and job descriptions, and various regulations exist to guide employers in delivering equal employment opportunities to employees (Stoilkovska et al., 2015). However, it is most effective when employers treat others with equality and integrity, with or without equal employment opportunity regulations (Stoilkovska et al., 2015).

The responsibility to ensure equal employment opportunities are adhered to within a company is the responsibility of HRM and business leaders. Stoilkovska et al. (2015) argued that as HRMs become strategic in their approaches, they can ensure equal opportunities in employment practices, results that permeate throughout the organization and increase employee retention. Affirmative action plans put forth by the government have resulted in the mandating of organizations to hire minorities, further ensuring that hiring occurs for minority groups as well as assisting to create an environment where all individuals are safe and respected (Voight & Hirst, 2015). The purpose of a diverse recruitment strategy should be to search for the most qualified candidates to fill organizational vacancies (Stoilkovska et al., 2015). Although this can be an extremely expensive process in fulfilling an organization's strategic plan, concerned leadership will hire equally, based on the knowledge, abilities, and skills of an employee, and therefore increase retention and organizational success (Ramona & Anca, 2013).

Employee Engagement and Retention

In relation to employee engagement, Smith and Macko (2014) directed a quantitative study to examine the relationship between employee engagement and turnover. Using a 20-question questionnaire, the authors collected data from 64 store-level employees of a major retailer in the United Kingdom (Smith & Macko, 2014). The researchers determined that while turnover intentions do not predict actual turnover, employee disengagement could potentially become a larger issue in the future, for some companies (Smith & Macko, 2014). Smith and Macko (2014) did not find a definitive relationship between employee and engagement, yet acknowledged that results are

indicative of an unclear relationship, and stressed the need for further study based on their hypothesis that employee engagement creates employee retention. Nevertheless, Smith and Macko (2014) did discover that variables negatively influencing employee engagement and leading to dissatisfaction included: poor managerial communication, negative perceptions of management, and lack of employee involvement in decision-making processes.

Anwar, Nisar, Khan, and Sana (2014) conducted a qualitative study to explore the importance of talent management as it relates to organizational performance and the relationship between talent management and employee attraction, retention, and engagement. Anwar et al. (2014) used a talent management conceptual framework to conduct their study, providing a detailed explanation of the framework, and demonstrating how they used the framework to validate their study. The authors interviewed bank managers from various banks to determine which factors helped to increase employee engagement and retention (Anwar et al., 2014). Anwar et al. (2014) theorized that using talent management could improve organizational performance and create competitive advantages. The authors ascertained utilizing effective talent management strategies positively influences organizational performance, competitive advantage, and talent positioning, resulting in significant levels of employee engagement and retention (Anwar et al., 2014).

In another study relating to employee engagement and retention, Albercht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey, and Saks (2015) supported a strategic engagement model, which used numerous engagement-related HRM practices effectively. The engagement

related practices were: (a) job demands, (b) organizational climate, (c) job resources, (d) the psychological experiences of safety, (d) meaningfulness, (e) availability at work, (f) employee engagement, (g) individual, group, and organizational performance, and (h) competitive advantage (Albercht et al., 2015). According to the results of the study, the employee engagement practice indicated actively disengaged employees to be at 20%, and globally 40% of employees had low engagement levels (Albercht et al., 2015).

Albercht et al. (2015), as well as Smith and Macko (2014), asserted that employers need HRM policies, practices, and procedures to impact employee engagement and retention. Albercht et al.'s (2015) work further depicted the inextricable link between job factors and organizational factors, individual employee psychological and motivational factors, employee outcomes, organizational outcomes and competitive advantage. Their theoretical framework supported the argument that HRM systems affect competitive advantage, and common themes revealed within the results included: (a) employee selection, (b) training, (c) reward, (d) job design, and (e) motivation (Albercht et al., 2015). In addition to how these practices could lead to increased productivity, creativity, cooperation, and the needed involvement that results in improved performance, profit, and growth (Albercht et al., 2015).

In a study by Platonova, Hernandez, and Moorehouse (2013), related to HR engagement strategies, the authors assessed HR professionals in their strategic planning practices to implement innovative HR approaches. Platonova et al. used binary logistic regression to analyze data from a total of 63 surveys from CEOs and HR executives from 48 hospitals. The results indicated a strong relationship between HR strategies, the

engagement of HR professionals with organizational strategic planning, and three key initiatives including staffing for key vacancies, culture, and values (Platonova et al., 2013). They also analyzed individual and team compensation based on goal-oriented results to indicate the success of employee engagement and retention, the results of which were positive (Platonova et al., 2013). The researchers did note, however, that though many benefits are associated with the HR strategies, business leaders did not always implement them, which lead to a reduction in employee engagement and retention (Platonova et al., 2013).

The studies used in relation to employee engagement and retention are important to understanding causes of employee turnover and engagement. It is imperative that small business owners, employee managers, business scholars, and practitioners understand it is the business's responsibility to erect practices that engage and retain employees. The findings from these studies can supply information to design effective strategies to influence employee engagement and to prevent employee turnover. Implementing strategies to help improve managerial communication, and help employees believe their opinions count, can improve what takes place in the workplace environment and can encourage employees to remain with an organization.

