


2017

# Exploration of Leadership Skills for Organizational Strategy Execution

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Regina Banks-Hall

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Walden University  
2017

Abstract

Exploration of Leadership Skills for Organizational Strategy Execution

by

Regina Banks-Hall

MBA, Baker College, 2012

BBA, Baker College, 2010

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2017

## Abstract

Multinational corporate leaders acknowledge that a lack of business direction by senior leadership results in a 68% failure in the execution of organizational strategies. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore what best practice solutions automotive manufacturing senior leaders created to help front-line managers execute organizational strategies. The population consisted of 20 automotive manufacturing senior leaders located in Michigan with significant years of automotive experience and at least a year of experience employed as an automotive manufacturing senior leader. Vroom's expectancy theory served as the conceptual framework for the study describing the enhancement of employee performance related to their skills, knowledge, abilities, and workplace expectations. Data were collected through semistructured interviews using open-ended questions. Methodological triangulation and a modified van Kaam data analysis approach were used with field notes and interview data to guide the coding process, theoretical saturation, and trustworthiness of interpretations. Five themes emerged that senior leaders identified important for creating best practice solutions: benchmarking, training, communication strategies, organizational change, and integrity. These findings may influence positive social change by offering management strategies, objectives, and actions that help to promote the development of employees and collaboration between individuals, government institutions, local businesses, and communities.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this study to God and all the people who supported me. To my husband, Dolphus F. Hall Jr, I am truly blessed to have received your love and support. You have been a constant rock of support, challenging me to stay committed to earning this degree. I will always be grateful for your love, support, and patience. Finally, to my parents Bishop Jake and First Lady Estella Burgess thanks for encouraging your children, that regardless of our circumstances, we should never give up on our dreams.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Industries often face organizational change associated with technology, economic climate, and global competition. The increase of organizational change has created the need for clear leadership and investment in best practice solutions that (a) engage employees, (b) improve operational performance, and (c) reduce manufacturing costs (Wiengarten, Fynes, Cheng, & Chavez, 2013). In this qualitative descriptive study, I explored how automotive manufacturing senior leaders created best practice solutions to help their front-line managers execute organizational strategies. Through the research of best practice solutions, automotive manufacturing senior leaders may make informed decisions about investing resources in these practices, when analyzing the business success of their facilities.

### **Background of the Problem**

According to Bigler and Williams (2013), best practice solutions make strategy execution an increased priority because automotive manufacturing senior leaders recognize that a disciplined strategy execution connects to favorable organizational outcomes and improves organizational performance. Despite the widespread impact of change and the relationship between organizational survival, leaders struggle to execute strategies effectively (Powell, 2017). Thus, the understanding of leadership skills provided a background that defines a manager's inclination to engage in *do good* versus *avoid harmful* behaviors (Waldman & Balven, 2014).

In turbulent business environments, changes in (a) customer demands, (b) technological advancements, and (c) global competition require a transformation in performance measurement and management (Yadav, 2014). Modifying a business culture is a sensitive process that challenges (a) employee loyalty, (b) commitment, (c) optimism, and (d) job security (O'Neill, Feldman, Vandenberg, DeJoy, & Wilson, 2011). The process of modifying the business culture may create managerial challenges because scholars believe leadership styles have a significant influence on organizational performance and strategy execution (Grady & Grady, 2013).

Since the 2008 economic crisis, automotive manufacturing leaders have experienced unprecedented change, driven by an unstable global marketplace. Some drivers associated with the volatile global marketplace include (a) expansions in global competition, (b) weak currencies, (c) enhanced customer demands, (d) outdated technology, and (e) trade policies (Yadav, 2014). Automotive manufacturing leaders are rebounding from significant 2012 product safety recalls and looking to maintain their individual corporate market share (Haibing, Jinhong, Qi, & Wilbur, 2015). Corporate leaders who effectively manage these drivers of change with effective leadership and clear best practice solutions, ensure long-term sustainability for their organizations (Grant, 2012).

### **Problem Statement**

Multinational chief executives acknowledged two-thirds of their organizational change initiatives as ineffective, indicating a problem with strategy execution or

implementation (Shin, Taylor, & Seo, 2012). Chief executives associated 30% of the failure to coordinating the change initiatives across business units and 40% of the failure due to misaligning initiatives with the company's mission (Sull, Homkes, & Sull, 2015). The lack of business direction by organizational leaders may support a 68% failure rate in the execution of organizational strategies (Grady & Grady, 2013). The general business problem is that the failure of organizational strategy execution leads to a decrease in profitability and reduction in business growth. The specific business problem is some automotive manufacturing senior leaders do not have a set of best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute business strategies.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore what automotive manufacturing senior leaders created as best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute business strategies. Data came from automotive manufacturing senior leaders working in firms located in Auburn Hills, Detroit, and Livonia, Michigan. The study findings may be useful in helping senior leaders address (a) product safety issues, (b) improve customer experience, (c) streamline production, and (d) manage global trade issues.

The results of the study may contribute new leadership insights and highlight how best practices may lead to effective organizational improvements. The implication of this study on social change may encourage automotive manufacturing senior leaders to examine the use of best practice solutions for their front-line managers, enhancing



employee engagement and corporate profitability. The study findings may encourage business leaders to examine the impact of collaboration with key community partners, to create shared value and commitment that improves the living standards of the local community (Monahan, 2013).

### **Nature of the Study**

The nature of this study supported using a qualitative research method. Qualitative research allowed for the exploration of systems, using a variety of resources to obtain information and to understand through semistructured interviews how local populations attach to a social problem (Yin, 2014). Quantitative research supported the analysis of numerical data and applicable when investigating the size and interrelationship among variables using closed-ended questions (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). Qualitative research made it possible to probe into the heart of the event while attaining a sound general understanding based on personal experiences by the participants (Bleijenbergh, Korzilius, & Verschuren, 2011). By exploring the experiences of the senior leaders, themes developed that included descriptions regarding the participants' perception of best practice solutions and the impact when helping front-line managers. By using experiences as a basis for research, this process eliminated the use of the quantitative method.

Researchers use qualitative descriptive research to explore problems using open-ended questions (Yin, 2014). This information supported my selection of this design for the doctoral study. Qualitative descriptive research aids the researcher in presenting the

case in everyday language (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). When using the qualitative descriptive research approach, the information that appears to the individual provides the driving force for experience and generation of new knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative descriptive research allowed for the examination of leadership styles and best practice solutions based on the perceptions of the participants within a real-world setting (Bleijenbergh et al., 2011).

Other qualitative designs such as (a) ethnography, (b) grounded theory, and (c) case study did not provide the necessary information to address the research question. The other qualitative methods required researchers to use multiple stages of data collection (Nicola, Oliver, & Graham, 2012). For example, case study research is often exploratory, descriptive, and includes multiple locations and organizations creating a comparative study (Yin, 2014). In addition, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study methods share patterns of behaviors versus a focus on individual experiences (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013).

The focus of this study was to explore what automotive manufacturing senior leaders created as best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute business strategies. For this reason, qualitative research was the ideal design to enable the collection and interpretation of information, including the senior leaders' (a) knowledge, (b) perceptions and (c) values. It was important to use a design that required an in-depth study of people's lives or the issues in their natural settings without referring to a pre-determined category of analysis (Yilmaz, 2013).

### **Research Question**

Yin (2014) stated that a qualitative research question explores perceptions and meanings of a population associated with an event. The central research question guiding the study addressed the importance of best practice solution development by automotive manufacturing senior leaders to support strategy execution. The primary research question for this study was: What do automotive manufacturing senior leaders use as best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute business strategies?

### **Interview Questions**

This study included the following interview questions:

1. What major elements such as personal, professional, or knowledge-based information qualify as important when integrating best practice solutions?
2. What are some of the dynamic changes you have to make to your current business infrastructure to integrate best practice solutions?
3. How have you identified any best practice solutions you believe are needed for the organization?
4. As a corporate leader, how do you communicate best practice solution concerns to front-line managers?
5. As a corporate leader, what best practice solutions have you created in the past you consider successful?
6. What actions have hindered your employees from embracing best practice solutions that support organizational change?

7. How do you measure the success of your best practice solutions?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore what automotive manufacturing senior leaders created as best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute business strategies. The conceptual framework identified for this study supported Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. Vroom's expectancy theory focused on the idea that an employee's performance supported individual factors such as (a) personality, (b) skill, (c) performance, (d) knowledge, and (e) abilities. Vroom's theory provided an opportunity to explore how automotive manufacturing senior leaders use best practice solutions for enhancing employee work performance.

The expectancy theory is a belief about the likelihood of achieving the desired performance level when exerting some level of effort, which supports motivation and management (Estes & Polnick, 2012). The premise of the expectancy theory concluded that while employees have different goals, they can be motivated if they believe a positive correlation exists between effort and performance. The data from the research of best practices solutions supported and provided alternative results of previous research when studying the expectancy theory and the impact on employee performance.

Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory centered on three beliefs: (a) valence, (b) expectancy, and (c) instrumentality. Valence denoted an emotional belief towards a reward (Estes & Polnick, 2012). Expectancy referred to an employee's confidence about their skill sets (Hayyat, 2012). Instrumentality referred to the perception employees have

towards receiving a reward linked to their skill sets (Chaudhary, 2014). The connection between expectancy and best practices solution success can be the catalyst affecting organizational effectiveness.

