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Small Construction Business Owners' Strategies for Employee Retention

Charles H. Griner
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Charles H. Griner, Jr.

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. Kenneth Gossett, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Alexandre Lazo, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Carol-Anne Faint, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2019

Abstract

Small Construction Business Owners' Strategies for Employee Retention

by

Charles H. Griner, Jr.

MS, Troy University, 2006

BBA, University of Mississippi, 1991

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

November 2019

Abstract

Thirty-four percent of people in the United States of America work for businesses that employ fewer than 100 people. However, many small business owners lack the strategies necessary to retain their valuable employees. Businesses that fail to retain valuable employees are as much as 28% less efficient. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies small construction business owners use to retain their valuable employees. Contingency theory provided the conceptual framework. The participants were three owners of three small businesses in the construction industry located in Mississippi which implemented successful policies and procedures to retain their employees. The data sources for this study were semistructured interviews, financial statements, newspaper articles, websites, and social media. A thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Three themes morphed to include challenging employees and reward them accordingly, mitigating unplanned turnover, and treating employees and others fairly. Potential implications for positive social change are that increased profits among small business owners may enable them to provide better benefits and pay and incentive increases to their employees. Small business owners with increased profits may also be better equipped to participate in community-based charitable organizations.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my mother, Brenda Morris Griner. She provided encouragement and served as an example of what one can accomplish with hard work and persistence.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my chair, Dr. Kenneth Gossett, for being patient with me while I was being impatient. I would also like to thank the faculty, staff, and my fellow students for all of their input and guidance along the way.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Thirty-four percent of people in the United States of America work for businesses that employ fewer than 100 people (US Census, 2016) and encompass all facets of the economy. They include such examples as the local fast food restaurant, the barber shop, the mechanic shop, the drug store, and countless other places that customers visit on a daily basis. These small businesses are such a large part of our daily lives that people often take their existence for granted.

Background of the Problem

Small business owners face a multitude of challenges and decisions that may affect the future success of their endeavors and result in the closure of their business. Questions arise about how to attract and retain a vibrant, enthusiastic workforce (Yecheng, Smidt, & Yaoqi, 2014). One way that small business owners attract employees is by offering employee benefits. However, there are a variety of benefits from which small business owners may choose. These include vacation pay, sick days, health insurance, 401-k plans, incentive bonuses, disability insurance, and life insurance (Purdon, 2018; Zhang, 2018).

Some researchers have concluded that employee benefit packages encourage a positive workplace attitude and cooperation among team members. Team efficiency and productivity increase because of improvements in knowledge sharing created when employee benefits depend upon the performance of other people and departments (Zhang, 2018). Interdepartmental communications and cooperation also benefit from an attitude of interdependence created by profit-sharing plans (Adhikari, Choi, & Sah, 2017).

Small business owners experience negative consequences from employee benefits plans also. Long-term incentive plans may not be effective at increasing profits due to the uncertain nature of those plans. Executives may manipulate incentive plans to their advantage and the company's detriment (Avci, Schipani, & Seyhun, 2016). Stock option plans may limit employee risk taking and hamper firm growth (Mao & Zhang, 2018).

Problem Statement

One reason for business closures is the failure to retain valuable employees (Harms, 2018; Tauscher & Kietzmann, 2017). Businesses that fail to retain valuable employees are as much as 28% less efficient (Konings & Vanormelingen, 2015). The general business problem is that small construction business owners do not implement policies, benefits, and procedures to retain their valuable employees, which inhibits the growth of their businesses. The specific business problem is that some small construction business owners lack the strategies required to retain their valuable employees.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that small construction business owners use to retain their valuable employees. The population for this study was comprised of small business owners of three different organizations in the construction industry located in Mississippi who have implemented successful policies and procedures to retain their valuable employees. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to increase the growth of annual earnings for the owners of small businesses in all industries. Increasing the earnings of small business owners can enable their businesses to pay higher wages and offer better benefits

to their employees. Increasing the success of small businesses could also decrease the unemployment rate. People may be able to afford better housing, health care, and education when the unemployment rate was lower.

Nature of the Study

Researchers commonly use three types of methodologies: qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods (Yin, 2014). Researchers applying qualitative methods use open-ended questions and other sources of data and information to better understand underlying phenomena (Mariotto, Pinto-Zanni, & De Moraes, 2014; Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014). I chose to apply the qualitative method. The qualitative method was appropriate for seeking to understand the strategies small business owners use to retain their employees. Researchers applying quantitative methods use close-ended questions to test hypotheses (Gupta, 2014). Mixed method researchers use both qualitative and quantitative elements (Park & Park, 2016). I did not intend to test any hypotheses so quantitative and mixed methods are not appropriate for this study.

I considered four research designs to understand the strategies small construction business owners use to retain their employees. These designs included narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, and case studies. Researchers applying narrative designs seek to explore the meanings of lived experiences of individuals by exploring their stories (Prowse & Camfield, 2013). Phenomenological researchers seek to explore a single concept or idea based on lived experiences of the participants (Prowse & Camfield, 2013). Ethnographic researchers explore the shared culture of individuals by exploring the shared patterns of behavior or belief (Park & Park, 2016). Case study researchers

explore real-life situations bounded by space and time (Yin, 2014). The focus for this project did not include actions to relate stories, understand culture, or explore individual situations as accomplished by narrative, ethnographic, or phenomenological designs. Therefore, I chose to employ an exploratory case study design to enable me to explore the successful strategies that small business owners use to retain their employees.

Research Question

What strategies do small construction business owners use to retain their valuable employees?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to retain your valuable employees?
2. How do you respond to employees who may indicate they plan on leaving the company?
3. What information, if any, do you gain from exit interviews?
4. How do you encourage employee retention?
5. What rewards do you offer your employees to retain them?
6. What additional information would you like to share about strategies you use to effectively retain your valuable employees?

Conceptual Framework

I used contingency theory as the theoretical framework for the study. Fielder developed contingency theory in 1967 during his work on the effectiveness of leadership styles on employee productivity (Nebeker, 1975). Fielder concluded that the effect of company policies on company profitability was dependent upon the premise that

employees are inspired to work effectively by rewards that fit their present situation (Nebeker, 1975). Key constructs underlying contingency theory are that resources, management, and environmental factors work together to create the present condition of the business and personal situation for the employee (Van de Ven, Ganco, & Hinings, 2013). As applied to this study, company strategies should influence corporate profitability because small business owners have designed leadership styles, management strategies, benefits programs, and company policies with the goal to attract and retain valuable employees.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions provide a common perspective to the readers.

Construction materials: Articles or items incorporated into a building or site (Elkhalifa, 2016).

General contractors: Businesses or individuals who contract with the owner to complete an entire project (Manu, Ankrah, & Chinyio, 2015).

Valuable employee: Someone who works for an employer who was considered to be qualified, dependable, and trained (Harms, 2018; Tauscher & Kietzmann, 2017).

Venture capitalist: An investor who provides experience and capital to a business start-up (Festel & Rammer, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Koo & Li (2016) indicated that assumptions are unproven facts and as such carry risks. Hughes & Foulkes (2015) also indicated that the limitations section presents the

weaknesses of the study. Delimitations set the scope of the study and are defined as the boundaries of a study (Ellis & Levy, 2009).

Assumptions

Assumptions are items within a study that a researcher assumes to be true (Koo & Li, 2016). Researchers identify assumptions to prevent any material misrepresentations (Palagolla, 2016). An assumption of this study presumed that the interview questions were appropriate to address the research problem and would be easily understood by the participants. An assumption of this study was that each of the participants would provide truthful and complete responses to the interview questions. One reason that participants may provide incomplete information would be a fear of a lack of confidentiality. Therefore, I provided each participant with a form that outlines the procedures undertaken to ensure data confidentiality.

Another assumption was that small construction business owners are actively involved in the operation of their business. The small business owner may not possess knowledge concerning all aspects of their businesses' operation. However, they need to have sufficient experience in employee retention matters to help me explore this topic. I also assumed that a qualitative methodology was appropriate to explore my research question.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study beyond the control of the researcher (Hughes & Foulkes, 2015). There are no distinctions made as to the type of construction the company does nor the services they provide. However, because the

participants were from a purposefully selected sample in the State of Mississippi, the study was limited in generalizability. A geographically restricted sample may, therefore, also be a limitation of this study. Even though all of my interviews were done in a face to face fashion, my ability to accurately judge body language or other nonverbal cues may also be a limiting factor. The amount of experience the participants had in employee retention might also further limit the results of the study, as the years of experience might vary. Finally, the participants' responses must be honest and forthright, which might further limit the results of the study.

Delimitations

Delimitations set the scope and bounds of the study (Ellis & Levy, 2009). Changing the scope of the study in any way could influence the results (Hughes & Foulkes, 2015). The owners of construction companies in Mississippi who have successfully implemented procedures to retain their valuable employees with fewer than 100 employees participated in this study.

Significance of the Study

The goal of this research was two-fold. The first goal was to contribute to business practice by offering insights into strategies that small construction business owners use to retain their employees. The second goal was to promote social change by increasing the quality and quantity of jobs offered in low-income areas.

Contribution to Business Practice

Small business owners need to understand how the policies and procedures they implement in their businesses affect their employee retention rate. The goal of this

doctoral study was to explore the strategies that small construction business owners have found effective at retaining their employees. Successful small business owners craft, implement, and maintain employee retention strategies that facilitate their continued profitable operations.

Insights gained from this study may provide small business owners with methods and tools to craft and improve strategies to retain their employees. New sources of potential employees may arise that would help small business owners to grow their businesses profitably. Specific strategies that could enable small business owners to successfully motivate and reward their employees may also reveal themselves in this study.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change are that increased profits among small construction business owners can enable them to offer better benefits to their employees. Increased profits may also provide for increased pay and incentives to better retain employees. More job promotion opportunities and higher-paying jobs in low-income areas may also be available. Those increased profits could also enable small business owners the opportunity to participate in more community-based charitable organizations such as donating building materials to build houses for low-income families to benefit both families and their communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

An essential component in a research study is a literature review. The purpose of presenting this literature review was to build a foundation upon which to explore the

research question. The research question explored in this study was: What strategies do small construction business owners use to retain their valuable employees?

The databases used for this literature review are Business Source Complete, ABI/Inform Complete, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, and government databases. There were several keywords employed for these searches including *small business profitability, employee benefits, employee retention, company policies, management styles, and small business success strategies.*

I used these keywords to gain knowledge of the strategies employed by small business owners to successfully retain their employees. One hundred thirty-six references are in the study. One hundred twenty-eight references (94.1 %) are peer-reviewed. One hundred sixteen (85.3 %) of the total references are expected to be less than 5 years old when this study was completed. Ninety-six references are in the literature review. Ninety-four of the 96 references (97.9%) are peer-reviewed. Eighty-nine (92.7%) references in the literature review are expected to be less than 5 years old when the Chief Academic Officer approves this study.