Transition

The purpose of this qualitative single case study is to explore HR strategies managers use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. A review of the literature provided information regarding strategies small business owners can use to successfully sustain their organizations beyond 5 years. The literature review served to introduce:

success and the concepts akin to the structural components used by organizations, how resistance to change can interfere with success, and concepts such as effective leadership, through transformation and inspiration. Employee retention and engagement were a focus of the literature review, and the review addressed assessments of the following areas related to the study's problem statement: (a) systems theory (b) TQM, (c) organizational structure, (d) resistance to change, (e) effective leadership, (f) transformational leadership and inspirational motivation, (g) employee retention, and (h) employee engagement. Section 2 covers the qualitative methodology used in this study and includes a description of the population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, and reliability and validity of the results. Finally, the data presented in Section 3 consist of the findings of this study, with implication for applications to professional practice, for social change, and for recommendations for future study.

Section 2: The Project

Some small business owners lack HR strategies to sustain their small business beyond 5 years (Albuquerque et al., 2016). Additionally, 75% of small businesses operating in the United States fail to implement effective HR strategies for sustaining small businesses (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2014). In this study, I explored strategies small business owners can use to survive beyond 5 years. The following section includes the role of the researcher, an overview of the research methods, and research design. Furthermore, it includes a discussion of participant information, population, and sampling, data collection instruments and techniques, data organization, data analysis, as well as reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore HR strategies small business owners use to sustain their small business beyond 5 years. The targeted population consisted of two small business owners from North Carolina who have demonstrated successful use of HR strategies for sustaining their small businesses beyond 5 years. The implications for positive social change include the potential for sustaining small business and providing guidance to new small business owners. Small businesses are important for job creation, innovation, competition, economic growth in the United States, and improving the quality of life within the communities they serve (Shukla & Shukla, 2014). Using effective HR strategies for small businesses can create social change by stabilizing businesses, reducing failure rates, and developing local economies for individual and community prosperity (Oriaku, 2012).

Role of the Researcher

Researchers can conduct qualitative studies in numerous ways (Stake, 2013). In this qualitative single case study, I collected information to understand the different strategies small business owners use to sustain their small business beyond 5 years. I conducted interviews with open-ended questions (see Appendix A), ensured participants knew that what they shared would remain confidential, and informed participants that they could choose not to participate in the study at any time. I remained objective in reviewing the information presented by the participants, and I minimized researcher bias when analyzing the data. As a resident of the area, an advocate for small businesses, and occasional user of local businesses, I used member checking to ensure that the results are impartial and that the study is valid (see Stake, 2013). In recording and analyzing the transcript data, I used triangulation to verify the accuracy of my results (see Denzin & Giardina, 2016). Researchers must also adhere to certain procedures and ethical principles throughout the research process (Yin, 2014). Any information shared by participants of the study is confidential and used for research purposes only.

Participants

For this study, I used two small business owners from North Carolina who have demonstrated successful use of HR strategies for sustaining their small businesses. The selection criteria for the business owners required them to be owners and those who have been in business a minimum of 5 years. To ensure that I obtained the necessary data, I used participants who are qualified (see Yin, 2014), which meant that they had experienced success in their businesses. After receiving approval from Walden

University and the Internal Review Board (IRB), I contacted potential participants by phone. As I am familiar with North Carolina, I have knowledge of which businesses have been successfully operating beyond 5 years. Using purposive sampling (Stake, 2013), I asked if the potential participants met the eligibility criteria to take part in the study.

Purposive sampling is in line with qualitative studies, which allow for the selection of individuals who are knowledgeable about a certain phenomenon (Yin, 2014). After obtaining interest from potential participants, and after verifying their eligibility criteria, I explained the purpose of the study. I then asked participants if they were willing to meet for a face-to-face interview. At this point, an interview meeting time was set up that was convenient for both the participant and myself. In conducting the interviews, I brought a consent form and asked participants to sign the form, which explained any expectations related to the study.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

I used a qualitative method to explore successful strategies small business owners used to survive beyond 5 years in North Carolina. A qualitative methodology forms the groundwork for the study and helps find the best method for outlining and communicating the outcome of the study (Yin, 2014). This qualitative study was comprised of semistructured interviews through which I gathered explanations from the participants experiencing small business success (see Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). I asked interview questions in an open-ended, iterative style, and I was flexible to allow participants to respond in a comfortable manner.

Qualitative studies are exploratory and appropriate when the researcher seeks insight into the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations related to behavior (Yilmaz, 2013). Qualitative studies are also subjective, where the researcher interprets information from participants (Yilmaz, 2013). A quantitative methodology would not have been appropriate for this study. Qualitative and quantitative researchers use different research strategies, processes, and inquiry procedures (Yilmaz, 2013). The goal of a quantitative researcher is to explore the relationship between independent and dependent variables in a certain population (Stake, 2013). Additionally, quantitative researchers use randomization to achieve internal validity (Stake, 2013). However, the nature of this study did not warrant randomly assigning small business owners into groups who consistently achieve a certain outcome. A design that excludes randomization, based on obtaining numerous participants, was better suited to this study. A mixed-method technique was also not appropriate because it involves both qualitative and quantitative methods in conducting one study (Stake, 2013). Using a qualitative research method, instead of a quantitative or a mixed method, allowed for a deeper understanding of the topic.