Vroom (1964) stated an employee's beliefs about expectancy, instrumentality, and valence creates a motivational presence, where the employee acts in a manner that produces enjoyment over pain. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) suggested that understanding the concept of resonance supports understanding leadership theories because leaders can use their personal experiences to improve their organizations. Some scholars alluded that when employees understand their sense of purpose within the workplace; they may be motivated to improve their productivity (Guillen, Ferrero, & Hoffman, 2015). When automotive manufacturing senior leaders infuse moral purposes into work, they enhance intrinsic valence of followers increasing the moral correctness of their behavior, which leads to motivation (Lam, Loi, Chan, & Liu, 2016).

### **Operational Definitions**

Some specific terms associated with the doctoral study include the following:

*Best practices:* Best practices describe a technique consistently showing superior results and used as a benchmark (Salicru, Wassenaar, Suerz, & Spittle, 2016).

*Dynamic capabilities:* Dynamic capabilities describe a capacity to renew competencies to achieve congruence with a changing business environment (Hiroki & Shumpei, 2016).

*Extrinsic motivation:* Extrinsic motivation describes a variety of behaviors performed for reasons beyond those inherent in the activity (Zhao, Detlor, & Connelly, 2016).

*Intrinsic motivation:* Intrinsic motivation refers to behaviors performed based on self-interest and connects to an internal reward (Zhao et al., 2016).

*Job performance:* Job performance defines individual output regarding quality and quantity expected from every employee for a job (Menges, Tussing, Wihler, & Grant, 2017). This level of performance connects to motivation and the will or ability to perform (Xiaojun & Venkatesh, 2013).

*Leadership development:* Leadership development refers to the development of human capital talent, through organizational enhancement in a manner that supports excellent strategy execution (Bigler & Williams, 2013).

*Organizational commitment:* Organizational commitment is the relative strength of an individual's identification, association, and involvement with an organization (Xueli, Lin, & Mian, 2014).

*Performance measurement:* Performance measurement is the effectiveness of leaders in implementing human resources management (HRM) practices and allows a measurement of the performance through employee satisfaction regarding the implementation (Bos-Nehles, Van Riemsdijk, & Kees, 2013).

*Strategy execution:* Strategy execution is a process that converts strategic objectives into corporate results (Srivastava & Sushil, 2013)

*Talent management:* Talent management is a programmatic and cultural norm within an organization created to (a) attract, (b) develop, (c) employ, and (d) retain talent supporting the achievement of business objectives (Church, 2013).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

This subsection provides an overview of assumptions, limitations, and delimitations for the study. Assumptions support implications that topics associated with the doctoral study are authentic based on predetermined factors (Vernon-Dotson, 2013). Limitations identify weaknesses uncontrollable by the researcher (Cole, Chase, Couch, & Clark, 2011). Delimitations identify areas included and excluded from the study (Bleijenbergh et al., 2011).

#### **Assumptions**

In this study, assumptions supported the idea that leadership plays a significant role in increasing (a) organizational productivity, (b) efficiency, (c) employee engagement, and (d) business growth (Ruggieri & Abbate, 2013). I assumed that a set of best practice solutions improved organizational performance and revenue potential (Church, 2013). I assumed that I would receive sufficient access to participants to conduct the research. I assumed the participants would have sufficient knowledge regarding the topic. I also assumed that the participants would respond to the interview questions truthfully. Finally, I assumed that participants who have received some organizational success utilized practices to engage front-line personnel.

**Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses in the study uncontrollable by the researcher (Silverman, 2013). There were several possible weaknesses associated with the study. First, the use of only senior leaders limited the study results to a select part of the leadership team and may not have provided a complete view of the problem. Second, the responses from the participants may not apply to all automotive manufacturing businesses. Third, geographical limitations supported a population only associated with the automotive industry. The selection of this population limited the ability to view perspectives from additional key stakeholders such as suppliers or customers.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations help clarify the focus of a study by indicating the areas that are included or excluded from the research (Bleijenbergh et al., 2011). The first delimitation of this study centered on the use of participants working in the automotive industry. Another delimitation of the study was the exclusion of senior leaders with less than 1 year of automotive experience but experienced in other industries. Failure to include information from senior leaders with additional experience separate from automotive narrowed the amount of information provided by the participants. A final delimitation for this study relied on senior leaders with more than a year of automotive experience, assuming the leaders understood best practice solutions and created solutions to help front-line managers working in the automotive industry.



### **Significance of the Study**

This study was significant because the results represent contributions to business practices based on the use of best practice solutions. The study also provided applications of recommendations that may lead to positive social change.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore what automotive manufacturing senior leaders created as best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute business strategies. For executive leaders, the common workplace attitude of business is often an indicator it is time for a new strategic direction. Chief executive officers are responsible for implementing organizational direction and communicating a vision to all corporate stakeholders (Mayfield, Mayfield, & Sharbrough, 2015). A lack of job satisfaction, career development, and low productivity within the automotive manufacturing environment hinders (a) employee development, (b) stakeholder value, (c) profitability, (d) competitive advantage, and (e) business growth (Xiaojun & Venkatesh, 2013). The data generated from the study may offer automotive manufacturing senior leaders tools to engage their employees with effective business solutions on strategy execution since the 2008 economic crisis (Patten, 2015). For instance, I explored whether the current automotive senior leaders have created best practice solutions and I explored what senior leaders believed hindered employees from embracing organizational change. The study results, if applied, may lead to increases in employee commitment and workplace productivity.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Positive social change is a process of creating and implementing strategies and actions that promote (a) value, (b) dignity, and (c) development of individuals and communities (Walden University, 2013). Understanding the impact of best practice solutions by senior leaders and the help the solutions provide front-line managers remain necessary for improving (a) customer service, (b) employee engagement, and (c) global business expansions (Grady & Grady, 2013). This potential increase in employee engagement may ultimately lead to (a) achievements in organizational goals, (b) enhanced workplace interactions between the leader and the employee, (c) and improvements in organizational loyalty (Lin & Hsiao, 2014). Results from this research may address a gap in strategy execution, helping automotive manufacturing senior leaders affect positive social change; cultivate an improved outlook for employees, which may resonate with their families and communities.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

In this qualitative descriptive study, I explored what automotive manufacturing senior leaders created as best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute business strategies. A comprehensive literature review of relevant topics provided a scholarly background to address the business problem. Organizational leaders face many workplace challenges, which require strategic management from their senior leaders and front-line employees (Estes & Polnick, 2012).

I reviewed academic journals using the EBSCO database with a direct focus on Business Source Premier, Sage Premier, Sage Research Methods, PsyINFO, Science Direct, and Academic Search Premier to find articles that authenticated the basis for the literature review. The following search terms provided the depth necessary for an effective literature review: *best practice solutions, workplace motivation, equity theory, expectancy theory, intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards, organizational commitment, strategic management, strategy execution, transformational leadership, organizational change, transactional leadership, competitive landscape, strategic management, leadership, and human resources management.*

The literature review included 215 books, government sources, and peer-reviewed articles. Eighty-five percent of the journal articles came from peer-reviewed sources with a minimum of 60 sources contained in the literature review. Also, 85% of the peer-reviewed articles included in the study were written within 5 years of the anticipated approval of the study. The books and articles provided a foundation for the doctoral study and included structural support by early theorists. This relevance helped identify and support the need for evaluation and reexamination of prior literature identifying concepts that supported improving the practice of business strategies for the creation of a flexible business environment (Kim, Suresh, & Kocabasoglu-Hillmer, 2013).

The organization of the literature review began with an overview of motivational theories. Reviewing the theories supported an examination of whether existing literature on motivation helps organizational leaders evaluate the effectiveness of best practice

solutions created by automotive manufacturing senior leaders and designed for front-line personnel (Latham, 2014). The next section of the literature review included a discussion of (a) motivational theories, (b) change management, (c) communication strategies, and (d) organizational commitment. The literature review ends with a discussion of leadership theories and leadership styles.

### **Motivational Theory**

Scholars have suggested that employees build quality into a firm's goods and services. The quality of service provided by employees represents (a) employee commitment, (b) participation, (c) motivation, (d) compensation, (e ) performance, and (f) job satisfaction (Carton et al., 2015). A focus for this doctoral study included consideration of the application of (a) expectancy theory, (b) content theory, (c) leadership theories and their effects on executing workplace strategies for front-line managers.

A determinant of productivity among all classification of workers is motivation (Estes & Polnick, 2012). Consequently, motivation is a set of forces which predicts a person's behavior (Kopelman, Prottas, & Falk, 2012). A front-line employee may choose to work extremely hard in support of the organization's goals or do just enough to earn their wages. Subsequently, strategy for organizational leaders is to maximize knowledge, skill, abilities, and obtain the best performance possible (Crawford & Mills, 2011). Based on the importance of employee motivation, Latham (2014) considered workplace motivation a core competency of leadership.

When reviewing academic literature, motivation begins with the development of needs. Needs are hypothetical constructs not measured but inferred from a person's behavior (Latham, 2014). Needs are internal to individuals, and they push them to exhibit certain behaviors, which reduces a need and leads to a level of satisfaction (Cameron, 2011). Human resources (HR) management research supported the idea that the implementation of best practices encourages (a) employee motivation, (b) commitment, and (c) creates a financial advantage for organizations (Battistelli, Galletta, Portugese, & Vandenberghe, 2013).

