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Reducing Operational Costs in the Trucking Industry to Increase Profitability

Theophilus Bush II
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Theophilus Bush II

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Carol-Anne Faint, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration
Faculty

Dr. Janet Booker, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Deborah Nattress, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

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2019

Abstract

Reducing Operational Costs in the Trucking Industry to Increase Profitability

by

Theophilus Bush II

MBA, American Military University, 2017

BBA, Campbell University, 2015

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2019

Abstract

Leaders of small trucking businesses who fail to reduce operational cost and increase profitability can experience reduced profits and sustainability challenges. During the first 2 years of operation, 75% of small trucking businesses in the United States fail. The purpose of this single case study was to explore the strategies that successful leaders of small trucking businesses implemented to retain talented employees after downsizing. Transformational leadership was the conceptual framework for the study. The population for the study included 3 business leaders in a small trucking business in the southeastern region of the United States who had successfully reduced operational costs and increased profitability. Data was collected from semistructured interviews with leaders of the small trucking business and from reviewing artifacts such as the company's documents. Yin's 5 steps of data analysis, the tenets of transformational leadership, and member checking were used in identifying key themes. These 5 themes emerged from the analysis of data: applying transformational leadership, finding dependable drivers, establishing trust, rewarding and recognizing employees, and competing with trucking industries that seek to gain competitive advantage. The application of findings from this study might contribute to social change by enlightening leaders of small trucking companies about what strategies reduce operational costs and increase profitability in the small trucking industry.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my family. A special thanks to my parents Theophlius and Vonda Bush who have pushed me in the right direction in pursuing my goals and achieving above my own expectations. My sister and brothers Candice, Marqus, Kyle, and Jacob. I would also like to give a special dedication to my grandparents Dock and Margaret Cooper who have supported me through everything throughout my life. My first undergraduate school advisor was Dr. Tim Abrams. I would like to give a thanks to Mrs. Deanna Girarrd who was my school advisor when I finished my degree with Campbell University. I dedicate this to my strong and beautiful wife Zeribria Bush for being that strong mother and co parent. I want to thank my sons Zavien, Theophlius, and my daughter Zion for being there for me up to this point in the doctorate program. All of you have shown support in so many ways, and I could never thank you and appreciate you enough so here is my dedication.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The success rate of small trucking businesses depends on the business leader's strategy and planning from the initial start of the business. The improvements, changes, productivity, efficiency, and profits depend on the abilities of the leaders (Bellou & Chatzinikou, 2015). Transformational leadership attributes of the leader break down any barriers for the employees and may create a sense of passion and commitment and may explain how a business can be successful beyond 5 years. Transformational leaders identify shortcomings and navigate the company through challenges, to increase business profitability (Mozammel & Haan, 2016). Dependability of the drivers is a big component of efficient operations. Finding the right personnel for the organization is critical. Productivity deficits resulting from improper personnel recruitment can jeopardize the sustainability of the organization (Hansson, 2015). My objective in this study is to explore reducing operational costs in the trucking industry to increase profitability.

Background of the Problem

The business problem is the sustainability of the small trucking business and the components the business needs for it to remain operable beyond 5 years. Small businesses are a contributor to the growth of the economy. Some business leaders lack strategies to reduce operating costs because leaders lack appropriate leadership skills. Effective leadership should demonstrate good structure and value within the business. Theories and styles of leadership are patterns of beliefs, philosophy, attitudes, assumptions, and feelings about leadership impacting individual's behavior (Beer, 2015). Leaders set clear expectations as to what is attainable. Leaders are thinkers who act

creatively in the non-routine environment (Kang, Solomon, & Choi, 2015). Leaders set out to impact the actions, beliefs, and feelings of employees. Leaders adopt various roles to motivate behavior. These include influencing, motivating, monitoring, and communicating. Leaders expose the organization to risks and harness opportunities to grow (Beer, 2015). Without a transformational leadership approach, organizational performance may suffer.

Problem Statement

Trucking companies struggle to remain operable beyond 5 years (Hansson, 2015). Profits in this industry remain at a low 6% to 8% of the annual revenues per truck. The maintenance, fuel, insurance, and driver related costs reduce profits, leading to potential business collapse (Mellert, Scherbaum, Oliveira, & Wilke, 2015). The general business problem is trucking industry leaders unable to reduce operating costs may lose profits. The specific business problem is some trucking business leaders lack strategies to reduce operating costs to increase profits.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies trucking business leaders use to reduce operating costs to increase profits. The population for this study included business leaders from one profitable trucking organization who have successful strategies to reduce operating costs to increase profits. This organization is in the south eastern part of the United States. The findings of the study may contribute to social change by aiding business leaders to stabilize their businesses to provide

meaningful and consistent employment; and moving products to sustain business in society.

Nature of the Study

Researchers choose between three research methods, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. A quantitative researcher relies on numerical data to examine phenomena (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The goal of this study was not to explain the phenomenon using numerical data; the quantitative method is not appropriate. The mixed methods researcher uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore and examine a business problem (McManamny, Sheen, Boyd, & Jennings, 2015). The mixed methods approach included quantitative inquiry; this method is also inappropriate for the study. The qualitative researcher uses interviews, documentation, observation, and physical artifacts to explore phenomenon (Yin, 2016). The qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because of the intention to learn about the phenomenon through interviews and exploring documentation related to the business problem.

The qualitative researcher selects among various designs to conduct research. Some designs reviewed for this study include ethnography, phenomenological, narrative, single, or multiple case studies. An ethnography researcher explores phenomenon within a unique culture or society (Pernecky, 2016). I did not select the ethnography because the population of this study does not belong to a unique culture or society. The phenomenological design involves the exploration and experience of individual experiences of people. I did not select phenomenological design because the goal is not to limit exploration to lived experiences only; the intent is to broaden the interview process

to include more than lived experiences. Researchers use the narrative design to capture life history as a contributing factor to decision-making process. I did not select the narrative design as life histories may not expose decision-making processes within the business setting. The single case study researcher uses a single setting to investigate a business problem (Yin, 2016). The selection did not include a multiple case study because the intention is to explore one agency to gain insight into profitability in the trucking industry. The multiple case study researchers include multiple businesses to gather enough data on strategies for addressing business problems (Povee & Robert, 2015). I did not use a multiple case study to explore the phenomenon because the goal is not to explore various successful strategies in more than one business perspective. Instead, the goal was to use data from different business owners within one business.

Research Question

What strategies do truck business leaders use to successfully reduce operating costs to increase profits?

Interview Questions

The strategy-related interview questions for this study include:

1. What strategies did your organization use to improve the costs of the trucking units in your fleet?
2. How, if at all, have you reduced truck maintenance costs to trucking units in your fleet?
3. What were the key barriers to implementing your successful strategies for reducing the cost of operations?

4. How did you address the key barriers to decrease the operational costs of your trucking business?
5. How do you organize workloads to increase profitability?
6. How does your organization assess the effectiveness of strategies for reducing operations costs?
7. What additional information can you provide to help me understand trucking industry leader strategies to reduce operating costs to increase profits?

Conceptual Framework

Transformational leadership theory was the conceptual framework most appropriate for the study. Transformational leadership theory was developed by James MacGregor Burns (1978). Leadership approaches characterized by individualized attention, enhanced wisdom, motivation, and encouragement create growth opportunities in individuals and the systems within the organization. Burns underscored that the whole was greater than the sum of its parts explaining that to perform well, a transformational leadership relies upon the integration of various tasks to elevate actions. The tenets of transformational leadership include (a) individualized consideration, (b) intellectual stimulation, (c) inspirational motivation, and (d) idealized influence. Transformational leadership theory is appropriate for the study because the trucking industry leaders work to inform, support, and reinforce employees to improve business performance, and establishing a well performing organization requires a collaborative tone between a business leader and employees. Transformational leaders gain respect from employees by providing empathy, appreciation, understanding, and direction to employees.

Operational Definitions

The operational definitions that I am displaying will aid readers in making sure that they understand what special terms were being used.

Employee retention: Employee retention is an organization's leadership keeping their employees, strategies, and procedures in place for sustainability (Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, & Pemberton-Jones, 2015).

Significant organizational change: Significant organizational change occurs, for example, when an organization changes their strategy for the success and build of the company. There are alterations that must be made and the new changes have to be implemented to see if they are going to affect the organization in a positive or negative way. This happens when an organization changes its operations and the organization must undergo significant change. The development will take time when there is new change in an organization's development (Appelbaum, Degbe, MacDonald, & Nguyen-quang, 2015).

Turnover intention: The turnover intention is a measurement of whether a business' or organization's employees plan to leave their positions or whether that organization plans to remove employees from positions. This all depends on how the business is operating and what is affecting the business in a bad way (Qazi, Khalid, & Shafique, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are actions perceived to be true without proof (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). In this study, I made two assumptions. My first assumption was the participants would provide honest responses to my interview questions, and a second assumption is at the time of the interview, each participant would have good recall and clarity to explain their perspectives and experiences.

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses that the researcher cannot control (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). One key limitation of the study is the inability to generalize findings to all businesses or industries. The sample is too small to make any generalizations about findings. A second limitation is there may be some bias in the responses to interview questions. While I attempted to mitigate bias by using an interview protocol, and keeping all questions consistent, I cannot control bias completely and expect some bias in conducting research.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the parameters of the study (Nelms, 2015). A delimitation of the study was the scope of participants that lived in the southeastern area of the United States. There are certain categories in this study such as the locations where the organization deliver and the different sections of the industry. I focused on the checklist of starting up the business. The next portion was the dependability of the drivers in the organization. The customers make the business successful, and it is the employee's job

to keep them coming back. This company was only located in the southeastern region of the United States. All participants met the criteria to participate in the study.

Significance of the Study

The trucking industry is fundamental to business supply chain management. The trucking company contains goods used to sustain a society, and the trucking industry serves to fuel local economies through the exchange of goods to meet basic human needs. The trucking industry supports a large employee base generating employment within society.

The findings of the study contributed to business practice by identifying means of remaining sustainable and generating meaningful operational costs. Strategies that maintain the trucking industry's sustainability of a wide range of businesses involved in the sales of goods to consumers, made the sustainability of the business possible (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The leadership and employees must also sustain good customer service as well as good productivity.

The trucking industry is vital to the provision of goods in society. Communities benefit from profitable business investments into the local economy through the purchase of goods and services because of revolving customers. With a sustained trucking industry, a society remains economically stable through the efficient transportation of goods and services.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this single case study was to explore the small trucking industry and view the effective strategies that business leaders use to retain their customers and employees. Employee retention is a required for a leader to keep a proficient flow of business (Ruiz & Rivero, 2018). The result of having negative employee retention can cause decreasing productivity in the daily operations (Sharma, Sharma, & Agarwal, 2016). Customer retention results from the leadership styles of the leaders, and leaders ensure optimal operations. The customer drives the business accumulation of revenue (Li, Zhao, & Begley, 2015). Shortfalls and low revenue decrease profits and lead a business to lose customer and employee retention (Wilkinson, Mowbray, & Sun, 2018).

The purpose of the literature review was to provide the reader with detailed information about sustaining operations and profitability in the trucking industry. The literature review included the following subsections: (a) systems of theories, (b) retention of customers and employees, (c) profitability in the small trucking industry, (d) organizational behavior, (e) turnover intention, and (f) job satisfaction.

The information in this literature review comes from peer-reviewed journals. The following search terms was used to gather this information: *theories, retention in small businesses, profitability and sustainment in small businesses, leadership styles, and organizational turnover intention and job satisfaction*. These terms were searched using databases such as Google Scholar, SAGE Premier and Business Source Complete, which are business databases that aid with business studies, as well as Academic Search Complete and ProQuest Central. I also consulted books and doctoral studies for this

research. Of the 165 references, 155 (90%) were published within the past 5 years (2014-2019) of my expected year of CAO approval of my completed study.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership is a style of leadership in which the leader of the organization works with the members of the workplace so that the changes are identified, annotated, and fixed; the business increases in sales and productivity (Dong, Bartol, Zhang, & Li, 2017). The leader uses the changes to create a better vision, and the vision also shows the workers that their leader is listening to the problems and making the needed corrections. The vision builds inspiration in the workers and that ultimately leads to trust in the leader (Deinert, Homan, Boer, & Voelpel, 2015). The transformational leadership theory was introduced by Burns (1978). Burns was the first to develop a theory centered on morals and values in its leadership (Burns, 1978). A leader and worker relationship evolves through the application of the transformational leadership style (Aga, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo, 2016). The tenets of transformational leadership include: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration (Northouse, 2013). The tenets of transformational leadership align with the study because the concepts of leader influence, inspiration and motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration mark the strategies for success in retaining employees within small trucking companies. Poor leadership leads to a loss of productivity, loss of employee commitment, and a disconnect between leaders and workers.