Research Design

Multiple case studies include questions to ask *why* and *how* (Yin, 2014), which are consistent with the interview questions used in this study. Considering multiple interview questions to gather data was consistent with interviewing small business owners as participants (see Stake, 2013). In selecting a research design, the single case study approach was chosen over phenomenology, ethnography, or narrative because of

the purpose of this study and the type of data needed. For example, phenomenology is suitable to explore participants' lived experiences (Flick, 2014), but the objective of this study was not to explore the participants' experiences. Ethnographic researchers explore the behaviors, beliefs, customs, and any social behaviors of a populace (Hyett et al., 2014), which was also not appropriate because the purpose of the study was not to understand the behaviors or customs a population. The single case study design allows for exploration of the occurrence from a broader perspective, while still constrained by time, events, activities, and individuals.

A single case study design was appropriate for exploring successful strategies of small business owners in North Carolina. Case study designs allow for the use of multiple sources to construct a comprehensive picture of the topic and permits participants to respond to face-to-face interviews (Yin, 2014). Data saturation happens when nothing new develops from interviewing the participants of a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). During the interviews, I requested that participants provide answers to questions until they believe they have no more to add. After reviewing what was shared via the interview transcripts, I asked the participants to read the information to determine if what I had was correct and if they wanted to add information. At the point when there was nothing more to add, I assumed data saturation had occurred. Consistent with the purpose and questions explored in the study, the single case design was the most appropriate, as it includes the use of triangulation and data saturation practices. Triangulation occurred by comparing the interview and literature data. The last steps involved precise coding of the data, and data analysis to reveal significant themes (Yin, 2014).

Population and Sampling

I used purposive sampling to conduct this single case study. Purposive sampling is used in qualitative studies for selecting a demonstrative population (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). The purposive technique helps with the selection of groups or individuals experienced with the topic of study (Ritchie et al., 2013). Random sampling facilitates studies in which data generalizability is a concern (Ritchie et al., 2013); however, generalizability was not addressed in this study, so I chose purposive sampling. In this study, I used two small business owners who offer products or services within North Carolina, and whose businesses have successfully survived beyond 5 years. I justified the number of participants based on Yin (2014), who asserted that a study is valid based on the depth of information provided by the participants.

I did not consider the study authentic until data saturation occurred and the participants had no new information to offer (see Stake, 2013). The selection criterion for the small business owners required them to have been in business a minimum of 5 years. To acquire interviewees, I contacted potential participants by phone. I asked if the potential participants met the eligibility criteria to join the study. After obtaining interest from potential participants, and after verifying their eligibility criteria, I described the purpose of the study. I then asked participants if they would be willing to meet for a face-to-face interview. At this point, I scheduled an interview meeting time that was convenient for both the participant and myself. When I conducted the interviews, I brought a consent form and asked participants to sign the form, which explained any

expectations related to the study. I met with participants in a location that is comfortable for them, yet private enough to keep what they shared confidential.

Ethical Research

To ensure the research is ethical, before gathering any data, I first gained approval from the Walden University IRB (approval no. 05-23-18-0648769). I endeavored to ensure (a) protection of the participants, (b) adherence to the recruitment plan, (c) protection of the research participants' privacy, (d) respect for their rights, and that (e) the informed consent process was followed. I asked participants who participated to sign the informed consent form. The consent arrangement, together with my ethical behavior, aided me in protecting the participants' rights in this study. To ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, their identities, those of their organizations, and all information collected will remain confidential. The participants were aware they could leave the study at any time, and they had the choice to respond to only the interview questions they found acceptable. The participants could withdraw without penalty and had their right not to participate at the start of each interview explained to them (see Yin, 2014).

The data gathered during this study will stay in a locked filing cabinet that only I will have permission to access. The data will be stored for 5 years; after 5 years, I will destroy the data by deleting material and shredding the hard copies, which follows common procedures (Stake, 2013; Yin, 2014). To minimize business owner's potential discomfort, I did not share with other research participants, and I informed the participants that these findings will be used for research purposes. I anticipated a lack of

perceived physical, legal, or economic risk for participants, as well as no direct incentive for taking part in the study. I did not provide participants with financial compensation, although according to Dinh et al. (2014), participants may experience nonmonetary motivations for participating in a study.

Data Collection Instruments

Yin (2014) identified several sources of data used in qualitative research, these consist of the following: (a) interviews, (b) documentation, (c) physical artifacts, (d) direct observation, (e) archival records, and (f) participant observation. Yin further stated that not all sources are needed in any single study. In the study, I used participant interviews to obtain data and results. In addition to identifying myself as the primary data collection instrument, I interviewed participants using a set of written semistructured interview questions in a one-on-one interviewing setting (see Appendix A). To begin each interview I shared with participants the nature and purpose of the study. I assured the participating small business owners that information they chose to share with me would stay confidential, and they could terminate the interview at any time they believed they needed or wanted to.

The interview questions were open-ended, and if necessary, I was willing to use prompts to encourage participants to provide comprehensive answers to the questions. To guarantee content validity, prior to conducting the interviews, I asked a university cohort to review the interview questions and protocol. I double-checked the interview instruments to ensure the appropriate number of questions, clarity of language, and to confirm there was enough time to conduct the interviews without inconveniencing the

business owners, as recommended by Gioia et al. (2013). I further followed the recommendations set forth by Gioia et al. (2013) and determined reliability by creating a highly detailed audit trail. Validity of the data took place through member checking (see Yin, 2014).