I begin the literature review with a discussion of contingency theory. A discussion of the central principals of contingency theory follows. A review of the rival theories of systems theory, expectancy theory, and two-factor theory was next. Discussion of four different types of employee benefits follows. I then included discussions on company finance, construction safety, insurance, and bonding. The literature review closes with an analysis of the findings.

Contingency Theory

The theory that serves as the conceptual framework for this study was contingency theory. Fielder developed contingency theory in 1967 during his research on the effectiveness of leadership styles (Nebeker, 1975). Contingency theory can explain the effect of company policies on employee retention based upon the premise that employees are inspired to work effectively by rewards that fit their needs and expectations. No one best way to manage a company exists. Based upon the premise of contingency theory, the most effective way to manage a business was to use the leadership style that matches and evolve with the current situation (Van de Ven et al., 2013).

Key constructs underlying the theory are that resources, management, and environmental factors work together to create the present situation (Van de Ven et al., 2013). As applied to this study, contingency theory holds that effective company strategies should influence corporate profitability positively because small business owners have designed leadership styles, management strategies, and company policies that effectively reward their employees' present situation with the goal to attract and retain them as employees.

Resources. Items used in the process of conducting business are a company's resources (Myszewski, 2016). Construction or raw materials are what I usually think of first. Raw materials affect a company's bottom line in several ways (Helbig et al., 2016). Manufacturing and construction processes cannot proceed without raw materials to work with. Operations may cease due to problems stemming from the availability, price,

storage, or shipment delays of raw materials (Helbig et al., 2016). However, companies may benefit if they actively manage their raw material supply chain (Olah et al., 2017). Companies can benefit further by managing all of their supplier relationships (Ruiz-Benitez, Lopez, & Real, 2018). Managers achieve those benefits by customizing the design of products and timing payments to best fit the needs of the company.

An inventory of products to sell was also a type of resource for a retail operation or construction company. Companies cannot sell products or services that they do not have or that do not meet the needs of the market. The purchase cost, storage cost, spoilage rate, sales price, and the location of retail inventories can have an impact on operating costs and revenues, which ultimately dictate company profits (Dolgui, Kovalev, & Pesch, 2015; Ji et al., 2018; Venkatachalam & Narayanan, 2016).

Construction equipment, trucks, cars, tractors, forklifts, and tools can also be a vital part of a company's resources. These implements can be custom made to fit a particular application or process. When the proper tools and equipment for a job are used drudgery was reduced, efficiency increases and employee safety improves (Vyavahare & Kallurkar, 2016).

Office space is an additional item that most businesses require. Business owners and managers need to take into account both the organizational structure and management style of their company when designing their office space (Hoff & Oberg, 2015). Hoff and Oberg (2015) concluded that effective office spaces vary according to personal preferences and organizational structures.

Manufacturing facilities are also an item that some companies use. The type of facilities that a company decides to use depends on the industry and competitive environment that the company competes in (Miltenberg, 2015). Companies should enact measures to ensure that their manufacturing facilities stay up to date with current industry safety and quality standards while maintaining governmental regulatory compliances (Miltenberg, 2015).

A company's employees are a resource at their disposal. However, the fact that that the workforce receive proper training for their assigned task was important (Kirk, 2019). When a company offers effective on the job training to their employees, employee satisfaction, and retention typically improves (Beynon et al., 2015). Workplace efficiency and productivity increase because properly trained employees are more devoted to their jobs and happier with them (Konings & Vanormelingen, 2015).

Intellectual property is also a resource that companies rely on. Corporate knowledge, patents, trade secrets, processes, corporate structures, and business models may create value for a company. Companies leverage that value to create a competitive advantage in the marketplace to increase profits, create new markets, or maintain existing markets (Crittenden, Crittenden, & Pierpont, 2015).

A resource that companies depend upon is a distribution channel to market and sell their products and services to the end-users (Goyal & Mishra, 2016). If there are no marketing avenues for their products or services, revenues vanish, and companies may fail. Disturbances in transporting products to market may also affect a company's revenues and hinder future success.

Access to banking services and capital is also a tool companies rely upon. Traditional bank funding in the form of loans was the way that most businesses acquire capital to grow (Mollick & Robb, 2016). However, there are also new methods of funding such as “crowdfunding” that are becoming available that facilitate business owners’ needs when the company was seeking to obtain smaller loans to acquire the assets necessary to grow their operations (Assenova et al., 2016).

As a general rule, most people want to minimize risks. Small business owners, directors, managers, and employees all want to preserve their present well-being. They do not want to take any undue near-term risks that may cause them to lose or have less of their present resources. People tend to take more risks on long term outcomes when they do not put the present situation at risk (Kim & Yoo, 2017).

Management. The leadership style of a company’s managers has a strong influence on the efficiency, productivity, and profitability of that company (Weber, Geneste, & Connell, 2015). A company usually experiences positive results when the company leaders have the requisite education and experience to adapt their style of leadership to one that creates an atmosphere of teamwork (Rydenfalt, Odenrick, & Larsson, 2017). Team building is most effective when catalyzed through the controlled use of organizational knowledge and structure (Brisley & Douglas, 2015). The style of leadership required to accomplish optimal efficiency may need to change on a minute-by-minute basis (Desmidt, 2016).

Small business owners accomplish this evolution of leadership style most efficiently when they take a direct role in managing the day-to-day operations of the

company. These efficiencies result when the business owners know and understand their own personal and business strengths, weaknesses, and goals better than anyone else. Therefore, business owners are the best-qualified individuals to create company policies that emphasize their strengths, minimize their weaknesses, and facilitate reaching and exceeding those goals (Weber et al., 2015).

Companies with employee-led management teams may not operate as efficiently as those with owners who are active in the day-to-day operations of the business. This can be the result of several issues. The first of those may be a lack of understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, goals, and mission of the business's stockholders or owners. Frequently, company managers simply put their own well-being and personal income above the health and future profitability of the company (Pohler & Schmidt, 2016).

Company leadership may also be informal. Members of workgroups find their role and place in the group by applying their strengths to the situation at hand. Those group members whose natural strengths and abilities best fit the workplace tend to change and influence the dynamic of the whole group (Tan, 2015). These informal leaders may be the most inefficient type of leader because they may have no ideas or concerns about what the business owner's strengths, weaknesses, mission, or goals for the company are.

Leaders' personal traits can also affect small business owner and manager effectiveness in operating a company. The communication and interpersonal skills of company leaders are two key personal traits. Poor communication and interpersonal skills may hinder a small business owner or manager's ability to explain the company's

goals and policies to employees. If employees do not understand the company's goals and policies, they cannot follow them (Desmidt, 2016).

Company management's attitude towards employees is also a factor in company success. Small business owners and managers who choose to spend money on better employees through increased payroll rather than items such as product research and development usually are more successful (Ledbetter, Stanfield, & Paulus, 2018). Stockholders care less about executive pay increases when a company was consistently making money (Cole & Mehran, 2016). However, there is a delicate balance that company leadership must maintain because most employees will take every extrinsic reward available to them (Qiang, Jimmy, & Shelvin, 2016).

Leadership styles also play a part in management's success in running a profitable business. The transformational leadership style tends to create employees who generate ideas more in line with company values (Deichmann & Stam, 2015). However, transactional leadership styles create more employee-generated ideas among shop floor workers (Deichmann & Stam, 2015). Transactional leaders are most effective when employees are engaged in repetitive, mechanical tasks that last for a short duration (Afsar, Badir, Saeed, & Hafeez, 2017). A transformational leadership style is best suited to use when crafting incentives for managers who need to react quickly (Li, 2015). Small business owners should use the leadership styles, company policies, and reward structures that align the successful achievement of company goals with the goals of the employees (Quintana, Park, & Cabrera, 2015).

State, county, city, and federal governmental regulations also play a role in how small business owners and managers operate their companies. These rules and regulations vary by state and local jurisdiction, which may result in situations where they contradict each other. Governmental bodies and agencies also revise and change the regulations periodically (Moody, 2015). Most small business owners do not fully understand all of the applicable regulations that affect their business, which further complicates their efforts to maintain or grow the business (Mucenski-Keck & Smoker, 2015). Small business owners should stay abreast of and understand those regulations that effect their operations (Moody, 2015).

Environment. Small business owners and managers face several factors that affect the environment of the business and workplace on a daily basis. Firm size is one of those business factors. Smaller firms have better employee satisfaction and retention rates because of the nonmonetary benefits of face-to-face relationships and the family atmosphere that employees experience on a daily basis (Bhattacharyya, 2017).

Another factor that affects the workplace environment was organizational structure. When there was a clear leadership structure, businesses, and organizations operate efficiently and effectively (Bunderson et al., 2016). When there is no clear leader or organizational structure, chaos typically occurs because each employee has different personal goals and a varying understanding of the company's goals (Musibau, Cho, Ekanem, & Ojochide, 2016). Small business owners and managers should ensure that there is a clear, written organizational chart and management structure (Musibau et al., 2016).

Employee compensation was also one of the elements that shape the environment of the workplace. The base rate of pay that an employee receives is something that most employees discuss. However, small business owners should remember that the base pay rate might not be an effective motivator for a business's management team. There is no correlation between a manager's base pay and their absences from work (Pfeifer, 2014). Therefore, business owners and stockholders rely on performance-based bonus payments to motivate the managers of their businesses to work towards and achieve the organization's goals. The length of time that a bonus payment covers varies, but they are usually for a 1-year period of time. However, those bonus payments need to have a basis in attaining or exceeding measurable corporate and personal goals (Neto & Mullet, 2016).

Business owners have found that goal-based bonus payments to managers yield fewer absences from work (Pfeifer, 2014). In addition, the more a department manager's bonus depends on the performance of other departments within a business, the more knowledge employees share among departments (Zhang, 2018). Group-based incentives can be effective in increasing departmental efficiency and company performance (Farrar, Libby, & Thorne, 2015).

The fringe benefits package that a company offers to an employee also affects the work-place environment. These fringe benefits may include retirement plans, health insurance, and various other items discussed in greater detail later in this study. The way that fringe benefits packages are structured can make the difference in whether they serve to encourage or discourage positive behaviors among employees (Vidal-Salazar, Cordon-Pozo, & de la Torre-Ruiz, 2016).

Corporate social responsibility and community involvement can also have a large impact on the workplace environment and success of the business. An employee's organizational identification and knowledge sharing increase when companies are socially responsible and contribute to the local community charities (Lyra, Gomes, & Pinto, 2017). Small business owners benefit when their employees perceive that the business treats them well and the business also supports the community (Kim et al., 2018).

Outside economic factors can also affect the internal operations and working environment of businesses. Economic downturns, such as a recession, may force business owners to reduce employee compensation and fringe benefits packages due to decreased revenues and profits. Pay reductions often lead to unsatisfied employees and increased turnover, which typically causes productivity to suffer (Verheyen, Deschacht, & Guerry, 2016).

