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# Improving Small Business Hiring Practices in the Millennial Era

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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MA, Webster University, 2009

BS, Mid-America Christian University, 2003

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

By 2025, Millennials will likely make up 75% of the workforce, making them the fastest growing group and the quickest to change jobs; subsequently, human resource managers struggle to retain these young, skilled workers.  This study is important to human resource managers because without strengthening the Millennial workforce, human resource managers could experience high Millennial turnover leading to decreased performance. Grounded in organizational performance theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies human resource managers use to acquire and retain Millennials to maximize organizational performance.  Participants consisted of 5 human resource managers from 5 small to medium size enterprises in the Midwestern region of the United States who were successful at acquiring and retaining Millennials. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, company documents, and company social media platforms.  Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, which lead to three key themes: competitive benefits and pay, recognizing motivations, and open lines of communication.  A key recommendation includes that human resource managers restructure hiring protocols and restructure compensation. This study may contribute to social change as human resource managers who restructure hiring protocols and compensation could retain Millennials and subsequently strengthen and secure economic independence for Millennial employees and their families, while capturing and retaining the next generation entering the workforce.

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# Dedication

This work is dedicated to the Millennial workforce in the Midwestern region of the United States, in which it is hoped the information found herein will assist hiring managers and supervisors, to better understand your reasonable workforce wants and needs and perhaps lead other researchers to further this cause. It is anticipated that understanding and implementing your realistic workplace requirements will be a catalyst to increase stability, continuity, and harmony in the work environment. It is also hoped this study and studies like it, will aid in growth so that you and the small and medium enterprises you are involved with prosper and have positive business, personal, and social ripple effects in your region.

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# Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Hiring Millennials is no longer a choice for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) due to the evolving multi-generational workforce (Tsai, 2017). The Millennial generation influences the American workforce growth and prevalence. In the doctoral study, I sought to understand the changing organizational culture and the transitioning HR business processes and framework. The purpose of this study was to identify strategies for hiring and retaining Millennials to improve organizational performance and sustainability. Some small and medium-sized enterprises experience challenges acquiring and retaining talented and educated Millennials (Ertas, 2015). Low salaries and perceptions of subpar benefits and working conditions accentuate the problem of acquiring and retaining such employees. In the following three sections, I discussed hiring practices used to attract and retain Millennials. In section 1, I provided the problem statement, central research question and conceptual framework, and a review of relevant literature. In section 2, I discussed reliability and validity of the study, elaborated on the data collection and analysis process and ethical research processes. In section 3, I provided the findings of the study, the implications for business practice, and social change, then concluded with recommendations for future research and reflections.

## Background of the Problem

The evolving business environment, characterized by changing age demographics and varied levels of employee commitment, led to the need to rethink ways to recruit and retain the next generation of employees to sustain a business (Carpenter & de Charon, 2014). As of 2018, Millennials made up the largest segment of the American workforce

(Fry, 2018). Born in the 1980s and 1990s, Millennials are in their 20s and 30s by 2018. Companies failing to implement generational-specific changes to their corporate culture may experience challenges with employee retention, loss of institutional knowledge, and a resultant loss of competitive advantage (Carpenter & Charon, 2014). Researchers argued that organizations who recruit and properly invest resources and train employees excel in their fields, while organizations who merely focus on resources, struggle to remain competitive (Covella et al., 2017). Papay and Kraft (2016) explained how hiring the right employee is potentially more important than motivating current employees, to take proper actions after hiring, due to the greater job protections employees enjoy and the expense of employers invested in newly hired employees. Calk and Patrick (2017) described the need for organizations to take advantage of recruiting and retaining Millennials who possess unique strengths and talents that positively impact organizational performance.

## Problem Statement

As the fastest growing group, and the quickest to change jobs, SME owners struggle to retain young, skilled workers (Calk & Patrick, 2017). Weber (2017) explained how two-thirds of all Millennials are likely to switch careers, compared to other demographics such as Baby Boomers (31%) and Generation X (55%). The general business problem is that SMEs who do not acquire enough qualified Millennials may not adequately meet organizational goals and experience lower organizational performance. The specific business problem is that HR managers lack strategies to acquire and retain Millennials to maximize organizational performance.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that HR managers use to acquire and retain Millennials to maximize organizational performance.  The target population consisted of HR managers from five SMEs in Midwestern region of the United States who have been successful at acquiring and retaining Millennials. The impact for social change is that hiring Millennials in the Midwestern region area will inherently strengthen the local economy when they invest their time and resources into civic activities that may benefit the local social infrastructure. In turn, strengthened local economy provides more resources and equity in the surrounding areas which stimulates further growth.

## Nature of the Study

Researchers investigating a phenomenon select between a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed method (Williams, 2011). Quantitative researchers test hypotheses and gather statistical data to explain a phenomenon. I did not select the quantitative method because numerical evidence is suitable for determining the presence or absence of phenomenon, rather than why the phenomenon exists. Qualitative researchers explore the *why* and *how* of a business problem (Yin, 2017), and use an interview technique to understand behavior. A qualitative method was appropriate for the doctoral study because my intent was to conduct face-to-face interviews to investigate decision-making processes. The qualitative approach is subjective and flexible, whereas the quantitative approach is rigid.  Mixed method researchers combine quantitative and qualitative inquiry; and develop a hypothesis to gain statistical evidence and conduct interviews to understand how and why individuals take specific actions (Salona, Kaczynski, & Smith, 2015). The inclusion of quantitative inquiry renders mixed methods research inappropriate for this doctoral study because numerical evidence cannot discover strategies to explain the phenomenon in my research.

Qualitative researchers choose a research design appropriate to investigate the business problem. The designs considered included narrative, ethnography, phenomenology, and case study.  Researchers use a narrative design when investigating life stories. The narrative research design is suitable to explain behaviors evolving from early life experiences (Cayla & Arnould, 2013). I did not select the narrative approach as life stories will not explain the decision-making processes in the doctoral study. An ethnographic researcher explores behavior unique to a group or culture (Cayla & Arnould, 2013). I did not select the ethnographic design because the business decisions explored in the doctoral study are not specific to any group, culture or tribe. A phenomenological design is appropriate when investigating lived experiences only (Moustakas, 1994). In the doctoral study, my intent was to look beyond lived experiences and include perspectives or opinions therefore, I did not select the phenomenology research design. A case study researcher uses triangulation to investigate a problem (Yin, 2017). For instance, interviews, documentation, and physical artifacts may add richness and detail when exploring behavior. I selected the case study design to gain information through interviews, available related documentation, and physical artifacts. I used various lenses including semistructured, face-to-face interviews, documentation such as job descriptions, and physical artifacts including company websites, to investigate the phenomenon.

## Research Question

What strategies do HR managers use to acquire and retain Millennials to maximize organizational performance?

## Interview Questions

The strategy-related interview questions for this study include:

1. What strategies do you use to acquire Millennials to maximize organizational performance?
2. What strategies do you use to retain Millennials to maximize organizational performance?
3. How might recruiting and retaining Millennials impact profitability?
4. How might recruiting and retaining Millennials impact business performance?
5. What attributes are important when considering potential candidates?
6. How can you improve your current hiring practices?
7. What additional information can you provide on acquiring and retaining Millennials to maximize organizational performance?

## Conceptual Framework

I selected Weber's (1922) theory of organizational performance as the conceptual framework which guided the doctoral study. Weber explained that to achieve the greatest organizational performance requires selecting the most talented employees, based on the qualifications needed for the job. Weber's principles of selection of employees, based on the potential employee's intrinsic qualifications, ensure efficient and optimal performance outcomes. The tenets of organizational performance theory include: (a) organizations are social units of people united to meet organizational needs, and (b) organizational social units pursue collective goals. The tenets of organizational performance theory aligned with the doctoral study because Millennial employees are in and of themselves a unique cohort within the workplace, and business owners must work within the framework of how this unique cohort interprets: the work they do, the commitment to employers, the buy-in, the mission and purpose of the organization, and its practices, and the goals and aspirations that the organization promotes to drive performance. Further, the mission of organizations is to create efficiencies in employee management that supports collective efforts to reach the purpose and objectives of the company.

The concept of performance has been widely debated. According to Ployhart (2015), firm performance refers to operational measurements like productivity. The purpose of this study was to explore strategies to recruit and retain Millennial employees to improve company performance. Millennials are the next generation presumed to become the primary base of employees in the workforce. While the Millennial generation will likely strengthen company performance through the technological knowledge and independence they bring to the workplace, business managers must draw Millennial interest and commitment into the larger goals of the company, and that is to develop an efficient and united workforce focused on improving business performance.

## Operational Definitions

*Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):* CSR refers to actions and policies directed towards stakeholders' expectations and economic, social, and environmental performance (Bernard et al., 2016).

*Millennials:* Millennials are people in their mid to late 20s and 30s by 2018 with the most substantial marker of this generation, as explained by Calk and Patrick (2017), who are most familiar with the latest technology and various forms of communication due to a lifetime of access to technology vital to daily living.

*Retention:* Retention is the ability to maintain employees by offering desirable benefits, competitive wages, and other desirable perks for employees to remain loyal to the company (Pyoria, 2017).

*Sustainability:* Sustainability refers to the lasting success of a company's growth, financial, economic and social development (Bernard et al., 2016).

*Turnover:* Turnover refers to the rate at which employees leave a company forcing business owners to replace lost employees with new hires. Higher turnover rates mean less profitability for the company and more revenue expended on employee training and new hire materials (Buzza, 2017).

## Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The methodological approach and research design is necessarily confined by assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. The human resources environment and function is an integral part of every company regardless of size. The rules and regulations of most human resource departments, and the respective decisions made by them, are typically well structured and designed for the greater good of the company. In the best interest of the organization, managers must maintain and update the hiring practices to optimize resources and functionality, thus maximizing the probability of effectuating corporate objectives, sustainability and effectiveness. The policies and procedures associated with hiring personnel would well serve implementing best practices and assessing the extent to which their policies and procedures most adequately achieve such corporate objectives.

**Assumptions**

Mushtaq (2012) explained that assumptions are unverifiable beliefs impacting the research process. For the doctoral study, I made three fair assumptions which upon reflection were unverifiable, yet accurate. First, I assumed that a case study was the most effective approach to ascertain the strategies used to hire and retain Millennials due to the concentrated focus on the subject. Second, I assumed that management, rather than non-management workers, provided the most reliable and accurate data. HR manager’s experience expertise in evaluating/hiring prospective employees as well as the necessary and desired skills required by the company make them the most qualified subjects for this study. Third, I assumed that choosing the right employees for the right jobs is more important for SMEs than the large corporate counterparts, given that each employee in a smaller organization has a greater probability of affecting the overall performance of the organization. While larger enterprises have more at stake from a functional and financial standpoint, SME’s employees have a greater impact on company success or failures.

**Limitations**

Limitations refer to conditions the researcher cannot control (Mushtaq, 2012). Du Gay (2015) proposed that organizational performance alone should be an area of future research. The first limitation was since no universally accepted methodology to accurately measure organizational performance exists, measuring Millennial work value in terms of organizational performance was a limitation of this study. Second, given that employee attitudes may contribute or hinder performance (Ployhart, 2015), employee attitudes may be factors of determining organizational performance and researchers should consider the subjective and constantly changing nature of perceptions. Third, research conducted with a small population may not produce generalizations applicable to all businesses in all locations; therefore, limited the findings to the interviewee perceptions.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations refer to the scope or boundary of the study (Mushtaq, 2012). For this study, I purposely limited the focus to small and medium enterprises rather than including larger corporations. A small sample of participants meeting specific criteria for study inclusion may be sufficient to ensure saturation and may best provide expert perspectives to enlighten and provide depth of understanding of the phenomenon. I also limited the physical boundaries of the study to the Midwest region of the United States. The region characterized a typical region in the United States and the businesses selected were typical businesses within the larger industry.

## Significance of the Study

Hiring practices and procedures are vital to a business' sustainability and performance. Without competent and talented employees, the company could not compete with corporate enterprises, subsequently limiting their profits and growth. Employers must listen and support employees to remain profitable. Millennials have knowledge and experience with the latest technology bringing new ways of thinking enhancing a company's innovative strength. Stewart et al. (2017) described how each generation has something to contribute to an organization. Employers who embrace Millennial changes may find new opportunities to gain a competitive edge. The new group of professionals flooding the workforce, creates a need for new hiring protocols. New ways of thinking may provide improved and efficient practices while finding ways to motivate and reward a new generation of employees (Stewart et al., 2017).