Researchers use member checking to increase the credibility, accuracy, validity, and transferability of a study (Yin, 2014). Researchers provide participants with frequent opportunities to review portions of the work to ensure that information gathered was authentic, and the researcher's interpretation was accurate (Yin, 2014). Although Yin (2014) asserted member checking can occur at various stages, including both during the interviewing and afterward, to add to the validity and credibility of the study I instigated this process after the interviews were complete. As I interviewed participants, I attempted to create a comfortable atmosphere to ensure the participants were at ease while sharing their experiences.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection methods included face-to-face, semistructured interviews and the review of the company documents associated with the small business owners and their attempts to remain solvent beyond the 5-year mark. To warrant the validity and accuracy of the data collected and then analyzed, I intentionally gathered, analyzed, and interpreted the information with only an attempt to comprehend and compare the perspectives, beliefs, and actions of the small business owners explored in this study. I also reviewed company documents and other literature relating to the participants business. Parts of this research design helped maximize the validity of this study while reducing researcher bias.

For example, as recommended by Yin, the member-checking process, in which I verified what the participants shared was correct, ensured the results were objective and the study design continued to be valid during the process of gathering and interpreting the information.

Semistructured Interviews

I used face-to-face interviews to interview the small business owners, because as noted by Irvine, Drew, and Sainsbury (2013) many benefits exist from the conduction of face-to-face interviews including: (a) politeness, (b) the skill to gain the trust of others, (c) learning from nonverbal communication, and (d) the capacity for participants to express themselves more fully. Further, Manning and Kunkel (2014) posed that conducting interviews allows for a deeper understanding of the participants' feelings, sentiments, and experiences. Other types of data collection might not create the same effect. The variety of ways in which to ask questions, for example by using prompting, can help bring out more information and direct the interview to greater levels of comprehension (Klenke, 2016). To garner plentiful data and to achieve a deeper appreciation of the participants' experiences, I asked open-ended, semistructured questions during both interviews to.

I anticipated that each interview would last approximately 30-60 minutes, although time spent could vary somewhat depending on the level of detail in the participants' responses. The interviews were individual and private, in a location chosen by the small business owners, with only the owners and myself present. The instrument I used in the interviews was a tool for organizing notes and an audio recorder to record the

interviews for transcription purposes. Once completed the participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts for the accurateness of their responses. I conducted the interviews iteratively and I used follow-up questions about the answers provided by the participants.

The process I planned to use to collect data was flexible, as recommended by Yin (2014). Finally, I used member checking to garner descriptive and thick data from the participants to warrant reliability and validity and until data saturation occurred. I conducted member checking during the interviews by asking participants to review what they had shared to ensure what they communicated was what they intended to share. Data saturation took place by using member checking and a complete exploration of the themes and the literature, which O'Reilly and Parker (2013) recommended as a method to ensure that no different patterns emerged through the data collection and analysis procedure.

Data Organization Technique

I separated the data into groupings (e.g., recordings, notes, participants' and responses) for clear identification of the information. I used a tape recorder, audio-recorded the interviews, and transcribed the interviews. Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) noted to achieve accuracy and to avoid leaving out relevant information narratives should be immediately transcribed. This type of data organization method allows for both flexibility and accuracy (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) stated researchers use member checking to improve the validity, credibility, accuracy, and transferability of the findings within the study. For additional clarity, member checking

occurred after the interview process and during an informal follow-up with the business owners. Throughout the process, I aimed to create a comfortable camaraderie with the small business owners, to ensure they were comfortable sharing their insights, experiences, ideas, and strategies for helping their places of employment survive beyond the 5-year mark. I shared the transcribed material with the participants to ensure the completeness of their responses, as recommended by Yin, which confirms the data collected and interpreted could then serve as a design for future studies. After transcribing the interviews, I stored the transcription in a Word Document as well as on a backup drive. I will store the backup drive, consent forms, and transcripts in a locked facility for 5 years. After the 5 years elapses, I will destroy the electronic data and shred any paper data as both Stake (2013) and Yin (2014) recommend.

Data Analysis

The fundamental components of qualitative data analysis are available through a modified van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994). These components include: (a) organizing the data, (b) familiarizing oneself with the data, (c) classifying the data, (d) coding the data, (e) triangulating the data, (f) interpreting the data, and (g) presenting and writing up the results of the data (Rowley, 2012). After the interviews, I transcribed the recordings by listening closely to the recordings. Next, I reviewed what I transcribed and manually conducted open coding of the information as a means of identifying and categorizing the information shared by the participants. Rowley (2012) recommended coding data in this manner for its effectiveness in identifying themes. I asked two experienced coders to code the transcripts as well and then, to validate the findings, I

compared my coding results with theirs. I also reviewed company documents and other literature relating to the participants business. Given the vigorous nature of qualitative studies, data analysis is a continuing process. I also identified key themes as well as related them to the literature and the conceptual framework.

Rowley (2012) described that constant coding is necessary to recognize the emerging themes in a study and to identify the point at which data saturation takes place. The first step in analyzing the data, open coding, consisted of reviewing the transcribed material, identifying the classes of information in which to place the material, and then organizing the data, as recommended by Urquhart (2013). I coded the data both manually and using NVivo 10 software. I used NVivo 10 software to analyze, to organize, and to identify emerging themes, in addition to organizing the unstructured data, as necessary. I also backed up the material by retaining a paper copy of the data. The NVivo 10 software helped with coding themes and determining trends in the responses.