The geographic location of a business's facilities and personnel may also affect company operations and the workplace environment (Valentinov, 2014). Businesses in a vacation destination town may reflect the relaxed nature of other businesses in that town. Those personnel may also experience the seasonal crowding, increased traffic congestion, and other accompanying frustrations commonly associated with destinations such as the ski slopes or the beach.

The type of employees and the level of education that they possess may also affect the workplace environment. Employees with post-graduate degrees exhibit more emotional attachment and commitment to their job (Ariffin & Che Ha, 2015). There is

also a direct relationship between an employee's level of pay and their level of commitment to the organization. (Ariffin & Che Ha, 2015).

Rival Theories

How small businesses operate can be explained by some other theories. Three other conceptual frameworks that I considered were systems theory, two-factor theory, and expectancy theory. An explanation of those three theories follows.

Systems theory. Some theorists hold that business and organizations consist of sets of internal subsystems (Moldogaziev, & Resh, 2016; Van de Ven et al., 2013). Examples of internal systems include departments, facilities, workgroups, shifts, product lines, and employees. Those systems may change over time and location also (Valentinov & Chatalova, 2014).

Outside systems also influence businesses and organizations. Those outside systems may include industry competitors and businesses in other industries (Valentinov, 2014). These outside systems also extend to customers, governments at the federal, state, and local levels, and regional economies or the national economy as a whole (Valentinov & Chatalova, 2014).

According to this theory, these systems need to work together in a harmonious manner for the organization to be successful (Moldogaziev, & Resh, 2016). That makes this theory not applicable to this study because most small businesses are chaotic in nature. The inherent unpredictability of retaining employees in a small business makes this theory less practical than needed for me to address my research question.

Expectancy theory. Vroom's theory of employee behavior stands on four presumptions (Lazaroiu, 2015). The first of those presumptions is that people bring their own set of requirements with them to the organization. The second presumption is that a person deliberately controls their conduct. The fact that individuals require distinct rewards from the organization was the third presumption. The fourth presumption is that employees selectively choose actions that will help them personally to receive the rewards that they desire.

Proponents of expectancy theory state that employees are motivated to work by what they perceive as a fair reward for the level of effort and contribution they provide to the company (Nimri, Bdair, & Al Bitar, 2015). Employees consciously endeavor to minimize negative outcomes and maximize positive rewards for themselves (Lazaroiu, 2015). Researchers applying expectancy theory have shown that employees will participate in programs where they expect to receive the greatest personal reward for their efforts (Nimri et. al, 2015).

Intrinsic rewards include a sense of personal accomplishment and personal growth. Extrinsic rewards include things such as personal use of company vehicles, pay, and bonuses. As a general rule, extrinsic rewards are more effective at motivating positive employee behaviors than intrinsic rewards (Malik, Butt, & Choi, 2015).

Expectancy theory deals mainly with employee motivation (Lazaroiu, 2015). Expectancy theory does not address resource availability, governmental regulations, or any of the many other complicated and often confusing factors that small construction

business owners face when crafting strategies to retain their employees. Therefore, this theory was not equipped to serve as the basis of this study.

Two-factor theory. Other theorists hold that two factors influence employee contentment and their resulting job performance. Herzberg felt that individuals have two sets of needs that influence their behaviors. The first of those is as an animal need to prevent discomfort. The second of these needs is the human need to advance psychologically (Lazaroiu, 2015).

These two factors are either motivators or hygiene factors. Motivators meet an employee's human needs for personal growth and are intrinsic in nature. Examples of them would include job titles, the corner office, employee empowerment, job enlargement, increased praise, and greater responsibility (Lacey, Kennett-Hensel, & Manolis, 2015).

Hygiene factors meet an employee's animalistic needs and are extrinsic in nature. They serve as de-motivators when they are absent from the workplace and the employee does not receive them (Kim, Kim, & Heo, 2016). Examples of hygiene factors may include pay, fringe benefits, workplace safety, facility cleanliness, and relationships with co-workers.

Two-factor theory deals primarily with employee motivation (Lacey et al., 2015). Two-factor theory does not account for many of the other items that small business owners encounter while seeking to retain employees to facilitate the operation of their organization such as material shortages, access to capital, marketing, or product

packaging, delivery, and storage. Therefore, two-factor theory did not lend itself to serve as the basis for this study.

Employee Benefits

There are numerous types of benefits that employers can offer to employees that serve to set the workplace environment. Some of these benefits are extrinsic in nature such as health insurance and bonuses. Other benefits may have a basis in intrinsic qualities.

Paid time off. Most employees have come to expect to receive some type of paid time off from their place employment. Therefore, small business owners must offer their employees paid time off to remain competitive in the labor market so that they may attract good-quality, new employees and retain the ones that they already have. The federal government has extensive regulations regarding paid time off that most states, including Mississippi, rely on (Employment Law, 2016). However, some state governments, such as the state of California, require employers to provide paid time off to their employees (Zalatel, & Launey, 2015).

Paid time off covers several different types of employee compensation. The first type of employee compensation was vacation pay. Some employers award vacation pay on the basis of tenure where longer serving employees receive more vacation days per year. Employers intend vacations to be a time for relaxation so that employees may clear their mind, reconnect with family members, and de-stress. Vacation pay may improve employee retention among married, rural workers (Mushinski, Bernasek, & Weiler, 2015).

The second type of paid time off is holiday pay. Examples of holidays that employers typically pay employees for are Christmas, Thanksgiving, Fourth of July, and New Year's Day. Other holidays that some employees in the USA receive paid time off for include Memorial Day, Good Friday, President's Day, and Labor Day. Employers who provide holiday pay to their employees can boost employee satisfaction and retention (Zaharee et al., 2018).

Sick leave is a third type of paid time off that some employers offer their employees. As people age, no one knows when or if they may get sick or require medical treatment. Employers who provide their employees paid time off to recover from an illness or disease usually experience the benefits of retaining those employees (Craft et al., 2017).

Health insurance. An employee who often misses work due to illness or poor health was not as productive as their employer may need them to be. Therefore, some small business owners make the health of their employees a priority in their business. Small business owners may pursue having healthier employees by offering health clinics at the workplace, on-site exercise facilities, prescription drug plans, and health insurance plans (Grande, Cieslak, & Silva, 2016; Warshawsky, 2017).

Small business owners often experience huge costs involved with maintaining and administering an employee health insurance plan (Warshawsky, 2017). Federal, state, and local governments make constant regulatory changes that small business owners must keep track of and address also. Therefore, non-profit organizations are more likely to offer health insurance benefits to their employees than for-profit businesses (Devaro,

Maxwell, & Morita, 2017). However, there are also benefits to small business owners and multinational corporations that offer health insurance to their employees and their dependents. Employees are often afraid to change jobs if their family will lose their health insurance coverage. Employers who offer health insurance to their employees or their families often reap the benefits of improved employee retention. Improved employee retention reduces the costs associated with training new employees and improves operational efficiency (Devaro et al., 2017).

Employer-sponsored health insurance plans also benefit the employees. These plans allow the employee to receive top quality medical care for themselves and their dependents at a subsidized cost. Prescription drug coverage was often included in employer-sponsored health insurance plans. Health insurance and prescription drug plans also afford employees the peace of mind in knowing that this coverage was uninterrupted if they must change jobs. Federal statutes such as COBRA and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 ensure that employees and their dependents can remain on their present insurance policy for a period of time after changing jobs (McLeese, 2017).

Retirement plans. Some small business owners also offer employee retirement plans as part of their employee benefits packages. These plans are most often in the form of a 401-k plan. These plans usually allow the employee to elect to invest a portion of their paycheck in a mutual fund of their choice before income taxes. The employee's investment continues to grow tax-free until the employee reaches a specified age. Employers sometimes offer to match a portion the employee's investment. The matching

portion provided by the employer usually vests over a three to five year period. The IRS regulations surrounding the administration of these plans are cumbersome for employers (Garner, 2015).

Employee stock ownership plans are a type of investment that some 401-k or profit-sharing retirement plans make when the small business owners are ready to sell their stock in the company (Klingler, 2016). These plans use the company contributions to the plan to purchase stock in the company from the shareholders at the current fair market value price. The retirement fund managers assign the shares of stock proportionally to accounts of the 401-k plan participants. There are tax advantages to this type of transaction for both the employer and the employees (Klingler, 2016).

An additional, less popular, type of pension or retirement plan that some small businesses offer was a defined benefit plan. Defined benefit plans provide a fixed income for the remaining life of the retiree. However, most retirees cannot count on this type of plan providing enough funds for their entire retirement income. They must rely on Social Security and Medicare benefits also to help meet their income needs. Employers and employees may fund this type of retirement plan through purchasing annuities or insurance-based products (Parrish, 2015).

Nontraditional benefits. There are also many nontraditional employee benefits that employers have implemented to be more competitive in the labor market. Employers offer these benefits so that the company can attract and retain efficient and effective employees. Childcare centers at the office or workplace are one example of these innovative benefits. Researchers have demonstrated that offering childcare in the

workplace can lead to happier employees, better performance and less absenteeism (Ollier-Malaterre & Andrade, 2016).

Corporate philanthropy was also a benefit that some employers have offered to their employees. As an employee, corporate philanthropy may sound good for your employer to contribute to your favorite charity. However, small business owners and managers should use this benefit cautiously. There was no evidence as to whether corporate philanthropy affects company profits positively or negatively when used as an employee benefit (Gautier & Pache, 2015). Other researchers have shown that corporate philanthropy can be a powerful marketing tool to attract both current and new customers (Lacey, Kennett-Hensel, & Manolis, 2015).

Senior executive employee stock ownership plans are a controversial employee benefit offered by some employers. Shareholders may grant CEOs and senior executives stock incentives based on financial goals for the company that vest over time. However, researchers have shown that these types of benefits can limit company growth due to management's fear that taking risks may hamper stock prices (Wang & Wu., 2017).

Stock option plans are a benefit that some companies grant to members of their board of directors. However, these types of benefits tend to cause senior executives and directors to promote their personal interests rather than the company's goals (Mao & Zhang, 2018). The cost of these rewards grows exponentially when senior executives also sit on the board of directors. Similarly, other researchers have also shown that long term incentives connected with stock ownership are not effective motivators for reaching corporate goals (Wang & Wu, 2017).

A nontraditional employee benefit that was popular among small business owners was dental insurance. However, researchers have shown that employees and their families may not use this benefit even if they receive dental insurance (Manski, Moeller, & Haiyan, 2014). Manski et al. (2014) suggest that this lack of use may indicate that dental insurance was not an effective motivator to include in employee benefit packages.

An unconventional benefit that some employers provide was the freedom to work from home. This freedom enables employees to manage their schedule around their family's needs. This benefit was especially helpful for employees with young children. Job satisfaction was higher among employees who work from home and they often do unpaid overtime work (Brenke, 2016).