### Contribution to Business Practice

Historically, businesses focused on the bottom line to judge the success of a company. In the doctoral study I aimed to redirect thinking towards employees rather than simply profits. The doctoral study may be of value to organizations in both the private and public sectors. Specifically, productive adaptations to business practice may create effective mechanisms by which businesses may improve internal HR functionality and facilitate the attainment of organizational goals and benchmarks. Accordingly, many organizations could benefit from the requisite improvement to the HR business platform. However, smaller companies that remain susceptible to increased competition and turnover could benefit from performance enhancement mechanisms. A higher retention rate helps business leaders avoid costly expenses of recruiting and training new hires, which could in turn, help the company save money or reinvest in employee improvement measures and training (Bibi, Ahmad, & Majid, 2018). The doctoral study may enhance overall corporate performance by increasing efficiencies, saving time and money, and reducing turnover.

### Implications for Social Change

According to Buzza (2017), Millennials place a higher value on balancing work life with personal life compared to previous generations in the workplace. With Millennials as one of the largest generational groups in the workforce, employers must consider their needs and desires when making hiring decisions as well as when promoting from within. In the process of restructuring hiring protocols, the workplace might produce a happier and healthier organizational culture.

## A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Based on the totality of the literature review, an adequate examination of hiring practices related to acquiring and maintaining Millennials to maximize organizational performance, may not exist. Research on hiring practices, Millennials in the workplace, and employee retention are vital topics in academic literature. Researchers aim to build or expand on the existing, respected research available. In this review of the literature, I reviewed relevant studies. Below, I discussed the specific research related to hiring practices of SMEs in attempts to understand the acquisition and retention of talented Millennials.

In this section, I explained background regarding Millennials in the workplace and organizational performance. Most of the information in the literature review was from academic peer-reviewed journals obtained from the EbscoHost database and related books. In this review of existing literature, I used the following search terms: *talented employees, retention, organizational performance, Millennials in the workplace, and turnover*. Of the 114 references, 101 (88%) were published within the 5 years (2015 to 2019) of my expected year of Chief Academic Officer (CAO) approval of my completed study, and 86% of the total references are peer-reviewed. Therefore, these percentages comply with the DBA doctoral study rubric requirements. Table 1 provides a summary of the different totals and types of sources.

Table 1: *Calculation of Sources*

| References Summary | 2014 and older | 2015 & 2016 | 2017 & 2018 | Total | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Peer-Reviewed Journals | 8 | 42 | 41 | 91 | 85% |
| Books | 2 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 8% |
| Other | 1 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 7% |
| Total | 13 | 51 | 50 | 114 | 100% |

**Organizational Performance**

The framework that comprised my research study was organizational performance, founded upon Weber's (1922) principles of selection for employees. This theory was relevant to the study of hiring and retaining Millennials to maximize organizational performance. The selection of many, if not most, employees results from factors other than inherent qualifications for the job, ultimately impacting the selection of nonqualified employees which could lead to negative consequences to organizational performance. Organizational performance is the extent of the company's achievements, commonly expressed in sales and profits and market share growth, and completion or achievement of the company's objectives (Long, 2015). Researchers argued that organizations who recruit and properly invest resources and train these employees excel in their fields, while organizations who merely focus on resources, struggle to remain competitive (Covella et al., 2017).

A significant component of organizational performance is the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization, not simply measured by just one policy or procedure. Studies exploring organizational performance and success are vast and each one hypothesizes a variety of causes. Nason, Bacq, and Gras (2018) explained how financial performance is as important as societal contributions, shifting focus to social performance and social responsibility of organizations. Social responsibility refers to the business practices that intend to improve societal connections and well-being, which in turn, gains support from the community and drives higher profits for the shareholders of the organizations (Mishra & Modi, 2016).

Lee and Tamraker (2018) stated that network characteristics, referring to the strength among members, are important factors to consider when discussing the performance of the organization. Ali (2018) contributed strategic planning, not simply financial planning, to a company’s success due to their required adaptation to the ever changing environment and competition. Ali described this planning as the tasks of collecting data, creating forecast models, and construct alternative future scenarios which lead to the ability to outperform other firms who did not engage in such practices. While possible for effectiveness and efficiency to co-exist in top performing organizations, there is not a direct correlation; the concept of performance has been widely debated.

In this study, I focus on recruiting and retaining Millennial employees, techniques and how selected employees can affect organizational performance. Chopra (2017) explained how the role of human resource management is vital to business success. Successful human resource policies and practices increase the organizational performance providing the right skilled workers to fill the appropriate position resulting in quality work (Chopra, 2017). Talan et al. (2017) determined that human resource is the single most important factor in determining organizational performance. Papay and Kraft (2016) explained how hiring the right employee is potentially more important than motivating current employees, to take proper actions after they've been hired, due to the greater job protections employees enjoy and the expense of employers invested in newly hired employees.

To achieve high performance, companies must invest adequate money into salaries, bonus incentives, contributing to other monetary incentives, retirement funds, healthcare, and continuous training (Talan et al., 2017). Triguero-Sanchez et al. (2017) described the relationship between human resource management practices and organizational performance with the premise that employee diversity, as well as fostering employee commitment, can improve organizational performance. Dimensions of diversity refers to differences in ethnicity, gender, language, age, race, nationality, education, religious orientation, socioeconomic class, background and length of service (Hoover et al., 2018). Diversity produces greater creativity, innovation, and problem-solving capacity which is the source of competitive advantages; these mechanisms stimulate and motivate the workers to collaborate with their coworkers to maximize production (Triguero-Sanchez et al., 2017).

Perceptions of hiring managers and organizations require examination and consideration. First, business owners consider the age of the hiring managers and potential stereotypes and perceptions of their generation. Then owners consider the younger cohorts and Millennials flooding the workplace, Millennial work intentions, credentials and experience, mindsets, and values. Common trends in 2018 are Millennials applying for jobs online, tattoos and piercings, and the prevalence of smoking. All new or common trends require consideration, especially when these affect the workforce. Applicants in the job market experienced both the convenience of searching for open positions online and also the frustrations of filling out numerous applications online and not receiving any responses. Novak (2017) described the latest methods of sorting through automated applications, in which certain recruiters disregard or set aside applications missing preferred keywords. The mainstreaming of applicant searches reduces the time and resources companies spend on human resources, in turn, HR may pass up qualified applicants for positions due to the lack of human interactions, personal connections, and computerized screenings. First impressions are vital to the human resource search, but the online approach to hiring reduces and in some cases, fosters the necessity to create a strong resume and cover letter to set qualified applicants apart from the rest of the applications (Novak, 2017).

If applicants do pass the first screening process, applicants gain a face-to-face interview, but the increasingly popular are unconventional hair styles and colors, tattoos, and piercings may appear unprofessional to managers and companies (Arndt et al., 2017).

Many assumptions and stereotypes surround people who drastically alter their appearance. Tattoos may disqualify applicants for jobs, regardless of their qualifications. Many factors may influence these perceptions, such as the age of the applicant, the size and message of the tattoo, the job there are applying for, and other inherent qualifications of the applicant. According to Arndt et al., healthcare managers believe service providers with tattoos typically are less honest and intelligent and generally less responsible and or engaged in risky behaviors such as drug and alcohol use and unsafe and deviant sexual behaviors. Approximately 23% of Americans over the age of 18 now have at least one tattoo, usually demonstrating a social or group bond, asserting independence, and reclaiming their bodies after trauma. Arndt et al. explained how most managers are not biased against individuals with tattoos, but rather they fear hiring those employees would hurt or taint their organizational image or social responsibility image. Many employers make exceptions depending on the size and location of the tattoo, ability to cover, and also the *gender appropriateness* of the tattoo on the particular individual. In almost every instance, larger tattoos are subject to greater stigmatizations in service settings than smaller ones (2017).

Another widely researched trend is cigarette smoking, which previously viewed as glamorous is now stigmatizing (Roulin & Bhatnagar, 2018). Roulin and Bhatnagar explained how smokers and non-smokers are adversaries in the workplace. Many organizations avoid hiring smokers based not only on perceptions, but also the negative health consequences. Smokers tend to exude higher healthcare costs and premiums, greater absenteeism, and lower productivity. As with most other perceptions, smokers are usually overlooked for a position compared to non-smokers. This concept also applies to other *undesirable* attributes and behaviors, regardless of the applicant's qualifications (2018).

Chopra (2017) discussed the impact of human resources and productivity on company performance as well as negative effects such as consequences of failures in stimulating human capital. Norcross and Lambert (2018) emphasized the importance of the relation between company and employee, similar to a therapeutic relationship, which includes the feelings and attitudes the employee holds, and the organization, and how employees express those feelings and attitudes. If human resource practices reduce the enlistment of new competencies or squash the existing skill which consequently help competitors gain a productive advantage and more profits. Organizations face the realization of continual competition and the opportunity to gain the competitive advantage by investing in the human resource assets with engagement programs and develop these assets for further growth and productivity (Chopra, 2017).

Many different theories exist in relation to organizational performance. Hiring practices and qualified applicants may be the most effective link to organizational performance. Millennials are the fastest growing group entering the workforce, making research of this particular group important to the future of the workplace. Millennials provide a new perspective on the value of technology in the workforce, acting as teachers to veteran employees with the technological transition that will eventually be universal in the workplace (Crosley, 2018). Human resource managers need to gain a better understanding of Millennials to appropriately understand and acquire such talented employees, due to the need of effective hiring policies and procedures.

## Alternate Theories

The theories and concepts below are unsuitable for the topic, and therefore I did not select them to guide the doctoral study. The theories previously considered include: market orientation, corporate social responsibility, social identity theory, career orientation, organizational support theory, human capital theory, and hiring retention and turnover. With the knowledge of the other theories encompassing SMEs success and struggles, the business and social implications of my study become apparent in the evolution of SMEs as the Millennials flood the workplace.

**Market Orientation.** Two landmark studies, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Narver and Slater (1990), identified and instituted the concept of market orientation which positively correlated with performance. According to Narver and Slater (1990), performance encompasses three primary dimensions: customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination. Indeed, they have been instrumental in informing the understanding of the interplay between how companies can maintain competitive advantage by meeting the needs of their collective internal and external stakeholders (Brik et al., 2011).

Market orientation has three fundamental behavioral dimensions: customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination (Narver & Slater, 1990). Narver and Slater (1990) formulated an empirical measurement framework of market orientation and the resultant profitability effects for the business. The authors theorized that higher firm levels of market orientation lead to correspondingly higher levels of profitability. Regarding the constructs of an organization, the implementation of the marketing concept is the market orientation (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). The authors addressed the perceived void of academic literature in marketing orientation. The authors posited that, despite the absence of a universal definition for the marketing concept, three fundamental components remain: customer focus, coordinated marketing, and profitability. Upon the conclusion of the independent field research, the streamlined concepts of market orientation exposed three core issues: intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination, and responsiveness to market intelligence (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990).

The totality of the market orientation constructs and considerations are an organization's external focus on external factors affecting the entity (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Despite the historic popularity and adoption of market orientation, not all researchers look upon market orientation favorably. Gromark and Melin considered market orientation as overly customer-centric. Additionally, market orientation may be: (a) *reactive*, since the orientation is based on the customer's demands; (b) *narrow-minded*, because too much focus is on the customer no matter the potential ramifications; and (c) *tactical*, since behaviors and activities mirror market orientation (Gromark & Melin, 2013).

Market orientation is a systematic informational gathering and dissemination process with respect to the attainment of information (of customers and competitors). According to Narver and Slater (1990), market orientation effectively and efficiently creates a superior value for buyers and requires continuous superior performance for the SMEs. Superior performance encompasses three primary dimensions: customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination. Narver and Slater further explained how market orientation places the highest priority on the profitability and provides guidelines to behavior regarding the organizational development and responsiveness. Researchers either implicitly or explicitly acknowledged the evolution of the marketing concept.

The foundational constructs of the marketing concept underscores the impetus of current academic research to focus on the relation to such external modalities. While corporate social responsibility and market orientation are mutually exclusive, in both theory and practice, the evolutionary paths of marketing orientation and corporate social responsibility merged (Felix, 2015). Certain precursors including formalization and top management traits influence market orientation (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990), researchers concentrate on innovation and organizational culture (Felix, 2015). The logic is to ascertain whether innovation and organizational culture also influence market orientation. Nevertheless, Felix posited the possibility of organizational informality (internal arrangements of social discourse and communication), rather than such formal relationships, could influence market orientation.

Both academics and marketing managers eagerly await a consensus as to the resultant outputs of market orientation and corporate social responsibility (Felix, 2015). Market orientation is a systematic informational gathering and dissemination process with respect to the attainment of information (of customers and competitors). Researchers demonstrated strong correlations between corporate social responsibility and a firm’s financial performance (Brik, et al., 2011; Long, 2015). Notwithstanding the foregoing, the extant body of research on market orientation largely fails to account for the firm performance dimension within emerging markets. Research on market orientation exists, while the proven importance of this theory is not in question, there is no significance to the examination of acquiring and retaining Millennials.