According to Robbins and Judge (2016), three key components define motivation. The three components are intensity, organizational direction, and persistence when the essentials are associated with workplace performance (Battistelli et al., 2013; Robbins & Judge 2016). Intensity describes how strong individuals complete their daily assignments (Bigler & Williams, 2013). Organizational direction supports the level of intensity provided by senior leaders (Cameron, 2011). The organizational direction can influence the firm's organizational goals (Bigler & Williams, 2013). The final component persistence measures how employees maintain their efforts (Latham, 2014).

Scholl (2002) declared performance a function of a person's (a) motivation, (b) ability, (c) role, (d) perception, and (e) resource. Perception connects to motivation as a process, by which individuals organize their sensory impressions when giving meaning to their environment (Robbins & Judge, 2016). Motivational theories can help explain employee's efforts and the direction of that effort exhibited by a firm's employees. A

constant desire to understand motivation connects to the research of early theorists who focused their research on the challenges facing the industrial revolution (Battistelli et al., 2013). In the current business environment understanding employee motivation helps automotive manufacturing leaders develop a work environment that (a) rewards teams, (b) business divisions, and (c) corporate performance (Fang & Gerhart, 2012).

### **Vroom's Expectancy Theory**

A key motivational theory selected for the literature review was Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation. The expectancy theory works on the premise that individuals pursue courses of actions that result in outcomes they believe will occur (Vroom, 1964). A premise of Vroom's theory is that three perceptions can independently influence an individual's motivation but when combined these perceptions create a powerful effect (Estes & Polnick, 2012; Vroom, 1964). The three perceptions are (a) valence, (b) instrumentality, and (c) expectancy (Hayyat, 2012). The three perceptions when combined help employees make decisions that are far from being optimal but based on the expected results.

Predicting how much effort individuals exert and value outcomes may help to identify the degree of motivation individuals direct towards an outcome. Vroom (1964) used this information as a definition for motivation, controlled by the individual based on how their behavior affects the expected result (Expectancy Theory, 2014). Workplace motivation is an energizing force originating from both inside and outside the individual, pushing employees toward a desired action (Battistelli et al., 2013).

As mentioned earlier, Vroom (1964) placed emphasis on three perceptions connected to motivation: valence, instrumentality, and expectancy (Hayyat, 2012). Valence refers to values the individual personally attaches to the reward or outcome (as cited in Estes & Polnick, 2012; Scholl, 2002). An outcome provides value when the individual decides to pursue the outcome. Consequently, when the individual avoids the outcome, the outcome produces a negative value (Chaudhary, 2014). The outcome may produce value or because of instrumentality leads to the attainment of additional valued outcomes (Hayyat, 2012). Automotive senior leaders may find that by understanding all three perceptions, they can use the information gained when linking employee values and workplace performance towards organizational goals (Glaser, Stam, & Takeuchi, 2016)

When applying the perception of valence to senior leaders and their management of front-line managers, the front-line managers will select one behavior over another behavior, believing the chosen behavior produces a particular outcome (Hayyat, 2012). Front-line managers will work hard for the implementation of best practice solutions if they believe senior leaders may acknowledge the extra effort (Griffin, 2017). The expected or unexpected behavior of the front-line managers may influence the set of best practice solutions created by automotive manufacturing senior leaders if the front-line managers take issue with certain behaviors exhibited by management (Chaudhary, 2014).

Instrumentality, another perception of the expectancy theory is the belief that if a person meets performance expectations, they will receive a greater reward (Scholl, 2002). Instrumentality is the personal belief that outcomes from a first level may lead to

additional outcomes whether the outcomes are positive or negative (Estes & Polnick, 2012; Scholl, 2002; Vroom, 1964). For example, a strong performance can lead to a perception of a pay increase, promotion, or sense of accomplishment. When the perception of the reward is low, the instrumentality of the reward is low. Front-line managers may not perform at their highest level limiting the success of organizational strategies (Chaudhary, 2014).

The perception of instrumentality within the automotive manufacturing environment represents the following: A front-line manager may rationalize within their thinking, that if one department produces more parts, they as the employee will receive a raise or promotion. Consequently, the automotive manufacturing senior leader may believe that a significant amount of parts produced does not support receiving a raise. Depending on the relationship or perception of a reward, the front-line manager may decide that producing the minimum amount of parts is all that is required when helping the organization (Parijat & Bagga, 2014).

Some variables affecting instrumentality are trust, control, and policies (Hayyat, 2012). Trust takes place when employees trust their leaders. Employees place a high probability, believing that what management states it will do associated with a person's performance receives acknowledgment through a reward (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). The variable identified as a control in this example creates an atmosphere, where employees lack trust in their leaders and often attempt to control the reward system through a negotiated contract (Estes & Polnick, 2012).



Policies are the degree in which pay and reward systems are used in formalizing written policies (Scholl, 2002). These policies connect rewards to performance to increase instrumentality. Valence refers to values the individual personally attaches to the rewards (Estes & Polnick, 2012). Valence connects to the individuals supporting needs, goals, values, and consider a source of motivation (Chaudhary, 2014; Hayyat, 2012).

The third perception expectancy includes the description of confidence concerning the probability; action will follow a particular outcome (Estes & Polnick, 2012; Vroom, 1964). This perception suggests certain elements could affect the person's perception associated with (a) self-efficacy, (b) goal difficulty, and (c) control (Hayyat, 2012). Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their ability to perform successfully (Scholl, 2002). For senior leaders, the individual may or may not believe he or she possesses the required skills and competencies to lead personnel effectively (Chaudhary, 2014).

Goal difficulty includes examining whether the goal or performance expectations set by the organization are unachievable (Lee, Keil, & Wong, 2015). The perception of goal difficulty may affect a front-line manager's perception of best practice solutions and the front-line manager's ability to execute organizational strategies (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). If the expectations are beyond the employee's ambitions, motivation is low because of low expectancy. Finally, the term control is the perception an employee has over performance (Scholl, 2002).

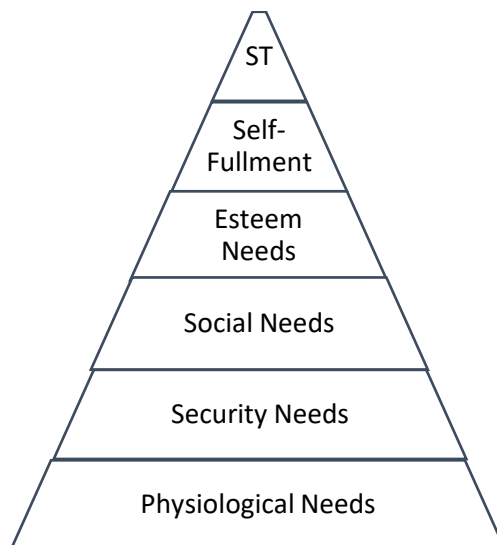
Front-line managers who deem the outcome beyond their abilities will place low expectancy on the results (Chaudhary, 2014). In reverse, front-line managers that deem the outcome within their abilities may believe they exhibit some degree of control over the anticipated outcome (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). A theory supported by academic scholars suggests that when organizations identify business functions that hinder performance, leaders can correct the issues by working together (Welch & Bjorkman, 2015). When applying this principle to the doctoral study, the absence of best practice solutions for the front-line managers can be the business function affecting the execution of organizational strategies (Bigler & Williams, 2013).

### **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory**

A second motivational theory recommended for the literature review is Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Maslow's original hierarchy of needs theory characterized individual needs in five levels using a pyramid (Jyothi, 2016). The needs are (a) physiological, (b) security, (c) social, (d) esteem, and (e) self-fulfillment (Hatfield, Turner, & Spiller, 2013). The theory includes the suggestion that individuals must satisfy lower level needs before the satisfaction of higher-level needs (Maslow, 1943).

A sixth level added later; labeled self-transcendence is included in the below diagram (see Figure 1). Self-transcendence includes a description of a desire to further a cause beyond self and experience a relationship beyond boundaries through peak experiences (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). Employees can reach the level of self-

transcendence(ST) after satisfying all lower level needs listed on Maslow's pyramid (Mirabela & Madela, 2013).



*Figure 1.* Figure title. Adapted from “A Theory of Human Motivation,” by A. H. Maslow, 1943, *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396. Copyright 1943, the American Psychological Association.

Maslow (1943) labeled physiological and security lower level needs and viewed esteem and self-fulfillment as higher order needs (Mirabela & Madela, 2013).

Physiological needs consider (a) food, (b) shelter, and (c) water basic for all individuals (Hatfield et al., 2013). When comparing physiological needs within the business environment, these physiological needs translate into adequate wages and a stable work environment (Casey, Hilton, & Robbins, 2013). When these requirements appear fulfilled, employees turn their focus towards a satisfaction of security needs. Security requirements support freedom from danger within the workplace (Ciprian-Dumitru, 2013; Maslow, 1943). When applying these requirements to the workplace security connects to

(a) stable employment, (b) personal safety, (c) employee benefits, and (d) stable retirement (Guillen, Ferrero, & Hoffman, 2015).

When satisfying security needs, employees begin to focus on social needs (Ciprian-Dumitru, 2013). Social needs connect to a need for (a) affection, (b) belongingness, and (c) friendship. Within the business environment, social needs support the atmosphere for social interaction, workgroups, and team support (Guillen et al., 2015). Automotive senior leaders who effectively understand the importance of social interaction can use this skill as a strategy and drive innovation throughout the organization, improving the management of their human capital talent.