Triangulation. In many studies, researchers use either methodology triangulation or data triangulation, or sometimes both. Methodology triangulation involves using several methods of primary research, such as interviews, observations, surveys, questionnaires, and documents, to gather data and guarantee the integrity of the findings (Denzin & Giardina, 2016). The use of data triangulation allows researchers to compare findings across different periods of time and in different settings. Both primary and secondary research can be used with data triangulation to compare different points of view through interviews, public records, documents, observations, and photographs (Denzin & Giardina, 2016). In this study, I used data triangulation to aid in the

integration of the interview data and literature review. I carried out data triangulation by conducting interviews and intensely reviewing the literature associated with small business owners and their attempts to remain solvent beyond the 5-year mark. The purpose of using data triangulation is to affirm that data gathered is complete (Denzin & Giardina, 2016). The information garnered through the interview data and a thorough review of the literature helped establish an all-inclusive dataset to allow for an understanding of the experiences of small business owners in North Carolina.

Reliability and Validity

Moustakas (1994) described validity as the precision of research results and reliability as that which other researchers can duplicate and obtain similar results. Reliability and validity are critical to warranting the truthful results of a study. According to Sousa (2014), an honest understanding of the data can lead to valid and reliable results. To confirm the consistency of the data I interviewed small business owners located in two different businesses, whose businesses have been in operation for at least 5 years.

Reliability

Defining reliability often depends on the credibility and dependability of a study (Stake, 2013). Tactics used to guarantee dependability are comprised of interviewee participation in the analysis through member checking their responses and through providing a detailed description of the research method (Yin, 2014). To evaluate the dependability of a study, it is critical to examine the processes that made the study attainable by conducting an audit trail, an approach recommended by Yilmaz (2013). I used an audit trail by delineating the process by which I made all methodological

decisions. Researchers can generate audit trails by (a) clarifying the reasons for choosing the participants used in a study, (b) clarifying the purpose of the study to the participants, (c) clarifying the data collection process, (d) clarifying the transformation of the data during the exploration, (e) clarifying the precise techniques used to define the credibility of the information, and (f) clarifying the research findings (Yin, 2014).

Validity

Allowing for the validity of a study commonly entails ensuring transferability, confirmability, and credibility. Confirmability occurs when the researchers have achieved these three essential components (Sousa, 2014). Qualitative research should be reflective and honest, these parameters are preferable as it increases the credibility of the research (Sousa, 2014). Through thick descriptions, I provided thorough information to add to the conformability of this study. To attain confirmability, I used member checking. As discussed, member checking is a procedure a researcher uses to enhance the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of a study (Yin, 2014). During the interview process, I confirmed that participants shared what they intended. Throughout the process, I attempted to build a bond with the participants and ensure they were comfortable sharing their experiences, insights, and strategies for helping their businesses survive beyond 5 years.

To ensure the credibility of the data, I used triangulation. Researchers employ triangulation by using the responses to the semistructured interview questions to verify the data findings (Denzin & Giardina, 2016). Yin (2014) asserted that a solid method of review has both negatives and positives, which researchers can validate through

triangulation. I employed triangulation in the data analysis process by using established data and previous research associated with well-known methods and theories to offer supporting evidence for this study.

As a final element, I used member checking and attempted to gather rich, thick explanations from the participants to warrant reliability and validity until data saturation occurred. Data saturation occurs when nothing new is revealed throughout the data collection process (Stake, 2013). To guarantee data saturation, I persistently collected data until nothing new emerged and at which point no new patterns emerged.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore HR strategies small business owners use to sustain their small business beyond 5 years. The targeted population consisted of two small business owners from North Carolina, who have demonstrated successful use of HR strategies for sustaining their small businesses beyond 5 years. Conducting face-to-face semistructured interviews with small business owners, who helped their businesses survive beyond 5 years, allowed for a complete understanding of the phenomenon. A criterion-based sample of those involved in small business success in North Carolina included two HR participants, who successfully helped sustain their businesses for at least 5 years.

After obtaining approval for the study from the Walden University IRB, I called participants and explained the purpose of the study. I ensured the confidentiality of the participants and after participants agreed to participate, I double-checked to ensure they met the criterion. Then, I arranged the interview and guided the small business owners

through the interview questions (see Appendix A). I created an audio recording of the interviews and transcribed the recordings. After I transcribed the recordings, I asked the participants to check the transcription to verify both the correctness and completeness of their responses. As recommended by Yin (2014), a qualitative case study method is appropriate for warranting the accuracy and correct meaning of the data, and will serve as a design for reproduction by future researchers.

Using a purposive participant selection process improves the chances the data collected is accurate and ensures the study is objective (Stake, 2013). With the use of semistructured interviews, data analysis and coding, and NVivo10 software, I interpreted the data to answer the research question for this study. In Section 3, I present the findings, share the relevancy of the study to the professional practice, indicate implications for change, make recommendations for action, and share suggestions for further research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore HR strategies small business owners use to sustain their small business beyond 5 years. The targeted population consisted of two small business owners from North Carolina who have demonstrated successful HR strategies for sustaining their small businesses beyond 5 years. Through the van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994), and as recommended by Rowley (2012), I organized the data; familiarized myself with the data; classified, coded data, triangulated, and interpreted the data; and wrote up the results of the data. I used semistructured interviews with six questions. After each interview, I conducted member checking by asking participants to review the transcripts to ensure it was what they intended to share. Data saturation occurred through member checking and an exploration of the themes and the literature. I used NVivo 10 software to analyze, organize, and to identify emerging themes and organize the unstructured data. I triangulated the data through the interviews and review of the literature associated with small business owners' attempts to remain in business beyond the 5-year mark. Based on the data analysis three centralized themes emerged: (a) effective leadership, (b) organizational structure, and (c) work climate. The two minor themes discovered were (a) finding the right person for the role and (b) networking in the community.