**Corporate social responsibility.** Long (2015) constructed the concept of social responsibility in the 1950s and the theory evolved into the era of social responsibility. Although the concept has many different perspectives, Carroll's (1979) conceptualization remains fairly consistent and widely accepted, including her theory of the four types of responsibilities to include economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic. The four types include the company's responsibility to monitor changes in the economy to stay competitive, to abide by all legal guidelines and laws, maintain fair and ethical practices far beyond legal obligations, and give back to the community as well as promote human welfare.

An organization's interest in social responsibility aid in strengthening the relationship with society which further suggests that the more socially accepted and active a firm or small business remains, the more attractive the company is to potential employees (Catano & Hines, 2016). In a market that remains competitive, especially regarding small businesses versus large enterprises, social responsibility could mean the difference between community support and employee turnover versus excellent employee performance and commitment. The theorist discussed potential benefits of proper advertising to attract high quality and variety of employees. Catano and Hines explained that the more positive the company's image or reputation, the more likely they are to attract job seekers and gain support from the community. Organizations who value corporate social responsibility attract more job seekers because they are perceived to respect social issues and care for and about employees. Consider the higher qualified job applicants, in regards to their number of choices in the job market, applicants admire an organization who appears socially responsible and exhibits a strong commitment to positive corporate social responsibility policies. Catano and Hines report that employees of organizations with strong positive social policies and procedures report higher job satisfaction and similar values creating stronger loyalty to the organization.

In a competitive market, a company's image directly affects consumer willingness to support the business. Environmental concerns are increasingly popular, forcing companies to conform to more environmentally safe practices, such as recycling. Endorsements are the most recent craze for corporate social image. If a company endorses a particular practice, policy, or person, the company opens themselves up to criticism and boycotting depending on the image that practice, policy, or individual represents. The social responsibilities are the foundations of a successful business which is the ultimate goal of every business both small and large (Long, 2015).

Another major corporate social responsibility that is more common than consumers realize is fundraising or donating. Social responsibility is a choice each company must make to maintain operational excellence and optimal performance. Catano and Hines (2016) explained how the corporate image is initially what attracts applicants to the company, which is vital to the success of the company and the ability to attract high quality applicants as well as retain employees.

Bernard et al. (2018) described a direct link between corporate social responsibility and firm performance. He examined the principle of legitimacy and managerial discretions, the rationale for the social responsibilities of businesses which translates to opening up lines of communication with the public which reduces room for speculation and criticism. They focused on CEOs and the link to corporate social responsibilities. The authors determined that managers of the company have great influence in the company choices and may directly affect the company's social image if allowed enough decision making power to do such. With a wide range of variables hindering managerial discretion: product differentiation, market growth, competitive structure, demand instability, legal constraints, and powerful external forces could disrupt the managerial process of maintaining or implementing change in policies and procedure to increase the company's social status (Bernard et al., 2018). Corporate social responsibility theory was not significance to my study as Millennials are similar to all other employees and stakeholders who benefit from social responsibility of a corporation.

**Social identity theory.** Similar to the social corporate responsibility, social identity theory refers to the link between an employee and the company for creating a sense of identity and belonging connected to the company (Catano & Hines, 2016). Curtis et al. explained how the identity develops in adolescence and evolves throughout the individual's life. Positive group membership is essential to developing a healthy social identity. Experienced throughout grade school and high school, then extending later in life, this phenomenon is more commonly known as the in-group. Positively supported by an individual's in-group creates a positive impact on the individual's mental health when they may experience shifts in their social identity and status. For example, if an individual experiences significant life changes such as leaving employment, identity renegotiation may occur. In this renegotiation, the individual may re-examine who they are, regardless of previous accomplishments, resulting in a greater need for the strong social connections and support (2016).

Social identity theory refers to an individual's behaviors, attitudes, and expectations guided by group norms, their position within that group, as well as the groups' status (Selenko et al., 2017); and, relates to the social image of the company, well known and socially accepted, which generates a sense of pride for employees, feeling synonymous with the image of their company. The attraction to a fit in values, personality, and attitudes between the job seeker and employees appears important to applicants; employing people similar in values to the applicant, the applicant may perceive this as a signal that the organization's values align with personal values and beliefs (Catano & Hines, 2016). As the company succeeds, the individual's intrinsic values boost, creating higher self-esteem and sense of belonging, in turn creating higher sense of pride in their work and greater output performance. Selenko et al. described how employment and personal identity are closely related, as most people hold negative connotations with unemployment. The authors described the direct link with employed persons belonging to a group (employed), which individuals aren't aware of until an event threatens the status or job security becomes more insecure. This shakes the confidence and secures the personal feelings with the identity as long as the individual belongs to the employed group.

Buttner and Lowe explained how individuals naturally classify themselves and others into social groups and categories in which individuals gain a sense of meaning and value contributing to their own sense of identity based upon the social group or category they align with. Crucial to understanding motivations of individual employees, examination of how individual employees' perception of their organizational group becomes essential. Also important to note is the difference in cultural differences. Buttner and Lowe described the connection between pay levels and the employee's identity as an indicator of the employee's value to the organization; as such, minority employees are particularly sensitive to inequality in pay, compared to the majority counterparts. Employees of color are aware of cultural and social comparisons while evaluating the fairness of their pay and experience relative deprivation in regards to pay inequality. Relative deprivation refers to the feeling of helplessness in relation to an inequality of pay, meaning the injustice is not internalized as being the individuals' fault or creating feelings of inferiority, but rather externalized into feelings of resentment, anger, and unhappiness (2017).

An individual may experience effects when an event compromises the employment status and social identity. Salenko et al. explained that becoming unemployment or the possibility of losing one's job, not only creates instability in the psychological well-being of the individual, but also reduces the employees' performance on the job as their connection to the employer or company is weakened (2017). Social identity theory explains, in depth, motivations for employment and career choice, however these concepts are not valid to my focus on the acquisition and retention of Millennials.

**Understanding Employee Attitudes to Increase Retention**

Acquiring employees is somewhat easy, but retaining them is another matter. The attitudes and motivations behind the career choice is the determining factor behind the potential length of employment in a particular career. Extrinsic motivations are short term, while intrinsic and altruistic motivations could lead to loyal and permanent employment. Understanding the employees' attitudes, motivations, work ethic, and finally job satisfaction are the best predictors of length of employment. The most relevant factor linked to turnover is job satisfaction; best explained as the indication of how important or content the employee is with their current position.

Changes in the work situation or environment are a powerful influence on work expectations, which in turn, influence turnover intentions (Tschopp et al., 2014). Employees who experience poor job satisfaction often intend to leave the organization, which is why employers should consider this a factor of employee behavior and attitudes about the workplace. Understanding and catering to every employee need would not benefit the organization; however, sometimes monetary incentives, vacation time, and healthcare, supplements employee job satisfaction.

Compensation is generally the key motivation in considering a career or employment path. Company leaders must consider the type of work needed to fulfil the position, the candidate the company is looking to employ, and the length of time they expect to retain the new hire. Many factors go into selecting the appropriate compensation for a position.  Sarkar (2018) explained how for decades, debate about compensation being the primary factor for quitting one job and starting another has been heavily contested among working professionals.  Compensation-turnover research was initiated by the equality theory of 1963, in which social comparison of employees measured the fairness of the individuals' compensation within the organization.  Sarkar explained that the employees' perception of fairness directly affected the employees' behaviors and attitudes towards the organization, determining their job satisfaction. Mosley's 1977 model of the turnover process outlines the factors an individual considers, such as: pay, level of autonomy, and how much the employee values the job.

Sarkar (2018) explained the consideration given to different levels of compensation include performance-based, seniority-based, individual versus group, long-term pay, internal consistency, and egalitarian pay.  Compensation rates account for almost half of the total operating expense required by businesses to acquire and retain talented employees.  In 1915, business owners retained skilled and experienced workers to reduce severance costs associated with employee turnover (Sarkar, 2018). Bernard et al. (2018) focused on chief executive officer (CEO) turnover and the effect on the company and performance.  A new CEO usually has different personal characteristics from the predecessor, which may explain why turnover in a prominent and impactful position would affect the social image and performance of a company.

Turnover, or job mobility, refers to a transition or job change, whether voluntary or involuntary (Chi et al., 2016).  Retention is the process and efforts by organizational leaders to keep an employee to ensure continued employee productivity and consistent business performance (Aruna & Anitha, 2015). Millennials are not loyal to the company but rather to the job and work performed. The motivations behind the career choice is the determining factor behind the potential length of employment in that particular career. Extrinsic motivations are short term, while intrinsic and altruistic motivations could lead to loyal and permanent employment. Understanding the employees' motivations, work ethic, and job satisfaction are the best predictors of length of employment.

Adams in 1963, underscored the tenets of equity theory to include potential obstacles in employee retention and turnover, indicating employees are sensitive to justice and equality in social exchanges, including pay (Buttner & Lowe, 2017). In some cases, the perception of inequality is enough to disrupt the flow of organizational and employee productivity and job satisfaction. Perception may not be fact, but remains truth to those who perceive inequality or unfairness. Adams further explained that an individual's perception of equality is a function of social learning, values, and norms learned from the individuals' social group and past experiences, and the perceptions form the employees' attitudes, decisions, and actions (Buttner & Lowe, 2017). Buttner and Lowe viewed equity theory as consistent with the ethical dimension of corporate social responsibility which outlines the obligation for the company to treat employees fairly.

Talent acquisition and turnover is essential for organizational leaders to execute policies to strengthen hiring practices. Gretczko and Cleary (2016) described how the plethora of options for job seekers creates challenges for company leaders to fill positions. In 2014, employers took approximately 52 days to fill an open position, creating deficits in company performance and employee morale during labor shortage periods (Gretczko & Cleary, 2016). Gretczko and Cleary explained how quality of the hire is more important than the cost to hire, considering the length of time the hire will stay, if the company expresses interest in developing the necessary skills and training protocols. Further, company leaders fill skilled positions with individuals possessing specific skills, creating barriers for the entry level applicants and businesses in need of skilled laborers (Suseno & Pinnington, 2017).

Universally, turnover is a concern for SMEs and the need for retention of qualified applicants remain vital to HR to ensure organizational performance. Buttner and Lowe (2017) explained turnover reduction is invaluable because when professionals leave a position, they take with them organizational tacit and explicit knowledge, and human capital developed while on the job, as well as organizational costs associated with work disruption or shorthandedness, and loss of institutional knowledge. Nica (2018) explained how turnover creates unforeseen expenses in hiring and training new workers, in addition to the hardship placed on other employees who may experience increased workload resulting from high turnover in the workplace. For this particular study, however, employee motivations that lead to turnover are not factors in the acquisition and retention of Millennials related to organizational performance.

**Career Orientation.** An employee’s career orientation can directly affect turnover. Employers must consider an applicants’ career orientation to understand the employees’ motivations for working and specifically applying to the company. Tschopp et al. (2014) explained how career orientation represents employee attitudes and preferences in relation to the workplace and career path. Career orientation is the individual's expectation of the work environment which becomes a point of reference for evaluating the work situation and job satisfaction (Tschopp et al., 2014).

Career development and orientation refers to the natural gravitation towards certain career paths, requiring a set of skills the individual possesses based on a reflection of their own abilities, personality, interests and values (McMahon & Patton, 2018). Career orientation may evolve over time, but similar to the identity of an individual, orientation is a form of career identification. Zaichenko and Vinokurov (2018) suggested that career orientation is a reflection of one's future career preferences. Career selection is essential for the health and happiness of the individual, due to the time and energy required to succeed in the workforce. For this reason, career inventories are administered in high school to aid in the proper and educated selection of the appropriate career path. While never too late to select or change career paths, changes in career orientation are not easy and require a shift in the individuals' identity. The most popular questionnaire is Edgar G. Schein's career orientations inventory, consisting of nine areas of interest: entrepreneurial creativity, challenge, organizational competence, professional competence, service, stability of place of residence, autonomy, lifestyle integration, and stability of place of work (Zaichenko & Vinokurov, 2018). Based on the results of this questionnaire, career orientation becomes clear and helps undecided job seekers and young adults entering the job force understand interests and abilities to aid in selecting a rewarding and appropriate career path.

Tschopp et al. categorized an individual's career orientation into four subsections: (a) promotion-focused, (b) loyalty-focused, (c) independent, and (d) disengaged.

Workers driven by promotion are career-focused, seek the next advancement, place high importance on job security and work ethics; loyalty-focused employees are less concerned with advancement, are typically happy with the position and plan to remain with the company with the highest priority on job security; independent career oriented employees do not expect or seek support from management, but rather value opportunities for the individual to succeed on their own; and the disengaged oriented employees are independent and focused on personal needs rather than the organization's needs, and value the flexibility to pursue personal goals within, or separate from, the company (Tschopp et al., 2014).