Maslow's term esteem defines workplace respect (Ciprian-Dumitru, 2013). The importance of respect supports the business environment by providing extrinsic rewards of accomplishment such as a job title, recognition, or a nice office (Mirabela & Madela, 2013). These types of extrinsic rewards support a challenging job assignment and opportunities for employees to gain a sense of accomplishment (Hatfield et al., 2013). Automotive manufacturing senior leaders can use esteem, through (a) employee promotions, (b) career development, and (c) recognition of workplace performance.

The term self-actualization describes the self-fulfillment of a person's potential (Guillen et al., 2015). Scholars contend that workplace self-fulfillment is the hardest need to develop because employees define the need (Ciprian-Dumitru, 2013). Self-actualization is a universal need but can describe specific goals and capabilities (Hatfield et al., 2013). Automotive manufacturing senior leaders can help promote a work culture

where self-actualization is possible through (a) self-empowerment, (b) decision-making, (c) career development, and (e) training (Cameron, 2011; Sengupta, 2011).

Maslow (1943) suggested these needs are unique to individuals and require satisfaction before individuals moved up to the next level. Maslow advised that human beings were different, influencing the drivers of motivation. Maslow concluded that individuals differ and some individuals may not desire to reach the highest level on the hierarchy of needs pyramid. A conclusion from Maslow's statement is that within an organizational setting employees are likely to be at various places within the hierarchy, and this makes it difficult to determine which need is the actual motivator (Maslow, 1999).

Koltko-Rivera (2006) challenged Maslow's (1943) theory stating that Maslow amended this model adding self-transcendence as a step beyond self-fulfillment. Koltko-Rivera (2006) believed Maslow viewed self-transcendence as a desire to advance a cause beyond self and experience a communion beyond boundaries through peak experiences. Maslow (1943) believed some individuals could go beyond self-actualization as a salient motivation (Koltko-Rivera, 2006) and arrive at the top of Maslow's hierarchy with a strong motive towards self-transcendence.

Koltko-Rivera (2006) also argued people seek a benefit beyond the purely personal. Individuals seek communion through a mystical transpersonal experience and relate to a self-transcendence experience. These peak experiences involve (a) service to others, (b) support for an idea, (c) causes, (d) social justice, and (e) a desire to unite with

something divine (Caprara, Alessandri, & Eisenberg, 2012). Koltko-Rivera concluded that Maslow connected peak experiences with mystical experiences where individuals experience a sense of identity that transcends beyond personal self.

Academic scholars are now associating self-transcendence to workplace spirituality. Workplace spirituality is the recognition that meaningful work and the sense of community are essential for spiritual growth in employees (Chawla & Guda, 2013). Workplace spirituality has become an emerging area of research when examining employee motivation (Gupta, Kumar, & Singh, 2014). Organizations are now making room for spiritual dimensions because spiritual dimensions focus less on rules and more on meaningful work and a sense of community (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011).

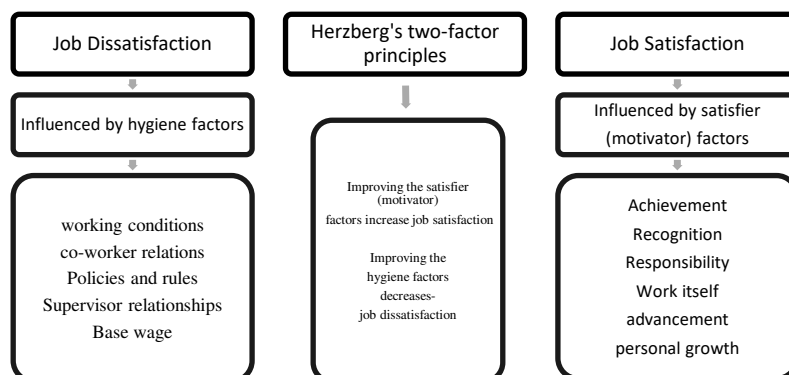
As a final point, Maslow's (1943) research provides academic scholars many opportunities to argue the impact of the pyramid on employee performance. In 2013, scholars argued that a relationship exists between Maslow's pyramid and Carroll's (1999) corporate social responsibility (as cited in Ciprian-Dumitru, 2013). Corporate social responsibility programs often focus on external matters, which support profit and shareholder value (Ciprian-Dumitru, 2013). Limited research exists on how corporate governance and organizational control may affect a firm's leadership approach to successful CSR strategy implementation (Filatotchev & Nakajima, 2014).

### **Herzberg Two-Factor Theory**

Following Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, Herzberg proposed a two-factor theory labeled as the motivator-hygiene theory (Herzberg, 1968; Smith & Shields, 2013).

Herzberg (1968) introduced the motivator-hygiene theory which related to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Herzberg (1968) focused on motivation factors divided between intrinsic (internal) and extrinsic (external) motivators (as cited in Robinson, 2010). Some critics of Herzberg's theory argue that the motivator-hygiene theory allows individuals to take credit for satisfaction and blame dissatisfaction on external factors (Smith & Shields, 2013).

Herzberg (1968) concluded that the element of job satisfaction was different from job dissatisfaction. Job satisfaction is the motivator and job dissatisfaction the hygiene (Sinha & Trivedi, 2014). Herzberg elaborated on the theories stating two distinct needs exist for employees. The first need or requirement related to fundamental human needs can influence other human desires (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011). Fundamental human needs can provide excellent working conditions and competitive wages (Smith & Shields, 2013). The other need or requirement labeled human characteristics, describes the ability to achieve and experience psychological growth (Cinar & Karcioğlu, 2012). Human characteristics support personal growth and opportunities for advancement (Smith & Shields).



*Figure 2.* Figure title. Adapted from “One more time: How do you motivate employees,” by F. Herzberg, 1968, *Harvard Business Review*, 46, p. 57. Copyright 2000 by the Harvard Business Review.

The motivational factors intrinsic to the job are (a) achievement, (b) recognition, (c) the work, (d) responsibility, and (e) advancement (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011).

These motivators support job satisfaction and motivation, but their absence results in neutrality or detachment from the organization (Cinar & Karcioğlu, 2012). Workplace dissatisfaction or hygienes’ extrinsic to the job are (a) company policies, (b) supervision, (c) interpersonal relationships, (d) working conditions, (e) salaries, and (f) job security (Herzberg, 1968; Smith & Shields, 2013). The above hygienes also connect to career contexts, such as (a) organizational problems, (b) poor work relations, (c) low salaries, and (d) terrible working conditions. These hygienes create job dissatisfaction. In addition, the absence of these hygienes does not lead to motivation but supports neutrality and a detachment from the organization (Cinar & Karcioğlu, 2012).

Herzberg’s (1968) research also focused on the management of personnel. Herzberg concluded three philosophies connect with personnel management. The three philosophies provide the best method for human talent management. The three philosophies are (a) organizational theory, (b) industrial engineering, and (c) behavioral science (Smith & Shields, 2013).

Organizational theorists believe human needs are irrational or varied; therefore, the major function of personnel management is to be as pragmatic as the occasion demands (Herzberg, 1968; Smith & Shields, 2013). The role of personnel management is



to design the best incentive program that obtains the most desired results (Welch & Bjorkman, 2015). By applying a behavioral scientist approach, the focus on attitudes of employees and the organization's psychological climate can improve motivation (Teck-Hong & Waheed, 2011).

The final part of Herzberg's (1968) theory focuses on the impact of job dissatisfaction. Herzberg concluded that determinants of job satisfaction were different from those of job dissatisfaction. Herzberg concluded providing employees with essential job duties results in job satisfaction and motivation (Herzberg, 1968; Smith & Shields, 2013). Failure to provide employees with something meaningful would not necessarily lead to job dissatisfaction but a detachment from the organization's vision (Cinar & Karcioglu, 2012).

### **McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y**

McGregor (1960) expressed a different belief, labeling individuals as lazy or productive with the creation of theory x and theory y. The application and introduction of theory x and theory y centers on the practice of management (Kopelman et al., 2012). McGregor recommended an authoritarian management strategy for managing laziness and a collaborative management strategy for productiveness (as cited in Robinson, 2010).

Theory x offered a theory that employees were lazy, avoided work, and indifferent towards the attainment of organizational goals (Simionel, 2011). According to the basis for the theory employees also failed to take responsibility for their actions lacking creativity and support for organizational change (Robinson, 2010). McGregor

(1960) recommended an authoritarian management style forcing employees to perform (Kopelman et al., 2012).

Theory y offers a premise that employees were self-motivated and interested in completing daily job duties. Employees engage in organizational achievement, take responsibility for their actions, and when motivated are self-directed and innovative (Simionel, 2011). Based on this assumption McGregor (1960) recommended a collaborative management style applying an empowerment strategy for motivation (as cited in Kopelman et al., 2012). A conclusion drawn from McGregor's theory may provide insight into how automotive manufacturing senior leaders view their employees.

Simionel (2011) offered a different opinion of theory x and theory y. Simionel (2011) suggested the definition of theory x supports a pessimistic view, and the definition of theory y supports an optimistic view. The manager's view of theory x leads to assumptions of predictable patterns of organizational behaviors that hinder or improve employee performance. Leaders that focus on theory x may unknowingly orchestrate low employee morale (Kopelman et al., 2012). Leaders who focus on theory y can connect optimism to the current business environment and use optimism towards the development of workers (Bowlby, McDermott, & Obar, 2011). The application of theory y in the workplace leads to (a) improved performance, (b) business growth, and (c) the attainment of organizational strategies (Church, 2013).