Within the small trucking industry, creating a vision is the initial step in the transformational leadership process (Li, Zhao, & Begley, 2015). The leader has to analyze and judge the audience and take the best avenue to make the organization a continuous success (Aga et al., 2016). The purpose and values of the business formulate a business unit strategy. The business unit strategy is the playbook for the organization and holds all the key information on how to keep the organization on a positive path (Li, Mitchell, & Boyle, 2016).

Organizational adherence to the mission statement is essential. The mission statement is something that the workers must understand and accept (Cheng & Wang, 2015). If the leader does not gain buy-in from employees into the mission and vision of the organization, the company may experience poor performance. The mission is generally discussed through business meetings in which the leader can link the mission statement to the worker's goals. The next step of transformational leadership is managing the delivery of the vision (Cheng & Wang, 2015). The leader must demonstrate what tasks are required (Han, Seo, Li, & Yoon, 2016). The leader must stay consistent and set the example. The last step is building a trusting relationship and foundation with the workers (Northouse, 2018). As a transformational leader, the focus is on the people and work that will help employees become successful in achieving their goals and dreams (Mittal & Dhar, 2015). The process may require the workers using advancement certifications for higher positions by semi-annually doing reset training and making sure that the rules and regulations are being followed (Jiang & Chen, 2018).

The leadership role in the small trucking business is a long-term process and a commitment to making sure that the relationships between the leader and workers remain intact. Creating the vision for the workplace, motivating people to buy into and deliver the vision, managing the delivery of the vision, and building that trustworthy relationship with the workers resulted in a high performing, harmonious organization.

Transformational leadership focuses on the mission and execution of the business (Salem, 2015). An example of transformational leadership in the small trucking business is getting the drivers to understand that making the scheduled times for delivery and pick up are crucial. Leaders dedicated to optimizing the customer experience, turn to the positive customer reviews and future references for the future customers that are looking for a company to deliver a product for a reasonable amount (Masa'deh, Obeidat, & Tarhini, 2016). Transformational leaders are flexible and adaptive, implementing changes continually in the organization (Liu & Li 2018). The individual talents of the workers gain recognition because that talent can benefit the organization and be the solution to organizational problems (Zhang, Li, Ullrich, & van Dick, 2015). Overall, the leader focuses on the vision of each load or pick up that takes place and makes sure that the mission and goals are consistent with each delivery or pick up. If there is an issue, then the leader needs to reach out to the driver and see where the disconnect occurred, before addressing the issue with the customer (Singh, 2015). This way, the driver knows that the leader wants to know what the problem is internally instead of asking an outside source who can say anything because that leader does not have a relationship with the customer.

Communication and trust between the leader and employees build trust in the work environment.

This means that even if we must leave early and beat the traffic to make sure that we are on time for the delivery, then, that is what we will have to do. This leads to the customers turning over good reviews and future references for the future customers that are looking for a company to deliver their product for a reasonable amount as well. Transformational leadership is focusing on a different way of leading, and this is needed when there are changes being made in the organization. The individual talents of the workers must be observed because that talent can benefit the organization, and it can be the solution to the problem. Overall, the leader is focusing on the vision of each load or pick up that takes place and making sure that the mission and goals are consistent with each delivery or pick up. If there is an issue, then, the leader needs to reach out to the driver of the organization and see where the disconnect is before addressing the issue with the customer (Singh, 2015). Trust is built around transformational leadership as well (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). The workers are anxious to learn and performing this technique in the environment will make that happen.

Transformational theory of leadership has been widely discussed by various authors as the most appropriate in a contemporary organization (Salem, 2015). Leadership is more than motivation; it is the inspiration that drives the leadership in the right direction. Leadership can affect the relationship between the leaders and employees. It displays order within the organization, but, there is no necessary structure to leadership.

Alternative Theories

Transactional leadership is a theory that is the opposite of transformational leadership. Burns (1978) also introduced transactional leadership when introducing transformational leadership. Transactional leadership is a theory that focuses on rewards for the personnel (Masa'deh et al., 2016). This theory does not require leadership skills or people skills. There is no leadership shown with this theory (Northouse, 2018).

Transactional leadership only focuses on the daily operations and not the future and vision of the business (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003).

Transformational leadership recognizes the importance of followers' inputs and believes in decision making through consensus (Northouse, 2018). The final decision is made by the leader but, is carried out after careful consideration of different points of view.

Transformational leaders believe that followers are motivated by specific tasks performed. The theorist suggested that greater success is achievable by structuring an organization (Para-González, Jimenez-Jimenez, & Martínez-Lorente, 2018). Depending on leadership style, individuals can give their all to organizations while placing their individual interest second.

Laissez-faire theory is a theory where people are given a leadership position without providing leadership; this is focused more around the manager of a business and not a leader, which leaves employees left to figure things out themselves (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). The laissez-faire theory is based on the individual. The laissez-faire theory leader uses a delegative approach to complete the daily mission of the organization (Fried, 1998). The leadership style is reflected in the organization's leaders

giving the drivers the delivery assignment. The in between planning and how to get to the location is what meets the overall mission and how to meet it is the decision of the driver, not the leader.

Laissez-faire theory is not appropriate for this doctoral study because the leader is not simply observing the daily operations; problems arise when leadership is not involved due to delegation (Smith, 1998). The hands-off approach in the organization can cause a decrease in productivity. The reason being is because the details of the job requirements, in terms of proper treatment and processing of transport and billing forms, requires significant direction and oversight (Liden et al., 2015). The theory is a good selection for an organization that is operating independently and already has a strong management team with highly skilled and independent employees. The organization selected for the study is a small trucking business that does not quite have the exact formulation to excel and be comfortable to excel under a laissez-faire leader (see Mathew & Gupta, 2015). Laissez faire leadership style is an inappropriate leadership theory for the study.

Contingency theory was considered but found unsuitable for the study. Contingency theories are based upon the nature of the task, leader's personality, and the personalities of the group (Nichols, 2016). Several contingency theories relate to small business management, and include: strategic contingency theory, Hersey and Blanchard's situational theory, and Vroom and Yetton's decision participation contingency theory. Contingency theorists focus on behavioralist tasks, organizational integrity, and system environments. Fiedler's contingency theory was formed in 1958 (Northouse, 2018). Fiedler (1964) formed this theory through his research on leader attitudes and group

effectiveness. Contingency theorists consider the leaders with high personal relations, but in an organization without a strong structure and that needs assistance (Northouse, 2018) and who have a successful structure set up in their organization to remain sustainable.

Fiedler's contingency theory focuses beyond the leadership styles and includes how the leader controls the organization and supervises the daily operations (Mittal & Dhar, 2015). The leader-led situations focus on the big issues that are affecting the organization, and there is not a detailed description given when the situation happens; it is just the issue (Stilwell, Pasmore, & Shon, 2016). The control is based on the leader/employee relationship and whether everyone in the organization understands the mission, goals, and procedures (Jiang & Chen, 2018). The leader can reward and issue penalties as necessary (Kraemer, Gouthier, & Heidenreich, 2016). Contingency theorists seek to identify and accentuate the strong leadership quality within the leader and applies it in the most effective way that elevates the organization.

Fiedler created a *least preferred coworker scale* in which the employees are graded by the leader regarding which traits of their personality are strong and which are weak. The *low least preferred coworker* score is affected by the factors that are highly likeable or not (Kraemer et al., 2016). The *high least preferred coworker* is more effective when they are operating (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2016). The least preferred coworker can be useful to identify the correct leader for certain situations (Fielder, 1964). If the leader can control the tasks done in the leader-led situations, then they can have the power to lead and create a leadership environment that relates to the audience. The

contingency theory is focused around the leader's personality or mental disposition (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2016). The bigger question is if they can lead and to examine how the employees receive the leader and if they are on board with the tasks that are given to execute. The leader employee relations are where the leader has support and can build trust with the employees creating positive and cooperative relations (Lai & Lin, 2015). The task structures are the extent in which tasks are standard, documented, and controlled (Marx, 2015). The leader's positional power is the extent in which the leader has the authority to observe the employee's performance and reward or penalize the employee (Fielder, 1964). The coworker scale helps the leader figure out what are their employees' strong and weak points.

Strategic contingency theorists center on tasks that are formulated in a problem form, and they are solved. The leader who uses contingency theory does not have to have any likeable personality for employees or customers to solve a problem that exists within the organization (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2016). The leader is still considered an effective leader regardless of their likability. The problem solving is a role centered on the leader's ability to conform and have a general view of the world (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Strategic contingency theory focuses on the techniques of the leadership and less about the personality of the leader. This is a mission-based leaders' theory. The leader has a telling leadership style and has a nonnegotiable personality (Aghion, 2017). Strategic contingency theory is straight forward but there is no personal relationship established between the leader and the employee creating potential communication restraints leading to poor business performance if some employees require greater communication to

ensure productivity. Power is the ability to have others execute one's command, but respect must accompany power to ensure follow-through. The possibility of having a strong staff that follows the leadership is highly unlikely for a long period of time if the relationship lacks open communication and solid direction and leadership (Deery & Jago, 2015). The issue is the effect of the leader leading without using intelligence and rationality during crucial moments when needed. The leader in the small trucking business is not easily replaced because of their knowledge and problem-solving skills, which is a great asset to the success of the organization (Winter, 2016). The inadvertent loss of a leader in the trucking industry creates significant problems if the leader was unable to establish a culture supporting continuity through challenges. A good leader prepares employees for inevitabilities and ensures continued support until a new leader is on-boarded to continue the mission of the organization.

The Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership theory is a contingency theory. The simplicity of the theory and how it is broken down to the leader makes it easy to follow and implement in an organization (Foss & Klein, 2015). There are different types of tasks that leaders must handle throughout supervising a company (Audretsch, Kuratko, & Link, 2015). One transportation service deals with different businesses and organizations throughout North America. Some of the deliveries surpass the cutoff of North Carolina and deliver or drop off in the state of Virginia (Biswas, 2016). There are different personalities that the leader must respond to telecommunicating, and the driver must interact with customers face-to-face. The leader of the small trucking business must adapt and focus on his or her objectives and changing conditions. The goal setting,

capacity, responsibility, education, and experience are the key factors that determine whether the leader is successful or not (Aghion, 2017). The leadership style is important to a leader-led situation, but it also shows the ability and maturity of the leader that he/she can lead in critical moments. The placement of leadership comes from the leader observing and pairing their leadership style to their audience (Albuquerque, Filho, Nagano, & Phippsen, 2016).

The capabilities of the audience determine what Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership theory leaders utilize for their work environment. Telling, selling, participating, and delegating are the four leadership approaches, or tenets of this theory. The leader of the small trucking business determines the style based on the task and behavior (Northouse, 2018). The telling leadership style, which is a unidirectional passing of information from the leader to its employees, is not favorable. Telling is a demanding leadership style that uses force and the leader telling the employees that it is imperative that the mission is done by a certain deadline (Ghasabeh, Soosay, & Reaiche, 2015). In this style, there are no excuses at this point, and the leader expects the job to be finished on time. The selling leadership style is where the leader convinces the employees that the mission goals and values are going to produce big numbers within 6 months if the employees follow the guidelines that are given to them (Aga et al., 2016). This is a two-way conversation, but the leader is still overall leading the conversation. The participating style is where the leader shares the decision-making with the employees and makes the system more democratic (Elliot-Thompson, 2016). The leader does not present a pressing deadline on the objective while using this leadership style. Leaders

using this style get the employees involved, let them express themselves, make them feel more involved with the operations, and give them a sense of having a saying in the problems that are happening within the organization. The participating leadership style is building the confidence in the employees and not solely focusing on the mission (Edwards, 2015). The delegating leadership style is where the leader gives tasks to the managers, and the managers make sure that the task is accomplished. Once the task is complete, the manager gives the confirmation to the leader (Taneja, Sewell, & Odom, 2015). In this leadership style, the employees are given more freedom and not closely supervised because the confidence and trust are established between the leader and the employees.

A low maturity level within leadership creates difficulties in executing directions to employees. Leaders sometimes lack effective ways of communicating tasks to employees. Once the leader recognizes the miscommunication, the leader steps in to lead the employee in the right direction so that the employee works efficiently. The second maturity level issue occurs when an employee is unable to do the task but is willing to do so (Ali, 2015). The employee is a hard worker and dedicated to the mission, but has no clear understanding. Such an employee must be supervised, and the leader must look over their work and make sure that it is done right (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). For example, the employee is used to driving to one location, but he or she is a hard worker, so the leader decides to give the employee two locations (Abu-Ruman, 2016). The employee can complete the simple task, but multiple tasks are a challenge for the

employee (Chen, 2015). The third level of maturity is when employees are competent to do the task but do not think they can.