The majority of a person's life and energy is spent around their career, making selection of the appropriate job essential to a person's health and well-being. Accordingly, motivations behind career choice require careful examination to ensure that the decision is based on the correct information. Children typically select their future jobs based on their immediate surroundings and influences (parents, family members, or personal heroes); teenagers typically choose based on status or socially acceptable jobs; young adults mostly focus on the financial benefits associated with each profession. Tomsik (2016) described the motivating factors responsible for career choices: intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic. Intrinsic motivations are based on inner personality structures, making this the more durable and effective motivation, representing the *key to success*. Altruistic motivations refer to the desire to improve the well-being of others: teachers, counselors, and healthcare workers. Altruistic motivations are similar to intrinsic personality attributes as the desire to help others must come from within and soothe the individuals' desires to enter a helping profession. The last motivation is extrinsic, which is defined by higher performance, but short lived, and characterized by a flexible schedule, more income, higher social status, job security, pleasing others, and benefits. In general, immediate gratification is short term because as the job becomes intrinsic, needs of the individual are unmet, leading to job dissatisfaction and eventual burnout.

Career orientation reflects age and society specific normative perceptions and expectations (Arnold & Clark, 2016). Considering Erikson's stages of development, people in their middle to later career development experience a shift in motives and expectations, meaning that organizations must take into account age and expectations based on the individual's life experience. In older age, employees expect their career trajectory to level off, and risk and movement is no longer a priority (Arnold & Clark, 2016). As employees age, they typically become more satisfied with their work and status and focus more on family and retirement planning. Career orientation has been well documented and researched and while importance of this theory is not in question, at this time, Millennial motivations are not in question and therefore are not relevant to my study of acquisition and retention.

**Human Capital Development.** Human capital refers to the skills and knowledge possessed by an individual or group cultivated or stimulated by an organization to further employee growth and development by maximizing knowledge and talents, which translates to productivity for the organization (Teodoro & Switzer, 2016). Since 2005, organizations have shifted thoughts to the importance of investments in human capital, indicating the quality of an organization's human capital increases the relationship between strategy and firm performance (Barbuto Jr. & Gottfredson, 2016). Human capital is the nation and company's most important and valuable asset in sustaining competitiveness, in the changing economy, to maintain optimal organizational performance (Chen at al., 2016). On average, more than $140 billion is invested annually on employee learning and development in the U.S. to improve job performance and satisfaction, leading to retention and loyalty (Thompson, 2016).

Teodoro and Switzer explained highly educated labor pools typically lead to higher levels of production due to the ability for educated workers to develop new ideas, especially in technically complex industries, as compared to less educated workers. Human capital development referred to the company's willingness to encourage, educate, and build upon employees' creativity and knowledge (Andre da Rocha Garcia et al., 2016). Notable, is the actual job and related tasks associated with the job, in relation to the employees' happiness and length of employment. Stouten and Grobler described the dimensions of tasks and their complexity to explain how employees, as human nature, require daily challenges and variety to reduce burnout at a job. The authors further discussed the tasks and specifically ten complexity dimensions as size, variety, redundancy, ambiguity, variability, inaccuracy, novelty, incongruence, connectivity, and temporal demand (2017). Employees require some task complexities in their work to be content, consequently determining turnover or retention.

Human capital development goes a long way in building rapport with the employees which in turn gains firm performance and employee longevity. These concepts are even more important when considering organizational acquisitions and mergers. Chao (2017) discussed organizational learning when referring to the adaptations and reorganization involved with merging companies. By cultivating the ideas from both newly acquired associates and existing ones, companies can maximize capital and performance by merging both ideas to create new and improved operational guidelines and procedures as well as organizational and employee values. Considering merging organizations climates, managers must consider the cultural change and possible diversity in the workplace. Cultural diversity requires companies and managers to find way to communicate and accommodate individual and cultural differences effectively and efficiently (Bauman & Shcherbina, 2018). Managing diversity in the workplace is not a new concept, however research or consideration is less prevalent (Chandler, 2015). Chandler summed up the managing of the multigenerational workplace as an art form: Young workers intend to make a quick impact, middle generation needs to align with the company's mission, and older employees reject change and ambivalence.

Maier et al. (2015) explained that understanding employees' values are vital because how an employee values their job impacts their attitudes toward their work environment and explained employee motivations and job satisfaction. One commonality among successful organizations is their enculturation and dedication to the development of human capital; the organizations embrace employees as asset investments when nurtured, produce growth and development opportunities which advance the organizational mission, goals and values, and strategies (Salas & Weaver, 2016).

Retention of quality employees has emerged as the biggest challenge in human capital management (Barbuto Jr. & Gottfredson, 2016). Researchers found a positive correlation between human resource expenses on financial performance even though researchers are unsure of exactly how the payoff occurs (Talan et al., 2017). The most common thought is training enhances employee' knowledge, skills, and abilities, which improves productivity, production quality, and customer satisfaction which in turn, leads to higher sales and company profitability (Talan et al., 2017). Investing time, energy, and money into employees typically stimulates a sense of security and value within the company. When employees feel comfortable and safe enough to share their ideas with a company, confident that their presence is desirable. The emotional reciprocities are vital to the mental health of an employees. The payoff to such support from a company can payout in employee loyalty, work ethic, pride, and performance.

Technologically advanced industries, in particular, human capital determines productivity because technologies are adopted faster and productivity thorough knowledge spillover fosters diffusion of knowledge, leading to a more productive workforce (Teodoro & Switzer, 2016). Teodoro and Switzer explained that organizations with locations near academic facilities experience knowledge spillover and acquisition of highly educated applicants which stimulate human capital in benefit of the organization, compared to lower educated pools of employees. With this geographical factor, some business leaders must examine the location and determine how location promotes or deters human capital growth and stimulation within the company.

The need to shape and expand employee knowledge and performance is not the only motivation for companies who seek to expand and excel. Stakeholder theory is based on the idea that financial gain is not the only motive behind a company's function but also coordinating and executing the needs and interests of the stakeholders (Andre da Rocha Garcia et al., 2016). When employees and other stakeholders share needed changes or express other interests, companies must take every reasonable measure to execute said changes or implement reasonable interests to ensure the happiness of the stakeholders. If an employee feels unheard or under-appreciated, the situation may affect the company negatively. Unhappy and unhealthy employees perform less, care less, and are generally less happy which affects every aspect of the job performance and those surrounding the employee.

Chi et al. (2016) discussed differences in ideas relating to human capital theory as educational achievement being the key form of human capital rather than job mobility theories who determine the career competency and movement capital in relation to changing jobs. The focus on majority of the research provided revolves around benefits for the organization. Other factors important to consider are the benefits to the employees who experience mental stimulation on the job and competence development (Parding & Berg-Jansson, 2018). Social identity is directly tied to the organization of employment as well as the mental health of the employee. Motivated, driven, autonomous employees experience self-esteem boosts when their organization acknowledges them, educates them, and grooms them for advancement within the company which naturally translates into productivity for the organization. The organization’s motivations are clear, but the extensive benefits for the employees tend to gain little attention. Remaining with the company or transitioning into another company, cultivating human capital adds to the employees' value and future success, even if the benefits are applied to the next organization.

A vital factor that is often overlooked is the differences among various employees and their learning styles. Wille and Sajous-Brady (2018) estimated that one in five children in the U.S. have attentions and learning issues, many are not visually noticeable. Wille and Sajous-Brady further explained that 46% of working age people with learning disorders are employed and only 19% of them disclosed the disorders to employers. Attention and learning disorders are life-long conditions and examining how to support these individuals in the workplace as well as educated employers on how to adjust workplace settings to accommodate such individuals is vital to cultivating human capital and retaining loyal workers. Human capital development affects company success and performance, however, there was no significance to my study as HR managers and Millennials are the primary focus of my study.

**Changes in the Workforce.** Changes in the economy and job trends continues as a topic of discussion and criticism. Kessler (2018) discussed the trends of individuals seeking careers shifted to *gigs.* She classified gigs as part time or independent contractor jobs that are typically more flexible, independent, and lucrative. These jobs are often not the only income for individuals, but more supplemental income in addition to full time jobs. Sole workers are classified as poor and are generally less satisfied with their work due to the lack of benefits and security associated with the gig economy.

As the economy shifts, individuals are required to work more than previous generation to support their families. Previous generations typically gained support from the *breadwinner*, usually the father, while the mother stayed home, raised the children and took care of the household. Millennials are realizing the need for two stable incomes rather than one with the need for additional side jobs; gigs became the best solution to supplement income. Uber, Lyft, and Airbnb are quickly becoming profitable and convenient for individuals to earn extra money in their free time. Secret shopping is another flexible, fun, easy way to earn extra money or get reimbursed for eating out or entertainment activities. Kessler (2018) referred to the companies as ATMs in pockets, meaning simply by utilizing the assets both home and vehicle, in spare time, individuals can earn extra money without committing too much time or energy and the ventures requiring no skills.

As the economy changes, so does the need for hiring practices and attitudes towards applicants. According to Chen et al. (2016) demographic changes in the United States expose more women, ethnic minorities, and new immigrants in the workforce. Persons with disabilities, even two decades after passing the Americans with Disabilities Act, remain among the highest unemployment group. Global economic recession and the aging of baby boomers, have created a shortage of skilled workers and rising costs for employers (Araten-Bergman, 2016), resulting in the cultivation of human capital and consideration of applicants not previously acknowledged. Persons with disabilities, minorities, and immigrants are typically thought underqualified, but with the proper training and consideration, these applicants could be more productive and loyal than other applicants.

Considering the unlimited technological information available at the users' fingertips, has created a new concern of privacy in the workplace. Employees in the workplace, especially Millennials, use smartphones and other devices regularly, and the workplace is no different. With the flexibility of technology and social networking comes a greater concern for employers to monitor employees' online activity (Sheth et al., 2016). Sheth et al. explained that employees are more likely to expect to use their own devices in the workplace due to their perception of increased productivity and flexibility. Jayadeva (2018) explained that with this productivity and flexibility, Millennials tend to be available to work 24 hours a day and generally take work home to work in the evenings and weekends. These blurred boundaries with personal devices in the workplace cause confusion about liability, information sharing, and privacy expectations. Changes in the workforce are becoming highly researched topics as well as the focus on Millennials, the growing workplace population.

**Millennials in the workplace.** Fry (2018) researched the statistics of Millennials in the labor force, and discovered, as of 2017, 56 million Millennials entered the workforce or were looking for work, making them the most recent and largest generation flooding the workforce. By 2025, Millennials are thought to make up 75% of the workforce (Culiberg & Mihelic, 2016). Employers need to prepare for the upcoming shifts and changes of the organization to execute these changes in a manner that minimally disrupts the older generations who may be resistant to change. Millennials are typically classified as educated but possess substandard decision-making and communication skills (Calk & Patrick, 2017). The need for constant feedback and praise, thought to be a result of helicopter parenting in which they require feedback to excel on an individual level, but flourish in team work (Buzza, 2017). Raised in such a supportive and protective environment really harvested the sense of empowerment and entitlement Millennials are typically criticized for (Gong et al., 2018). Anderson et al. (2017) suggested that Millennials hold an unrealistic view of the workforce, expecting immediacy such as good pay, instant responses, and quick promotions; they appreciate and expect accountability but hold a greater sense of entitlement.

Each generation reflects the era in which the individuals were born and raised in, which affects the generational worldview and development; these generational specific differences in attitudes and beliefs creates a generation gap (Calk & Patrick, 2017). McNeill described Millennials as technological with short attention spans, special or entitled, team-oriented with focus on group work, sheltered with dependency on adults, confident (sometimes too confident or unrealistic), tolerant of others and their viewpoints, civic (concerned with societal problems), pressured or overly anxious, over-achieving and perfectionists, and conventional or lacking in creativity (Taylor, Blout, & Bloom, 2017). Millennials grew up in a world with school shootings, terrorist attacks, diversity and economical shifts rather than the wars and financial crises experienced during previous generations (Weber, 2017). The most prominent generational difference, however, is that Millennials were raised with unlimited access to technology, viewed as an integral part of their lives (Calk & Patrick, 2017); the most notable skillset is this interdependency with technology (Baker Rosa & Hastings, 2016). With the aid of technology, Millennials were not forced to develop or maintain face-to-face social skills or understand basic learning tools as they revert to technology as their main source of communicating in a world with unlimited resources via the Internet.

Unlike other generations, Millennials might perform well and remain with the employer, but that alone does not produce job satisfaction, rather a positive work culture is more indicative of job satisfaction and commitment (Stewart et al., 2016). Calk and Patrick (2017) examined how this perceived job satisfaction or lack thereof is the reason Millennials, unlike their previous generations, are more likely to change jobs more frequently and suggest they are more likely motivated by extrinsic rather than intrinsic rewards (Anderson et al., 2017). Buzza (2017) described how Millennials are more interested in job security, satisfaction, and work-life balance, rather than money. Many factors can lead to unhappy employees who search for better opportunities. Money may not be the most important factor, but of employees perceived that they were not receiving sufficient pay for their work, they were likely to reduce their output ultimately leading to turnover (Michael, Prince, & Chacko, 2016). Compensation package, not just salary, largely determines an employees' willingness to stay with an employer. Barbuto Jr. and Gottfredson said that Millennials place less emphasis on company loyalty, they remain ambitious to move up in their careers and to seek better opportunities and compensation elsewhere as compared to other generations. Millennials tend to maintain high expectations, seeking meaning in their work, having life goals more oriented toward becoming rich and famous, appearing to others to be entitled and needy, while they view themselves as inquisitive, socially responsible, and ambitious (2016). According to Ferri-Reed (2015), Millennials are the most entrepreneurial generation in U.S. history which could pose more obstacles in hiring these highly creative and motivated workers who may instead become competition as they pursue their own dreams.