William Ouchi (1981) would expand theory x and theory y with the creation of Theory z. Theory z is an extension of theory x and theory y perceptions (Lunenburg,

2011). McGregor's (1960) theory x and theory y focused on personal leadership styles of individual supervisors, and theory z focuses on the culture of the organization by increasing employee loyalty (Lunenburg 2011; McGregor, 1960). Theory z includes an emphasis on (a) long-term employment, (b) productivity, (c) consensus decision-making, (d) responsibility, (e) promotion, (f) career development, and (g) commitment to all aspects of the employee's life (Barney, 2013).

Ouchi (1981) applied the principle of theory z to schools. The schools created an environment that included (a) trust, (b) shared control, (c) training, (d) organizational processes, (e) budgeting systems, (f) interpersonal skills, (g) and motivation through self-interest (Lunenburg, 2011). Ouchi would construct a plan that allowed organizations to adopt a successful theory z infrastructure. Ouchi recommended the use of (a) long-term staff development, (b) consensus in decision-making, (c) concern for workers, and (d) democratic control through the creation of formalized policies (Barney, 2013).

McGregor's (1960) theory x and theory y models remain relevant as leaders continue to have a positive or negative view towards their direct reports (Barney, 2013). An automotive manufacturing senior leader's treatment and view of front-line employees may hinder work productivity and execution of organizational strategies (Bigler & Williams, 2013). The application of theory z in the current business environment provides an opportunity to revisit business strategies; these strategies may improve financial performance and organizational development (Vitell, Nwachukwu, & Barnes, 2013).

### **Deci's Cognitive Evaluation Theory**

Another theory for discussion is the cognitive evaluation theory. Deci's (1985) cognitive evaluation theory examined the concepts of self-determination, competence, and the influence on the enjoyment of activities (as cited in Robinson, 2010). Self-determination focuses on an individual's need for (a) autonomy, (b) competence, (c) relatedness, and (d) when satisfied allows them to meet other goals (Battistelli et al., 2013).

Scholars concluded under the self-determination theory employees prefer to feel they have control over their behavior (Bammens, 2016). Ke et al. (2012) suggested the effects on intrinsic motivation such as (a) rewards, (b) delivery of evaluations, and (c) other motivational inputs, influence an employee's perception of competence and self-determination. When applying a self-determination theory to strategy execution by front-line managers research may suggest that individual self-determination influences workplace performance (Robinson, 2010).

Deci's cognitive evaluation theory assumes individuals adopt either an intrinsic or an extrinsic motivational orientation (as cited in Robinson, 2010). The cognitive evaluation theory focuses on social events that enhance perceptions of competence, improving intrinsic motivation (Yidong & Xinxin, 2013). An individual's behavior can concentrate toward an introduction to new and useful ideas, processes or products, created to improve organizational performance. Perceptions of competence require belief in a person's abilities when supporting intrinsic motivation (Fang & Gerhart, 2012).

## **Job Characteristics Model**

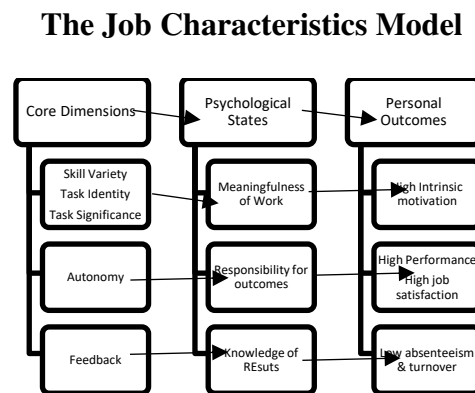
The final motivational theory for discussion examines the job characteristics model. This model introduced by Hackman and Oldham (1980) includes an evaluation of core job dimensions associated with (a) skill variety, (b) task identity, (c) autonomy, and (d) feedback. Hackman and Oldham (1980) would build on Herzberg's theory arguing that the joint effects of (a) individual differences, (b) personality, and (c) characteristics of the job determine motivation (Robinson, 2010; Robbins & Judge, 2016). Hackman and Oldham (1980) developed a model to explain how work duties influence attitudes and behaviors. Hackman and Oldham focused on (a) core job dimensions, (b) critical psychological states, and (c) personal work outcomes (Ali et al., 2014).

In the current business environment, this model often describes work redesign (Robbins & Judge, 2016). Work redesign or a focus on core job dimensions remains a chief strategy for improving productivity and the quality of the work experience for employees working in modern organizations (Barrick, Mount, & Li, 2013). The emphasis on matching employees to job duties creates a better organizational fit, applying the benefits of work redesign designed to improve worker performance (Ali et al., 2014). The objective allows the measurement of how job characteristics relate to employee satisfaction and job attendance.

Hackman and Oldham (1980) supported work redesign suggesting five core job dimensions could describe any workplace position (as cited in Robinson, 2010). The job dimensions are (a) skill, (b) variety, (c) task identity, (d) task significance, (e) autonomy,

and (f) feedback. Hackman and Oldham also found a connection between the (a) dimensions, (b) the individuals' psychological state, and (c) outcomes (Ali et al., 2014; Robinson, 2010).

The job characteristics model supported the doctoral study because the theory of purposeful work behavior may explain how job characteristics interactively influence work outcomes or execution of workplace strategies for front-line managers (Barrick et al., 2013). Accordingly, when motivational forces associated with job characteristics work in concert with purposeful motivational endeavors, individuals or front-line managers can experience the psychological state of meaningfulness (Ali et al., 2014). The following describes the relationship between the (a) dimensions, (b) psychological states, and (c) personal outcomes defined in Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model (see Figure 3).



*Figure 3.* Figure title. Adapted from “Motivation through the Design of Work: Test of a Theory,” R. J. Hackman & G. R. Oldham, 1976, *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 16, p. 256. Copyright 1975 by Organizational Behavior and Human Performance.

The first part of the model defines skill variety as the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities to ensure the employee can use different skills and talents (Casey, Hilton, & Robbins, 2013). Task identity is the degree to which a job requires completion of identifiable pieces of work (Robbins & Judge, 2016). Task significance is the extent to which a job has an impact on the lives of others (Ali et al., 2014). Autonomy is the extent to which the job function provides the employee independence, discretion in scheduling work, and determining procedures in carrying it out (Barrick et al., 2013). The final dimension, feedback is the degree to which data concerning work performance supports clear employee feedback regarding individual performance. (Casey et al., 2013)

Job duties vary along the dimensions of Hackman and Oldham's theory (1980) with some job duties containing more of the dimensions. These five dimensions' influence three critical states necessary for motivation and include: (a) skill, (b) task identity, (c) and task significance for supporting meaningful work. Autonomy supports knowledge of result where feedback supports professional responsibilities (Casey et al., 2013; Robbins & Judge, 2016). Autonomy is important as it is the degree to which jobs provide foresight to the individual in determining the procedures or best practices used in the execution of business strategies (Barrick et al., 2013). Autonomy also reflects industrial revenue growth and a positive sign of supervisor and/or senior manager support (Ford & Wooldridge, 2012).

Hackman and Oldham found that certain characteristics influenced behavior and attitudes at work. These features do not influence all employees the same way (Barrick et al., 2013). Employees with high growth necessities experience changes in job characteristics (Casey et al., 2013). These changes in job characteristics, however, do not influence attitudes and behavior directly. Instead, the changes in job characteristics influence the employees' perception of the changes (Robbins & Judge, 2016).

Another part of the job characteristics model, entitled, *the employee's level of motivation*, supports an employee's personal need to grow and develop (Ford & Wooldridge, 2012). The greater an employee's need for career development; the more positive their feelings develop toward workplace motivation (Barrick et al., 2013). A positive feeling towards career development leads to good job performance and workplace satisfaction (Casey et al., 2013). Automotive manufacturing senior leaders may conclude, jobs meaningful to employees will generate personal responsibility for outcomes and provides employees knowledge of the results (Robinson, 2010).

The final part of Hackman and Oldham's (1980) model includes the evaluation of personal and work outcomes. Personal outcomes include (a) high internal motivation, (b) high-quality job performance, (c) high job satisfaction, (d) low absenteeism, and (e) turnover (Robinson, 2010). Employees through job characteristics are motivated and their performance supportive of organizational goals (Casey et al., 2013). Employees through their individual experiences feel responsible for outcomes of the work performed and personal responsibility for the work outcomes (Barrick et al., 2013).



Hackman and Oldman (1980) concluded from their model that workplace duties should include core job dimensions (as cited in Robinson, 2010; Robbins & Judge, 2016). Positive outcomes can occur from core dimensions and support placement of employees' job duties (Casey et al., 2013). Core dimensions are positive for employees but may produce individual differences among the employees. For example autonomy and the ability to make decisions can become significant for some employees and other employees may require daily instructions (Ford & Wooldridge, 2012).

The examination of best practice solutions may show the ability of front-line managers to make decisions supportive of revenue growth and long-term profitability (Barrick et al., 2013). The examination of best practice solutions and support by the senior leaders is critical to the development of employees (Ford & Wooldridge, 2012). Per Hackman and Oldham (1980), growth requires strength and an individual fulfilling higher order needs supporting the relationship between the variables in the job characteristics model (Ali et al., 2014; Robbins & Judge, 2016).