Company-owned life insurance is a benefit some employers provide to key employees. This benefit ensures that at the death of a key employee the company receives a portion of the life insurance payments to cover the expenses related to replacing that key employee (McNeil & Nunn, 2017). The key employee's remaining family members also receive a substantial portion of the life insurance proceeds to cover their future needs.

Disability insurance is a benefit provided by some employers (Garner, 2015). The purpose of this type of insurance was to provide the employee with income should they become unable to work. Policies are available that cover either long-term absences from work or short-term illnesses. Employers may pay part or all of the costs of these types of policies with the employee covering the balance of the cost with pre-tax dollars.

Company parties, picnics, and outings are an often overlooked benefit. Company parties provide the employee an opportunity to network with their peers and superiors in a relaxed social setting. Having friends at the office may be good for the employee when management was considering raises or promotions. The camaraderie developed at company parties can build common ground among employees (Tuncer, 2015).

College tuition assistance for an employee's children is also an innovative benefit some employers offer. Other employers extend that benefit to an employee's spouse also. Organizations and companies who provide tuition assistance for their employee's dependents can improve employee retention and productivity (Spencer et al., 2016).

Some employers pay government mandated employee benefits such as social security and disability (Ekici & Besim, 2018). These types of benefits cost the employers large sums of money. However, some employees may not even realize that they are receiving these benefits. Therefore, small business owners should educate their employees about these benefits if the company wishes to receive any goodwill in return for bearing these costs (Desmidt, 2016).

Company Financing

Finances are the one area that touches all of the factors addressed by contingency theory. Without adequate cash flow, the small business cannot afford to purchase the materials, labor, or equipment that are required to operate (Morrison & Trushell, 2016). Inadequate cash flow limits the resources available to the small business owner to maintain the health of their business.

Finances also affect the management realm of a small business (Festel & Rammer, 2015). Limited finances may hinder the ability of the firm to hire highly-trained, experienced managers. The small business owner might only be able to afford managers that are new to the field or inexperienced. This inexperience may lead to costly errors in judgement for the business. An additional way that finances affect the management function of a business was a lack of planning. If small business owners are overly concerned with the current condition of the business, they may not be able to properly plan for the future growth of the enterprise.

Company finances also affect the workplace environment (Halvitigala, 2018). Employees may become frustrated if they do not have the proper tools or equipment to do a job correctly. Safety may also become an issue due to a lack of equipment maintenance or obsolescence. A workplace that may not be open for business tomorrow breeds uncertainty among the employees. Employees that are concerned with job security may be looking for other job opportunities on company time instead of concentrating on their assigned tasks.

There are some avenues that small business owners may pursue if they are short on funds to increase cash flow. The first of these steps that small business owners may take was cutting operating costs by leasing equipment or facilities (Halvitigala, 2018). Leasing equipment would allow construction firms to take on additional projects that they may not be presently equipped to complete. Leasing facilities may also allow companies to expand into new geographic territories or market niches at a reduced cost.

The second step was to pursue capital from equity partners such as angel investors or venture capitalists (Festel & Rammer, 2015). Some angel investors also provide mentoring and coaching to their partners. The advice received from someone who may have experienced the struggles of operating a business under similar circumstances may prove to be an invaluable source of information to a small business owner struggling to keep their operation healthy and profitable.

Small business owners who do not wish to seek outside investors may enlist bootstrapping methods to finance their operations (Rutherford, Pollack, Mazzei, & Sanchez-Ruiz, 2017). These methods entail such strategies as using customer funds to finance production through pre-payments. They can also include borrowing money from banks, peers, and innovative sources.

When small business owners borrow money from a bank several things happen. The small business owner and their organization begin to build a reputation and credit history. If the business makes loan payments in a timely manner, they are likely to get additional, larger loans from that banking institution. This additional capital allows the business to be able to purchase the materials, facilities, and equipment that the company requires to grow. This type of growth facilitates increases in production and profits (Krishnan, Nandy, & Puri, 2015).

The expansion of the Internet has also opened up creative new fundraising avenues for small business owners who need to raise capital. Crowdfunding websites match potential individual or collective lenders with small business owners in need of additional capital (Assenova et al., 2016). Crowdfunding websites can work well when

businesses and their owners need small loans to complete a job or make a down payment on a piece of equipment.

Small business owners may also turn to their personal resources to help finance a small business (Kapinos, Gurley-Calvez, & Kapinos, 2016). Small business owners may also reinvest funds from their day job or other companies into their small business (Grimmer, Grimmer, & Mortimer, 2018). Small business owners may also use personal computers, personal vehicles, family members, home office space, or home telephones to cut the operating costs of the business and improve cash flow (Grimmer et al., 2018).

Human capital is also an important part of financing a small business when small business owners are employing bootstrapping methods of financing. Careful hiring and staffing practices can help a small business to improve cash flow by limiting the number of employees a business requires to operate (Grable, 2015). These extra cost savings may come from items such as hiring a bi-lingual employee when seeking to expand internationally rather than paying an employee and an interpreter (Zolfagharian, Hasan, & Iyer, 2017).

Construction safety

Construction work is inherently dangerous due to the nature of moving heavy loads of materials and operating large equipment. Workplace accidents are a constant problem for companies operating in the construction industry (Goh & Askar, 2016). The costs associated with a single accident may force a company to go out of business. The extrinsic costs to a company from an accident may arise from medical expenses, rising insurance costs, lost labor, lost materials, and lost revenue. However, the intrinsic costs a

company incurs due to an accident may be more detrimental to their success due to increases in employee turnover and decreases in employee satisfaction (Goh & Askar, 2016).

To control these costs, small construction business owners should consider enacting several steps and procedures into their daily operations. The first item for their consideration was the importance of safety to corporate success as expressed by the overall company culture. The company's owners and managers must make a commitment to ensure the health and safety of their employees. Company owners and managers can demonstrate that commitment by ensuring that company policies meet or exceed industry standards for safety (Alarcon et al., 2016).

The second action item is to ensure that procedures are in place to incorporate safety in the bidding and proposal processes (Goh & Askar, 2016). Small business owners can accomplish this by figuring the cost of the extra time taken to properly plan each step of the construction process in the bid. A written site-specific project safety plan should be prepared for each project. That written plan should include the location of and contact information for the nearest hospital or medical assistance and law enforcement officials.

The third action item for small business owners to follow should be to ensure that personnel have the proper personal protective equipment for the job (Lu et al., 2016). Examples of personal protective equipment include hard hats, steel toed boots, gloves, and safety glasses. Management must verify that all tools and motorized equipment are well maintained and functioning correctly. Management personnel should keep

maintenance records on file for each piece of equipment that the company owns or operates under a lease.

Communications is also an integral part of a company's safety program (Lu et al., 2016). Small construction business owners should ensure that their employees know that they have a duty to stop work at any time if they detect unsafe working conditions at the job site until someone corrects those unsafe working conditions. All employees should be trained in and comprehend all company safety policies and emergency procedures. Their training should also include the proper use of all job related equipment and job specific safety plans and procedures. CPR, AED, and first aid training may also be required for some projects.

A crucial element of a construction safety plan is hiring and supporting a job site safety supervisor (Lu et al., 2016). Their role should go beyond simply conducting job site inspections. Small business owners must ensure that safety supervisors have the authority to halt work and correct any problems they observe. Owners should also ensure that employees have enough time and the proper equipment to complete a task correctly. Safety managers in conjunction with job supervisors should maintain incident specific files on any and all accidents or close-calls for future reference when completing similar tasks or projects.

Researchers have shown that the right combination of safety practices was different for each company, crew, and project (Alarcon et al., 2016; Goh & Askar, 2016). Other researchers have shown that safety incentive programs are the most effective measures small construction business owners can take to improve job site safety and

accident rates (Alarcon et al., 2016). However, all safety programs should ensure that every employee understands that they are responsible for each other's safety on the job site (Lu et al., 2016).

Worker's Compensation Insurance

Small construction business owners and all other employers have a duty to ensure the health and safety of their employees and others who may be at risk of injury due to their operations (Essa, 2015). However, construction work was inherently dangerous. There was no way to prevent all accidents. Employers and employees alike will, unfortunately, make mistakes. Therefore, most US states and foreign governments have some type of worker's compensation insurance or system to facilitate employees injured on the job to return to work (Hoffman, Burke, & Zohar, 2017). In the USA, worker's compensation legislation is designed as a no-fault system. State legislators designed this mandatory system so that employers pay insurance premiums to provide for the lost income, medical care, and rehabilitation of injured employees until they are able to return to work. In return for paying these workers compensation insurance premiums, employers receive a prohibition on lawsuits from injured employees (Hoffman et al., 2017). This prohibition includes suits from injured employees for pain and suffering. The worker's compensation system also provides employers relief from suits for punitive damages.

The worker's compensation system is good for the employees also (Eksiogu, 2016). While on worker's compensation, the injured employee receives a portion of their lost wages. They also receive free hospitalization, medical care, prescription drugs,

physical therapy, counseling for mental trauma, and any other items necessary for them to become physically capable of returning to work. Injured employees usually receive these benefits until they receive certification that they are able to return to work from a licensed medical professional.

Liability Insurance

When an accident occurs at the job-site or workplace, persons who are not employees, corporate entities, or property may also receive damage or injury. Those injured parties will look towards the small construction business owner to make them whole again also. Therefore, companies must have liability insurance in place to cover those losses. General liability policies cover bodily injury and property damage (Simmonds, 2015).

Most general contractors also carry an umbrella liability insurance policy. Umbrella policies provide additional protection against catastrophic events above and beyond the general liability policy. Some contractors also carry a pollution liability policy (Simmonds, 2015). Pollution liability policies are not a common type of coverage though.

In the construction industry, a common insurance item that some small business owners have to deal with was naming additional insureds to their liability policies (Henry, 2017). What this endorsement does was say that the contractor will also cover any losses the owner may have due to the contractor's negligence or inability to complete the work. Alternatively, if you go one step down, subcontractors may be required to

cover the expenses of the general contractor as an additional insured if the subcontractor was liable for the damages.

Payment bonds

An additional form of assurance used in the completion of construction projects was a payment bond (Duke, 2014). Payment bonds are usually required for construction projects using public funding. Payment bonds are an instrument that contractors acquire at the time of executing the contract that assure the owner that the contractor will pay for all materials and subcontracts associated with the construction project. Otherwise, the contractor could potentially keep all the monies advanced by the owner to the contractor for material and labor purchases for themselves.

Payment bonds generally cost about 1 to 1.5% of the total project cost to acquire. However, most property owners consider them to be money well spent (Gibson, Kahn, & McGovern, 2017). This was because subcontractors and suppliers may not have lien rights on most publically funded construction projects (Duke, 2014). The payment bond was usually a subcontractor's or suppliers' only remedy to receive payment.

Performance bonds

Contractors must also purchase performance bonds in conjunction with most large publically funded construction projects (Duke, 2014). Performance bonds ensure the property owner that the contractor will complete the project in accordance with the specifications and contract terms. If a contractor goes out of business, the surety company will step in, hire a different contractor, and complete the project.