Presentation of the Findings

A single case study was used to study business strategies from two small business owners from North Carolina identified by designators P1 and P2. The data collection

method involved semistructured interviews and exploration of literature on small business successes and failures. The data collected and analyzed from the interviews and the literature provided rich information and contributed to answering the research question: What HR strategies do small business owners use to sustain their small business beyond 5 years? The data obtained from the two interview participants was enough to achieve data saturation or until no new information emerged from the interviews and literature. I also used member checking and data triangulation (see Denzin & Giardina, 2016) for attaining the data saturation needed for comprehensive qualitative studies. Data analysis included examining the interview responses to establish a baseline for strategies employed by the study participants. I identified plausible themes after repetitive inspection of the interview data and with the aid of NVivo software. The data triangulation process included validating the answers given by the study participants against a secondary source of information. The information presented by participants was also in concurrence with the findings in the literature, allowing themes to emerge. The data inspection process contributed to developing a summary of the experiences shared by the participants. After an in-depth review and analysis of the collected data, three main themes and two minor themes emerged, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Main and Minor Themes

	Description of Themes	Occurrence
Main themes	Effective Leadership	P1, P2
	Organizational Structure	P1, P2
	Work Climate	P1, P2
Minor Themes	Finding the right person for the role	P1
	Networking in the community	P2

The following subsections include comparisons of the main themes using the conceptual framework, the articles discussed in the literature review in Section 1, and other current research. The three main themes and the two minor themes emerged from thorough examination of the case studies.

Theme 1: Effective Leadership

Both P1 and P2 identified effective leadership as a way of keeping a small business open past the 5-year mark. P1 and P2 both identified their transformational leadership styles and use of inspirational motivation as important ways of keeping promising employees engaged and committed to the development of the company. This is supported by previous research such as Avolio and Yammarino (2013), who described four behavior types as characteristic of a transformational leader: (a) intellectually stimulating, (b) charismatic, (c) considerate of individual employees, and (d) inspirationally motivating (also see Stoller, 2013). First, intellectually stimulating leaders

challenge their employees to think critically about the needs of the company. Second, to enthuse employees, charismatic leaders communicate their vision (Stoller, 2013). Third, leaders who practice individual consideration make employees aware of their strengths and their unique value to the company (Stoller, 2013). Lastly, inspirational motivation entails leaders using their understanding of individual employees' ambitions to create room for them to grow in the company (Stoller, 2013).

Transformational leaders often adopt TQM approaches. TQM practitioners encourage their employees to work together and compete, which gives employees a sense of efficacy, provides better customer experiences, and helps identify organizational problems (Åslund & Ingelsson, 2015; Goldman, 2012). These approaches relate to system theory, which stresses the interconnectedness and importance of all parts of an organization (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). System theory and TQM both emphasize the power of the individual relative to the organization at large and coincide with the personal nature of the transformational leadership style. The use of transformational leadership is also supported by Ghasabeth et al. (2015), who suggested that it is versatile in satisfying the needs of the organization and company. Mokhber et al. (2015) also concluded that transformational leadership not only facilitates innovation within an organization, but it also ensures market success.

Organizational leaders can use transformational leadership to improve employee retention, which is important for small businesses that need dedicated employees to succeed. increase employee retention by hiring a diverse and dedicated workforce and giving them the proper resources and lines of communication to grow with the company

(Cloutier et al, 2015). Employee turnover limits a business' performance significantly; employee turnover can be reduced by focusing on determining person-organization fit, creating a communicative work environment, maximizing employee diversity, optimizing the assessment of employment candidates, and offering many opportunities for employee development (Cloutier et al., 2015). By fostering an environment that employees are enthusiastic about and feel they belong in, transformational leaders inspire their employees to believe in their own worth and growth potential. This is particularly important for up-and-coming small businesses, which need dedicated employees to help businesses build a solid foundation of success and work through potential setbacks.

P1 claimed that focusing on development of current employees was a key part of their success in keeping their new business open for 5 years. P1 stated,

The needs of the company outweigh the risks of training and exceeding the standards for succeeding in revenue and increased productivity. . . . [We implemented] an employee satisfaction program for rewarding employees for exceeding the standards and providing feedback for improving the company.

[My] ability to implement successful programs was instrumental in sustain and improving my company through trial and error on several fronts dealing with day to day operations on several fronts that incorporates HR strategies.

Here, P1 demonstrates a people-focused transformational leadership model, which emphasizes investment in employee development, focus on employees' happiness, and recognition of employee achievement. Based on this response, P1 wants employees to

understand themselves as meaningful parts of their organization, and P1 wants to make an extra effort to demonstrate that employee feelings are valid and important.