### **Organizational Change**

The first part of the literature review focused on motivational theories and the theories' connection to employee motivation. This section examines the impact of organizational change. Organizations are confronted daily with the need to transform (Christensen, 2014). A major challenge for organizations is developing a culture, climate, and set of workplace solutions supporting (a) downsizing, (b) re-engineering, (c) managing global competition, and (d) embracing new technologies (Barton & Ambrosini,

2013). Organizational change is a modification of existing work routines and strategies that affect the whole organization (Karakas, 2009).

Organizational change is significant as automotive manufacturing senior leaders are critical actors in strategic change, and their strategic commitment may ultimately lead to poor employee performance (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013). The failure of a new strategy or strategic direction may support the inability or resistance of individual employees to commit to a strategy and adopt necessary behaviors to accomplish an organization's strategic mission (Adeniji, Osibanjo, & Abiodun, 2013). Organizational change strategies may describe an underlying need for improvement in organizational development associate to organizational development not sure (Christensen, 2014).

Organizational development is a planned organization-wide effort to increase organizational effectiveness through knowledge and technology (Christensen, 2014). Organizational development focuses on making effective change using three key elements (a) the change agent, (b) the client, and (c) the intervention (Nasir, Abbas, & Zafar, 2014). Organizational development is necessary for the doctoral study because a relationship may exist between the creation of best practice solutions and organizational effectiveness.

Successful organizational change depends on (a) executives, (b) senior leaders, (c) managers, and (d) other corporate professionals (Nasir et al., 2014). Some approaches to successful organizational change concentrates on leadership, and the key agents of the organization who can navigate the organization through a change process (Caldwell,

2013). Another approach to successful organizational change is through the creation of good communication and information strategies within the organization, through the creation of a change process (Kroll, 2016). Understanding external global factors requires organizations adapt business strategies to their environments of activities to maintain their competitive advantage and business growth (Adeniji et al., 2013).

The main goal of organizational change is effective organizational development. Grady and Grady (2013), advised that 68% of all organizational change strategies fail to deliver expected results or meet certain objectives. Organizational change through development is a discipline for improving an organization's problem-solving and renewal processes through the collaboration of change agents, guided by theories of human behavior and methodologies of action research (Karakas, 2009). Therefore, the (a) examination of best practice solutions, (b) a review of communication strategies, (c) change processes, and (d) employee attitudes supported the problem statement and purpose for research (Caldwell, 2013).

Some problems with organizational change focus on resistance to change by employees, often-labeling resistance as a process that delays the change process (Smith, 2014). This delay in the change process affects implementation and increases cost. Organizations may consider the adoption of mutual dependence, trust, and shared goals as positive influencers of performance (Omar, Davis-Sramek, Fugate, & Mentzer, 2012). Some drivers associated with the resistance to organizational change are (a) economic

fears, (b) uncertainty, (c) inconvenience, (d) impact on social functions, and (e) the impact on internal processes (Karakas, 2009).

Organizational leaders must recognize the importance of understanding the effects of organizational change when evaluating critical aspects of common workplace situations overlooked by senior management (Christenson, 2014). Karakas (2009) advised that the current business environment relates to words such as (a) fluid, (b) flexible, (c) adaptive, (d) dynamic, and (e) evolving. The choice of words is a change from industrial terms, such as (a) hierarchy, (b) top-down, (c) clockwork, (d) static, and (e) machine. The differences in terminology represent a change in how organizational leaders view their business models and how the terms support a sustainable future (Caldwell, 2013).

The current business environment requires organizations to adapt to change strategies, designed to stretch and redefine the (a) knowledge, (b) skill, and (c) abilities of employees (Omar et al., 2012). Automotive manufacturing senior leaders must have a thorough understanding of how to recognize and manage the human aspect of the transition (Karakas, 2009). According to Adeniji et al. (2013) leaders should be aware that human characteristics are critical elements associated with a change process. Individuals often go through the change process to eliminate the past and embrace a new beginning. Leaders can focus on a holistic approach that includes social transitions, ultimately, helping the organization embrace change (Krzakiewicz, 2013).

One process essential for organizational development is that firms recognize all leaders are change agents and part of the change process (Karakas, 2009; Omar et al., 2012). Change management comes from the middle of the organization, as much as from the top management (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013). Academic researchers emphasize four-change management roles remain within an organization and include: (a) change initiators, (b) change implementers, (c) change facilitators, and (d) change recipients (Karakas, 2009). These four roles reflect the innovative modern-day economy and the application of workplace tuning, reorienting, and restructuring to maintain a competitive advantage (Krzakiewicz, 2013).

One key element essential for organizational development is for firm leaders to understand how organizational development impacts organizational change and the role of the change agents (Karakas, 2009). When analyzing organizational change within the automotive manufacturing environment, organizational change is the link between (a) flexible work specializations, (b) innovations in lean production, and (c) the introduction of total quality management (Bryson, Barth, & Dale-Olsen, 2013). Organizational change is an intentional effort designed to make differences in the organizational work setting for improving employee development and organizational performance (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011).

Another key to organizational change centered on the evaluation of organizational sustainability and how organizations may review their (a) processes, (b) human capital talent, and (c) resources within an evolving 21<sup>st</sup>-century environment (Christensen &

Cornelissen, 2011). When evaluating organizational effectiveness, organizational leaders operating inside the 21<sup>st</sup> century must know how to assess and revise their organizational change strategies to maintain sustainability (Karakas, 2009). A key to strategy implementation is the actions of front-line personnel, often tasked with implementing change strategies.

For the doctoral study, a review of strategic implementation was necessary because it allowed for an examination of best practice solutions created by automotive manufacturing senior leaders for the front-line personnel and the effectiveness of communication associated with these best practice solutions. Front-line manager perceptions of strategy execution/implementation may hinder or support the sustainability of organizational strategies (Caldwell, 2013). The development of best practice solutions by senior leaders supports business growth and organizational success (Barton & Ambrosini, 2013). Grady and Grady (2013) noted 68% of organizational strategies fail within the business environment. Grady and Grady recommended practitioners evaluate organizational theories to understand the context, perceptions, and temporal measurability.

Jian (2011) offered a different perspective, contending that researchers of organizational change desire an interest in understanding the dynamic, open-ended process of an organization beginning with change transformation and organizational survival after change implementation. Jian contended that this concept supported an expert's use of the term *synoptic or comprehensive approach to change*. A

comprehensive approach to change interprets change as differences between states while overlooking the flow of change associated with the process of transformation (Krzakiewicz, 2013).

Hanson (2013) advised that human resources (HR) policies must be able to manage change initiative and associate the change strategies with the skill sets of current employees. For the 21<sup>st</sup> century, human resources personnel must have the knowledge, skills, and abilities when adapting to change and when needed leverage opportunities successfully (Shin, Taylor, & Seo, 2012). This shift in leadership application includes impacts on the public-sector environments (Holmes, 2012). Municipalities and local governments now want to examine leadership programs considered a requirement for private organizations, now necessary for public sector sustainability (Grant, 2012). Government leaders now realize the importance of (a) business strategies, (b) talent development, and (c) organizational change to maintain sustainability (Amin & Karim, 2013).

Grant (2012) suggested that a shift in focus by municipalities and local governments supports the importance of sustainability, growth, and profitability for all business entities. Holmes (2012) concluded that all business leaders, private or public, improve the ranks of all personnel through (a) leadership development, (c) succession planning, and (c) human capital management if their agencies wish to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Growth and profitability connect to the application of best practice solution

development and implementation of the solutions for effective organizational performance (Amin & Karim, 2013)

Another measure of sustainability connects to environmental understanding and the impact on strategy implementation (Epstein, 2008). According to Tavares and Mamede (2011) concluded that tension exists between the global nature of environmental problems and the need for action at the local government level. This change fosters a new model for sustainable urban governance, which promotes (a) economic growth, (b) welfare, and (c) central policy objectives (Tavares & Mamede, 2011). This new paradigm for sustainable management faces opposition when initiatives fail to attract collaboration between different levels of government, private organizations, and nongovernment entities (Kalungu-Banda, 2011).

Kalungu-Banda (2011) argued the time has come for the business community to engage in a new level of organizational change. Kalungu-Banda (2011) advised business leaders to engage in a thinking partnership. This new partnership encourages individuals to reflect on something valuable, which leads to gaining a new understanding of organizational objectives (Amin, & Karim, 2013). This method also allows automotive manufacturing senior leaders to share new business strategies with employees and employees can learn how the strategies ultimately enhance their individual skill sets (Shin et al., 2012).



## **Communication Strategies**

Another important area of business development is the importance of business communication processes. Organizations operate in complex business environments, and leaders share the responsibility to derive an organizational direction through communication of a vision to stakeholders (Mayfield et al., 2015). When evaluating organizational change and its attachment to the execution of strategies, communication of the strategies is also a critical component (Caldwell, 2013).

Communication of strategies serves several major functions within an organization to influence the (a) control, (b) motivation, and (c) emotional expression of information (Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012). Communication of strategies fosters motivation by clarifying to employees their job responsibilities and workplace performance (Finkelstein & Fishbach, 2012). Andersen and Minbaeva (2013) suggested communication influences the notion that real leadership mattered for the survival and prosperity of organizations and recommended by the human resources community. Effective communication seems difficult to achieve when surveys indicate that 60–70 % of employees reported the most stressful aspect of their jobs is interacting with immediate supervisors regarding workplace duties (Vugt & Ronay, 2013).