Also, a positive element for property owners to the use of performance bonds in the construction industry was the assurance that a contractor was financially stable (Duke, 2014). Surety companies thoroughly review a contractor's financial condition before they issue bonds to the contractor for a project. If a contractor can purchase a bond from a surety company, a property owner can be certain that the contractor's finances are sound.

One negative aspect of a performance bond is that they are project-specific (Gibson, Kahn, & McGovern, 2017). The property owner's coverage ends when the project was completed. If a property owner has additional projects, the contractor would have to purchase additional bonds.

Analysis of Findings from the Literature Review

To begin this literature review, I analyzed contingency theory as the basis for my conceptual framework. Proponents of contingency theory state that a company's resources, management style, and environment work together to create the current situation that the company operates in. Examples of a company's resources include raw materials, inventory, equipment and tools, office space, manufacturing facilities, employees, intellectual property, distribution systems, and banking services (Myszewski, 2016).

A company's management function covers many variables (Weber et al., 2015). Those variables include leadership style, organizational structure, communication skills, attitudes towards employees, and formality. Outside factors such as governmental regulations can also affect a company's management function.

A company's workplace environment was subject to many variables also. Those variables include firm size, organizational structure, pay, benefits, social responsibility, economic factors, geographic location, and type of employee. Successful companies adapt their employee compensation and benefit policies as the current situation changes in a timely manner (Pfeifer, 2014).

A discussion of the alternatives to contingency theory for my conceptual framework were systems theory, two-factor theory, and expectancy theory presented several facts. However, the chaotic nature of running a small business makes systems theory not applicable for use in this study (Moldogaziev & Resh, 2016). The fact that expectancy theory and two-factor theory only deal with employee motivation likewise limits their perceived applicability for understanding the findings from my study (Lazaroiu, 2015).

One way that the workplace environment and employee retention is affected was through employee compensation and benefits (Garner, 2015). Employee benefits may include paid time off, health insurance, 401-K or defined benefit retirement plans, or numerous nontraditional ideas. However, there are varied opinions throughout the literature concerning them.

Company finances also have a large impact on the workplace environment (Festel & Rammer, 2015). Capital shortages may limit the ability of a small business owner to successfully retain their employees. However, if finances are handled carefully, small business owners may be able to leverage their resources to be successful at retaining their employees while growing revenues.

Job site safety is also an important concern for small construction business owners (Goh & Askar, 2016). Proper planning, equipment, maintenance, training, staffing, and monitoring all play an important part in project safety and overall company success. Small construction business owners cannot prevent all accidents. However, proper planning can greatly reduce their occurrence and severity if the company's management team ensures that employee safety was a priority.

Worker's compensation insurance is a no-fault system designed to facilitate employers and employees working together to return injured employees to work. Employers pay for insurance premiums that cover the rehabilitation costs of the employee and receive immunity from employee lawsuits. Employees receive the benefit of being able to return to work at no monetary cost (Essa, 2015).

A small construction business owner should have a general liability policy to cover bodily injury or property damage for entities or persons who are not employees (Simmonds, 2015). Umbrella policies cover liabilities above the coverage limit of the general liability policy. Some business owners may also elect to have a pollution liability policy. Contractors and sub-contractors may also be required to add additional insured to their insurance policies.

Payment bonds serve an important function in the construction industry (Duke, 2014). Payment bonds assure the owner that the contractor pays for all materials and labor incorporated into the project. Payment bonds also provide suppliers and subcontractors an avenue to pursue payment from in the event a contractor goes out of business.

Performance bonds are another common element associated with construction projects (Duke, 2014). Performance bonds ensure that the contractor completes a project. If a contractor goes out of business, the surety company will complete the project. Surety companies provide a service to property owners also by thoroughly vetting a contractor's finances.

Transition

The literature supports the need for further exploration of the results small business owners experience from their strategies to retain their employees because various authors provide differing opinions. Section 1 contained the business problem and a background for that problem. Section 1 also contains the purpose and nature of the study along with operational definitions. The exploration of the available literature demonstrates that various authors provide some useful insights into what effects small business owners can expect from their employee retention strategies. One of the most useful insights was contingency theory. Contingency theory suggests that employees are motivated to work effectively by rewards that fit their current situation. Further exploration of small businesses may yield specific strategies that can enable small business owners to improve employee retention.

In Section 2, I provide information regarding the role of the researcher, participant's qualifications, clarifies the methods and design, sampling methods, and the data analysis process. Section 3 will contain the results of the interviews and other data sources with a detailed analysis of them and recommendations stemming from those results.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I will provide a detailed description of qualitative research methods and a qualitative descriptive case study design. This section also includes a description of the role of the researcher, justification for selection of the study participants, and information on data saturation. A detailed description of the data collection and analysis strategies are also included.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that small construction business owners use to retain their valuable employees. The population for this study was comprised of small business owners of three different organizations in the construction industry located in Mississippi who have successfully implemented policies and procedures to retain their valuable employees. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to increase the growth of annual earnings for the owners of small businesses in all industries. Increasing the earnings of small business owners can enable their businesses to pay higher wages and offer better benefits to their employees. Increasing the success of small businesses could also decrease the unemployment rate. People may be able to afford better housing, health care, and education when the unemployment rate was lower.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers apply qualitative research methods when their goal was to understand why people behave as they do (Rosenthal, 2016). As their research reveals insights into this understanding, the researcher gains information and knowledge. Researchers have a

duty to disseminate this information to others so that they will also have the potential to affect social change (Warwick-Booth, 2014). Therefore, the researcher should conduct themselves in a professional manner.

I have been self-employed my entire life. Over the last 28 years, I have held concurrent leadership roles in multiple corporations and limited liability companies in various industries. I have experienced both dramatic successes and catastrophic failures. In all of the instances that I have experienced, one thing has held true. The success of an organization was dependent upon people.

Experience has taught me that there was a balance that business owners should seek to ensure business success. Business owners must reward each employee for their efforts in a manner that was fair to all employees and also the business. However, employees will become discouraged and unproductive if they perceive that the reward was too small for the amount of effort required. Conversely, if the reward was too great, employees become complacent and greedy. Neither scenario was beneficial to the long-term success of a company.

Small business owners find achieving this balance of rewards difficult because the present situation of each employee was different and fluid. Those differences make crafting company-wide policies and procedures to cover everyone especially challenging. Therefore, I have undertaken this research to ascertain where other business owners may have found the balance between employee effort and reward in their employee retention efforts.

The United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare issued their guidance on research involving human subjects in 1979 in the Belmont Report (US Department Health, 1979). The Belmont Report expressed three principles for research: a respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The report also offered three methods for researchers to use in the application of these guidelines. Those methods were informed consent, an assessment of the risks and benefits, and how a researcher selects their subjects.

This research followed the guidelines and methods as outlined in the Belmont Report. Everyone interviewed were active participants instead of passive subjects (Bromley et al., 2015). These active participants received the questions before the interview. Receiving the questions before the interview appointment allowed the participants with ample opportunity to assess the risks and benefits of participating in this study for themselves.

To reduce potential bias in the interview process and data collection, I employed bracketing while conducting the interviews. Bracketing occurs when a researcher suspends their natural assumptions and beliefs on a subject and lets the interview participant fully express their thoughts and ideas surrounding a phenomenon (Sorsa, Kikkala, & Astedt-Kurki, 2015). One element of bracketing is the exclusion of leading questions and postures. A crucial element is building a level of trust between the interviewer and interviewee. A minimalist approach is more effective when listening to and capturing the information and knowledge that the interview participant was providing (Lee & Prior, 2013).

Interviews are the appropriate method to use to explore the research question for several reasons. To assure a uniform approach for conducting the interviews, I chose to develop an interview protocol (Appendix A) to gather rich and deep information (Sorsa et al., 2015). The depth of the information obtained in the interview process grows as the level of trust between the two parties increases. Therefore, a skilled interviewer may be able to uncover some embedded knowledge. Interviews also provide opportunities to create friendships or professional relationships between the interviewer and interviewee. Those relationships may provide for future research opportunities with the small business owner and both their personal and professional contacts.

Participants

The participants for this study were small business owners who operate a business in the construction industry. Those businesses must be located in Mississippi. The owners of those small businesses must have successfully implemented policies and procedures to retain their employees.

Selection of participants for this study employed purposeful sampling techniques. Purposeful sampling provides participants with rich information and makes the most effective use of resources (Duan et al., 2015). Using purposeful sampling allows a researcher to select participants with knowledge and experience on the phenomenon of interest who can articulate that information in a concise and precise manner (Palinkas et al., 2015).

I found participants for this study through contacts made with the Associated General Contractors of Mississippi. This trade association holds periodic membership

meetings and continuing education seminars to facilitate face-to-face introductions. Their membership directory was available to the public online (<http://web.msagc.com/search>).

After initial identification of potential participants through the above means, I contacted them through telephone conversations to ascertain if they met the criteria for the study and were willing to participate. During these phone conversations, I also gathered any additional contact information necessary to provide the participants with the information for making informed consent to participate and a copy of the interview questions. The next step was to set up the tape recorded semistructured interviews at a place that was convenient for the three participants.

Research Method and Design

The intent of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that small construction business owners use to successfully retain their valuable employees. Those small construction businesses were located in Mississippi and employee fewer than 100 people. A discussion of and justification for the research method and design to investigate this subject follows.

Research Method

Research methods provide a researcher with strategies to answer their research questions. The three commonly used types of methodologies are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Park & Park, 2016). Quantitative researchers examine variables' relationships or differences, while qualitative researchers explore real-life situations

(Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014). Mixed method researchers apply a combination of both methods (Yin, 2014).

Quantitative methods are the most commonly conducted governmentally funded type of study because they seek to measure a result (Prowse & Camfield, 2013).

Quantitative researchers use statistical tools to justify actions and policies (Park & Park, 2016). However, quantitative research methods do not take into account the context of those actions or policies (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014). Therefore, quantitative research methods were not well suited to explore the research question.

Mixed methods researchers combine both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine and explore a single research question in the same study (Yin, 2014). The quantitative elements of a mixed-methods study use close-ended questions to test hypotheses (Gupta, 2014). Mixed methods researchers employ both methods to provide complementary views of a phenomena (Park & Park, 2016). However, I did not attempt to test any hypotheses so mixed methods were not appropriate for this study.

An analysis of all three methods indicated that a qualitative methodology offers the best strategies for this study. The qualitative research method was appropriate to explore the research question by enabling an examination of phenomena in the context in which they occur (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014). Qualitative researchers conduct this exploration by using open-ended questions and other data sources to better understand underlying phenomena and strategies (Mariotto et al., 2014).

Using the qualitative research method enables researchers to include and explore the human elements of a phenomena (Holley & Colyar, 2012). Qualitative researchers

use the experiences of people to explore underlying phenomena (Prowse & Camfield, 2013). Therefore, qualitative research methods were appropriate to explore small construction business owners' strategies to successfully retain their valuable employees.