The leader has full confidence that the employee can complete the assigned task, but the employee lacks confidence so he or she does not want the responsibility (Luo, Song, Gebert, Zhang, & Feng, 2016). The fourth maturity level is where the group is ready, willing, and able to do the task they are given. Each employee who is given a task at the organization have different maturity levels so the leader that identifies the employees with an overall maturity level of three could truly on be a level one when keying on specific work (Le & Lei, 2018). The leader lets the employees know the potential achievement and risks of the pending task. The leader has full confidence and lets the employee fulfill the task.

Blanchard (1977) expressed in his writing about the ability level and the willingness of a leader that raises their expectations and ensures that the employees have a good view of what is expected of them. Blanchard discussed four designations for the competency and commitment of the team member. The first level of designation is low competence and low commitment (Liu & Li, 2018). This would apply to employees who are temporary and are not fully committed to the mission of the organization. Because the organization placed them on temporary staff, the employees do not know if they are going to be permanent or not after the probationary period (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2016). The competence and commitment are low because of the low need of the employee. The next level of designation is low competence and high commitment. The low competence is the employee not having the knowledge and competence to complete the work

accurately (Kambayashi & Kato, 2016). The high commitment is the dedication and hard work that the employee is displaying daily (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2016). The third level is high competence and low/variable commitment (Kim & Fernandez, 2017). The high competence is the employee being able to complete the task with little to no supervision, but the employee lacks commitment because of other reasons that are not with the company (Maden, Ozcelik, & Karacay, 2016). The last level is the high competence and high commitment, which every leader looks for in every employee (Qazi, Khalid, & Shafique, 2015). This is the employee who is fully committed and learns the operations so that he or she can take charge in case of the leader being absent. While contingency theories offer great value in understanding the relationship between leader and follower, the flexibility in leadership is overly focused, as well as the attributes of the employee, and the contingency theory was not selected as a guide for the study.

Retention of Customers and Employees

The retention of customers and employees are two of the most important categories that a business should focus on to sustain itself in the small trucking business industry. The employee who works face to face with customers sees the levels of satisfaction and determines whether the customers are revolving (Maden et al., 2016). Employees then can know if they need to modify their business strategy to make their customers happy. The employees must have a passion for satisfying the customer. The environment that is created reflects the employees' behavior and how the environment is set up (Madden, Mathias, & Madden, 2015). The customer's impression of the organization determines whether they will return to the organization. The managers of the

organization set a standard and baseline of how the operation should run daily. The employees perform the daily routines that are set in place (Han et al., 2016). Employees impact the business environment through the ways in which they interact with each other as well as how they respond to customers (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The interaction between the employees and the customers also depend on what type of leadership they have in the work environment. Employee behavior in most cases depend on how the leadership treats employees professionally and personally. The interaction between the leader and employee must be in sync for the sake of the organization's sustainment and productivity (Nichols, 2016). The employees and customers need each other, and the leader knows that if their needs are not reasonably met, then, that is the cost of customer service and a continuing customer.

The leader must make sure that the employees have the required and advanced training if and when available. Leaders must provide support to employees when personal and professional issues arise. A supportive leader can set certain personal dates for that employee to be off for events such as birthdays, anniversaries, and graduation dates. Recognition of personal achievements and dates enhance the work environment, improves individual productivity, and increases company performance (Qazi et al., 2015). If the employees are in a comfortable setting, then they build relationships with the customers such as asking them questions about their personal lives to build a bond or remembering the normal order that customers put in when they come there (Tiwari & Lenka, 2016), which displays a sense of caring for the customer (Qazi et al., 2015). The management, when interviewing potential employees, will set up scenarios that will force

the applicant to interact in a certain way, and the manager determines if that is the personality that they are looking for, as a good fit for the company, to accomplish the work mission (Mellert et al., 2015). The employees are the first stage of representing the product (Wilkinson et al., 2018). Employees have the first impression of what the company has to offer, and the customer uses their own interpretation of whether the product is going to be continuous or a one-time trial and error.

Profitability in the Small Trucking Industry

There are many successful small trucking businesses, but there are also numerous small trucking businesses that failed for various reasons. Factors that directly influence the trucking industry are varying fuel prices, competitors of the big industries, regulatory requirements, increases and decreases in production, and the delayed or unpaid invoices of the organizations that are receiving services (Lingard, Turner, & Charlesworth, 2015). The last few years, the trucking industry itself did not have all the mandatory regulations. Such regulations are a cost (McManamny, Sheen, Boyd, & Jennings, 2015). The leader knows preventive measures to keep them from failing.

Approximately 15% of the small trucking companies make it past their first 2 years in the business because of the mandatory regulations (Jiang & Chen, 2018). The rise of the operational costs is approximately \$1.703 per mile (Jiang & Chen, 2018). The operational costs extend from the repair maintenance, driver wages, driver benefits, truck/trailer lease payments, truck insurance premiums, tolls, fuel costs, permits and license, and the tires. The average profit that a trucking industry usually receives in the second year of business is between 6 and 8% (Cooper, Cooper, & Adams, 2018). For

example, if a company earns \$250,000 on an annual basis and has a 7% return, then the annual profit is \$17,500. The other 93% percent goes toward the operational costs of the business (Dong et al., 2017). The operating costs include labor, administrative fees, insurance, self-employment taxes, vehicle maintenance, truck repairs, vehicle registration, trailer registration, medical exams, rental costs, factoring companies, advisors, and trailer payments. There are two types of cost, which are fixed cost and variable cost (Chen, 2015). The fixed and variable costs are important, and the leader must know the difference for expense and profit purposes.

A major factor affecting the profitability of a small trucking company is the variable cost of truck maintenance and repairs. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (2015), the repair and maintenance costs for an 18-wheeler truck vary depending on what needs to be done with this key resource. Most of the truck owner-operators of the fleet managers need to understand the importance of preventive maintenance (Cooper & Adams, 2018). Unscheduled breakdowns are costly because the leader is not expecting the need to fix a problem with this key resource of their business (Kraemer et al., 2016). Extra costs associated with truck malfunctions (Colorafi & Evans, 2016) include the higher cost when the parts on the 18-wheeler truck begin to break to the point of being irreparable. In addition, because unexpected repair work is mostly done away from the headquarters location with unfamiliar mechanics, it tends to be costlier, so repair work should be a quarterly expense for routine checks that happen throughout the year.

There is no relationship with the employee, and the leader is unaware of the quality workmanship the employee possesses. Important diagnostic testing should take place to ensure the organization knows exactly what happened to find out how long the labor and part will take to get fixed (Barnham, 2015) because there is going to be a delay for the business which could result in delivery delays, loss of revenue, loss of customers, and loss of contracts (Lee, Sameen, & Cowling, 2015). There is potential for litigation if the driver caused damage to people or property, which is another unforeseen cost that may arise. For example, one transportation company had a driver that hit a pothole in the road that made the driver react and turn the wheel (Cooper et al., 2018). When the driver turned the wheel, the driver hit the side of a residence fence. This was a small cost, but, the frame of the truck was bent from the hole the driver hit in the road. There may be some leaders in the small trucking business who have no knowledge of what is required with preventive maintenance (Patton, 2015). Sources that can aid the small trucking organizations are vehicle manuals, networking with other organizations, manufacturer forums, and trucker forums (Kambayashi & Kato, 2016). The preventive maintenance is vital, particularly for the business that expands across the nation.

The vehicle manuals specialize in routines and schedules that help small trucking organizations. Networking with other organizations can help, but that leader still should keep a secondary source to avoid missing critical information (Lai & Lin, 2015). The networking is based off that organization's experience with their company. The manufacturer forums focus on that specific truck and what are the best ways to keep the vehicle in the best condition for safe daily operations (Leppaaho et al., 2015). Trucker

forums are going to be a step up from the manufacturer forums because this forum is coming from experienced drivers and owners that can tell the organizations about the trends of their truck that they have already experienced (Sarma, 2015). This source is very useful for finding out the potential problems that could occur with their truck.

The leaders in the organization should have key reminders that make sure that the preventive maintenance happens for their vehicles. There should be a designated section that keeps track of the tasks, and a leader that supervises over the tasks to make sure that it is being handled by that section (CISL, 2017). The reminder email can be set for the leader so that he can send a reminder email to the section and ask for a reply and read receipt for the confirmation that the issue is remedied. Once the job is finished, there should be receipts that are kept on file. The receipts should be kept electronically and as a hard copy (Lynch, 2015). The leader needs to make sure that the driver understands and is practicing the preventive maintenance daily. The preventive maintenance for the drivers is the walk-around inspections (Kraemer, Gouthier, & Heidenreich, 2016), where the driver is checking tires and looking for potential leaks under the truck. The driver also makes sure that there are no mechanical lights that are popping on from the initial crank of the vehicle to the shutdown of the last delivery.

The manager of the truck fleet should have the system of the truck set in place so that it is making sure that the driver of the truck is doing the preventive maintenance scheduling to the vehicle. The fleet manager could set up a checklist for the driver to follow to make sure that the task gets done, and the manager can review it and send it to the leader for the final receipt (Hayek, Thomas, Novicevic, & Montalvo, 2016).

The leader of the organization should set up a budget for the preventive maintenance costs so that it does not seem like a hassle when the monthly expenses and gains come in (Hopp & Sonderegger, 2015). The preventive maintenance portion should already be calculated and set up with the rest of the monthly expenses. The preventive maintenance percentage should be anywhere between 9 and 12% of the monthly gains (Marx, 2015). The other ways are knowing your true per-mile truck cost. The leader needs to assess the records of the organization and compare the monthly mileage against the preventive maintenance that has been done on the truck. Now, the leader can add up each month or calculate each month at the end to get an annual cost of preventive maintenance repair (Rivera, 2015). The annual maintenance cost can be the guideline for the future years and give the leader an estimation on what is going to be reserved. This way, if it is less, then that money can stay and overlap for the next year, or it can be used. This decreases the stress on the business and keeps the organization at a steady pace without interruptions (David, Hitchcock, Ragan, Brooks, & Starkey, 2016). The preventive maintenance scheduling of the rolling business is done by the leader.

The equipment leases and purchase payments are part of the operational costs of the organization. The leases are going to work different from the purchased truck and trailers (Cooper & Adams, 2018). The purchased truck and trailer payments are the owner's responsibility, and it is the owner's responsibility to make sure that they keep up with the maintenance on the truck as well (Cooper et al., 2018). The lease trucks are the sole responsibility of the company that needed the lease agreement. In between time, the organization that is leasing the truck must make sure the truck is not being mishandled

(Rivera, 2015). The company that leased the vehicle is responsible for the maintenance of the vehicle, and they are responsible for keeping the vehicle in good condition for their customers.

The leasing company should have receipts displaying and identifying exactly what equipment the organizations lease and the date and time of the equipment given and written on the receipt. The authorized equipment from the leasing company is identified. This means that an inventory is taken by the leasing company (Elsawah, Guillaume, Filatova, Rook, & Jakeman, 2015). The carrier needs to have a copy of the inventory that they leased from the organization upon return. The name of the leader, the length of the lease, and any obsolete negotiations are written and there is a mutual understanding between both parties (Rivera, 2015). The lease payments need to be specific within the lease agreement. There is a 15-day grace period to allow the documents if they are delivered to make it to the organization and for that organization to process the payment. The payment received is determined on the miles that are being utilized, and those miles are annotated in the daily logbook of the company that is leasing the equipment (Cooper & Adams, 2018). The logbook that is there to keep track of the miles where the organization requires this; the Department of Transportation also requires these documents.

The medical exam that the organization provides for its drivers is a requirement that the Department of Transportation enforces (Rivera, 2015). The Department of Transportation deemed it necessary that a licensed medical examiner conduct the examination (Rivera, 2015). The licensed medical examiner is listed under the Federal

Motor Carrier Safety Administration National Registry. The Department of Transportation exam is valid for a 24-month period, and the medical examiner can reexamine before the 24-month period expires if there is a health issue with a driver such as having high blood pressure (U. S. States Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy, 2015). Once the medical exam is complete, the medical examiner will issue the medical certification and keep a copy on file for record keeping. The employment tax is a very important category that should be handled with care. Cooper and Adams small trucking business hired an accountant so that the person can keep up with the legal matters of the business (Cook & Wolverton, 2015). As a limited liability company, an accountant is very important to have so that there are no shortfalls when it is time for the organization's tax processing. The form that the business uses is a schedule C tax form (Rivera, 2015). The schedule C form contains the organization's income or loss. This allows the owner to access the qualifications that their business could receive if the business is mainly about income or profit (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). The medical exams are important because this determines whether the driver is qualified to operate the rolling business.