Millennials, more than any other age group, appreciate and accept diversity, especially in the workplace. While typically blamed for conflicts in the workplace, this generation is known for their support of equal rights, same sex marriages, and environmental initiatives and movements (Taylor & Francis, 2018). Shared physical or employment space with multigenerational workers is guaranteed to create conflict, but if workers and employers embrace and build upon these differences, the organization employee relationships will align to create positive productivity. Millennials tend to feel more comfortable with authority figures and value a close line of communication with their superiors, placing value on fewer boundaries and more open and transparent communication (Weber, 2017). The relationship bridges the gap between management and workers which tends to encourage a respectful reciprocity of information. Barbuto Jr. and Gottfredson (2016) explained that Millennials prefer managers who are seen as *friends*, someone who is very supportive, on their side, and has their best interest at heart. Employees who gain a better understanding of upper level intentions and feel included and appreciated in decision making and objectives of the organization, experience greater levels of self-worth and loyalty to the company.

According to Weber (2017), the life-long integration of technology in their personal lives help Millennials apply the same methods to their professional lives, understanding and visualizing possibilities due to their expertise, leading to new and innovated creations. The outcomes of this innovative thought processes and creations point the company in a more competitive direction. Weber said the obsession and attachment to technology contributes to lack in basic literary fundamentals, short attention spans, lack of exercise and sociability, and loyalty or respect to position of authority. Consequently, Millennials are more likely to disregard rules and customs and reject authority, unlike their previous generations. Weber explained how Millennials are not afraid to speak out based on their beliefs or ethical practices. Millennials are more ethically and racially diverse and tolerant but more willing to report unethical practices and wrongdoings. In a world with questionable business practice ethically dilemmas, whistleblowers or authority challengers are needed to stand up against wrongdoings (2017).

Lack of understanding of the new Millennial generation created many negative perceptions and stereotypes. Millennials may have less drive, sometimes referred to as lazy, but reality reveals different motivations than with previous generations (Stewart et al., 2016). Some think Millennials are apathetic, disinterested, tuned out, and entitled ("Bridging the generation gap", 2018). Migliaccio (2018) argued other negative characteristics were whiny, self-absorbed, spoiled, and more self-critical in comparison to other generations. Thompson (2016) described Millennials as multi-taskers and tech-savvy but require unique learning differences that require development; they are desirous of instant gratification and recognition, work-life balance and flexibility, collaboration, and career advancement. The key to bridging the generational gap is a greater understanding of characteristics and motivations of Millennials.

Gewald et al. (2017) showed that Millennials, while thought to be lazy, over-achieve at work and earn less compared to previous generations. Many Millennials are workaholics, mostly due to blurred boundaries between professional and private lives, often taking work home with them. Gewald et al. discussed this concept as IT consumerization, referring to the ongoing process of blending private and business lives by using personal devices to solve or supplement work deficits. Migliaccio (2018) further explained that evidence shows compensation for the same types of jobs, meaning Millennials are clearly experiencing more financial duress than older cohorts, but remain overworked.

Anderson et al. (2017) discussed work centrality becoming less and less important across the three generations, especially in relation to Millennials who value work life balance and meaningful lives outside of work which include leisure activities and vacations. Buzza (2017) identified this concept as working to live rather than living to work, more common of older generations. Calk and Patrick (2017) described Maslow's hierarchy of needs as one of the tools used to examine Millennials' workplace motivations: (a) basic: positive personal benefits including salary, work conditions, and leisure time; (b) safety: personal standards, safe working conditions, insurance and retirement plans; (c) belonging: friendly colleagues, interaction with others, and teamwork; (d) ego-status: recognition and rewards based on performance and opportunities for advancement; and (e) actualization: evolving work in terms of challenges and meaningful work which sparks creativity and leads to personal fulfillment and job satisfaction. Millennials show greater interest in career-related programs and desire career advancement knowledge and learning for fun and enrichment (Thompson, 2016). Buzza (2017) explained how the work-life balance is a primary concern for Millennials in their decision to remain with a company, creating need for organizational policies and programs to reduce family stress and conflicts in balancing career and family. According to Buzza, both family and work can create overwhelming stress on individuals which damage the individuals' mental and physical health, in turn, reporting higher exhaustion and burn out rates. Programs aimed at assisting the employees in this delicate balance paired with job advancement opportunities are important ways to keep employees happy, satisfied, and loyal (2017).

Calk and Patrick (2017) described the need for organizations to take advantage of recruiting and retaining Millennials who possess unique strengths and talents that positively impact organizational performance. Senior management must alter their expectation with respect to the contributions of all employees by linking individual contributions directly to specific organizational objectives and engaging in performance appraisals to stimulate further growth (Stewart et al., 2016). According to Calk and Patrick (2017), Millennials are quickly becoming the largest group in the workplace, employers should consider the lack of long term commitments to their organizations and their fluid understanding of their roles and desires in the work place. They described the need for employers to continually change and adapt to the different and changing work values of a multigenerational workforce in order to recruit, motivate, and retain the largest, most technologically savvy generation changing the needs and effectiveness of organizational policies and procedures.

In reference to Maslow's hierarchy of needs in the workplace, Calk and Patrick (2017) described how organizations should promote a collaborative, team-based environment along with providing challenging and meaningful work instead of predictable salary, insurance, retirement, and other menial benefits, suggesting the need to branch out from one size fits all approach to recruiting and retaining Millennials and other qualified employees. Anderson et al. (2017) suggested that employers should review and adjust their interview protocols to include a more realistic and brutally honest picture of what employment looks like at their organizations, this will help Millennials decide early on if the job is a good fit to avoid wasting time and company resources relating to turnover due to inconsistent organizational and job expectations.

Millennials engage in role innovation according to Gong et al. (2018). The authors stated that an individual's practice of redefining their organizational role to satisfy their personal needs and desires is due to the individualization of Millennials in the workforce, this evolution is naturally occurring, meaning organizations do not require or instruct these individuals to redefine their role, but rather for Millennials who aim to improve the world around them, redefinition naturally occurs. Gong et al. said Millennials expect unlimited information resources, push for speed, multitasking, communication, and are eager to share their experiences and success with their social networks. The need from social acceptance comes from the world Millennials experienced where texting and Facebook are means for interpersonal connections and approval, where children get medals for participation and attendance rather than performance, and limitless information was the platform for endless possibilities. The authors described this time as when entitlement and empowerment begins; the government pushed the importance of higher education, making attending college essentially a right rather than a responsibility, monetary incentives and grants given to homeowners, and government aid was readily available and utilized without hesitation or embarrassment. Understanding the thoughts and experiences of Millennials may help organizations to understand their ambitions for career advancement and role innovations.

According to Gong et al. (2018), career anchors refer to an individuals' understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, competence, value system, and vision of the career in which they desire to obtain. The eight career anchors: autonomy/independence, security/stability, technical-functional competence, general managerial competence, entrepreneurial creativity, service to a cause, challenge, and lifestyle. These factors remain consistent and long term affecting career decisions and increase the need for self-development and desire to take control of one's career path and decisions.

Stewart et al. (2016) explained how each new generation has something to teach older colleagues, suggesting employers who embrace change find opportunities that offer competitive advantages over competition by inspiring employers to reconsider outdated notions about the ways workers demonstrate commitment and reframe concepts of motivation and rewards. Crosley (2018) discussed a new idea, called reverse mentoring, where younger generational employees partnered with appropriate older generational employees to assist and educate one another on fresh ways of thinking to develop hard and soft skills needed in the workplace. This level of mentoring builds tangible, mutual respect, reducing feelings of inferiority, and gaining a new level of corporation and connections in the workplace which encourage a safe and comfortable environment to encourage new ideas and innovations throughout the company (Crosley, 2018). Many older generations are resistant to change but possess wisdom, which creates a perfect platform to trade ideas and knowledge while connecting with coworkers. Previous generations viewed information gathering and research as a solitary task pursued through prints such as phone books, encyclopedia, books found in libraries whereas Millennials recognize and appreciate technological advancements due to the widened expertise available online (Hernandez, Poole Jr., & Grys, 2018).

## Transition

In Section 1, I introduced the critical and foundational components of this study. Specifically, the link between theoretical constructs and real world application was first identified by providing a concise context for the business problem. The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study were then articulated. In this section, I clarified the nature, scope and significance of the study to establish a framework for the literature review, which concludes the section.

In Section 2, I discussed the components of the actual research collected and how the information is recorded. I then discussed the population included in the sample and the ethical issues and implications of the research. I outlined instruments used to collect the data and method to analyze the results. I explained reliability and validity of the study as well as information for further review.

In section 3, I presented the findings of the research and interpretation of the results. I discussed the application to professional practice and social change as well as recommendations for future research.

Section 2: The Project

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that HR managers use to acquire and retain Millennials to maximize organizational performance.  The target population consisted of HR managers in five SMEs in the Midwestern region of the United States who have been successful at acquiring and retaining Millennials. The impact for social change is that hiring Millennials in the Midwestern region area will inherently strengthen the local economy when they invest their time and resources into civic activities that may benefit the local social infrastructure. In turn, strengthened local economy provides more resources and equity in the surrounding areas which stimulates further growth.

## Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher requires great care to mitigate not only ethical violations but also personal bias. A researcher must be cognizant of verbiage used in their questions to avoid leading participants towards the desired answers. Interviewers must be aware of personal bias to take great care in avoiding biases to change the outcome of the study results.  The researcher must take every precaution to avoid imposing personal biases within the context of each phase of the research process.

As in all research, addressing the researcher’s bias is essential.  As the research collection instrument, knowing my own biases and viewpoints was important to be aware of as I conducted these interviews.  I collected information verbatim to avoid rendering my own interpretation of the answers.  As a supporter of small businesses and a future entrepreneur, I am supportive and understanding of the hardship HR managers experience as they maneuver the hiring protocols but I do not actively have any kind of relationship with the specific businesses involved in this study. Also as a father to Millennial children, I have a better understanding of Millennials and their unique outlooks as well as their mannerisms which provided me compassion towards these young adults while others see failures. With my unique relationships with both sides of the research, I aimed to maintain unbiased standpoint and examined the results presented while keeping my personal opinions and feelings at bay. During the interview protocol, I used every effort to separate my biases and focused solely on recording the data accurately. I used reflective listening skills to repeat back to the interviewee to ensure that I understand the message they were trying to convey. I applied member checking to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research data. Interviews began after approval from the Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The purpose of the IRB is to ensure research complies with ethical standards set into motion from the Belmont Report after the incidents involving human research trials of Tuskegee (Garber, 2016). Kowalski et al. (2017) explained the three foundational principles of the Belmont Report as respect-for-persons, beneficence, and justice. Simply stated, the human subject's welfare should be regarded above all else, participants should fully agree and understand the purpose of the study as well as the outcomes, and equal treatment as well as minimizing risk to all participants.

For this study, I interviewed, using an interview protocol (see Appendix A), five HR managers of SMEs in the Midwestern Region of the United States. Yin (2017) explained that the interview is an important method of data collection during a qualitative multiple case study. Hoover et al. (2018) discussed the skills of a qualitative interviewer to include: (a) procedural: practical issues to include scheduling and recording; (b) interpersonal: skills revolving around human to human contact and connection, also referred to as rapport; (c) reflexive: referred to the interviewer's reflection on all aspects of the research, especially the interview process. In this study, my conduct was appropriate to prioritize the validity and credibility of the interview process and the conclusions and implications of the study based on analysis of the data collected.

## Participants

Participants included five HR managers of small and medium business enterprises located in the Midwestern Region of the United States. The criteria for inclusion in the doctoral study was (a) human resource management experience of 5 years or more, (b) must manage a business that has been successful for at least 5 years, and (c) must be currently employed at a facility with one hundred employees or less. These scheduled interviews took place face-to-face and last approximately one hour per interviewee. With a list of seven questions, each manager answered the same questions and I recorded their answers verbatim. Member checking is a process of ensuring the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of the interview data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). To member check, I reviewed the answers with each participant as recorded, to ensure the interviewee's meaning was recorded properly, as well as giving them an opportunity to add any information they may have left out the first time. Every appropriate measure and effort to maintain confidentiality was executed and reading and/or difficulty levels corresponded with the expected requisite levels of knowledge and experience of those interviewed.