Research Design

The research design was a logical plan that allows a researcher to connect the research questions with the data that they collect and analyze during a study (Yin, 2014). The four main types of qualitative research designs are narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, and case study. I chose to use a case study research design. An analysis of each of these types of research designs follows.

Researchers using narrative research designs seek to tell a story (Holley & Colyar, 2012). Narrative researchers seek to find uniformity of structure across language, culture, religion, and time. This type of research design usually consists of stories of participants' life histories through interviews (Prowse & Camfield, 2013). Narrative research designs and story-telling are historical in nature (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014). The purpose for this study was to identify and explore strategies rather than reconstruct historical events. Therefore, a narrative research design was not appropriate for this study.

Another type of research design was phenomenology. Phenomenology uses semistructured interviews to explore the meanings of the lived experiences of individuals (Prowse & Camfield, 2013). Phenomenological researchers seek to identify common themes surrounding shared experiences. The goal of this study was not to explore the

meanings of participants' shared experiences. Therefore, a phenomenological design did not fit this study.

Employing an ethnographic research design allows a researcher to observe participants over a long period of time (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014; Prowse & Camfield, 2013). Some researchers define ethnography as creating a picture of the way of life and culture of a group of people (Park & Park, 2016). Ethnographic research requires a great amount of attention to detail in recording observations. I sought to explore all facets of a small business owners' strategies for employee retention rather than just the cultural elements. Therefore, an ethnography design did not serve to answer our research question.

Case study researchers investigate phenomena in a real-world context at great depth over space and time (Yin, 2014). Case study researchers seek to understand and report the unique characteristics of the bounded system they are studying (Park & Park, 2016). While conducting a case study, researchers emphasize the context that events occur in that create the phenomena (Mariotto et al., 2014).

The overriding research question explores what strategies small construction business owners use to successfully retain their employees. A case study research design fits that research question because this design goes into great detail on the phenomena. Secondly, a case study research design stays with the confines of a small construction business. The third way that a case study lends itself to addressing my research question well was that I can use this design to understand events in the context that they occur. Therefore, a case study research design was appropriate to employ for this study.

Researchers must obtain an accurate picture of the phenomena that they are exploring. Therefore, the achievement of data saturation was critical (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation occurs when there are no new themes from collecting additional data. Researchers achieve data saturation through several methods.

Member checking is one way to ensure research quality (Birt et al., 2016). Using member checking allows the researcher to return interview transcripts to participants to verify their accuracy. However, I did not employ transcript review and possible follow-up interviews during this study so as to not impose upon the participant's time.

Triangulation is also a tool that researchers may use to ensure data saturation (Mariotto et al., 2014). The use of triangulation allows researchers to review other types and sources of data such as financial statements, newspaper articles, websites, or social media. However, financial statements may be difficult to obtain from privately held companies due to personal privacy concerns.

Population and Sampling

Sampling is a process where qualitative researchers select participants for their study from the population (Yin, 2014). I have been involved with construction businesses my entire life. That involvement has included memberships in various trade organizations. One benefit of those memberships has been the ability to network with other business owners in the construction industry. Each of these trade associations publishes member directories that list the contact information for their members.

The population for this study was three small construction business owners who have successfully implemented strategies to retain their valuable employees. Their

businesses operate in Mississippi and employ fewer than 100 people. I used purposeful sampling to select three small business owners from contacts with the AGC of Mississippi who meet the requirements of the study to participate in face-to-face semistructured interviews.

Purposeful sampling methods were appropriate for this study because they allow a researcher to select participants with relevant experience of the phenomena being studied (Palinkas et al., 2015). The application of purposeful sampling methods also allows researchers to make the most effective use of monetary, travel, and time resources (Duan et al., 2015). Purposeful sampling methods also allow researchers to select those participants whose experiences and forthrightness should enable them to provide the most accurate description of the phenomena being studied (Kluemper et al., 2015).

Sample size is usually determined using statistics for quantitative studies. However, qualitative researchers may be more flexible and select a sample size that was more efficient to work with (Duan et al., 2015). Sample size should be in accordance with the purpose for the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). Multisite case study designs offer advantages over single case study designs (Yin, 2014). A sample size of three participants from three distinct small construction organizations should offer more breadth than a single participant from a single company.

Researchers achieve data saturation when there was enough data collected to replicate the study and there are no new themes from collecting additional data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I did not employ member checking so as to not place a burden upon the participant's time. However, member checking allows a researcher to return typed

interview transcripts to participants to ensure that they accurately captured the events of the interview session (Birt et al., 2016). If needed, follow up interviews could have provided further clarification and contributed to demonstrating data saturation.

Triangulation is a tool that researchers use to ensure data saturation by examining other sources of information (Mariotto et al., 2014). Financial statements, newspaper articles, websites, and social media are some examples of that type of data. However, smaller companies may not have been in the newspaper or have constructed websites.

Initial contact with study participants was through a phone call to ask if they were willing to participate in the study and meet the selection criteria. Participants chose the time and place that best fits their schedules and comfort zone to conduct the interview. Participants who are in a comfortable setting are more likely to express their thoughts and ideas (Sorsa et al., 2015). By allowing the participants to take the lead in picking the time and venue for the interviews, researcher bias can be reduced (Lee & Prior, 2013; Rosenthal, 2016).

Ethical Research

Researchers must remember that study participants live with the social and political results of our research. Therefore, researchers must protect the privacy, dignity, well-being, and freedom of our research participants. Researchers should embed ethical considerations into every step of the research process (Greenwood, 2016).

The following steps to protect the research participants occurred. Participants could have withdrawn from the study at any time. All that was required to leave the study was to send me a written or verbal notification that they wish to stop participating.

I would have immediately returned or shredded all background documents, company files, and financial statements that they furnished, whichever they preferred. No participants were paid or received any type of remuneration or consideration for their participation in the study.

I will keep the data in a locked safe for 5 years. After 5 years, all data will be shredded and properly deleted. Only aggregate data will be published or available to other persons. No individual or corporate names will be available to the public.

Data Collection Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher is the principal data collection instrument (Yin, 2014). I used semistructured interviews to accomplish that task. Semistructured interviews explore the lived experiences of individuals (Prowse & Camfield, 2013). Researchers can gather rich data on a topic using interview techniques (Sorsa et al., 2015).

The interview protocol is in Appendix A. The first step of the interview process was to identify and contact the potential interview participants. Appendix A has a sample invitation to e-mail prospects. The next step in the interview process was to schedule a venue, date, and time to conduct the interview. When that date and time arrived, I was at the location early to set up the room and audio-recording equipment. After conducting the interviews, I sent each prospect a letter thanking them for participating in the study.

Member checking served to assure study reliability and validity (Birt et al., 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Member checking also gives the research participants more freedom to fully express their thoughts and opinions (Caretta, 2016). If requested by a

participant, I would have e-mailed them a transcript of the interview to assure that the transcript accurately reflected the interview. If there was a substantial misunderstanding, a follow-up interview may have been required to correct any errors.

Data Collection Technique

I used semistructured interviews as the data collection technique for this study. The protocol for these interviews was included in Appendix A. The first step for conducting the interviews was to e-mail the potential interview participants invitations to participate in the study. A review of any background information that participants provide, such as financial statements, websites, social media, or newspaper articles, occurred next.

The second step was to schedule a time and place of their choosing to conduct the interview. After arriving at the meeting place in a prompt manner, I set up the room and audio-recording equipment as needed to facilitate communication and avoid distractions. While conducting the interview, I asked the questions that the interviewee has had an opportunity to review beforehand. Using a respectful manner to conduct the interviews can increase the depth of information obtained (Sorsa et al., 2015). The interviewees should also be active participants in the process (Bromley et al., 2015). Listening to the participants more than I talk also ensured that a thorough representation of the interviewee's opinions and experiences was captured (Lee & Prior, 2013).

The third step occurred after the interviews, I typed a transcript of the audio recordings. If requested by a participant, that transcript would have been e-mailed to that participant for them to verify that the transcript accurately reflected the interviews. If

not, a second or third interview may have been required to accurately capture the experiences of the interviewee. Once the interviews were completed the fourth step occurred, each participant received a thank you letter by e-mail.

The advantages of this semistructured interview process include the fact that they allow researchers to explore in detail how people arrive at the decisions they do (De Ceunynck et al., 2013). Skilled interviewers may be able to uncover hidden knowledge or new ideas also (Sorsa et al., 2015). An additional potential advantage of using interviews and interview protocols to collect research data was to assure a uniform process was followed step-by-step (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014).

There are also a few disadvantages to using qualitative research methods and an interview process to collect data. One potential disadvantage was that the quality of the data was dependent upon the quality of the rapport between the interviewer and participant (Prowse & Camfield, 2013). Another possible disadvantage was using a small sample size can omit an important subset of the population (Park & Park, 2016).

Data Organization Technique

The audio-recorded interviews, transcripts and all data collected from the participants utilized a coding system to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Participants were more forthcoming with information and data because they were sure that their proprietary information was confidential (Karam & Ralston, 2016). Interviewers may be able to uncover hidden information if a level of trust and cooperation develops between the parties (Caretta, 2016; Sorsa et al., 2015).

I assigned the participants a designation of P1, P2, or P3. The assignment of the numbers occurred by the order of the first interview. Only I know the identity of the participants. All transcripts, notes, and other data will reside in a locked safe for 5 years. No raw electronic data will exist outside of the locked safe. After 5 years, all data will be shredded and properly disposed of.

Data Analysis

Qualitative researchers should be as objective as possible when organizing and analyzing interview data (De Ceunynck et al., 2013; Sorsa et al., 2015). The transcription of the audio recordings from the interviews occurred immediately after each interview. After transcription, each participant could have requested an opportunity to verify the transcript's accuracy with follow up interviews as necessary to assure validity and to reach data saturation.

These follow-up interviews or member checking serve several purposes. The first purpose of member checking was to ensure that the interview transcripts fully reflect the participants' true thoughts and opinions (Birt et al., 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015). A second benefit of member checking was that this process can catalyze the participants to take ownership of the research process and become an integral part of the study (Carretta, 2016).

During the member checking process, an additional step to ensure data accuracy and reliability that I took was to ensure that all of the participants defined their terms in the same manner (Karam & Ralston, 2016). For example, a "workday" may be different in the roofing business than the same term was in the road construction arena. An

accurate translation of terms between construction businesses was vital to the success of the study.

Researchers should begin their data analysis by exploring their data to see if any obvious patterns or themes emerge (Yin, 2014). A part of this exploration of the data was to utilize methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation uses other types of data to achieve data saturation (Marrionto et al., 2014). The other types of data that I used are financial statements, newspaper articles, websites, and social media.