The profit and loss statement form for each load shows the details of what happened on each delivery. The Department of Transportation regulations require quarterly payments on both the federal and state tax (CISL, 2017). The company keeps monthly and quarterly profit and loss statement to calculate the estimated tax value (Barnham, 2015). The penalty for underpaying taxes is more than what the company would pay initially avoiding the full cost of taxes.

Organizational Behavior

The leaders examine the impact of people and structure on behavior within an organization with the purpose of implementing such knowledge in enhancing organizational efficiency (Nichols, 2016). Organizational behavior has various constituents including people, technology, structure, and environment. Leadership has a significant impact on organizational behavior (Chen & Mykletun, 2015). The organization's base rests on leadership, vision, values, and goals. Creating a common vision for the organization and making sure that the managers of the organization implement the values in the vision as well because the values hold the same amount of weight as the vision within the business (Northouse, 2018). The leadership can only be successful and develop relationships through the understanding of the vision and values (Yin, 2016). Relationships, developed and ongoing, benefit the operations and build the foundation for the effective leadership to happen. The vision and values are the key factors that add to the relationship and make the organization stronger. The vision and values initiate the relationship between the leader and employee (Haque & Aston, 2016). One reason why the relationships of leaders and followers excel is because the vision and values are understood by both parties. There are no misunderstandings in the relationship which makes the productivity increase, customer service increase, and operations need to increase (Nichols, 2016). The relationship between the leader and employee must be healthy. The leader is going to share the common vision and value with the employee. This, in turn, makes the organization a positive and productive environment.

The vision and values work together to make sure that the organization can live up to its full potential, but, the leader plays an important role in the collaboration as well (Madden et al., 2015). The values bring the vision. If there is not a value, the vision is not going to exist. These components must be present in the establishment between the leader and employee. If this is not present, then, the relationship is going to serve little value (Mellert et al., 2015). The relationship between the leader and their followers is strengthened by the values and the vision.

The standard relationship between the leader and the employee has been established over time. The effective leaders usually integrate all their employees who are in the organization to understand the vision that exists (Luo et al., 2016). The vision is known as the *big picture*, and the ultimate goal of the business. This is the vision that ultimately inspires the employees of the organization (Nichols, 2016). The only way that the leadership is going to maximize their production is by making sure that the vision is understood (Burns, 1978). The vision statement serves a bigger purpose than the mission statement because the vision statement is utilized as an inspiration tool. A vision integrates the personal goals and mission goals and implements them to the organization's purpose (Salem, 2015). The vision is related to the leadership. The values are the personal tools through which the vision is created and enforced within the company.

An individual's personal values determine moral standards and principles. These factors drive organizational culture made up of informal organization, formal organization, and the social environment (Singh, 2015). Organizational culture

determines leadership, group dynamics, and communication within an organization. Organizational members perceive this as the quality of work life which influences the degree of motivation (Ali, 2015). The outcome is in the form of individual satisfaction, development, performance, and personal growth. The influence of leadership on organizational behavior is a fundamental issue to any organization (Lai & Lin, 2015). Leadership and organizational behavior are essential and interdependent in goal attainment of any business. Leadership involves influencing others to achieve a goal. Another element is that leaders have followers. In an organization, employees are the followers.

Employees in an organization are willing to follow leaders with amiable personality traits. Leaders tend to focus less on goals, structures, goals, availability of personnel, and resources in place of influencing followers to achieve set objectives (Bellou & Chatzinikou, 2015). Effective leaders use important leadership behaviors to help people move processes and entities. Diverse literature shows the relationship between leadership behaviors and organizational behavior (Lai, Saridakis, Blackburn, & Johnstone, 2015). In this sense, leadership is personal. Identifying the most effective leadership style is important as leaders require the knowledge to positively influence organizational behavior (Appelbaum et al., 2015). The choice of leadership styles can also help the leader establish the probable effects on the organization.

Additionally, leaders can also help work on strengths and weaknesses and help followers find their own niche for success. While there is a clear delineation of the differences between leadership and management, leadership is considered an important

facet of organizational behavior (Aga et al, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo, 2016). Leaders can influence behavior by encouraging followers to think and act in ways that benefit them as individuals, as well as the organization. The most effective leaders ensure that they put employees in positions that will leverage their strengths (Beer, 2015).

Organizational behavior rests on leadership practices. Leaders are guided by various leadership theories. A range of leadership theories evolve based on behavior (López-Delgado & Diéguez-Soto, 2015). These include trait, situational, transformational, and charisma. Each leadership model has advantages and disadvantages as well as limitations and assumptions (Northouse, 2018). Thinkers and researchers have made efforts to link some of the theories of organizational behavior.

Leadership is of significant importance since the organization is made up of diverse groups. Organization members are diverse in various ways (Cloutier et al., 2015). Diversity is any perspective, characteristic, or approach to work which different people bring to the workplace (Dong et al., 2017). Diversity comprises both visible and non-visible traits. Physical characteristics include gender, age, color, race, abilities, cognitive style, appearance, and mixed personality (Nicolò, 2015). Cultural characteristics include sexual orientation, ethnic or national origin, marital status, lifestyle, language, and religion. Socio-economic characteristics include profession, education, social class, and job function (Deinert et al., 2015). These traits combined to form *cultural identity* which shapes the behaviors, attitudes, and values shared by members of an organization. Effective leadership is a good strategy that allows an organization to maximize diversity (Jiang & Chen, 2018). An advantage of a diverse workforce is the capacity to tap into the

different talents which individuals from different abilities, perspectives, and backgrounds bring to the workplace (Dong et al., 2017). With effective leadership, conflicts that escalate to more problems can be easily managed before they can harm the organization.

Leaders also influence organizational behavior through communication.

Organizational members need to communicate with each other (Beer, 2015). This is important for effective coordination of activities. When communication is effective, the organization experiences more efficiency and productivity (Ali, 2015). A workplace requires effective communication for transparency and for clarity of roles. Successful leaders understand the role of communication in project success (Deery & Jago, 2015). A leader promotes effective communication to ensure cohesiveness and sharing of information among all organizational members. Effective communication is the responsibility of a leader to promote internal communication leading to successful mission accomplishment (Kang et al., 2015). A leader promotes communication between departments and guides employees in the right direction of internal communication. Where communication is carried out efficiently, teams complete their work quicker and in a more accurate manner than others (Northouse, 2018). Communication enhances collaboration.

Communication is an important part of organizational behavior. Many initiatives concern communications between groups and individuals in the organization (Han et al., 2016). Bringing groups and individuals to address a concern and an issue requires communication skills. Leaders require effective, concise, and clear communication to formulate the message to fit both the intended audience and the situation (Gutiérrez,

2015). Influence skills will enable the facilitation of change. A leader should be able to influence others to action. Influence involves the capacity to sway people's beliefs, thoughts, or actions (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). This is essential to the leadership process. Influence is the result of credibility, competence, and trustworthiness (Luo et al., 2016). Communication enhances collaboration.

Collaboration involves the ability to use skills to promote the development of relationships, collaborative efforts, and to garner the support required to address the problem. Leaders need communication skills to work with other individuals or groups to attain a set goal (Patton, 2015). There is no single leadership style that is effective in influencing organizational behavior. A leader should respond to the context based on the environment. Leaders should adjust their style to suit the development level of the followers (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). The style of leadership may change constantly to meet the demands based on the situation. More importantly, leaders should demonstrate common and critical leadership competencies to diagnose or understand the situation, adapting or adjusting, communicating or interacting their behavior in response to the situation and communicating or interacting with others (Stilwell et al., 2016). The important key is to maintain an acute awareness of areas for development and leadership-related strengths.

Depending on leadership style, employees can place their individual interest second. A leader may be the transformational, transactional, or another type of leader. Different types of leaders influence behavior differently (Reinhardt & Gurtner, 2015). The most effective leaders ensure that they put employees in positions that will leverage

their strengths. As a result, leadership is considered an important facet of organizational behavior (Chen & Mykletun, 2015). Leadership significantly influences organizational behavior through communication, goal setting, vision, values, and goals as well as the establishment of desired organizational culture (Mozammel & Haan, 2016).

Organizational culture determines group dynamics and behavior within the organization.

Communication is an important part of organizational behavior. Many initiatives concern communications between groups and individuals in the organization (Mittal & Dhar, 2015). Bringing groups and individuals to address a concern and an issue requires communication skills. Leaders require effective, concise, and clear communication to formulate the message to fit both the intended audience and the situation (Megheirkouni, 2018). Theories and styles of leadership determine patterns of beliefs, philosophy, attitudes, assumptions, and feelings about how leadership impacts individual behavior. Leaders set clear vision as to why and what is attainable. Leaders set out to impact the actions, beliefs, and feelings of employees (Marx, 2015). Leaders adopt various roles to motivate behavior. These include influencing, motivating, monitoring, and communicating (Velu, 2015). Communication is important because this is one of the ways an employee, leader, and customer develop a relationship.

Turnover Intention and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction depends on the leadership within the trucking company and how it operates. The leader must show transformational leadership as well as a sense of knowing their employees and what they contribute to the organization (Dong et al., 2017). The behavior of the employees must be recognized early so that the leadership

can recognize and correct the issue if there is one with the organization. Employee satisfaction happens if the employee is content and satisfied with their occupation (Kim & Fernandez, 2017). The employee's satisfaction is usually determined through the leader addressing concepts such as the compensation, workload, perceptions of the leadership, flexibility of the organization, teamwork, and the resources that the organization has to offer. These subjects are critical to keep the employees around and make sure that everything is in order (Deery & Jago, 2015). This reduces turnover as well as job satisfaction. Job satisfaction can be met as long as the initial counseling of the leader has been recognized and understood.

Herzberg's two-factor theory focuses on two factor theories. The relationship between the job satisfaction and the turnover intention should be one (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). The job satisfaction is the person being appreciated for a job well done and being proficient. The work of the people in the organization meeting the standard have set the example for the people around them, and the employees, customer's expectation, and values have been met at that point (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Quantitative statistics are tabulated to find the rates of turnover and productivity, work-related accidents, and absenteeism in the work place. Most of the studies on job satisfaction showed that the employees were more satisfied with their work when they were at work rather than being absent (Leung, 2015). Leaders empower employees, and the employees gain job satisfaction because they make decisions and self-manage more effectively. This is showing the employee that the leader has a sense of trust in them (Barnham, 2015). The leader knows that if they drop employee morale and job insecurity, then, the likelihood of

a person staying with the organization for a long period of time is very short. The two factor theories are extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors are challenging work, recognition, relationships, and growth potential. Extrinsic factors are status, job security, salary, and fringe benefits (Alasadi & Al Sabbagh, 2015). Herzberg's theories are in an active status, and they are techniques that the leader uses to boost the motivation of their employees.

Turnover intention is the intent of rotation. Employees that have high withdrawals in the organization's intentions and low morale in the organization are usually the ones that have high intentions to turnover (Wei, 2015). The reason for the turnover could be the dissatisfaction with work. This can vary from work, coworkers, or just the way the organization is operating (Taneja et al., 2015). The turnover from work is the mission may not align with the worker's views, and the worker feels as if there is something that alters the work experience and makes the experience better (Kinanga & Cheruiyot, 2015). The coworkers having different personalities and attitudes can cause friction and tension in the environment. A turnover rotation is effective, but the leader ensures that the replacement employee is not missing any steps that could make the company go at a downward spiral.

Intrinsic factors are challenging work that have critical tasks that must be accomplished in a timely manner. These instances show the leader that the employee deserves or they are filling their job title as expected of them (Audretsch et al., 2015). The leader can also investigate giving that person more responsibility and this will help them grow as an employee of the company. Recognition is the leader announcing the

employee of the month and giving them some type of recognition for the hard work (Singh, 2015). The reward can be anything that the leader thinks the employee deserves for their dedication (Sharma et al., 2016). Recognition can assist in the sustainment of the employees because that shows the employees that the leader cares about how they develop professionally (Wei, 2015).

Relationships between the employees/customers and employees/leaders are detrimental to the entire business design and plan (Marx, 2015). This is the only way that the business can keep going without taking losses from month to month (Morse & Coulehan, 2015). The leaders must delegate and task in certain situations. If the leader is not level-headed and not willing to compromise, then, there will be a shortfall of longevity because of the friction between the employee, customer, and leader (Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2016). Growth potential is the continuous growth of the organization and employees (Taneja et al., 2015). This happens by the leader making sure that the employee is knowledgeable and making sure that the customer is happy and satisfied with the service (Maritz & Donovan, 2015). In return, the leader must make sure that the employee is happy and satisfied with the organizational treatment and how the operations function daily.