P2 broadly implemented similar policies regarding employee training and incorporating a focus on employees' belief in the philosophy of their workplace. They added,

My current company relies upon human resource functions which include diversity and providing suitable procedures for improving employee morale and productivity. Based on feedback from current employees, I have developed crafted a work climate assessment for assisting in measuring the scope of employees' attitudes towards managers and other employers, geared towards sustaining my current business and focusing on employee morale and evaluations.

P2's emphasis on employee morale and diversity relates to the transformative leader's focus on understanding their employees as individuals. By focusing on morale and diversity, P2 communicates to their employees that their perspectives are special and important. This is a major part of the transformational leadership style, which stresses praising the efficacy of individual employees.

Theme 2: Organizational Structure

P1 and P2 both mentioned optimization of organizational structure as a significant component of their successful business models. P1 and P2 focused on HR optimization for their structural success. Scholarship surrounding HR departments' role in organizational structure support P1 and P2's assertions. For example, Longenecker and Fink (2013) revealed that employee-focused HR mindset, employee development,

practical appraisal systems, well-developed incentive systems, and creating a friendly and accommodating culture were all key to fostering a successful work environment.

Additionally, Mulabe (2013), Kidombo et al. (2012), and Maier et al. (2014) all confirmed that employee retention, employee satisfaction, and market performance were all positively impacted by organizational emphases on improving HR practices. Finally, Albercht et al. (2015) studied organizational management, employee performance, and competitive advantage and concluded that employee selection, training, job design, reward, and motivation led to increased profits, growth, and productivity.

P1 expressed their thoughts on the importance of HR:

When developing and using HR strategies for my company, I must deal with advantages geared towards creating strong environments where the focus is on development of a friendly work environment and safe atmosphere for employees to grow and succeed in productivity and growth on a community level. Current employees are given opportunities for enhancing the capabilities of operations thru expression and creativity. The HR strategies of my organization align with the needs of my small business to maximize employee performance and creating an environment for transformational leadership. The objective is to employ the very best to assist in expanding my HR strategies for my company and ensuring compliance with state and federal laws.

Participant 2, largely agreed with P1's thoughts on human resources, and went on to describe specific ways they improved their company's approach to HR:

[I d]eveloped an employee feedback program for addressing the concerns of the business and how it relates to HR strategies from the ownership side and how it affects the growth of the company. The intentional grounds for implementing the necessary corrections based on sustaining the business atmosphere and the correlation to renewed success and growth. [...] The ability to implement successful programs was instrumental in sustain and improving my company through trial and error on several fronts dealing with day to day operations on several fronts that incorporates HR strategies.

Participant 1 and P2's focus on improving HR methods tied into adopting system theory and TQM into the management process. Human resources act as a means of determining the health of the organizational system, and is the primary method for correcting inefficiencies within the organization. Investing in human resource departments demonstrates a managerial understanding of system theory, and ties in with the people-focused transformational leadership style. A manager who focuses on TQM and improves overall productivity via engagement of individual employees shows the manager's desire to invest in the abilities of individual employees; however, an effective human resources department is a crucial part of maintaining the healthiness of the openly competitive work environment that TQM-focused managers seek to foster.

Theme 3: Work Climate

Both participants 1 and 2 also focused on the importance of creating a positive work climate, in which employees felt tended to and important. Team-focused managers foster inspirational leadership skills, when they advocate for group mentorship, and

effectively preach the mission and message of their organizations (Paillé et al., 2014).

Panagiotakopoulos (2014) also explored the concept in relation to the way a leader demonstrates sensitivity toward employees and how the sacrifices the leader makes for the team positively impact the work environment.

In another study relating to employee engagement and retention, Albercht et al., (2015) discussed the effectiveness of a strategic engagement model, which used numerous engagement-related HRM practices. The practices in question were job demands, organizational climate, job resources, the psychological experiences of safety, meaningfulness, availability at work, employee engagement, individual, group, and organizational performance, and competitive advantage (Albercht et al., 2015). Albercht et al. as well as Smith and Macko (2014), asserted the need for HRM policies, practices, and procedures to impact employee engagement and retention.

Maintaining a positive work environment is key for a practitioner of system theory. Managers of a positive work environment stipulate that all parts of the organizational system are performing in harmony with each other. Similarly, only a manager implementing a nurturing work environment can properly sustain TQM's competitive nature. Without a work environment based on teamwork and support, practitioners of TQM may foster a cutthroat workplace that is not conducive to positive productivity.

Participant 1 and P2 discussed the dynamism of the small business managerial mindset, particularly as it relates to human resources concerns. P1 said,

[It is important to adopt] the mindset of sustaining business operations along with various HR strategies while not having the onsite experience of a HR manager.

Orienting employees with feedback help them in obtaining important evaluations with improving and sustaining my current business for the long run. A workplace of engaged employees can have a high correlation to increased productivity and improve the bottom line. Monitoring employee satisfaction is important to understanding employee perception and how well the organization is managed.

Here, P1 emphasizes the fact that new small business managers must take an active role in their employees' well-being. Employees of new businesses are investing valuable time and effort in an organization that may or may not come to fruition; a proper transformative leader understands this gamble and shows tremendous respect for it through their emphasis on creating a positive work environment.