## Research Method and Design

During the course of an investigation, researchers must select which type of research method and design which best suits the business problem.  To adequately address the objectives of the study, the researcher intends to conduct thorough interviews, the primary purpose of which was to identify the optimal approach based on the nature of the study and the study objectives. The development of data for this case study research intends to use comprehensive qualitative responses to open-ended survey questions. A systematically implemented process was used to identify the objective, synthesize the data, and articulate the findings (Williams, 2011).

### Research Method

Among the various approaches to academic research, the most common methods include a quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method (Williams, 2011). The research method is the method researcher’s use to obtain knowledge about their research interests (Gill, 2014). I determined that qualitative research was the most appropriate methodology for this study because of the explorative nature of the research question (Yin, 2017), and because qualitative research takes place in the natural world, focuses on the context, and is mostly interpretive (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The quantitative researcher uses numerical evidence to explain relationships and differences among variables and does not take into consideration the context (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014). An examination of the relationship or differences between variables was not needed for this study because of the explorative nature of the research. The mixed method is a research method that involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting both qualitative and quantitative data in the same study (Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2016). Thus, neither the quantitative or mixed method would have been appropriate for this study. Therefore, I employed the qualitative method.

Each research method has its advantages depending on the scope of the research to be conducted. In this study, qualitative research methods are appropriate to examine the best hiring practices to acquire and retain Millennials. The aim of this study was to evaluate how managers in the private sector can employ strategies to hire suitable employees, based on their first-hand experiences and personal perspectives. Saxena (2017) explained how exploratory research asking the *why* and *how* questions suggest the suitability of qualitative research methods. Accordingly, the focus of the research explored the experiences and attitudes of managers to find suitable employees. Qualitative analysis was best suited for finding solutions to the problems with hiring protocols of small businesses.

**Research Design**

Four of the most frequent qualitative designs are narrative, ethnography, phenomenology, and case study (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Narrative researchers explore the influence of life events and experiences as a possible explanation of business behaviors and decisions (Germeten, 2013). Hiring and retaining Millennials is a relatively new experience for business owners who may equip themselves with long-term strategies that apply to older cohorts, but may not apply to Millennials, and therefore, the narrative approach of exploring historical personal events to explain behavior, was not appropriate for this study. Ethnographers focus on studying the cultural behavior of groups (Cayla & Arnould, 2013). This design was perhaps suitable for exploring populations with unique values and behaviors. In this study, Millennials are a unique age cohort, but because of the integration in the workplace with other cohorts, I encountered difficulties isolating aspects of this population to gain a true indication of the influence that being a Millennial holds in any workplace. Further, some Millennial behaviors may closely reflect behaviors observed in other cohorts; therefore, I deemed the ethnography as not the best design for the doctoral study. Given that studying the cultural behavior of groups was not my intention, the ethnographic approach was not appropriate for this study. The phenomenological design is an approach researchers use to explore lived experiences of a common phenomenon (Berglund, 2015). A phenomenological researcher assumes that participants have vast experience with the population and can draw on those experiences alone to explain the phenomenon. In the doctoral study, business owners may not have an abundance of experience working primarily with Millennials, but may have perceptions that help guide decision making, that leads to successful recruiting and retention of Millennials. The phenomenological approach limits the data collection process to only lived experiences and as I seek responses extending beyond only lived experiences, the phenomenological approach was inappropriate for the doctoral study.

A qualitative case study was the most appropriate design for the doctoral study because the purpose of the study was to identify and explore strategies business leaders use to recruit and retain Millennials to improve business performance. A case study is an empirical research approach in which researchers apply a variety of data collection techniques to explore a particular phenomenon (Leppaaho, Plakoyiannaki, & Dimitratos, 2015). A case study researcher uses interviews as a primary technique to collect data, and triangulates the research by incorporating available documentation gathered from the host agency or participant, along with physical artifacts such as company websites, signage, or brochures available on site. In summary, a qualitative case study was appropriate for the purpose of the doctoral study.

## Population and Sampling

The population of a research study refers to those certain individuals who encompass the study group. The specific population used in this study includes hiring managers in small and medium businesses. Managerial level employees qualified under the requisite criteria guidelines for the current study as appropriate participants given their first-hand knowledge of the underlying work environment.

A qualitative methodology assisted in gaining a more robust recognition of the attitudes and experiences of the perceptions of the selected participants (Wideman et al., 2016). This representative and purposive sampling methodology comprised the selection of a representative subset of managerial workers in the private sector. The purposive sampling technique was beneficial from the unique and distinct knowledge and perspectives of the participants (based on my pre-defined criteria: comprised of at least five individuals who exhibit personal and first-hand knowledge of the internal infrastructure as well as the policies and procedures associated with such an environment

(Kamalludeen, Hassan, & Nasaruddi, 2017). Snowball sampling is an approach for locating and recruiting participants in the event that a researchers attempt to recruit participants provides no volunteers. Snowball sampling involves consulting previous interviewees who may know of individuals meeting the criteria and who may be appropriate to interview (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I applied snowball sampling to recruit participants as needed.

## Ethical Research

According to Fontana and Frey (1994), the overriding impetus of ethical considerations within the context of a scholarly academic study when interviewing people is to ensure great care is taken to avoid harm to the interviewees. Fundamental ethical considerations include such matters as seeking and obtaining proper informed consent, ensuring the privacy of all survey participants, and preventing or mitigating the potential for any harm. Nothing in the realm of deceit, trickery or lack of full and fair disclosure is useful within the context of any data collection techniques. Accordingly, all subject participants were acutely aware of how and why any and all information was collected, utilized, and disseminated (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

Since the 1972 Tuskegee Syphilis Study, the federal government was forced to take a closer look at clinical trials involving the study of humans, creating the Belmont Report (Adashi et al., 2018).  The Belmont Report outlines what researchers could and could not do in reference to their research on human participants.  The researcher no longer possessed the power to decide if their experiment was *safe* for their human participants, but now had a clear understanding to how to conduct research (Adashi et al., 2018). More specifically, the Belmont Report dictated that physicians must put their patient above all else; meaning the patient's health and effective clinical care prioritized above any potential research gains (Kowalski et al., 2017). Graber (2016) further explained that internal review boards were established as a system to oversee and approve research on human participants and to ensure the safety of these participants was the highest priority.

Prior to conducting this study, I gained IRB approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB No. 06-10-19-0285824), and I adhered to all IRB policies and procedures to ensure the integrity of this study, including but not limited to briefing all participants as to the voluntary nature of the study, the informed consent process (briefing each participant to ensure each participant provided written consent that clarified, among other things, that they understand fully their respective roles within the context of the study), the ability of the participants to withdraw from study, and confirming that none of the participants received any related incentives to participate in the study. Accordingly, all participants had full disclosure and clarification of the (scope of the) study and their participation therein before they sign the requisite consent forms (*see* Appendix B). Further, I instructed each participant as to their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative repercussions.

## Data Collection Instruments

A data collection instrument refers to the tool or method used to gather information in a research study. In this qualitative research study, I am the instrument collecting the information in conjunction with a structured interview protocol using a survey questionnaire. Qualitative research is used when the intent is exploratory and the purpose is to understand conversations and narratives as well as examining the qualities within the human experiences (Saxena, 2017). Researchers also explore realities people construct to make sense of their own events and experiences throughout their lives, influenced by social, cultural, historical, and individual contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). An interview process is used to gather these experiences and perceptions to measure these ideas against others. In this type of research, the skills of the interviewer are influential in the data collection process. Studies based on the counseling setting, focus on utilization of reflective listening to facilitate the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, which helps the interviewee feel comfortable and remain honest (Taylor et al., 2017). Reflective listening refers to the ability of the interviewer to accurately repeat back the understanding of the participant's words to ensure the correct meaning was relayed to the interviewer. Taylor et al. further discussed empathy and unconditional positive regard are needed for the individuals to feel comfortable telling their stories when they feel the interviewer understands their story and remains non-judgmental. Various instruments ensure the reliability and validity of the study. The instruments include the use of an interview protocol and member checking. An interview protocol is a step by step approach identifying all tasks involved in collecting data, to ensure consistency and reliability in the data collection process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Member checking, an approach in data analysis, involves conducting a follow up interview with each participant to establish the accuracy and reliability of the data collected. Participants review their contribution and make changes or confirm the information is accurate, before transcribing the data for thorough analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

## Data Collection Technique

I directly contacted a five organizations, asked to speak to HR managers, and introduced myself and my study. I requested their participation in an interview for the doctoral study. I explained the intent to interview participants who met specific criteria which included (a) human resource management experience of 5 years or more, (b) must manage a business that has been successful for at least 5 years, and (c) must be currently employed at a facility with one hundred employees or less. For participants who met the necessary criteria, I sent out an email invitation to participate in the study and a consent form to electronically sign and return.

The interview protocol detailed the steps that I took during the interview process (Appendix A). The interview protocol helps to ensure the interviews are consistent with all participants which reduces potential biases, and increases the reliability and validity of the doctoral study. Each semistructured interview, using an open-ended interview technique, took approximately one hour, in a location selected by the participant. With a list of 7 questions, each HR manager answered the same questions and I recorded their answers verbatim to enhance reliability and validity. At the end of each interview, I reviewed the answers as recorded, to ensure the interviewee's meaning was recorded properly, as well as giving them an opportunity to add or change any information they may have left out. During the initial interview, I asked participants for any related documentation that may enlighten me to additional workplace processes related to the business problem.

Following each interview, I member checked. Specifically, I arranged a second interview to review responses from the first interview and ensure I interpreted the data effectively. This type of interview was a semistructured interview. Semistructured interviews contain a set of questions with minimal variation and room for expanding or re-routing the interview (Hoover et al., 2018).

In the data collection and analysis processes, I applied triangulation to improve the reliability and validity of the research. Methodological triangulation techniques included conducting face-to-face interviews, reviewing available documentation, and exploring physical artifacts (Marshall & Rossman, 2017). To apply methodological triangulation, I conducted semistructured interviews with participants, I asked participants for any related documentation that may help in understanding the business problem. I then explored the materials available at the organization to augment the research process. The materials or physical artifacts included company websites, memos, bulletins, signage, communication logs, and performance statistics in relation to profits and losses. Of the four forms of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and methodological triangulation, methodological triangulation was appropriate for this study, utilizing different data sources, face-to-face interview and interpreted observational data (Mayar, 2015).

## Data Organization Technique

For purposes of demographic accuracy and confidentiality, I assigned each contact with a pseudonym (P1, P2). Data gathered through the interview, as well as electronic copies, are stored securely in a locked file cabinet. In accordance with Walden University's requirements, all data procured, both electronic and hard copies will remain locked in a file cabinet, located in my personal storage facility. At the end of the required 5 years, I will destroy all related data.

## Data Analysis

Analysis begins with the collection of data. The uniqueness of qualitative data analysis involves the continuous shifts between data collection and analysis, often termed comparative analysis (Mayer, 2015). Methodological triangulation utilizes a combined analysis of (a) what is observed in the face-to-face interview; (b) words spoken, recorded, and member checked; (c) public document or physical artifact reviews; and (d) the data created from the interviews (Yin, 2017). Methodological triangulation was appropriate for this study because the researcher integrates multiple methods of collecting data to form a comprehensive analysis (Drouin et al., 2015). Following the initial interviews, I contacted each participant and conduct a second interview to member check the participant contributions to ensure accuracy and probe for further explanations or understanding. Member checking is a strategy to reinforce the reliability of a study by ensuring interview data is accurate before analyzing the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Each participant provided corrections as needed; then, once I verified the collected data was accurate, I transcribed the interview materials. Data collection involves a process called data reduction, in which the main objective is to reduce data without losing valuable information or changing the context. Coding and clustering are primary techniques of reducing the data to capture meaningful elements within the context of the information. Editing and summarizing the codes and clusters are typical approaches of data reduction which occur during analysis. Once I collect and reduce the data, then I displayed and organize the data using comparable charts, graphs, or diagrams. I used Microsoft Word® and NVivo® software to create tables and graphs to display the data. Once displayed, I interpreted the data and reviewed for patterns that addressed the initial proposition. Qualitative research is based upon trends or patterns in verbiage and concepts. Yazan (2015) stated that any conclusion requires verification to ensure positive reliability and validity. I reviewed the data repeatedly to ensure I did not overlook important details, as well as to ensure I recorded all the data and appropriate conclusions accurately.

## Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are vital to research studies. These two measurements reiterate the importance of the study and the research findings, or completely negate the study due to lack of one or both levels of measurement. Reliability comes in three forms: interrater, test–retest, and internal consistency; Validity also comes in three forms: convergent, discriminant, and criterion-related (Carcone, 2015). Below, I explored the reliability and validity most relevant to my study.