Extrinsic factors are when the person is motivated by the outside resources such as the status of the employee and how they can benefit the organization. This is an important factor and must integrate with the daily operations of the organization (Leung, 2015). If the status of the employee is not maintained, then, that employee's behavior and attitude is not going to benefit the organization, and there is going to be a conflict

with the leader/employee of the business. The next factor that ties in with the status is the job security. Job security is the organization and leadership letting the employee know verbally and written that there is a permanent occupation for them if they are fully committed to the business (Lingard et al., 2015). There is usually a six-month probationary period to make sure that the employee is reliable and can do their due diligence for the company. The six-month temporary staff is an employee that belongs to a company and is placed on probation (Kornbluh, 2015). The worker must show that they are loyal to the mission, and they have a full commitment to the business. There is a package that contains benefits that has medical insurance, retirement plan, and dental coverage for the employee and family (Hopp & Sonderegger, 2015). The occupational pay is salary-based, not hourly. This is usually paid on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). The salary of the employee is usually introduced before the employee starts. The salary is based off the experience, job title, and education of the employee (Kinanga & Cheruiyot, 2015). The employee should know their worth before they commit to an occupation.

Job satisfaction closely relates to salary. The quality of education outside of the occupations could motivate the employees to seek higher education so that their pay increases (Bellou & Chatzinikou, 2015). The research of the job title and how much it is worth should be done before the employee fills out the application. The last factor is the fringe benefits that are a supplement to the employee's salary (Kang et al., 2015). For example, the company that provides the employee a vehicle, extra pay for meals, housing allowance, or sick pay. On top of the fringe benefits, you still receive your regular salary

(Pernecky, 2016). Employees' salaries sometimes bring job satisfaction, but it is that leaders' responsibility to let them know if they are fulfilling their billet description.

The fringe benefits are usually in the compensation package and explained before the hiring of the individual. Promotions are an incentive for retention of the employees and job satisfaction (Albuquerque et al., 2016). Opportunities can improve the needs of someone progressing, the responsibility, participation, and dedicated work. The leader can initially ask the employee in the interview what are three short term goals and what are three long term goals that they want to accomplish with the organization (Zhang, Ahammad, Tarba, Cooper, Glaister, & Wang, 2015). The personal development within the occupation is the guidance coming from the leader that will set the employee up with a great opportunity to progress from their status. The daily operations can take a toll on the employees, and this can lead to a disconnect between the daily operations and the employees (Winter, 2016). This can stem from the disconnect in understanding the vision or the measurement of the work environment which is critical and one of the most important job satisfaction factors (Pernecky, 2016). The measurement of the work environment expands from variables that are visible and invisible (Ruiz & Rivero, 2018). Fringe benefits are a part of the leader's initial brief with its employees to make sure that they know that they are taken care in case anything happens to them while on the job.

Supervision relates to the organizational factors and the job satisfaction of the employees. The leader making sure that everything is operating the way it should be is the key to success and a factor in the performance and behavior of the employees (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). If the leaders make sure that they are supervising and

making sure everything is running correctly daily, that naturally reduces stress and keeps the employees in a positive mind frame that they are doing what they are supposed to do (Maden et al, 2016). Supervision has to be a part of the occupation to make sure that the employees are being treated fairly and are overall satisfied.

The Vroom-Yetton-Jago decision-making model of leadership is a flexible decision making tool, and the leader can make effective decisions (Lynch, 2015). The method has a procedure that puts the decision-making model at a decision-making process. The idea of the model is that it did not arrive as a nonspecific method (Luo et al., 2016). This is a perfect fit for the small trucking business if it is not going to expand, but, if the small trucking business expands, the organization becomes difficult to utilize. The decision procedure can be mechanically and take notes that have subtleties in the decision-making process (Elliot-Thompson, 2016). The model of leadership Vroom focuses on is the decision-making of how successful the leadership progresses in time. The quality of the decisions is important, and the commitment of the employees is another important attachment (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). The nature of the employees, leader, and situation determines the group and decision-making process (Mozammel & Haan, 2016). Vroom has five different styles that help with the decision-making process. The styles include two parts of autocratic, two parts of consultative, and collaborative.

The autocratic style of leadership is the leader making the decision by themselves and using information that is available. The second part of autocratic is using a less strenuous autocratic leadership style where the leader talks to the employees and determines what actions to take based off their own information and the information

given by the employees (Deinert et al., 2015). The consultative leadership style is the leader consulting individuals and seeking their opinion. The second part of the leadership style is consulting the employee's opinions and determining a solution afterwards (Liu & Li, 2018). The collaborative leadership style is the group of employees making the decision, and the leader supporting the decision as a result (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). The Vroom decision making model works with the employees, and it also gets the leader to interact with the employees more but, the leader must determine and make sure they are making the right decisions at the end of the day.

Transition

In section 1, I provided an overview on operational costs and profitability, particularly the issues and problems confronting businesses implementing employee downsizing. Businesses, such as a small trucking company, implement downsizing for different reasons that yield different results. I conducted a single case study interviewing three leaders of the company. The business leaders implement revenue incentives to retain talented employees for the reduction of operational costs and keep revolving customers for the profitability of the organization. A single case study was the most appropriate method for answering the research questions of *what strategies do small trucking business leaders implement to retain dependable employees after downsizing?* Small trucking business leaders who comprehend the impact of a potential negative business performance after downsizing are displaying better strategies for retaining talented employees, and getting better performance.

Section 2 included the research instructions with a detailed explanation of the role of the researcher, the participants, the research method and design, data collection instruments and techniques, and how to assure reliability and validity. Section 3 included the presentation of the findings from the study, interpretations, and recommendation for further research.

Section 2: The Project

In this section, I focused on strategies that the business leaders use to sustain their small trucking business beyond 5 years. Retention of employees and revolving customers are a common business management strategy that business leaders use for improving organizational productivity, efficiency, profits, and competitiveness (Edwards, 2015). The shortfalls to non-retention can create a decrease in productivity and the loss of business (Toma, Grigore, & Marinescu, 2014). In this section, explained the data collection, retention, and analysis process. In section 3, I provided findings of the study, recommendations for future research, and the implications and contributions for the current research. I explored the criteria for participants, my role as an investigator, and strategies to ensure reliability and validity in the research process. Some key sections in Section 2 include the role of the researcher, the research method, research design, the participants, and ethical consideration in research.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that the trucking business leaders use to reduce operating costs to increase profits. The population for this study comprised business leaders from one profitable trucking organization who have successful strategies to reduce operating costs to increase profits. This organization is in the south eastern part of the United States. The findings of this study may contribute to social change by aiding business leaders to stabilize their businesses to provide meaningful and consistent employment, moving products to sustain business in society.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher included collecting and analyzing data from the research, as well as protecting the participant's identities and safely storing their personal information throughout the research process and beyond. I used a qualitative method to gather the information from the participants (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). The researcher maintains an awareness of personal biases and issues within the ethical situations. Maintaining a neutral perspective of the small trucking business when analyzing participants' responses is vital to enhancing the quality of the research into the small trucking business (Collins & Cooper, 2014).

Although I am currently supervising and managing operations in the small trucking business, I did not have a business relationship with the organization or research participants. By using this interview protocol, I ensured that my data from the small trucking business leaders did not influence data interpretation, which ensured consistent methods of asking questions and recording responses, applying member checking to verify interpretations, and using additional source data to augment the interviews. I challenged any potential biases I may have by purposefully setting my own views and perceptions aside to be open to the opinions and experiences of others, I strived to gain valuable information to help me understand this phenomenon. Data collection occurred only after I received approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB provided oversight and ensured the research complied with ethical standards and the three foundational ethical principles outlined in the *Belmont Report*

(Connolly, 2014). The *Belmont Report* provided three principles guiding the conduct of research involving all participants. The three foundational principles of the *Belmont Report* are respect-for-persons, beneficence, and justice. Respect-for-persons involves respecting and protecting human participants with limited autonomy (Wessels & Visagie, 2015).

For this qualitative single case study, I collected data from one primary source, direct interviews with participants, and have physical artifacts attained through the company, such as websites and other available sources. First, I collected data from interviews in a small trucking business (Yin, 2016). An interview protocol contains the interview questions and step-by-step guidance that a researcher can use consistently for several interviews. An interview protocol includes having a ready set of interview questions and using a script, so the researcher maintains focus. Yin (2016) noted that an interview protocol includes providing an informed consent form to participants, ensuring participants meet the established criteria, arranging a location for the interview, providing information on the interview process, maintaining confidentiality, and following-up via member checking. Yin (2016) emphasized that the interview protocol is a significant way to increase the reliability of the multiple case study. Roulston and Shelton (2015) added that researchers help eliminate bias and ensure validity with multiple data sources for cross-referencing. Multiple sources of evidence enable methodological triangulation to assure the validity of research findings (Yin, 2016).

Participants

I initiated the data collection process only after receiving approval from the Walden University's IRB system; I used purposeful sampling to gain access to small businesses that have success rate beyond 5 years (Yin, 2016). The selection for the small trucking business and the leaders of the company in the southeastern region may be appropriate. The criteria for inclusion in the single case study, the leaders that were interviewed had to work in the small trucking business industry and successfully develop and implement a retention strategy for reducing the operational cost and gaining profitability (Lingard et al., 2015). The business leaders have successfully developed and implemented policies that maintained talented employees. To gain access to participants, I connected with them on telecommunication and through email. The consent form served as the invitation letter and a reply with an "I consent" indicated agreement to participate in the study.

Research Method and Design

In the following sections, I summarized the methods and designs considered to conduct research and determine the most appropriate approach for my specific business problem. In the first section below, I considered potential methods. In the second section, I discussed designs.

Research Method

A researcher selects between three research methods to conduct research: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. A researcher selects a qualitative method in hopes of exposing narrative explanations to explain decision making processes in

businesses (see Yin, 2016), and because qualitative research takes place in the natural world, it gives the researcher a better understanding of how the organization operates (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The qualitative method was determined as the most appropriate method for the qualitative study because my intent was to ask open-ended questions to gain a breadth of information from business leaders related to decisions made. The quantitative researcher uses numerical evidence and ratios to explain relationships and differences among variables, and the researcher does not take into consideration the context (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014). I am not interested in testing hypothesis or explaining behavior in terms of numerical evidence; I did not select the quantitative approach for the qualitative study. The mixed method approach involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting both qualitative and quantitative data in the same study (Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2016). The mixed method approach includes quantitative analysis; it was not appropriate for this study.

Research Design

A qualitative researcher selects between several designs (Yin, 2016). I considered four designs in conducting this study, the phenomenological study, ethnography, single case study, and multiple case study. A phenomenological researcher limits an investigation to lived experiences, researches a large cohort of a population to identify common themes in a singular experience (Berglund, 2015). I did not select the phenomenological design because my intent was to look beyond lived experiences to capture perspectives and multiple sources of evidence related to a phenomenon. An ethnographic researcher explores behaviors unique to a culture or diverse population. In

the qualitative study, there was no uniqueness about small trucking companies, so an ethnography was not selected. A case study researcher provides a record of details relating to a person, place, or group of people during a specified period (Gutiérrez, 2015). A single case study would typically focus on one business. A multiple case study captures more than one company. The participants for this study were selected from one large organization as this may provide ample data for the qualitative study. I used a qualitative single case study for the research. A qualitative single case study is the most appropriate design because the purpose of the study was to identify and reduce the operational costs and increase the profitability in the small trucking business and a plethora of information was available through the single case study lens as the company selected for the research was typical of most trucking companies within the trucking industry.

Population and Sampling

The population for this qualitative single case study was comprised of one small trucking business with three different business leaders in the southeastern region of the United States. This company has less than 100 employees. A transportation company depends on the customers and their satisfaction resources such as product, delivery service, and face-to-face experience. In this study, I used a purposeful sampling method and selected three business leaders in a small trucking business in the southeastern part of the United States of America who were presently or currently reducing the operational cost of the business and increased the profitability. The determination of an appropriate sample size was an important part of a qualitative research design, and the appropriate

sample size for a qualitative single case study depended on both theoretical and practical deliberations.

Purposeful sampling was a usable sampling method for working the cases with reasonable information related to the study. The initial decision on the sample size at the beginning design stage underrated the practical application of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). A four-point approach sampled the qualitative research that included (a) defining the sample universe, (b) decision making of the sample size, (c) planning the sampling strategy, and (d) determining the sample. The purposeful sampling provided an opportunity to include new ideas and perspectives to the study, so the outcome aligned with the research purpose. I used purposeful sampling when selecting the participants.

The participating organization was three business leaders in the small trucking business in the southeastern part of the United States. The small trucking business in the organization had between 3 and 6 employees. If saturation was not met, then, there was an alternative solution, in which the addition of more participants from that organization would have been interviewed. The interview participants may have had the capability of providing good quality answers to the research questions because they had previous successful experience with the industry. The research participants were business leaders who are successful in the small trucking business.