According to Vugt and Ronay (2013), organizational leaders must determine the cause of this high failure rate. Scholarly research regarding change management theories suggested organizational change generates extreme resistance between employees and senior leaders hindering success rates (Christensen, 2014). Employees resist change

when they are unsure about the consequences (Shin et al., 2012). A key hindrance to the success rate is the lack of information and communication from senior leaders giving life to rumors and anxiety (Bryson et al., 2013).

Strong communication about organizational change and consequences can improve acceptance and reduce anxiety (Shin et al., 2012). The development of transparent communication and information strategies support successful change processes (Christensen, 2014). Another strategy requires the involvement of employees in the planning and implementation phase of the change process (Smith, 2014). This strategy by senior management can increase (a) employee interest, (b) motivation, and (c) support for organizational initiatives (Andersen & Minbaeva, 2013).

Studies found employees working in a secure environment take pride in their job duties and enjoy workplace relationships (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). Trustworthy environments also support open communication between senior leaders and front-line employees (Lewis, Laster, & Kulkarni, 2013). Managing employees effectively builds trust through positive communication efforts as well as demonstrating respect for employees and acting with integrity in all employee related matters (Shin et al., 2012). Researchers argue that employees trust their senior leaders to the extent they demonstrate (a) honesty, (b) transparency, (c) workplace support, and (d) a willingness to listen (Mishra et al., 2014).

Baker, Kan, and Teo (2011) defined the term collaborative networks as highly fluid constructs, dependent on ongoing social relations created to build (a) values, (b)

trust, and (c) commonality necessary for collective action among employees. A review of information sharing whether verbal or written can assist firms in understanding their communication policies. Crawford and Lepine (2013) recommended that management use small focus groups to gain a clearer understanding of employee needs and those small focus groups effectively support the completion of individual tasks and builds a collaborative workplace. Accordingly, Getha-Taylor and Morse (2013) suggested it was essential to understand how leadership has transformed over time and the steps necessary for developing future organizational leaders.

### **Organizational Commitment**

One important area of organizational change focuses on the impact of organizational commitment by employees. As the economy continues to undergo a social revolution due to a competitive business environment, firms are examining traditional bureaucratic structures (Gohar et al., 2015). The lessons from the industrial revolution suggest these policies created an atmosphere of poor working relationships between management and employees. Today organizations must ensure employees are (a) empowered, (b) work in a friendly environment, and (c) engaged in workplace strategies that promote trust and organizational commitment (Shin et al., 2012).

Nasir et al. (2014) suggested organizational commitment reflects an approach towards attainment and recognition for engagement, advising it is the fundamental goal of any organization. Organizational commitment also reflects an approach towards a mindset of attainment and recognition for engagement (Andersen & Minbaeva, 2013).

Organizational commitment is a fundamental goal of any organization. Organizational commitment is necessary because employees may become productive, loyal, and accept additional responsibilities towards tasks assigned by management (Gohar et al., 2015).

Human resources (HR) Personnel, offer a different perspective on workplace commitment. Human resources representatives have supported the implementation of best practice solutions that encourage motivation and commitment (Andersen & Minbaeva, 2013). An employee who does not feel inspired to act toward a particular target is non-motivated (Battistelli et al., 2013). Deci and Ryan (2000) introduced a self-determined theory as the perception of freedom, pro-activity, and autonomy of action. From this understanding, self-determination contributes to the conceptualization of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Self-determination theorizes the existence of several types of motivation, separated by the level of autonomy and freedom associated with behavior.

Allen and John (1990) developed a three-component model that included the concepts of (a) desire (affective), (b) obligation (normative), and (c) cost (continuance) which associated to organizational commitment (Battistelli et al., 2013; Chao-Chan & Na-Ting, 2014). The different forms of commitment support various mindsets, such as (a) desire, (b) perceived costs, and (c) the obligation to support a course of action (Battistelli et al., 2013). Affective commitment is the employee's emotional attachment and involvement in the organization (Chao-Chan & Na-Ting, 2014). Emotional attachment to a corporate body supports a strong belief and acceptance of the

organization's goals (Bakiev, 2013). Emotional attachment is a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the firm and a desire by the employee to remain associated with the organization.

Normative commitment refers to the employee's obligation to remain with the organization (Bakiev, 2013). Normative commitment connects with moral commitment. Employees attach to the organization regardless of the benefits the organization provides. Continuance commitment is the employee's perception of the impact of leaving the organization (Chao-Chan & Na-Ting, 2014). Continuance commitment focuses on the costs of leaving the organization. Employees may have an extreme continuance for commitment because leaving the organization would affect (a) retirement, (b) the cost of living, or (c) other benefits (Doh & Quigley, 2014).

Scholars suggested that the attachment to organizational commitment was possible when responsible leaders effectively leverage a stakeholder approach (Doh & Quigley, 2014). The stakeholder approach can influence others using a psychological or knowledge-based pathway. Leaders focus on (a) micro/individual, (b) team, (c) organizational, and (d) societal areas to improve organizational commitment efforts (Bakiev, 2013). Automotive manufacturing senior leaders can use the information from organizational commitment ideology to describe an employee's organizational bond and the possibility of employee turnover (Chao-Chan & Na-Ting, 2014).

Additional research on organizational commitment offers a different perspective, emphasizing the importance of a caring climate (Fu & Deshpande, 2014). Employees

learn appropriate workplace behaviors through climate perceptions (Bakiev, 2013).

Climate perceptions are the values and beliefs perceived by the organization's employees.

When describing a caring atmosphere, the focus is on what is best for the employees of the organization. Within a caring climate, organizational leaders will identify business problems efficiently and focus on strategies that promote efficiencies (Strand, 2014).

Additional research conducted by Doh and Quigley (2014) suggested business leaders consider their employees as essential stakeholders and business leaders use the relationship to generate motivation and creativity. At the same time, leaders will encourage diverse perspectives when approaching stakeholders hoping this leads to psychological safety and learning (Fu & Deshpande, 2014). At the organizational level, leaders using a stakeholder approach will build an inclusive and diverse culture by sharing and disseminating knowledge fostering a strong bond with external stakeholders (Bakiev, 2013). At the societal level, leaders who consistently apply a stakeholder approach can manage across cultural boundaries (Bigler & Williams, 2013).

When applying the concept of organizational commitment, research from the participants can offer insight into the commitment level of front-line managers and the impact on their leadership skills when executing strategies (Gohar et al., 2015). Some automotive manufacturing senior leaders may feel a strong connection to the organization's culture, policies, and react positively towards their employees (Bakiev, 2013). Other top leaders may experience a divide from the organization and react in a negative manner. The negative reaction by automotive manufacturing senior leaders can

lead to poor performance reviews and lack of support. Chief executive officers understanding of front-line manager commitment can offer insight into policies or programs necessary to improve engagement and organizational performance (Fu & Deshpande, 2014).

### **Leadership**

The final area of the literature review includes an examination of the role of leadership. The role of leadership refers to organizational behavior associated with the leader's ability to influence employee behavior (Hayyat, 2012). Leadership within organizations will always be vital components in the effectiveness of the organization when making an organizational change or implementing a strategy (McDermott, Conway, Rousseau, & Flood, 2013). Accordingly, leaders are catalysts for change and have the capacity to (a) enhance, (b) maintain, or (c) hinder employee performance based on their leadership abilities (Brown, 2014).

Early theorists studied leadership traits to ascertain personality characteristics of a successful leader (as cited in Brown, 2014). One of the principle theories of trait leadership is that leaders are born and not made. Research conducted by Stogdill (1948) suggested no consistent set of traits differentiate leaders from non-leaders. A person may exhibit leadership in one setting and fail to exhibit leadership in another setting (Dries & Pepermans, 2012). Leadership is not a quality a person acquires but conceptualizes as a relationship between people in social situations (Brown, 2014; Stogdill, 1948).

Leadership style theorists believed it is a leader's behavior rather than the leader's characteristics that determine employee performance (Brown, 2014). This belief by style theorists may support viewing leadership styles through various lenses, such as (a) transformational, (b) transactional, (c) autocratic, or (d) democratic. Through an examination of theories, both style and trait theorists follow a one-size-fits-all philosophy or one best way to leading approach (Dries & Pepermans, 2012).

According to Aarons, Ehrhart, Farahnak, and Sklar (2014), scholars believe leadership facilitates processes important in fostering (a) a supportive work climate, (b) positive employee attitudes, and (c) commitment to organizational change. Leadership includes the definition of the relationship between individuals and groups around common interests when the group behaves in a manner directed by the leader (Keskes, 2014; Rost, 1993). Strong leadership is vital in the creation of a collaborative network (Dries & Pepermans, 2012).

Existing research also introduced the concept of leader-member exchange theories as dyads that focus on the relationships among subordinates and leaders (Keskes, 2014). The implicit leadership theory includes an emphasis on subordinate perceptions of leader behaviors in contrast to theories, which maintains that leaders affect the performance of subordinates (Zhang, Wang, & Shi, 2012). The result from the relationship created is that leaders develop unique relationships with each of their individual followers. The quality of the relationships supports (a) trust, (b) respect, (c) loyalty, and (d) mutual obligations (Keskes, 2014).