## Reliability

In a qualitative case study, reliability rests in the ability to replicate a study and gain consistent results (Leung, 2015). I achieved reliability by asking appropriate, targeted questions and correctly documenting evidence. I also developed and used an interview protocol to ensure all procedures are consistent from one participant to the next. An interview protocol is a step by step guide to ensure each participant is treated in the same manner from introducing the study, to concluding the interview process and member checking (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). El Hussein, Jakubec, and Osuji (2015) indicated that rigorous qualitative inquiry requires a genuine representation of the data collected and the application of triangulation. Triangulation is the integration of multiple sources of data culminating in broadened perspective of a phenomenon derived from targeted and verifiable sources (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). To triangulate the doctoral study, I incorporated interview data, documentation, and physical artifacts to ensure data evolves from multiple viewpoints and interpretations. Member checking ensure the accuracy of interview data and enhances the dependability of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

## Validity

Using an appropriate method and design to conduct research, followed by appropriate data analysis, enhances the validity of qualitative research (Leung, 2015). Marshall and Rossman (2016) argued that methodological triangulation of the data using multiple sources, including member checking, also strengthens the validity of research.

Trustworthiness occurs when others have confidence in the data presented (El Hussein et al., 2015). Carter et al. (2014) explained that to validate findings, both triangulation and member checking add trustworthiness to research. Verifying the interview data and findings with participants and re-interpreting summaries and gaining feedback on methods and outcomes adds credibility and validity to the study (Andraski, Chandler, Powell, & Wakefield, 2014). I applied both triangulation, member checking, and gaining feedback to enhance the validity of the doctoral study. Trustworthiness culminates from the transferability, confirmability, and credibility of the findings of the study (El Hussein et al., 2015). Transferability occurs as others interpret the findings from my doctoral study, and apply the findings to other locations or businesses. To achieve transferability, I ensured all data was detailed, accurate, and easily transit able.

Confirmability occurs when others can easily understand research findings (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). To understand research findings, developing an audit trail creates a pathway of steps to commence and complete the research process. The NVivo® data analysis software serves as part of an audit trail to prevent bias and enhance credibility (Houghton et al., 2013).

Data saturation is the point in the interview process when the addition of new data adds no new information, and at that point, the interviews stop (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation is a technique to reduce bias by accumulating data naturally and completely without embellishing or concluding interviews prematurely. I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to reduce bias in the data collection process, data saturation to include as much information as possible without interrupting the interview process, member checking to enhance the accuracy of data, and NVivo® software to appropriately analyze the data, to ensure a true account of participant views. The techniques described above, affirmed finding confirmability, credibility, and transferability.

## Transition and Summary

In section 2, I outlined the components of the research collected and how the information was recorded and stored. The population included in the sample and the ethical issues and implications of the research were discussed. Data collection instruments and methods to analyze the results were discussed. Reliability and validity of the study were explained as well as information for further review.

In section 3, I presented the findings from the research conducted and interpretation of all the data and results. The importance of the data collection was discussed as well as application to professional practice and social change. Recommendations for future research was outlined.

# Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

## Introduction

HR managers from SMEs in Midwestern region who have been successful at acquiring and retaining Millennials were interviewed to identify strategies for hiring and retaining Millennials. The goal of this study was to explore HR hiring practices to improve organizational performance and sustainability. Examining the interview data, company websites, company documents, and the literature review available on hiring strategies and organizational performance revealed three key themes. The resultant themes were (a) competitive benefits and pay, (b) recognizing motivations of Millennials and responding to job satisfaction concerns, and (c) open lines of communication.

Weber's (1922) research focused on hiring the right people to maximize organizational performance. Weber's research provided the groundwork used in this study. The emphasis of the current study was on Millennials and the unique skillset and knowledge they provide to enhance organizational performance. The literature review outlined specifically the importance and strengths of Millennial employees as well as the challenges associated with this generation. Competitive benefits and pay seem to be the struggle for most businesses, as confirmed by the participants. The open lines of communication are vital to any relationship, but specifically when employees feel valued and heard, they are happier and more likely to remain with the employer.

**Presentation of the Findings**

In this qualitative multiple case study, I explored strategies that HR managers use to acquire and retain Millennials to maximize organizational performance. The research participants' responses were relatively consistent across all questions in this study. The consistent responses, conceptual framework, literature review findings, and triangulation highlighted themes during data analysis. In review of the responses, member checking, methodological triangulation, and review of physical artifacts, several common themes emerged.

Listed below, in Table 2, is a summary of response themes by each question and the number of participants who supported those themes. Uncommon responses, only mentioned by one participant per question, should be considered for future research as there is not enough information to form any conclusions or opinions on the subject. Lastly, the table compares the study findings to the previous research discussed in the literature review from section 1. Majority of the research findings supported, or complemented, the literature review discussion.

Table 2. *Comparative Summary by Question*

| Question Number | Common responses from participants | Number of participants who responded with common response | Uncommon responses to consider for future research | Findings Vs. Lit Review |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Websites/online company image | 2 | College Fairs | Complementary |
| 2 | Benefits and pay | 4 | Communication | Complementary |
| 3 | Competition | 5 | Education vs experience | Complementary |
| 4 | Keep Millennials happy/satisfy needs | 4 | Competition | Complementary |
| 5 | Employment history | 5 | Education vs Experience | Not complementary |
| 6 | Looking for suggestions | 5 | None | No information |
| 7 | Unique qualities & difficult adjusting | 4 | Communication | Complementary |

To examine the responses outside of the confines of each question, I then expanded my analysis, to themes and the recurrence of which they were mentioned throughout the entire data collection process. I categorized the common responses using NVivo© analysis software which calculated the total number of responses and the percentage of times each theme was discussed.  I used Microsoft word © to input the responses and corresponding percentages to form the pie graph which helped to visualize how common each theme occurred.  I found that the resultant themes were (a) competitive benefits and pay, (b) recognizing motivations of Millennials and responding to job satisfaction concerns, and (c) open lines of communication.

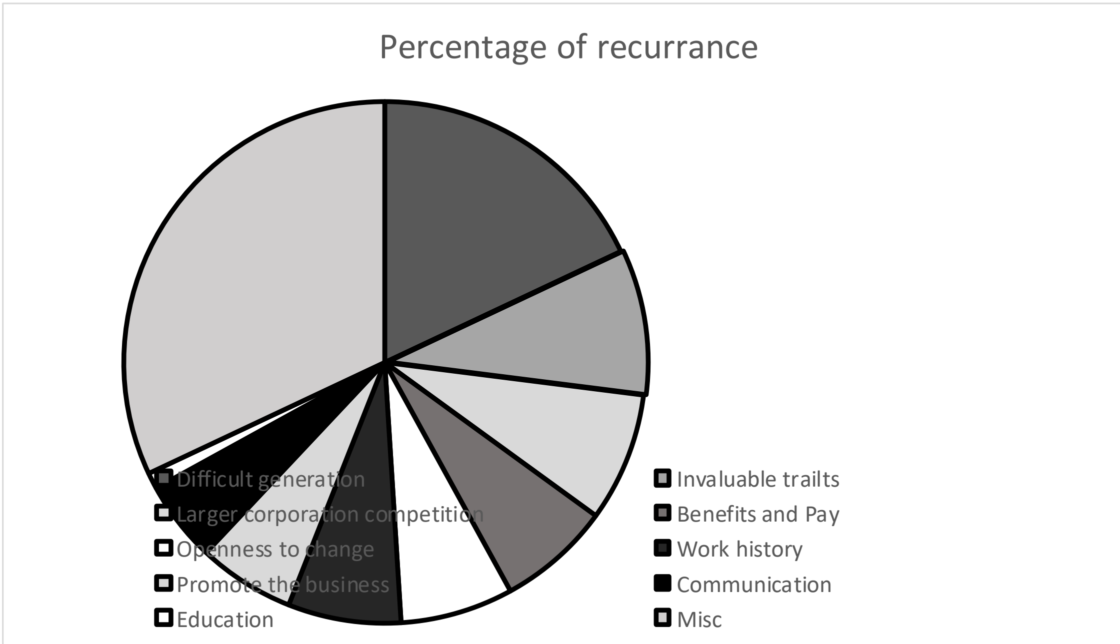


*Figure 1.* Overall Common Responses

**Theme 1: Competitive Benefits and Pay**

One factor of relevance to job and career path is salary and benefits. All of participants, 5/5 (100%), acknowledged that this is not specific to Millennials, but rather most employees, regardless of generation. Individual circumstances and lifestyle choice dictate the level of importance of each, but both remain highly influential in an employee's decision to take a job and remain with the company based on the amount of compensation. Triangulation included review of employee compensation packages, the employee handbooks, and healthcare options manual which provided insight on the current degree of employer understanding of employee needs. The healthcare compensation packages contained 2-3 levels of coverage. These levels contained varying deductibles, eligible dependent coverage, employee out of pocket monthly cost, health incentive programs to reduce employee responsibility, and coverage percentages. Offering employees health care options gave employees greater control over choosing a package that fits their personal and family needs. P5 explained that

> I offer different employment packages. This enables the employee to have some control over the variables that are most important to them. For instance, higher pay and less benefits, or a lower wage with a better benefits package. We also offer a few healthcare options to help entice Millennials and give them greater control based on individual needs.

P2 said

> we strive to offer comparable wages to other IT companies, and offer a fair amount of paid leave and a variety of health benefits based on their individual

> needs. Giving them options really seems to make them happy….. The competition is fierce and as a small business it's always harder to compete with larger corporations who have the capital and manpower to offer higher wages and top level group benefits.

Based on the interview responses, employers were knowledge, and understanding of competitive benefits. Salaried and hourly positions remained specific to the level of skill required for the position largely based on experience and education and negotiated at the time of hire. The HR managers explained that the more education and experience an applicant possessed, the higher the pay they would be willing to offer. Each company offered benefits to employees who were employed for over a year. This competitive platform paired with the understanding of employees' wants and needs, is aimed to attract and retain Millennials and other qualified applicants.

Weber (1922) founded his theory of organizational performance on evidence that the selection of many, if not most, employees results from factors other than inherent qualifications for the job. Researchers argued that organizational leaders who recruit and properly invest resources and train these employees excel in their fields, while organizational leaders who merely focus on resources struggle to remain competitive (Covella et al., 2017). Michael et al. (2016) have shown that money may not be the most important factor for Millennials, but if employees perceived that they were not receiving sufficient pay for their work, they were likely to reduce their output, ultimately leading to turnover. Sarkar (2018) explained that the employees' perception of fairness directly affected the employees' behaviors and attitudes towards the organization, determining their job satisfaction.  The compensation package, not just salary, largely determines an employees' willingness to stay with an employer (Michael et al., 2016).  Barbuto Jr. and Gottfredson said that Millennials place less emphasis on company loyalty, they remain ambitious to move up in their careers and to seek better opportunities and compensation elsewhere as compared to other generations.  Millennials tend to maintain high expectations, seeking meaning in their work, having life goals more oriented toward becoming rich and famous, appearing to other to be entitled and needy, while they view themselves as inquisitive, socially responsible, and ambitious (2016).  Study participants indicated unanimously that in their hiring experience, potential employees' first question was inquiring about company offered benefits and pay.  P3 stated that

> competing with larger companies is hard. They have the abilities to offer great health benefits and a low price and it's not as expensive as the policies we are able to provide. That seems to be the first question Millennials ask, *what kind of health benefits are available?*

These managers recognized the importance of offering competitive wages and benefit packages to attract qualified applicants, particularly Millennials, and remaining competitive.  P1 stated that the hardest part in attracting and retaining Millennials is "remaining competitive with benefits and salary in order to attract them".  P4 stated that "we offer competitive benefits and pay, but the larger companies have more resources and therefore can offer better benefits."

**Theme 2: Recognizing Motivations and Responding to Job Satisfaction Concerns**

Millennials' impact on organizational performance was the focus of this study. Results of this study produced a unanimous, 5/5 (100%), response recognizing the unique attributes Millennials possess. Millennials, while difficult to work with, possess so many unique qualities, acquiring and retaining them for employment may greatly improve organizational performance. Millennials are familiar and dependent on technology, they tend to be highly educated, and innovative in their thoughts and problem solving abilities. They are not afraid to try new things and are open to change, as opposed to their counterparts. Participants acknowledge Millennials require a delicate balance of autonomy and communication to produce creative ideas and promote efficient work production. P4 stated,

> Proper care and communication goes in to overseeing Millennials. They are so eager to provide ideas and improve the company. They need to feel helpful and valued. They also require a great deal of freedom to work as they see fit. It's a careful balance as this is work and there is still a job to be done.

P2 said "I strive to stack my team with as many Millennials as I can. In the IT world, computer skills and confidence are required and that's the biggest strength these candidates possess."

Understanding these strengths and challenges are vital to comprehend the motivations and needs of Millennials. While there may be plenty of reasons why this generation is difficult to associate with, the positive attributes make acquiring and retaining them necessary for organizational success.

Participants recognize how valuable Millennials are to company performance and recognize the need to attract and retain Millennials for their SMEs.