The setting for the interviews was at the business in a residential area in the southeastern region of the United States. There were no interruptions inside of the business, and it was in a quiet neighborhood. The interview lasted between 30-45 minutes, and I used probing questions to keep the interview at a consistent flow. Upon

receiving IRB approval and before the interviews, I confirmed each met the criteria set to participate. The main reason for ascertaining each participants' eligibility in advance was to ensure that each person met the qualification criteria.

Ethical Research

Protecting the study participants was critical in ensuring ethical research (Wessels & Visagie, 2015). I explained that participation was voluntary, and a participant could have withdrawn at any time before or during the interview, and there was no further action required if that was to happen. To withdraw, the participant would have had to contact me at any time and advise me of their desire to withdraw; at that point, I would have asked if they want their contribution to be included or removed from the study, and I would have done as instructed. I retained all interview data collected to date in a locked cabinet and destroy after 5 years. There was no consequence to participants who would have decided to withdraw or disregard any interview questions during the entirety of the research process. I provided this information in the informed consent form (see Appendix A). The informed consent form contained the researcher contact information, the Walden University IRB contact email, and phone numbers. The Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) has the oversight and approves research involving interactions between people to ensure compliance with the guidelines set for ethical research in studies. The IRB procedures stipulated that research participation was voluntary (Connolly, 2014) and that the researcher would ensure there was no harm caused to the participants. The researcher being ethical ensured participants confidentiality. I reassured the participant that their personal information has not leaked or been given to the public.

I numbered the participants according to the order of the interview where the first participant was PA1, the second participant was PA2, and the third participant was PA3. I kept an electronic data copy that I will keep for no less than 5 years on a password protected computer that I only have access to. The remaining data was stored in a locked storage cabinet for no less than 5 years according to Walden University's policy to safeguard the rights of the participants.

Researchers must inform the research participants regarding the purpose of the study as well as obtain informed consent before conducting the research. Informed consent is a process that protects the human participants in a research and ensures that participation is voluntary and independent. The researcher has the responsibility of getting approval from the university's institutional review board IRB before conducting the research. The IRB number 05-28-19-0738593 has the oversight of ensuring the protection of the interviewees by evaluating any possible harm to the participants against their will, and there are no activities involving great risk during the interview. The participants received no compensation for their involvement in the study. The participants received a courtesy summary of findings at the end of the research.

Data Collection Instruments

As the primary instrument in the single case study, I collected data from the small trucking business in the southeastern region of the United States; I conducted interviews with the business leaders who are successfully reducing the operational cost. Sutton and Austin (2015) pointed out that the researcher is the person that is collecting the data primarily and going through the research process and making sure that the information is

accurate before the presentation. The case study researcher uses an interview protocol (see Appendix A) providing a description of the procedures that guide the research process (Yin, 2016). Yin (2016) maintained that the interview protocol helps increase the reliability of case study research. Yin (2016) detailed own what the case study should look like and what is recommended such as (a) relevant questions in the interview, (b) interviewer being a good listener, (c) basic knowledge of the topic, and (e) favoritism or avoiding bias.

During the interviews, I obtained the information from each participant through a digital recorder and electronically on my laptop. This was also a part of my data collection process. The digital recorder that was utilized had the original information and was captured through expressions from each participant. After the interview was conducted, each participant reviewed a summary of the interview for accuracy (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Member checking required a second interview to review summaries of the collected data to verify accuracy before transcribing.

Data Collection Technique

Observing and interviewing the participant is the foundations of the techniques and gives a detailed understanding of the business phenomenon. An interview is a primary method of gathering the information from the participant and the researcher asking questions that are in line with the qualitative method. There are three different formats used by the researcher such as structured, unstructured, and semi structured interviews. Using the face-to-face technique allows the interviewer and the participant an opportunity to understand each other and build a relationship with one another. The

interviews built have interview questions and guidance that help the interviewer through the process step-by-step. For the single case qualitative study, I contacted potential participants directly by phone and introduced the study. If the potential participant demonstrated interest in participating by agreeing to complete a consent form, I would hand-deliver a consent form and provide information of the study in detail that would explain the confidentiality component, storage and destruction of personal data, and rights of participants. Once participants signed the consent form, I worked with them to schedule face-to-face interviews to ask open-ended questions about the business phenomenon.

The advantage of using the face-to-face interview for a case study is that the researcher capitalizes on deep context with the interviewee and builds a rapport because of the face time spent in the interview. The disadvantage of using the face-to-face interview is that there is a chance for bias (Yin, 2016), and the researcher may influence the outcomes of what happens. At this point, the researcher is drawing conclusions that are not factual, and they are opinionated. Another disadvantage of using the face-to-face interview as the data collection technique is that the interviewee gives information to the researcher that is not true to impress the interviewer and provides personal views rather than objective feedback. The researcher being aware of personal bias helps them mitigate issues and influences the interview results. A researcher reduces personal bias using member checking. Member checking is a process to share interview data with the participants to assure the accuracy of interview data and credibility of research findings, and it may not require a second interview to review the information and verify accuracy

before transcribing (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; David et al., 2016). I used member checking to reduce the chance of bias and increase trustworthiness. I conducted face-to-face interviews at a time and location suitable to the participant. I stayed within the allotted time in conducting interviews and followed the interview protocol to ensure each participant was asked the same questions in the same manner to ensure consistency in the interview process.

The data collection technique captures semi structured interviews and the structure of the organization's artifacts such as the websites and advertising. The purpose of this study was to identify and explore strategies that small trucking business leaders implement to retain talented employees to reduce operational cost and retain customers for profitability. The semi structured interview was appropriate for the study.

Researchers posted that the semi structured interview is a useful technique to collect data in qualitative research (Yin, 2016). The researcher can ask open-ended questions to obtain rich data and, as necessary, to seek clarification (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The initial interviews were recorded to ensure the accuracy of the interview process.

Following the initial interviews, I scheduled a follow-up interview to member check for accuracy and to gain any additional information to support the data collection process.

Following the write up of the research findings, I provided participants with a summary for their records.

Data Organization Technique

Prior to conducting interviews, I assigned each participant a pseudonym (P1, P2) to ensure their information was kept confidential throughout the research process. I used these identifiers to keep logs on all contributing data related to each participant. I kept all research data such as recorded interviews and a field journal that contained handwritten notes, in a locked cabinet in my home, for no less than 5 years. Reflective journals help to keep personal logs to review and interpret the field data (Applebaum, 2014). I used an iPhone to record the interviews and transcribe all interviews into text. Then I backed up the data to an external drive. According to Quick and Choo (2014), using the most up to date methods is essential in recording data. According to Novak (2014), maintaining the trust between the researcher and the participant is essential to protect the integrity of the research. The data is stored in a password protected computer, accessible only by me, for confidentiality, and I keep data stored securely for 5 years.

Data Analysis

Qualitative researchers use methodological triangulation to compare multiple types of data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Yin (2016) added that the collection of multiple types of data, including interview data, physical artifacts, and available company documentation, validate research finding. Marshall and Rossman (2016) indicated that researchers compile data from interviews, incorporate proof from the literature, and apply the study to the tenets of a conceptual framework to ground the data to understand business phenomenon. In the single case qualitative study, I incorporated interview data, physical artifacts, and company documentation, enhanced by the comprehensive review

of existing literature and the conceptual framework to gain a deeper understanding of the business phenomenon.

Analyzing research data required organizing the collected data from the interviews, documentation, and physical artifacts; reviewing and coding the collected data; and developing subsequent themes that would answer the central research question. Each step of the data analysis process requires coding, clustering, and reducing ideas to common themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The process of interpretation of data required that I make meaning out of the data to add context to my understanding of the business problem. I transcribed and coded all collected data using computer NVivo software. NVivo is a computer software program that organizes and facilitates the analysis of collected qualitative data (Lenses, Hollensbe, & Masterson, 2016). Specifically, with identified codes, the software locates similar words and sentence formations to help create themes of information within the data (Yin, 2016). I coded and analyzed the data with the computer software program and worked to manually identify themes within the coded and clustered data.

Theme analysis is a process of identifying repeated words and phrases in the data (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). NVivo computer software assisted in identifying the themes from the transcribed data. Closing this process required returning to the central business problem repeatedly to ensure that findings reflect a response to the central research question. The research process ends with the development of a clear summary of findings of the study. The final findings were a precise representation of participant

contributions, physical artifacts, and available documentation to align directly with the central research question.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research means the extent to which research is consistent (Leung, 2015). Reliability is the consistency and replicability of the research methodology for a case study (Yin, 2016). The researcher can enhance the reliability of the study by asking the right questions during the interviews as well as properly documenting the processes and rationale for any decisions made during the research process (Grossoehme, 2014). Also, the use of the interview protocol assures that the researcher stays focused and unbiased during the interview sessions. I used the interview protocol as well as asking questions that were relevant to answering the central research question.

El Hussein, Jakubec, and Osuji (2015) explained that rigor in qualitative research means achieving a correct and genuine representation of the study participants' experiences and situations. Marshall and Rossman (2016) added that a researcher could ensure rigor in a qualitative study through triangulation. Carter et al. (2014) explained that methodological triangulation of data in qualitative research is a strategy of applying various methods, such as interviewing, reviewing available documentation, and exploring physical artifacts, as a means of understanding phenomenon.

I interviewed the participants as well as examined relevant company artifacts (e.g., the participating companies' websites, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook), and company

documents, to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies that small trucking business leaders implemented for the reduction of operational cost. To assure the study's dependability, I used member checking.

Validity

The validity of qualitative research refers to the use of the appropriate methodology for data collection and data analysis for the realization of a creditable result (Leung, 2015). Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated that a researcher could enhance the validity of the study through the methodological triangulation of data from multiple sources and member checking. Carter et al. (2014) underscored that the use of triangulation would help assure the validity of research findings. Member checking is a process that involves getting the participants to review the themes from the collected data, reviewing the summary of the interpretations, and offering feedback to ensure credibility and validity of the findings (Morgan, 2016). I used both methodological triangulation and member checking to assure my study's validity.

Trustworthiness. El Hussein et al. (2015) discussed trustworthiness, positing that trustworthiness in qualitative research signifies the level of trust, confidence in the data, and addresses the quality or credibility of the research. Trustworthiness is a concept that incorporates transferability, confirmability, and credibility of the research findings (El Hussein et al., 2015). Transferability means enabling others to form conclusions if findings from a research study apply in a different field or location. Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) stated that to enable others to determine transferability;

researchers should provide rich descriptions of the context of the research and detailed descriptions of the participants' accounts to enhance transferability.

Confirmability. Kihn and Ihantola (2015) added that the researcher achieves confirmability when the findings and data leading to the results are easily understood. QSR NVivo® is a useful management tool for providing a full audit trail of all decisions made during the research process (Houghton et al., 2013). Describing the processes to prevent bias in a research project contributes to increasing the credibility of a study (Morgan, 2016). El Hussein et al. (2015) alluded that the higher the quality of data, then the greater the credibility of the entire study. Kornbluh (2015) added that researchers could also establish the trustworthiness of their studies through member checking and the incorporation of participants' feedback mechanisms into the data analysis process. By using the interview protocol (see Appendix A), I avoided influencing the data collection, or data analysis process with my personal views, and by using member checking, I ensured my interpretation of data is a true representation of the participants' views.

Fusch and Ness (2015) explained that one method for reaching data saturation is by asking multiple participants the same questions. Data saturation is the point when the researcher receives no new information or emerging themes after several interviews with the same participants (Gibbins, Bhatia, Forbes, & Reid, 2014). I interviewed the three participants. If I did not reach saturation with the three participants, I would have used the snowball sampling to gain more participants for the study until saturation was reached. Fusch and Ness (2015) added that a researcher attains data saturation when there is enough data to repeat the study and when further coding is no longer necessary.

By attaining data saturation, I affirmed and demonstrated the confirmability, credibility, and transferability of the research findings.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included a detailed discussion of the different stages of the research project. The stages included discussions on the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, participants, and population, as well as research design and methods. I also discussed the data collection instruments, techniques, and data analysis. The most appropriate research method and design is the qualitative single case study to explore the reduction of operational cost and increasing the profitability in the small trucking business in the southeastern part of the United States. The data collection technique was through face to face interviews and a review of the company operations. Section 3 included the presentation of the study's findings, discussion of the application to business practice, the implication for social change, recommendations for future research, and my conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that the small trucking business leaders use to implement the reduction of operational cost and increase the profitability of the small trucking industry. In this section, I present my findings and discuss the themes identified. I also discuss applications to professional practice and implications for social change and provide recommendations for action and further research, personal reflections, and my conclusions.