I utilized the qualitative data analysis software from Cleverbridge ATLAS.ti 8 to assist in identifying and exploring themes from the data (ATLAS.ti 8, 2019). The process of analyzing the data included accurately transcribing the data, using a code logbook to precisely identify participants, developing codes for the interview data, and finding a theme or themes from those codes. The conceptual framework for this study was contingency theory. I compared the themes that emerged with those expected from the conceptual framework and existing literature.

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative researchers must typically use smaller sample sizes than quantitative researchers. Therefore, qualitative researchers must take every step they can to ensure the reliability and validity of their findings. One way of achieving that goal is to use a semistructured interview format. Semistructured interviews enable achieving a point of commonality between the researcher and the participants which strengthens the validity, consistency, and reliability of the data (Warren & Szostek, 2017). Reliability and validity establish the truthfulness and credibility of the study (Yin, 2014).

Reliability

Reliability is the degree to which a study's findings are not affected by random issues and contain sufficiently detailed descriptions of the design processes to enable others to replicate the study to demonstrate similar results (Boesch et al., 2013). One way of ensuring reliability is through the use of methodological triangulation or using multiple sources and types of data (Mariotto et al., 2014). I reviewed financial statements, newspaper articles, websites, and social media to assure this study's reliability.

A threat posed to a study's reliability is the fact that qualitative researchers are collecting data in the real world. Therefore, researchers must have a written protocol to follow during the interview process should some unforeseen event occur to preserve uniformity of procedures among participants (Yin, 2014). The interview protocol for this study was in Appendix A.

Member checking also assures a study's reliability (Birt et al., 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015). The interview participants can also better express their thoughts and ideas when given an opportunity to review the data (Caretta, 2016). If requested by a participant, I may e-mail the participant a copy of the interview transcripts and conduct follow-up interviews to ensure that the data collected accurately reflect the participants' opinions.

Validity

There are several different types of validity that researchers seek to ensure in a study. The first of those types was credibility (Boesch et al., 2013). Credibility was the

issue of verifying that there are no other possibilities or causes of an event in the mind of the participant (Yin, 2014).

A way to verify that an interview transcript reflects the true thoughts and opinions of interview participants was member checking (Birt et al., 2016). The interview participants could have requested a copy of the interview transcripts with an opportunity to verify and correct their accuracy. Follow-up interviews may also ensure transcript accuracy.

Qualitative researchers can also ensure credibility by the use of data and methodological triangulation (Yin, 2014). Data triangulation uses other sources of the same types of data to assure the validity of results (Mariotto et al., 2014). Each of the small business owners participating in this study were asked to provide financial statements, related newspaper articles, websites, and social media files for review. A convergence of evidence from these different sources and types of data offered support for recurring themes, and therefore validity, from both internal and external sources (Yin, 2014, p. 121).

I included methodological triangulation in this study by using several different types of data collection. Reviewing financial statements, interview transcripts, and websites provided data from an internal perspective. A review of social media sites provided data from both internal and external perspectives. Reading newspaper articles provided data from an external perspective. Comparing information and data collected by five different methods supports the study's validity.

Transferability refers to the generalizability of the study to other populations (Boesch et al., 2013). Yin (2014) suggested that the analytic generalization of case study findings should only occur to situations under similar theoretical concepts. Therefore, an imperative to this study's validity and transferability was to provide thorough and detailed descriptions of the situations, participants and contexts studied.

Confirmability is the extent to which a data collection instrument or method measures what they were designed to measure (Boesch et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). Karam and Ralston (2016) suggested the importance of double-checking the data to ensure that all of the participants define their terms in the same manner. The need to ensure accuracy in defining terms applies to this study since the participants can be from different segments of the construction industry. I was specific in collecting interview data to ensure that all of the small business owners defined their key terms in the same manner. I disclosed the fact that I am also a small construction business owner to the participants in this study before they agreed to participate. The use of bracketing also assured the validity of this study's findings by avoiding my using leading questions and body language that could affect the participants' responses.

Qualitative researchers need to ensure an accurate representation of the events or situations that they are studying by achieving data saturation. Data saturation occurs when there is enough data collected to replicate the study and no further coding was required because no new themes emerge (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Using member checking allows participants to verify the data, interpretations of the data, and offers participants an opportunity to provide confirming or additional information for clarifying understanding

(Birt et al., 2016). The use of methodological triangulation also enables researchers to review additional sources of information such as financial statements, newspaper articles, websites, or social media to assure data saturation for each type of data (Mariotto et al., 2014).

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I presented a discussion concerning the research method and design. I also discussed the role of the researcher, the participants, the sampling technique, and data collection method for this multisite case study. In addition, discussion of processes for assuring my study's ethics, reliability, and validity was presented.

Section 3 includes the findings of the study, the significance of the study, and potential implications for social change. Another key heading in Section 3 will be recommendations for action and further study. The final heading will be a summary of my key conclusions from the study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that small construction business owners use to retain their valuable employees. The population for this study was small business owners of three different organizations in the construction industry located in Mississippi who have implemented successful policies and procedures to retain their valuable employees. The research question for this study was: What strategies do small construction business owners use to retain their valuable employees?

My data sources consisted of financial statements, interview transcripts, websites, social media, and newspaper articles. I conducted semistructured interviews with three owners of three different small construction businesses. I assumed data saturation occurred when no new data emerged from the participants. Three themes morphed from the data analysis by applying methodological triangulation to these sources of data. Those themes were (a) challenge employees and reward them accordingly, (b) mitigating unplanned turnover, and (c) treating employees and others fairly.

Presentation of the Findings

The primary research question for this study was: What strategies do small construction business owners use to retain their valuable employees? Three themes morphed from the data analysis that addressed this issue: (a) challenge employees and reward them accordingly, (b) mitigating unplanned turnover, and (c) treating employees and others fairly. Contingency theory provided the conceptual framework for exploring

the research question and was related to these three themes. I found that the themes and the literature did align with the theory.

Theme 1: Challenge employees and reward them accordingly!

Keeping employees challenged was one way in which leaders could mitigate unplanned turnover. Offering competitive salaries, flexible work schedules, less common benefits, and training are other areas where my research uncovered potential strategies to help reduce turnover. Good employees are hard to find, so it's important to go to extraordinary measures to retain valuable employees. Perhaps instead of trying to prevent an employee from leaving, recognize and reward extraordinary performance where such employees are not seeking to leave.

Strategy 1: Adequate pay and benefits. Participant 1 (P1) suggested that it was very important to understand how employees feel about their level of pay, which surprised me because the Gallup Organization does not include this question as part of their trademarked 12 question survey to understand employee engagement. Gallup suggested that when employees consider their satisfaction working in an organization, the pay was not a significant factor (Scott, 2014). "You know if they are not getting paid as much as somebody else might, that might be something else" (Participant 1).

Participant 2 (P2) felt that they could work through financial aspects more quickly depending on the person's ability to perform the job. For example, if the employee suggested the salary does not allow the employee to meet the needs of their family the company might offer the employee an increase in pay to help off-set the shortage. P2 also might offer a raise in pay if they see the worker's growth potential to become a better

employee. Participant 3 (P3) purported that insurance benefits were a very strong retention tool. P3 suggested their organization does a good job of making sure employees receive a competitive benefit package, “especially in times when the economy was struggling” Health benefits, however, might become less of an attractive factor according to how more American’s feel about the possibility of eliminating the Affordable Care Act and moving towards socialized medicine, a Medicare for All, single-payer plan (Lambrew, 2018).

Strategy 2: Being willing to help their employees out in a bind! Employees often find themselves in a bind (Participant 2). Needed car repairs seem to be a common complaint where Participant 2 would routinely float a loan until payday even though the practice causes extra work for our administration, our company feels helping an employee where they are, puts us a cut above the rest.

Participant 2 does provide financial counseling for employees and stresses they should create an emergency fund to help with a potential unplanned financial crisis whether it was for car repairs, emergency health care services, or household appliance failures. Participant 2 acknowledges that only about half of their employees could draw on one’s savings in an emergency situation because “employees tend to spend what they make and live beyond their means” (Participant 2). Further, people tend to spend money on luxury items, such as a 4-wheeler, instead of replacing old appliances.

Participant 2 recalled several situations where employees are embarrassed to ask for help and “avoid eye contact and text me for help when they have no other alternatives to get out of a bad situation.” Participant 2 sincerely wants to help their employees and

leaves the office door open so people might feel that they are approachable and willing to help. P2 has employees admit they cannot manage their money where one day its car repairs, and the next day it was gas money to get back and forth to work. Participant 2 worries that if employees do not come to them for help, they might result in pay-day loans where upwards of 21-35% interest accrues. This type of loan only was a band-aide to an otherwise hopeless problem where after the loan was paid, the employee was further behind paying current bills.

Participant 2 values their employees. The nature of their work puts them in the outside elements where they are out in the hot sun, drenched in sweat, and dehydrated. Caring about employee's health and wellness was demonstrated by walking over to the store, picking up and distributing cold water and Gatorade, and making sure their employees are taking needed breaks. "Once an employee knows you truly care about them, they are going to work harder and try to be successful" (Participant 2). Participant 2 further demonstrates their caring for their workers because they do not see that their involvement ends at 5: 00 PM on Friday. P2 carries that feeling of inclusion all the time and tries to help move people in making good decisions to move in the right direction.

Strategy 3: Less common benefits. In addition to providing a competitive salary, 401-k retirement plan, paid vacation, and health benefits, other financial incentives include reimbursement of half of their cell-phone charges because the company also has a need to contact employees during their shift. The company also provides approximately \$30-\$40 a month in the employee's clothing allowance instead of

paying for uniforms. Providing clothing and cellphone allowance makes employees feel special.

Strategy 4: Rewards and recognition. Participant 1 suggested that profit sharing is a nice option offered by the company, which provides monetary incentives to top-performing employees; thereby, sharing in the company's success. Other options that might help retain employees was to offer incentives, such as commissions based on billable hours. Participant 1 suggested that in an ideal world, "adjusting rewards based on the employee's individual needs would be the optimal strategy to retain workers." Participant 3 was very conscientious of sharing the profitability of the bank. "P3 stated, "I think the Board and management in general, are very aware of who makes things happen." Having this incentive encourages employees to believe if they put forth the effort, not only will the bank become profitable, recognition of one's efforts will be in the form of verbal appreciation and financial rewards.