P5 explained that “Millennials are amazing. For the most part they are so smart and educated, and bring fresh ideas and perspectives to the table which helps the company grow with the technology and economy.”

Considering Millennials’ familiarity and dependence on technology, Millennials are more likely to inspect a company’s website before they consider applying for a job. An adequate company website at the very least will contain vital information about a company, services offered, contact information, and company location(s). This information will help the potential applicant or customer learn about the company, who they employ, what they stand for, and company values which all factor into the company image. Catano and Hines (2016) explained how the corporate image is initially what attracts applicants to the company which is vital to the success of the company and the ability to attract high quality applicants as well as retain employees. I reviewed the participants’ websites for content and visual attractiveness.

Weber’s (1922) theory of organizational performance focused on hiring practices and motivations for companies to succeed. Building upon these ideas, the participants’ responses indicated that Millennials are considered a unique cohort in that they are particularly versed in modern technology and understand the importance of using technology to enhance employee skills and generally make technology invaluable in their personal and professional lives. According to Weber (2017), the life-long integration of technology in their personal lives helps Millennials apply the same methods to their professional lives, understanding and visualizing possibilities due to their expertise, leading to new and innovated creations. The outcomes of this innovative thought processes and creations point the company in a more competitive direction. Consequently, Millennials are more likely to disregard rules and customs and reject authority, unlike their previous generations (Weber, 2017).

The participants in this study acknowledge the uniqueness and strengths of Millennials as well as particular weaknesses and challenges associated with interacting and managing such a complex group of workers. P3 said,

> Millennials can be the best or worst thing that can happen to a company, depending on the current population. Millennials provide such a unique outlook and are creative in their thinking. They tend to provide new ideas on way to improve businesses. However, too much change in the workplace can upset the older employees and disrupt the peace and create hostility.

P1 emphasized the biggest challenge is

> Keeping them (Millennials) happy. Millennials seem to want more and it's hard to keep up with their needs….. Millennials are completely unique in their skillset, mindset, and values. It has been an adjustment for everyone, especially for the veteran employees as I've noticed they are not as open to the new ideas and skillsets the Millennials bring to the business.

P4 explained that

> Millennials seem to be looking for the next thing. They expect growth in their job position and duties and also their pay and benefits. Sometimes their expectations don't seem to be realistic and that becomes a challenge to keep them…..

> Millennials tend to look us up before considering applying and so we need to maintain attractive web presence in order to attract them….Proper care and communication goes in to overseeing Millennials. They are so eager to provide ideas and improve the company. They need to feel helpful and valued. They also require a great deal of freedom to work as they see fit. It's a careful balance as this is work and there is still a job to be done.

According to Ferri-Reed (2015), Millennials are the most entrepreneurial generation in U.S. history; this trend could pose more obstacles in hiring these highly creative and motivated workers who may instead become competition as they pursue their own dreams. Employers recognize the need to acquire Millennials, but also realize their attitudes and motivations make retaining Millennials an ongoing challenge.

**Theme 3: Open Lines of Communication**

Participants in this study recognized how communication was not specific or limited to Millennials, but rather impacts all employees. Of the participants, 3/5 (60%) agreed with research that Millennials, more than other generations of workers, desired and valued an open line of communication with their superiors. P2 explained

> I've learned how important it is to listen to your team. It's not specific to Millennials, but all employees need to feel heard and as their superior, it's my job to make time for them and hear their thoughts, suggestions, and concerns.

To examine workplace communication and open forums to exchange ideas, workplace breakrooms were examined. The managers who understood the value of inter-office communication had communication bulletin boards and contact phone numbers posted in the breakrooms for employee resources and assistance. Company websites were also examined for employee resources and suggestion forums. The websites for the study participants did not display consistent focuses on any given content or focus. Some of the websites contained minimal information leaving me unsure of what the company was about or services they provided, which forced me to consider submitting the *contact me* form from the website. One of the websites was so elaborate, I had no doubt on what services they offered and pricing on each service. With no questions or uncertainties, I felt confident and comfortable with a company who was so open and fourth coming with company specific information, services, and pricing. Lack of information and research on website importance and content remain a topic that could use further research and exploration to gain an understanding of its role and impact for employees and consumers.

Talan et al. (2017) stated that investing time, energy, and money into employees typically stimulates a sense of security and value within the company. P4 explained that

> Proper care and communication goes in to overseeing Millennials. They are so eager to provide ideas and improve the company. They need to feel helpful and valued. They also require a great deal of freedom to work as they see fit. It's a careful balance as this is work and there is still a job to be done.

When employees feel comfortable and safe enough to share their ideas with a company, they gain confidence in themselves and feel valued. Barbuto Jr. and Gottfredson (2016) said the emotional reciprocities are vital to the mental health of an employees; Millennials, in particular, tend to be more innovative and open to new ideas and change. With these innovative ideas, they require empathetic management and a comfortable environment to exchange ideas and feel valued and heard (Barbuto Jr. & Gottfredson, 2016). Millennials, more than any other age group, appreciate and accept diversity, especially in the workplace. While typically blamed for conflicts in the workplace, this generation is known for their support of equal rights, same sex marriages, and environmental initiatives and movements (Taylor & Francis, 2018).

Weber (2017) stated that Millennials are more accepting and tolerant of diversity but more willing to report unethical practices and wrongdoings. In a world with questionable business practices and ethical dilemmas, whistleblowers or authority challengers are needed to stand up against wrongdoings. Millennials are educated and can provide new insights and a fresh perspective that can improve organizational performance. Millennials are more likely to share these insights with a manager who engages in active listening, who is less of a superior and more of an equal. When the individual feels heard, and their ideas are implemented, they engage in a more active, productive role within the company, feel a sense of pride in their work, and a sense of accomplishment that Millennials require to feel fulfilled (Weber, 2017). P3 stated "I promote an open line of communication so that if they are unhappy in their position, we can work together to explore other positions in the company to transition them to."

## Applications to Professional Practice

Historically, business managers focused on the bottom line to judge the success of a company. In the study, participant responses redirect thinking towards employees rather than simply profits. The results of this study may be of value to organizations in both the private and public sectors. Specifically, focusing on the unique qualifications and knowledge Millennials are equipped with makes them assets to SMEs and extensive measures should be taken to acquire and retain this unique cohort. As discussed in the literature review and supported by the doctoral study results, competitive pay and benefits remains the top concern for applicants and SMEs must remain competitive to acquire and retain these qualified Millennial applicants. A higher retention rate helps business managers avoid costly expenses of recruiting and training new hires, which could in turn, help the company save money or reinvest in employee improvement measures and training (Bibi, Ahmad, & Majid, 2018). The doctoral study may enhance overall corporate performance by increasing efficiencies, saving time and money, and reducing turnover.

The literature review helped confirm the results of this study regarding hiring practices, organizational performance, and Millennials in the workplace. The added professional application relates Millennials to organizational performance and focused on how hiring practices in businesses acquire and retain this group of educated professionals. Discussed by participants in the study, Millennials more than any other group require open lines of communication with management. Millennials tend to be innovative and eager to share their new ideas but need to feel heard and valued. These findings need further exploration to determine their significance to businesses and hiring practices of Millennials. The findings of this study support the prospect that Millennials are vital to SME success and employers are aware of the importance and struggles related to acquiring and retaining this group of professionals.

## Implications for Social Change

According to Buzza (2017), Millennials place a higher value on balancing work life with personal life compared to previous generations in the workplace. With Millennials as one of the largest generational groups in the workforce, employers must consider their needs and desires when making hiring decisions as well as when promoting from within. In the process of restructuring hiring protocols, the workplace might produce happier, healthier workers who generally project more positive attitudes in their personal lives. Some of the participants did recognize that a company's social image does impact whether applicants would be attracted towards employment with the organization. 40% of the participants in this study placed high focus on their website and company's social image to attract qualified applicants, particularly Millennials who are heavily driven by technology and place a higher value on online resources.

## Recommendations for Action

Themes of this study revealed that Millennials are highly complex in their thinking and needs related to balancing employment and personal lives. Their skills and knowledge are far more complex than other generations and their insights prove valuable to the business setting. Beyond their value, Millennials need to feel valued with competitive pay and benefits and by expressing their ideas and concerns in an open communication platform. Considering these revelations, I recommend (a) HR managers develop a performance evaluation or review to discuss concerns of both management and Millennials, (b) managers implement a suggestion system for exchanging ideas, and (c) HR or business managers develop employee training seminars or programs to continue to cultivate talent.  Bridging the communication gap between management and employees is vital to provide a format to exchange concerns, problems, and room for improvement. Training programs and educational seminars could benefit employees and managers within SMEs since these investments are proven to improve organizational performance. Investing time, energy, and money into employees typically stimulates a sense of security and value within the company.  When employees feel comfortable and safe enough to share their ideas with a company, confident that their presence is desirable.  The emotional reciprocities are vital to the mental health of an employees.  Triguero-Sanchez et al. (2017) described the relationship between human resource management practices and organizational performance with the premise that employee diversity, as well as fostering employee commitment, can improve organizational performance.

## Recommendations for Further Research

The study of acquiring and retaining Millennials examined HR managers and hiring practices within the Midwestern region.  With such a limited scope, further research is required to expand upon this area to expand upon the limitations of this study. The most significant limitations are (a) for this study, organizational performance was measured in terms of Millennial work value, (b) employee attitudes may be factors of determining organizational performance and researchers should consider the subjective and constantly changing nature of perceptions, and (c) research conducted with a small population, in a specific region, may not produce generalizations applicable to all businesses in all locations.  Considering the three emergent themes and notable observations post interviews revealed more areas of future research to include (a) attitudes and resistance of hiring managers, (b) communication with Millennials, and (c) Millennial motivations and career orientation. These areas for further research are to explore difficulties in hiring Millennials and expand on the idea and focus on communication with them.

## Reflections

As in all research, addressing the researcher's bias is essential. As the research collection instrument, knowing my own biases and viewpoints was important to be aware of as I conducted these interviews. As a supporter of small businesses and a future entrepreneur, I felt such a connection to these HR managers' experiences and their hardships. Also as a father to Millennial children, I experienced empathy with the participant's responses and struggles, as I am sensitive to Millennials and their unique outlooks as well as their mannerisms. Participants affirmed how valuable and also difficult this particular generation can be, providing a well-rounded, unbiased set of results for this study.

## Conclusion

In this study, HR managers from five SMEs in Midwestern region of the United States who have been successful at acquiring and retaining Millennials were interviewed to identify strategies for hiring and retaining Millennials with a goal to improve organizational performance and sustainability. Examining the interview data, company websites, provided company documents, and the literature review available on hiring strategies and organizational performance has revealed three substantial factors to consider. Participants agreed that Millennials are a unique cohort who possess exemplary skills in technology but lack interpersonal skills, creating unique challenges in the workplace. SME managers recognize that the biggest challenge with acquiring and retaining Millennials is competition with larger companies, mostly relating to benefits and pay. To retain highly talented employees, managers should not only remain competitive, but also maintain an open line of communication with Millennials, as they need to feel valued and be able to share their innovative ideas. In consideration of the emergent themes of this study, SMEs should consider creating a system or protocol to exchange ideas and evaluate performance and satisfaction as well as training and education programs to stimulate the employee’s growth and development. Further areas to research include (a) attitudes and resistance of hiring managers, (b) communication with Millennials, and (c) Millennial motivations and career orientation.

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# Appendix A: Interview Protocol

| Interview Protocol | |
|---|---|
| Meet at the approved time and location. Obtain a signature on the informed consent form. Provide a hard copy of the informed consent to the participant. | |
| Reiterate the information included in the consent form. Gain verbal consent to proceed onto the interview process. | |
| **Questioning process** | |
| • Record the session<br>• Take notes<br>• Watch for non-verbal queues<br>• Paraphrase as needed<br>• Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in depth | **The questions:**<br>1. What strategies do you use to acquire Millennials to maximize organizational performance?<br>2. What strategies do you use to retain Millennials to maximize organizational performance?<br>3. What challenges or barriers have you experienced in acquiring Millennials?<br>4. What challenges or barriers have you experienced in retaining Millennials?<br>5. What attributes are important when considering potential candidates?<br>6. How can you improve your current hiring practices?<br>7. What additional information can you provide on acquiring and retaining |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Millennials to maximize organizational performance? |
| Give the participant opportunity to exclude any portion of the interview they wish or elaborate or add any information that may have been initially left out. | |
| Gain verbal permission to contact the participant in the event additional information or clarification is needed as well as preferred method of contact. | |
| Offer a copy of the transcription of the conversation. Record the participant's preference. | |
| Wrap up interview by thanking participant | |
| Schedule follow-up member checking interview | |
| **Following the initial interview** | |
| The researcher will transcribe and analyze all recorded interviews. | |
| Send any desired transcription copies within 7 days of the initial interview. | |
| Introduce follow-up interview and repeat the process. | |
| All information will remain locked in a personal filing cabinet with restricted access. | |