My findings revealed five themes for the successful small trucking business included: (a) applying transformational leadership, (b) finding dependable drivers, (c) establishing trust, (d) rewarding and recognizing employees, and competing with other trucking industries who are trying to gain the competitive advantage. All the participants mentioned dependable drivers and how it is beneficial to helping the organization grow as a whole. Participants reported that the businesses survival depends on employees that are reliable and the retention of customers. The organizational knowledge from the employees will result in a competitive advantage for their organizations. There is an improvement in the reduction of the operational cost and an explanation of how the organization can increase its profitability. Employees feel safe and secure when they have a sense of job security which in turn enables them to be creative and take risks for the organization. Participants reported that organizational support through recognition, a reward systems, career development opportunities, retention of customers and employees make them feel as if they are a huge asset to the company. Additionally, the small

business industry is building employees for the long term that can help sustain the business past the 5 year success rate.

Presentation of the Findings

The central research question for this study was: What strategies do truck business leaders use to successfully reduce operating costs to increase profits? Through interviews with small trucking business employees who successfully reduced operating costs and increased the profits, I identified five themes and present them in the following pages. The conceptual framework was transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978). I describe how the findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend knowledge, and tie the findings to the conceptual framework used for this study. I also review available information from the company's websites and social media sites. Table 2 contains the summary demographic information about the three participating small trucking business employees. The three participants had a total of 71 years of combined experience as business employees in the small trucking business industry.

Table 2

Demographic Information About the Small Trucking Business Leaders

	Characteristics	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
Business leader	Code Name	PA1	PA2	PA3
	Age	75	29	44
	Country of Birth	United States	United States	United States
	Highest Level of Education Completed	High School	High School	Bachelor's Degree
	Length in Current Organization	5 years	3 years	5 years
	Years of Experience as a Business Leader	45 years	5 years	21 years

As I noted in the introduction, the five themes were: (a) applying transformational leadership, (b) finding dependable drivers, (c) establishing trust, (d) rewarding and recognizing employees, and (e) competing with other trucking industries. The participants provided consistency in answers to the research questions that, in combination with the conceptual framework, literature review findings, and triangulation, helped me identify themes during data analysis.

Theme 1: Apply Transformational Leadership

Leadership in the organization was the first factor that participants identified as very important to a successful implementation of strategies for reducing the operational costs and increasing the profitability. Each of the three business leaders seemed to agree that the leadership in their organizations is inspiring and transformational.

Transformational leadership inspires as well as motivates followers to perform their best when executing the organization's policies after the downsizing. ElKordy (2013)

explained that transformational leadership is the right leadership style to achieve this level of inspiration and visionary leadership during expenses and after expenses that shows the amount of profitability in the small trucking business. According to PA 2, their companies' leaders implemented strategies that contributed to successfully reducing the operational costs and increasing the profitability. These strategies included implementation of gas card programs and proper planning of routes that reduced the time they spend on the road.

The transformational leadership theme confirms the findings of Hansson (2015) that downsizing requires a leadership style that can inspire and give surviving employees a sense of security and motivation to put their best effort into making an organization successful. The theme also resonates with the findings of Appelbaum et al. (2015) that the transformational leader combines the competence and skill at communicating and coaching to motivate, reward, and build good teams. Luo (2016) added that the remediating actions of the transformational leader offered a positive working environment and positively affected organizational efficiency. This theme aligned with the transformational leadership theory, which is one of the conceptual frameworks for this study. Table 3 contains the participants' statements about leadership styles in their organizations.

Table 3

Theme: Apply Transformational Leadership

Participant	Participant's Comments
PA1	The leadership must be seen and verbally re told.... If it is not then, the employees are not going to believe in the mission that was given to them initially. The employees must believe that they are an asset to the team, and they are worthy of being in the company. A sense of trust between the leader and employee must be established, if not, then the leader can only expect short term employees.
PA2	You as a leader have to make sure that you are setting your employees up for success. That means proper planning in all aspects of the business. Pre trip checklist is a big tool that I use before I get on the road. I walk around my truck and make sure that it is in good standings visually and I check under the hood and make sure that all my fluids are topped off. This saves money because you could have a flat tire on the road and that could cost you 800 dollars, but if you check that before you leave the shop then, I am only spending 80 dollars. Small things such as that can set your drivers up for success overall and make them better leaders. Whether they decide to stay or create their own business.
PA3	So the success of your business comes from the passion and what you pour into the employees. I started at Primerica Life Insurance. I have been with this organization for 21 years. This organization is set up as a volunteer opportunity. Yes, you get paid for it and you have people that you mentor, but you cannot fire them. I am also a pastor and I have been a pastor for 17 years. This is also a volunteer opportunity for people that come into the ministry program and it is also set up as a non termination program. When I came into the small trucking business organization, it was a different experience for me. The leadership has to be driven off of the intent of the company and focusing on the dependability of the drivers as well as gaining customers for retention to build an honest profile. If there is no profile or paper trail of good reliability from your organization then, you will constantly be looking for work instead of having that automatic client that knows that you are a reliable organization.

Theme 2: Finding Dependable Drivers

All three business leaders agreed on the relevance of having a dependable driver and developing them into a careerist for the organization. The mentoring from the business leaders prepared individuals development as drivers and that helped for long term careers in the organization. The knowledge that the leadership is providing is a platform and opportunity for the driver to understand how to handle customers and build a good reputation from the lower level. Ciutiene and Railaite (2015) underscored that the key constructs in human capital development and management were education and training. PA1 explained, “It is not easy to find reliable drivers as the organization spends time and money hiring new drivers and retraining what they just taught to the previous driver.” PA3 added, “When you lose your driver unexpectedly then, it puts you in a bind if you are already low staffed, you, as the leader, have to put on your work boots and get the job done until you can find a loyal driver.” The investment in a driver and then losing them is an expense and a loss when the employee separates from the organization (Yongbeom, 2013).

Finding a dependable driver theme confirms the findings by Seong-O and Patterson (2014) that employees need to invest in personal training and development to experience fewer layoffs and to improve employability, while organizations should invest in employee specific training to improve organizations’ productivity. In my examination of the participating companies’ employees, I identified statements such as “we invest in the learning and development of our employees to increase competency” and “we attract, retain, and develop our people.” The need for drivers in organizations is high, and the

need for mentorship and expertise is harder to find compared to the demand (Mackay et al., 2014). All the participants emphasized that there is a scarcity of talented employees willing to work in the small trucking industry. An organization can address this scarcity by making investments in training and development for its employees (Mackey et al.). This is a form of transformational leadership and can keep the employees engaged and motivated. Creating that vision for the workplace and managing the delivery of the vision all play a part of a successful business. The role of leadership is a long-term process, and the leader has to make sure that the employee is aligned with the vision.

The investments in dependable drivers create a reliable company that leads to the positive production of services to customers that overall improves the organization's competitive advantage (Stilwell, Pasmore, & Shon, 2016) and increases the profitability (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). The loss of a driver from the organization could also lead to a loss of productivity and profits (Singh, 2015), loss of dependability, loss of good customer relationships, and loss of customer satisfaction (Skoric, Zhu, Goh, & Pang, 2015). Leaders must make sure that they are flexible with their employees.

Implementing changes must be continuous in the organization. The employees gain recognition through their talents and benefit the organization, and they are the solution to the problems in the business. If there is an issue, the leader need to communicate with the driver and make sure they find out where the disconnect is before addressing the problem with the customer. This theme aligns with the finding a dependable driver and investment in training and education that leads to increased profitability and reduces the operational

costs for the organization. Table 4 includes several statements from participants related to finding a dependable driver.

Table 4

Theme: Finding Dependable Drivers

Participant	Participant's Comments
PA1	Finding dependable drivers is hard. You have to make sure that the foundation of a good driver is set before you even open the business, if you do not then, you are going down the road of a failed business. The driver steers the company and ultimately is the one making the money for the company because they are on the road making it happen. If you want a successful business find a driver that wants to learn and grow in the business.
PA2	I do not mind staying on the road and keeping the wheels turning for however they turn. The trips that are taken need to be worth the drive. I will drive wherever the truck takes me. I say I am a dependable driver and I do not want to give customers a bad view of me through tardiness and lack of effort.
PA3	Drivers are the main effort of the business. We have previously lost a driver under unfortunate circumstances. Dependable driver is not a common case in the small trucking business. Some will have that drive at the beginning and then lose it along the way because of their own reasoning.

Theme 3: Establishing Trust

Employees are affected by low productivity and worry about their future job security. Talented employees have high trust when there is a guarantee of their job security because that leads to long term stability. The employees feel secure when assured of their future. PA1 stated that the specific features of the strategies that contributed to successes included the involvement of small trucking business leaders, including direct supervisors. The direct supervisors were primarily involved with core

daily operational activities. The supervisors knew the individuals, built trust, and contributed to ensuring the retention of drivers in the organization. Mackay et al. (2014) emphasized that the perceived trust in the supervisors' leadership enhanced individual employee job satisfaction and increased productivity in the business. PA1 also stated, "Having the right drivers in the company from jump saves a lot of heartache in the long run." PA2 explained, "When people know that there is an invested interest in their future through the leaders, then you will see good consistent outcome every time." This theme confirms the conclusions of Tiwari and Lenka (2016) and Biswas (2016) that a protected work environment encourages teamwork and supportive and trustworthy relationships among employees. In such environments, employees can be creative, talk to their leaders, and communicate ideas without hesitation to their leaders. The methodological triangulation of the interview data and information from the participating companys' interviews show that they value and share the successes of their employees and that shows the establishing trust theme.

Organizations need to establish a history of trust between the leaders and employees for improved employee engagement. Some of the drivers for employee engagement include workplace support and support for work-life balance (Taneja et al., 2015). Schenkel and Teigland (2016) and Deery and Jago (2015) explained that positive practices from leaders such as help with managing work-life balance correctly and the show of support and affection to the employee produce positive outcomes such as increased performance and employee retention. Lu and Liu (2018) added that the lack of trust contributed to employees leaving the organization, but good communication and

mentoring can help reduce employee turnover intentions. The transformational leader communicates and builds trust between employees and management (Appelbaum et al., 2015). The establishing trust theme aligned with the transformational leadership theory. Table 5 contains a summary of related statements made by the participants on establishing trust. Building a trustworthy relationship with the workers results in a high performing and in-sync organization. Leaders in this organization focused on the transformational leadership in the business and getting the drivers to understand that making the scheduled times for pick-up and delivery gains trust from the customer and leader. This builds a customer/employee relationship and a leader/employee relationship. Leaders and employees dedicated to optimizing the customer experiences are on the same page that utilized this strategy for future customers that are looking for product to be delivered and picked up.

Table 5

Theme: Establishing Trust

Participant	Participant's Comments
PA1	The employee wants a leader that cares whether they advance and grow in the business and not stay at the same level for the rest of their career.
PA2	If you cannot build a trust relationship between the employee and leader then, the business is going to fail.
PA3	Leaders have the most impact on the organization because they are the supervision over the internal and external operations. That means there is no reason not to have trust in what your employees are going to do if you are not watching over them every step of the way.

Theme 4: Rewarding and Recognizing Employees

Each of the research participants agreed on the benefit and the value of rewarding and recognizing employees. PA1 and PA3 explained that having “incentives” among the employees such as payment bonuses and recognizing them verbally can keep that employee’s interest with the company. PA2 explained that having a good bonus system and recognition program was a key factor in keeping the employees long term and it also keeps them engaged in the mission. The theme confirms the findings of Rana et al. (2013) that perceived organizational support through recognition, effective reward mechanisms, and growth opportunities enhanced retention. Additionally, reward and recognition are key components of employee engagement (Taneja et al., 2015). The methodological triangulation of the interview data and the information from the company’s leaders explaining that there should be compensation packages and benefit packages for the organization’s employees. Burns (1978) explained the human capital theory as skills acquisition. The employees from the business expect to get commensurate compensation and rewards for their skills and experience. PA2 explained that “employees are rewarded for consistent on time deliveries and pickups as well as good customer satisfaction”. PA3 added that “rewards are not a problem, we just want to make sure that the productivity from the employees is consistent and not a one time achievement”. The more education and training the employee receives, the more compensation and reward the employee obtains because of productivity and performance gains (Burns, 1978).

Table 6 contains a summary of several key related statements made by the participants about the organizations' rewards and recognition of employees. As a transformational leader, the focus is on the employees and operations that help the employees become successful in achieving their goals and dreams (Mittal & Dhar, 2015). This process requires the leader to guide the employee because there may be a reset training in place that can help them increase in pay or give them more instruction on the rules and regulations of the road (Jiang & Chen, 2018). Transformational leadership focuses on the mission and execution of how the business is being operated.