Theme 2: Mitigating Unplanned Turnover

Strategy 1: Flexible schedules. Our employees appreciate our leaders offering flexibility to their work schedule (Participant 1). "You know, allowing people to take time off if they needed it" (Participant 1). Several factors must be considered when approving time off, but management feels it is important to help our employees maintain a healthy work/life balance. For instance, if there are technicians who primarily perform piece-meal, tedious shop work, management feels that it is important to provide flexibility for our staff to shift their schedule to care of their children while they are home from school sick, or act as caregivers to elder family members who might not be able to

attend doctor appointment on their own. “In our line of work, if you’ve got a tech who was doing shop work the whole time and they need to leave for 4-hours during the day, then the company lets that technician alter their schedule and come into work later in the day (Participant 1). Participant 1 suggested the amount of requests to alter hours was rare, but in the past, employees did take advantage of having a flexible schedule. Employees opted to leave the building during lunch periods or stay longer at night to make-up lost hours. “We don’t have a whole lot right now that really take advantage of that but in the past several have” (Participant 1). Participant 3 felt the working environment allows employees some flexibility in maintaining a good work/life balance. “We encourage employees to be present in the lives of their children” (Participant 3) and attend activities and important school functions. Personal aspects, especially in relation to children and family obligations, are important for emotional stability. Employers frequently implement work-life balance programs to include flexible work schedules to diminish potential financial losses resulting from unplanned turnover (Martínez-León, Olmedo-Cifuentes, & Sanchez-Vidal, 2019).

Strategy 2: Job duties and training. A strategy that has worked for Participant 1 is reviewing employee’s job descriptions versus what tasks were performed to make sure workers were paid appropriately for the work performed. For instance, sometimes employees take on extra duties when required to help fill a void for co-workers unplanned absence or because new processes are implemented, which later might become part of the employee’s position. Participant 1 found that evaluating an employee’s current responsibilities and effort at their yearly performance review cycle allows the employee

to showcase the extra effort of going above and beyond the normal position requirements. By that exchange in communication, managers might elect to offer a promotion or a bonus to help demonstrate an appreciation of an employee's commitment. Alternatively, the manager might elect to adjust the workload between different people.

Training is always a good option to help employees learn and grow. If an employee has several years working in the position, they might be a good candidate to have "a newer employee who might be right out of college" (Participant 1) shadow them to help guide the trainee through best practice processes and procedures.

Strategy 3: Exit interviews. Having the opportunity to have a conversation with an employee once someone expresses an intention to leave allows the manager to better understand what actions could improve employee engagement moving forward (Participant 1). Ultimately, that conversation could also open up a pathway to correct the problem and retain the employee. There are other times, however, when parting ways benefits both the company and the disgruntled employee. Participant 3 seems to address the problem of resigning directly. "We talk to them if they are upfront and let us know why they are considering a different profession or a different place to work management does our best to determine if there was something that can be done to make a difference." If the employee was leaving because of a pay increase, many organizations will make a counter-offer if the salary range was within the budget.

Theme 3: Treating employees and others fairly!

Strategy 1: Understanding value. Participant's 1 response to how they encourage employee retention supports the Fielder's (1967) contingency theory applied

in my research. Finding things of value that are important to employees, but might be unfamiliar to the manager allows leaders to adapt to change, create a present condition for the company, and support an employee's inspiration to work effectively that fits their present situation (Nebeker, 1975).

Some employees elect to leave because of convenience. Participant 3 indicated their employees enjoy a friendly work environment and want to come to work. Participant 3 suggested, "It's not work if you enjoy doing what you do every day." P3 did concede there are intangible factors that employees seek, such as the driving distance between work and home, which could be a factor in an employee's intentions to leave, of which the company has no control. Some employees improved their financial future to where circumstances now allow one of the primary caregivers to stay at home. Participant 3 reported that "only 21% of the employees are men," which could realistically pose a problem, but feels their retention was high, but in cases when someone decides to leave, the primary cause was personal situations not related to pay or job responsibilities.

Other employees most often elect to leave because they feel they do not receive proper and fair treatment. Participant 1 indicated that there are differences in an employee with 15 years of experience and a recently hired employee. Long term employees possess skills, training, certifications, and knowledge that newer employees may lack. Therefore, it was necessary that employers adjust the rewards that each employee receives to match the effort and resources that the employees feel they provide to the company.

Strategy 2: Open communication. Fostering an open-door policy does allow people to bring issues forward without fear of retribution or judgment (Li, 2015).

Participant 3 has an open-door policy, where anybody in the bank from an entry-level worker, to someone at the top, can walk in and discuss concerns with me freely and know they will receive a truthful response even if the answer was not exactly what the employee wanted to hear.

Participant 2 conducts regular safety meetings first thing in the morning but they also end the discussion with an open invitation for anyone to ask questions either with the group or individually. Participant 2 summed it up by expressing, “to keep an employee, I think that employee needs to know you truly care about them.” P2 reinforces the fact that they are a caring manager because they are always available to listen especially when someone was experiencing either a personal problem or job-related issue. That personal involvement substantiates Fielder’s position of feeling valued and helps managers connect with an employee’s present situation.

Strategy 3: Managing relationships. Participant 3 shared the difficulty in balancing a personable and friendly demeanor with their leadership responsibilities. “Unfavorable decisions you might need to make in regards to folks to correct problems” (Participant 3). Nonetheless, they are a manager that wants their employees to feel they are working with them, not for them, because at the end of the day, they are equally important to my success as our bank’s successes.” Participant 3 “has a good philosophy where they believe everyone was in this together and understands that grown folks can sit down and get situations worked out by isolating a problem and dealing with it.”

Strategy 4: Consider the opportunities. Once Participant 2 identified why the employee intends to leave, they could address that particular issue. Sometimes, an employee's intention to leave does not have anything to do with money or job duties, but centers on other factors such as the belief there are greater opportunities elsewhere or are simply burnt-out "so you can't do anything about it one way or the other" (Participant 2).

Once an employee expressed interest to leave, management would "try to ask them first to separate the financial aspect out of the decision versus some other reason they are not satisfied with the job. Sometimes, employees can no longer be on-call during weekend rotations because of childcare needs, where moving an employee to a different position could help solve the problem. The consideration, however, depends on the employee's work performance. If Participant 2 felt the employee was not valuable to the company, they might agree it was time to part ways.

Applications to Professional Practice

The findings and recommendations of this study could provide small construction business owners with successful strategies to retain their employees while growing their businesses. Small business owners may find the results of this study will enable them to more successfully retain their employees. Increases in employee retention may increase profits, facilitate expansion into new territories or product lines, and promote company stability and sustainability. Small business owners may find the themes of (a) challenge employees and reward them accordingly, (b) mitigating unplanned turnover, and (c) treating employees and others fairly and their underlying strategies useful in operating and growing their businesses while maintaining a profit.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change are that increased profits among small business owners may enable them to provide better benefits to their employees. Increased profits may also allow small business owners to provide pay and incentive increases to their employees. Small business owners with increased profits may also be better equipped to participate in community-based charitable organizations.

Recommendations for Action

The first recommended action for small business owners would be to emphasize employee retention by ensuring that they receive competitive pay, benefits, and proper recognition for their accomplishments. The second recommended action is for small business owners to take proactive steps to mitigate employee turnover by being flexible in their scheduling, properly defining job duties, and conducting exit interviews. The third recommended action is for small business owners to get to know their employees better so that they can understand the employee's situation and provide rewards and responsibilities to fit their situation. I will provide the three participants with a summary of the results of this study. I may also publish those results in trade association newsletters or on trade association websites.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are several areas available for further research. Future researchers could study a specific portion of the construction industry such as roofers or road builders. Researchers could also study other industries. Research into different geographical locations or business sizes may also yield valuable information. Future researchers may

also want to consider studying each of the themes that emerged during this study. Further research into employee retention could assist businesses in providing jobs and growth opportunities for people in their local economies.

Reflections

I have learnt a great deal while conducting my research. Conducting the interviews was an interesting learning experience in how much data is available if small business owners and managers simply listen to what people say. Conducting this research also provided an enlightening avenue to see how the scholarly literature aided in my research and analysis.

I came into this project as a long term business owner. By employing bracketing and a minimalist approach, I had an opportunity to suspend my knowledge and truly listen to what other people had to say (Sorsa, Kikkala, & Astedt-Kurki, 2015; Lee & Prior, 2013). The interview process provided compelling results by demonstrating that many of my long-held beliefs and thoughts were in agreement with other small business owners.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that small construction business owners use to retain their valuable employees. The population for this study was small business owners from three different organizations in the construction industry located in Mississippi that have implemented successful policies and procedures to retain their employees. The means of gathering data for this study were interviews, financial statements, newspaper articles, websites, and social media.

As the researcher for this study, it appears to me that the data indicates that contingency theory closely aligns with each of the three emergent themes. Small business owners who want to encourage employee retention should pay attention to the pay and benefits packages they provide their employees. Small business owners should also ensure that they provide intrinsic rewards and recognitions to their employees.

Small business owners who wish to mitigate unplanned turnover should provide their employees with flexible schedules. Clearly defined job duties and the training necessary to carry out those duties was an essential part of the equation also. The use of exit interviews may also serve to facilitate employee retention by serving as a means of measuring the applicability and effectiveness of a company's employee retention strategies.

Small business owners should understand the true value of their employees and treat them with respect. They should be available for open two-way communication with their employees. Small business owners would be wise to cultivate and grow their relationships with their employees. Most importantly, small business owners should provide their employees with opportunities for growth and future success.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

I used the following interview protocol during this study.

1. After obtaining information about potential candidates who qualify for participation in the study, I will e-mail to them an interview request as follows:

Dear Owner,

As a successful small business owner in the construction industry, everyone faces the challenge of designing and implementing strategies to retain a vibrant workforce. I would like to invite you to participate in a doctoral study to share your experiences on what strategies have been successful for your business for retaining employees.

Participants in this study will be asked to participate in an interview that will last approximately one hour. The time and place for the interview will be at your choosing. Your participation in this study would be strictly voluntary. Please find attached a form that details the procedures for this process and provides the interview questions for your review.

I will keep any data and information gathered confidential and only aggregate data will be public. I will be happy to finalize plans for the interview by telephone if you would provide me a phone number.

Please feel free to ask any questions you may have of me or my doctoral research chair by clicking reply all.

Thank you for considering to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Charles Griner, Jr.

2. When an invitee agrees to participate in the study, I will provide a set of procedures to them prior to conducting the interviews. No one will have access to the information other than myself. I will lock the data in a safe for a period of 5 years.
3. I will meet each participant at the time and place of their choosing. I will remind each participant that they may withdraw from the study at any time by simply notifying me and that all data are confidential. I will remind each participant of the study's focus and thank them for their participation. I will ask

them the following questions and any follow-up questions as needed for clarification and further insight.

1. What strategies do you use to retain valuable employees?
 2. How do you respond to employees who may indicate they plan on leaving the company?
 3. What information, if any, do you gain from exit interviews?
 4. How do you encourage employee retention?
 5. What rewards do you offer your employees to retain them?
 6. What additional information would you like to share about strategies you use to effectively retain your valuable employees?
4. After completion of the interview process, I will send each participant the following letter.

Dear Owner:

I would to thank you for participating in my doctoral study concerning employee retention strategies. I am currently compiling the data and writing up the report. I will send you a summary of the study once the study receives final approval.

Thanks again for taking time away from your busy schedule to participate in my study.

Sincerely,

Charles H. Griner, Jr.
Doctor of Business Administration Candidate
Walden University