Minor Themes

The two minor themes discovered were (a) finding the right person for the role and (b) networking in the community. Participant 1 introduced the importance of finding the right person for the role, while P2 introduced networking in the community. It could be inferred that P2's theme needs dedicated, competent staff members to focus on fostering a positive work climate and focusing on organizational structure. Networking in the community is an important means of finding competent staff, getting the word out about the organization, and demonstrating the enthusiasm employees and leadership alike have for the organization's mission.

Applications to Professional Practice

This study focused on two North Carolina small business owners' methods used to keep their company afloat past the 5-year mark. The strategies discussed in this study might provide a blueprint for new or relatively new businesses in major metropolitan areas trying to create sustainable business plans. Managers looking to adopt a transformative leadership style or businesses looking to reconstruct their culture to focus on employee retention may also incorporate these strategies. Effective leadership, organizational structure, and work climate all act as meaningful vectors for attracting and retaining the kind of reliable, enthusiastic staff that would allow a new company a reliable base of success.

The study does not disclose the business fields of the subjects involved, so while these points are widely applicable to most new businesses, they do not offer any unique help for those looking to better their new business in a particular field. Similarly, while the points made by both subjects are general enough that region should not matter; it is worth stressing that both subjects in this study are from North Carolina.

Implications for Social Change

The strategies found in the study may help identify strategies to assist small business owners to sustain business beyond 5 years. HR principles have changed drastically under the rapid expansion of corporations (Ulrich et al., 2013). Leaders encountering strategy choices must rely upon proven theories to assist in eliminating potential negative impacts. Implementing effective HR practices to increase the sustainability of small business could improve the quality of life for employees, families,

and communities (Ilies et al., 2017). Small businesses are vital for job creation, progress, and for promoting economic growth in the United States (Shukla & Shukla, 2014). In completing this study, the results could help small business owners develop HR practices to sustain a small business beyond 5 years. Sustaining small businesses may produce positive effects on the local economy and may promote progressive social change for many parts of U.S. society.

Recommendations for Action

The results presented in this study can help managers create strategies for developing an effective 5-year plan. By incorporating the transformational leadership style, designing and utilizing an employee-minded HR plan, and fostering a supportive, involved work environment managers can achieve business sustainability. Managers should consider the specific recommendations listed below as particularly important:

- Adopt the transformational leadership style, including TQM approaches,
- optimize HR strategies that seek and create engaged and enthusiastic employees,
- foster a work environment that recognizes and embraces the individual skills of each employee,
- Find the right employees; and,
- engage with the community at large.

To foster the use of the strategies in the plan outlined above, I will forward a findings summary to all participants and their companies. I will disseminate the study

findings to new small businesses either by visiting companies, conducting public conferences, or through electronic communications.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore successful strategies adopted by small businesses that managed to thrive in their first 5 years. The findings of this research validate early and current literature. One limitation identified in this study was the number of participating businesses, which, while providing an appropriate amount of data for triangulation, did limit the scope of the study. Conducting a broader survey with an emphasis on incorporating a diverse pool of businesses may be a useful approach to find a common ground of successful practices across business types. The best way for researchers to represent all small businesses is to use quantitative sampling to collect data from a large number of individuals and then use inferential statistics, which enables the researcher to determine the characteristics of a larger population. According to Lewis (2015), researchers can collect statistical information by using a sample of a population to make inferences or generalizations that may apply to a variety of populations or to the larger population in general.

Another limitation of this study is that the data collected from participants may not represent all small businesses. Both subjects in this study were in the same geographical area. Researchers cannot make direct observations within a population. Researchers may expand the study to other areas outside of North Carolina to confirm or disconfirm generalizing the study's findings. Other limitations were participants' responses, opinions, knowledge, experiences, and worldviews. Individual interpretations

of strategies can vary drastically from manager to manager, depending on the individual manager's business, mission, verbal acumen, understanding of concepts, and goals; all of which can influence the conclusions of a study.

Reflections

This was my first study within the doctoral field of business. Prior to beginning this study, I was unaware of the level of detail required for a doctoral study. A business study at the doctoral level is more exhaustive and methodically aligned than I had expected. The research alignment and level of integrity between sections of the study template were helpful in modifying my rationale for conducting an academic study and in communicating with the two subjects studied. I anticipated most of the themes that surfaced, but also became aware of wonderful new considerations. Findings from this study improved my knowledge of small business strategy and of the importance of HR departments in determining the culture and success of a new business. The identified themes are informative for managers of new businesses who are seeking strategies for early success.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies fostered by managers whose businesses were successful within the first 5 years. The study is valuable for those who look to start a small business. The study findings included five themes, three major centralized themes and two minor themes. The centralized themes were (a) effective leadership, (b) organizational structure, and (c) work climate. The two minor themes discovered were (a) finding the right person for the role and (b)

networking in the community. The findings of the study aligned with the literature, the current studies, and the conceptual framework. A transformative manager with a people-oriented mindset, a strong belief in HR strategies, and a desire to genuinely engage with their employees are all indicators that a new business has a chance of surviving the first 5 years of its existence.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What human resource strategy or strategies did you incorporate for your small business?
2. What HR strategy or strategies were needed to assist in sustaining and improving your small business?
3. What major obstacles to human resource practices did you overcome to sustain your small business?
4. What actions have you taken to improve HR functions and sustain your business?
5. How might interest in using diverse human resources affect the sustainability of your small business?
6. What other information would you like to share regarding strategies that you have developed and implemented to sustain your business beyond 5 years?