Table 6

Theme: Rewarding and Recognizing Employees

Participant	Participant's Comments
PA1	Make sure that you are taking care of your drivers by rewarding them with payment incentives. Holiday pay and if there are runs that pay extra then, make sure that your driver is taken care outside of their common pay. This keeps your drivers tuned in and wanting to come to work and make a difference.
PA2	I never mind hitting the road and going outside the southeastern radius because a lot of the organizations do not want to travel outside of their region or travel into the, "hotspots". The hot spots are the ones located in the northeastern part of the United States or in the mid-western part of the United States where the mountains are. Most of the southeastern drivers like to stay on flat land and avoid the ice in the north because they are not use to it. There can be a run in the southeastern region, and it is 1000 miles and it is paying 1500 dollars and there can be a run 1000 miles way headed north that is paying 4000 dollars. You are

traveling the same distance so why not go to the one headed north. Plan properly and pre trip and everything else will fall in place.

PA3 Fair pay to the drivers have to be a priority and rewarding verbally or through documentation goes a long way. This keeps your drivers honest and ready to take loads at any time. Rewarding does not have to always be a pay increase.

Theme 5: Competing with Other Trucking Industries

All three business leaders agreed that employees required to work in the small trucking business must be prescreened because of the different rules and regulations for operating an 18-wheeler. The competition between the small trucking industry and the bigger trucking industries is that the bigger trucking industries already have credibility established with businesses, and most of the time, they have contracts with these businesses. This theme confirms the findings of Yongbeon (2013) that the leaders have to establish a solid foundation and build enough credit to compete with other trucking industries. The small trucking industry is driven off leadership and productivity. Employees that are thoroughly trained can be effective in the organization. PA3 explained that “establishing a name and building employee/customer relationships along with gaining contracts for constant business are the best ways to have an advantage against other trucking industries”. Losing your employees while competing with other trucking industries could lead to a loss of productivity and profits for the small trucking industry but gains for the competing industries (Shankar & Ghosh, 2013).

Employee engagement reduces turnover and turnover intentions as the engaged employees feel that their contributions matter and the organization respects their ideas

(Taneja et al., 2015). As such, the methodological triangulation of the interview data and the information from the participating companies' documentations verified the theme of competing for employees with other trucking industries. Based on the concept of transformational leadership theory, the transformational leader inspires, motivating the employees to support a common vision (Zhang et al., 2015) as well as to use their best effort at making the organization successful. The transformational leader also provides the enabling environment for employee engagement. According to Taneja et al., (2015) engaged employees are dedicated to their work and feel proud of the organizations' achievements. Skoric, Zhu, Goh, and Pang (2015) concluded that the use of social media had a direct relationship with engagement. PA1 underscored that their company strives to build strong employee engagement levels to sustain customer retention levels. Table 7 contains several statements made about competing with other trucking industries.

Table 7

Theme: Competing with Other Trucking Industries

Participant	Participant's Comments
PA1	Making your business known to customers has to be done through physical work. That means that you are picking product on time and dropping product off on time. The pre trip checklist is major when it comes to this. If that is not done and you get on the road and something goes wrong with your truck then, that is a customer that you have just lost and a competitor that has the opportunity to get that customer that you once have. Make sure that you are a dependable company.
PA2	I always give myself a cushion and not run on a tight schedule. Even if that means I am there before the company opens and when that is the case the only thing I do is park at the closed gate and wait for them to open. At that point, the business cannot open because I am blocking them in before they can do anything. I would have to be the first truck to come in and get unloaded and be on my way.

PA3 Make sure that you have a good factoring company if you have a company booking your loads. Some people will even reach out to you and let you know that they are not giving you good loads and it becomes frustrating. The factoring company gets 5% percent of your profit on a monthly basis. This is you as the leader building that workers relationship with them and letting them know that you are serious and showing the customers that you are dependable and at that point the companies will by name request your organization for future business.

Applications to Professional Practice

The result of the study could prove valuable to current and future leaders in the small trucking businesses. The small trucking business implemented strategies that can aid the organization with their reduction of the operational costs and increase their profitability. The small trucking business leaders can improve their business performance by applying the findings from this study. The study findings include five underlying themes: (a) applying transformational leadership, (b) finding dependable drivers, (c) establishing trust, (d) rewarding and recognizing employees, and (e) competing with other trucking industries. Additionally, the findings and conclusions can help small trucking business leaders mitigate against the loss of profits and sustainability from failures in the operations and also retain the customers and employees. In transformational leadership theory, the transformational leader's remediating actions offer a positive working environment and positively affect organizational efficiency and performance. The basic unit in society, the natural right to freedom of the individual, and the corporations are rebellious and must be watched closely because they disrupt the order of the operations. In general, the small trucking businesses have leadership

strategies that help build the organization and retain the employees and customers. Moreover, the loss of long-term employees results in efficiency losses that can have a long-term adverse effect on the organizations' performance. Current and future small trucking business leaders can implement leadership strategies that will improve the reduction of the operational costs and increased profitability.

Implications for Social Change

Using the results of this study could help to improve the operational costs and increase profitability in the small trucking business. The organization contributes to the rural economy by offering employee positions for experienced drivers that are ready to work and become a part of the team. The continual survival and profitability of the small trucking industry is very important to the individuals and communities where it operates. The lack of knowledge, if not given by the leaders to the employees, results in little to no employee retention and this affects the performance and profits of the business. The results of the study can help with the knowledge of what strategies to implement for the reduction of operational costs and increased profitability. Small trucking companies can understand and apply the new strategies to improve the reduction of operational costs and increase profitability.

Long term employees that understand the business and benefit the business can earn income and provide for their families while also contributing to the southeastern part of the United States. The local businesses around the organization and economies can continue to thrive when community members have jobs with a stable income. Additionally, an improved workforce leads to employees with balanced personal lives

because of that sense of having job security. The findings from the study could contribute to social change by helping other business leaders implement employees that are happy, satisfied, and confident.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that help with the reduction of operational cost and increase the profitability in the small trucking business. The industry business leaders implemented ways that could be easily understood by the employees. Based on the findings of this study, I discovered several avenues that can be taken, and the current and future small trucking business leaders can implement these strategies. These strategies are going to improve the operations after the expense report and help reduce that operational cost. The business leaders need to understand five key issues for influencing their success: (a) applying transformational leadership, (b) finding dependable drivers, (c) establishing trust, (d) rewarding and recognizing employees, and (e) competing with other trucking industries.

First, the superior leadership of the small trucking businesses is adopting the transformational leadership attributes to inspire, coach, providing a sense of security and motivation to the long term employees. The leadership must show firm, fairness and an open communication line for the employees. The vision of the organization needs to be understood before the next step happens. Second, management that is designated by the leadership needs to understand and emphasize to the employees about enhanced training that is going to help the employees elevate in the long run. This is increasing the employee knowledge, improving personal development, and developing good habits. The

employers have to invest in the employees, and it shows the employee that the organization cares about their advancements and them progressing into higher responsibilities in the future. The training is also helping the productivity, and the organization can be put in a position where there is little to no supervision once the employees show their ability to complete tasks by themselves (Wei, 2015). Third, the business leaders need to develop and establish a means of communication and have confidence and fidelity in their employees and management. Employees seem to have low morale and not carry a sense of ownership in their responsibilities when there is not a thorough explanation and benefit to their career. Small trucking organizations that have employees that establish a trust line with their business leaders, the relationships can convert into high employee engagement with the customers. Fourth, the business leaders of the small trucking business have to establish a benefits package that is going to catch the employees' attention; the recognition and reward system for the employees have to be invested and taken seriously. The policy and terms of the employees' contract needs to include the long-term incentive awards and state what the employee rates on a monthly basis and potential bonuses. The contract states that the employees monthly days off throughout the year are sick days, emergency days, and personal reasons. The trucking business has demanding hours where the business leaders are on the road continuously, and this is going to give the employee an idea of how much time they can take off once they accumulate those days that they earned. The employees are going to look at the organization as a place of comfort and advancement because of the support through recognition, and effective reward mechanisms, and growth opportunities enhanced

retention. Fifth, the negative of not taking care of your employees turn into competition from other industries introducing their opportunities because the employees do not feel a sense of ownership being shown by their leaders. The employees feel as if they are not worth the investment and time to the organization if there are no benefits or time spent to build them. The employees need a sense of stability. The leaders have to market and commercialize their brand through social media and advertisements, and this shows the employees that this company is growing and has future opportunities coming up. I intend to publish the study and take advantage of opportunities to share findings with business leaders in the small trucking industry and business forums where business leaders discuss strategies for operational costs and increased profitability.

Recommendations for Further Research

I conducted a qualitative single case study on the strategies that the small trucking business employees. The industry business leaders implemented long term employees for the reduction of the operational costs. The population for the study consisted of five subjects in the southeastern region of the United States and the small size is one of the limitations of this study. The business leaders need to understand five key issues for influencing their success: (a) applying transformational leadership, (b) finding dependable drivers, (c) establishing trust, (d) rewarding and recognizing employees, and (e) competing with other trucking industries. The study is also limited to one geographic location in the southeastern United States of America. To generalize the findings, future researchers can decide on a different location such as in a different city or country. Future researchers should consider doing the study in a different industry such as a medium size

trucking company or manufacturing industries. Future researchers can use a mixed research method and conduct qualitative interviews on a select larger population as well as use the quantitative research method to develop a hypothesis to test the correlation between gains and expenses in the industry and the use of themes identified in this study. The quantitative research should include using a larger set of data for analysis enabling the potential demonstration of my findings' external validity to other environments.

Reflections

In this study, I explored the small trucking business leaders and implemented strategies that help reduce the operational cost and increase the profitability. I had an opportunity to learn and conduct research to solve the business problem. I also gained knowledge and quality information and experiences from interacting with the business leaders.

Management of the research process helped me understand that getting participants to agree to participate in research is not always a easy task. There were 30% of the business leaders that I contacted that did not participate due to work and personal reasons. For the participants who consented to participate, I had to get a solid insight on their life outside of the business to establish a business relationship. This made the interview smoother and not just about the business. I used the interview protocol to ensure that I asked the same questions to each participant, but the follow-up questions differed depending on their initial answers. Now, I can confirm from my experience that

transcribing the interviews required a considerable amount of time. The transcribing took approximately one week per participant.

The participants provided good quality information in the questions that were asked. They took the time and dissected the operational costs and profitability of the small trucking business and what has to happen in order for the business to sustain past 5 years. My experience interviewing the business leaders gave me good insight and empowered me with more knowledge of being a successful business leader and in time strengthening my own business.

Conclusion

The reduction of the operational cost and increasing the profitability of the small trucking business can be demanding and a difficult business strategy, and if not strategized the correct way in your business, it can lead to unexpected results that can potentially hurt the business and create both unexpected financial and social problems. Businesses experience lost profits, employees, customers, and sustainability from failure of reducing the operational costs and not accumulate an increase in the profitability of the organization. Growing and sustaining a small trucking business requires having the leader and team build a business model which is a result of the organization having different schemes and maneuvers. Improving business performance and profits takes the small trucking business leaders actively implementing strategies for their employees and retaining them for a long term. This in turn sustains the business performance and profits because of the understood mission from the long term employees that were implemented by the leaders. The small trucking business leaders adopting the transformational

leadership attributes of inspiring, coaching, and providing an enabling environment for the employees engagement increases the profitability of the business and reduces the operational cost. The transformational leaders' in the business express the actions that are helping and sustaining the business and offer a positive working environment and positively affect organizational efficiency and performance. Additionally, investments in the business such as overtime, mission accomplishment, networking, and extra training created a stronger employee and enables the organizations to attract and retain employees with the right skills for attaining the organizations' performance objectives. Overall, the employees are the running machines of the organization that handle the flow of operations on a daily basis. The employees understanding what needs to be done by the leader helped the business in a positive way and in the long term reduced the operational costs and increased the profitability of the small trucking business.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Introduce the interview, research topic over coffee or lunch and explain the purpose and scope of the study. Assure the participants that I will keep all the collected information confidential, ask that I record the interview, and inform the participant of the right to stop the interview.

The questions for the interview are as follows:

Interview Questions

Indent the strategy-related interview questions for this study include:

1. What strategies did your organization use to improve the costs of the trucking units in your fleet?
2. How, if at all, have you reduced truck maintenance costs to trucking units in your fleet?
3. What were the key barriers to implementing your successful strategies for reducing the cost of operations?
4. How did you address the key barriers to decrease the operational costs of your trucking business?
5. How do you organize workloads to increase profitability?
6. How does your organization assess the effectiveness of strategies for reducing operations costs?
7. What additional information can you provide to help me understand trucking industry leader strategies to reduce operating costs to increase profits?

Follow-up and Member Checking Interview

Introduce follow-up interview and set the stage over coffee.

Share a copy of the succinct synthesis for each question and interpretation.

Ask a probing question related to any information that I found during the interview and related to the research topic.

Walkthrough each question, read the interpretation and ask: Did I miss anything? Or, what would you like to add?