Through scholarly research, another concept of leadership emerged regarding defining and understanding effective leadership. Effective leadership is the outcome generated by the followers and successful long-term performance of the leader's subordinates (Robbins & Judge, 2016). In accordance, an expansion of collaboration within an organization creates an opportunity for implementing and maintaining an effective leadership strategy (Bigler & Williams, 2013).

Additional research looks at the impact of leadership power. Leadership power includes a definition of an individual's potential influence over attitudes and behaviors (Bigler & Williams, 2013). Leadership power is the resource some leaders can use to exert influence. The implementation of an excellent strategy serves as a test site for internal on the job programs designed for leadership development (Dries & Pepermans, 2012). Leaders who understand power can influence the behavior of their followers with different leadership styles and approaches (Keskes, 2014).

Although scholarly research has produced many leadership theories, there is little consensus on what defines effective leadership (Latham, 2014). Research conducted by Burns (1978) affirmed the relationship between leaders and followers as a series of exchanges of gratification designed to maximize gains for the organization and individuals. Burns labeled a universal approach to transactional leadership based on a quid pro quo approach (as cited in Stevens, 2011). Burns (1978) defined the approach as follows: The follower and leader each recognize that the other possesses something of

value. The leader and follower engage in exchanges, and these exchanges form the basis for the leader/follower relationship.

Burns (1978) introduced another kind of leadership, which he labeled *transforming*. The transforming leader has a more expansive and global leadership role (Latham, 2014). The transforming leader understands the leader's job as a radical commitment to the growth of the organization's employees (Zhu, Cooper, Thomson, De Cieri & Zhao, 2013). The effects from a transforming leader influence a work environment where employees become more (a) efficient, (b) stronger, and (c) smarter individuals in all aspects of life through a transforming process (Stevens, 2011).

Burns (1978) concluded that the transforming leader views their job duties as a responsibility to move their employees toward becoming fully autonomous moral agents and leaders respectively (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015; Stevens, 2011). Scholars of transformational leadership theories believe this type of leadership approach within the business environment, generates a greater degree of personal fulfillment and satisfaction for the leader (Zhu et al., 2013). This belief in the capabilities of transformational leadership creates a winning combination of strategy execution for all corporate stakeholders and helps to maintain solid organizational performance.

However, Bass (1985) offered a different perspective on leadership with the introduction of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). This questionnaire supports Burn's description of transforming leadership (Avolio, Bass, & Jung 1999; Bass 1985). The basis for Bass's conceptualization of transactional and transformational

leadership theories focused on seven leadership factors. The factors include: (a) charisma, (b) inspirational, (c) intellectual stimulation, (d) individualized consideration, (e) contingent reward, (f) management-by-exception, and (g) laissez-faire leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1999; Bass, 1985; Effelsberg & Solga, 2015).

In addition, Bass (1985) in subsequent writings concluded that charismatic and inspirational leadership were often not distinguishable and reduced his original multifactor model to six factors (Avolio & Bass, 1999). Researchers reviewed Bass's model, after a change in Bass's original theory and offered several critiques including a modification of the six-factor model (Avolio & Bass, 1999). The recommendations by scholars surfaced when the scholars could not replicate the six-factor leadership model (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015). The results of the scholars' research, led to a recommendation for a collapse of the primary leadership factors into higher order factors such as transformational leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1999).

A focus of this doctoral study is to examine transformational, transactional and autocratic leadership associated with the development of best practice solutions by automotive manufacturing senior leaders when helping front-line managers execute business strategies. Corporate leaders working within the automotive industry may use this information to determine if adjustments in (a) leadership styles, (b) workplace relationships, or (c) leadership training, impacts business growth and sustainability through the creation of best practice solutions (Zhu et al., 2013).

## **Transformational Leadership**

Listed below is now a review of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership theories have received significant research attention over other research methods (Kelloway et al., 2012). Transformational leadership is a process by which a person interacts with others and creates a solid relationship (Tourish, 2014). This relationship results in trust that increases motivation, for both the leader and the follower (Schuh, Zhang, & Tian, 2013). The essence of transformational leadership theories suggests leaders transform their employees through their dynamic nature and charismatic personalities (Li, Chiaburu, Kirkman, & Xie, 2013). The rules are flexible guided by group norms, and these group norms provide a sense of belonging to employees because they can easily identify with the leader and its purpose (Keskes, 2014).

As a result, Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) opened the door to significant research on transformational leadership. Burns (1978) focused on the relationship between leaders and employees, as exchanges of gratification designed to maximize gains for both interested parties. The relationship between leaders and subordinates describes a series of exchanges designed to maximize gains for the organization and individuals (Kelloway et al., 2012). Bass (1985) focused on transformational and transactional leadership with the creation of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire.

After a review of the theory, Bass's (1985) seven multifactor model represented only six factors. The development of Bass's (1985) six-factor leadership model existed based on preliminary results obtained by surveying US Army field officers who were

asked to rate their superior officers using the MLQ. Five leadership factors and the laissez-faire factor reported by Bass (1985) included (a) charismatic-inspirational leadership, (b) intellectual stimulation, (c) individualized consideration, (d) contingent reward, (e) management by exception, and (f) laissez-faire.

In the current business environment, contemporary organizations must be able to execute an innovate to achieve success (McKnight, 2013). Organizations that focus on one key business area reduce their chance of survival (Latham, 2014). Organizations that understand the six leadership factors can use the information to build effective employee networks (Bigler & Williams, 2013). In comparison, the absence of effective leadership may be the driving force reducing organizational effectiveness (Li et al., 2013).

Scholarly research on transformational leadership describes it as a collection of four dimensions (Grant, 2012). The four dimensions include: (a) leader behavior, (b) motivation, (c) influence, (d) stimulation and consideration. Transformational leadership, may not motivate higher performance among employees and possibly the focus shifts from job task characteristics, to social characteristics of the jobs based on interpersonal interactions and workplace relationships (Li et al., 2013).

Grant (2012) recommended that the focus shift from job task characteristics to social characteristics of the jobs based on interpersonal interactions and workplace relationships. Grant proposed that leaders could enhance the perceptions of prosocial impact, by engaging in transformational behaviors modifying the connections between employees and the beneficiaries of their work. This action leads to improvements in

collaborative leadership and development (Bigler & Williams, 2013). When applying the concept of transformational leadership to the doctoral study, information may identify how the role of leadership influences the development of best practice solutions for the front-line managers (Li et al., 2013).

Successful leaders gain status and legitimacy by demonstrating their competence and their loyalty to popular groups (Browde, 2011). French and Holden (2012) recommended practitioners examine the relationship between CEO performance and positive psychology. Leaders, who can view the crisis as a method for introducing positive organizational change, receive a stronger impact than leaders that view change as a method to implement aggressive control over their agencies (French & Holden, 2012). The strength of the agency's performance connects with the skill sets of the management staff leading the firm (Andrews & Boyne, 2010).

Bigler and Williams (2013) suggested using collaborative leadership strategies throughout the organization, provides an opportunity for implementing and maintaining an effective strategy. Leadership is an excellent strategy, which serves as an internal test for on-the-job leadership development (French & Holden, 2012). Groves and La Rocca (2011) proposed that transformational leadership exist as a process built on a set of ethical values, compared to transactional leadership and its relationship to ethics and social responsibility.

Additional scholarly research on the term transformational leadership, recommended transformational leadership describes four components, (a) idealized

influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) collaboration (Xu & Cooper-Thomas, 2011). Idealized influence supported trust and identification with leadership. Inspirational motivation allowed leaders an opportunity to challenge employee performance. When leadership motivates employees, the employees are likely to support organizational changes with behaviors that meet the demands of their leaders (Groves & La Rocca, 2011). Intellectual stimulation allows leaders to create an atmosphere that supports creativity. Collaboration allows leaders to support employee performance (Bigler & Williams, 2013). The application of the four components demonstrates an alignment of employee values and goals alongside organizational objectives, supporting employee identification (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015).

Effelsberg and Solga (2015) suggested organizational identification could predict transformational leadership behavior, through the examination of a person's psychological attachment to their organization. With this theory, highly identified individuals have a feeling of belongingness and tend to experience (a) organizational failures, (b) successes, (c) visions, (d) goals, and (e) interests (Schuh et al., 2012). Employees with no psychological attachment to their organizations may fail to meet expectations and have no incentive for supporting the organization's vision or mission (Groves & La Rocca, 2011).

Schuh et al. (2012) suggested highly identified leaders could create and articulate an attractive vision of their organization's mission, goals, and objectives through motivation. Leaders can help employees view their job duties as meaningful and connect

the functions to organizational strategies (Bigler & Williams, 2013). Leaders who feel inspired by their organization's vision can inspire passion, which removes individual focus to one that supports a team emphasizing the greater good (Li et al., 2013).

Singh (2013) described leadership as a social skill which makes people respect others and traces intelligence factors such as (a) attitude, (b) confidence, and (c) trustworthiness. Li et al. (2013) suggested that the appointment of a leader provided an essential component for organizational success. The complexities of organizations require a new focus on collaborative leadership and a sense of community where the focus of leadership is prevalent for organizational success (Groves & La Rocca, 2011). The concept of transformational leadership may identify an applicable strategy that leads to the effective implementation of organizational objectives (Bigler & Williams, 2013).

### **Transactional Leadership**

The next section provides an overview of transactional leadership. Transactional leadership includes a description of an exchange between the leader and their employees in which the leader establishes specific goals, monitors progress, and selects reward expected after goal achievement (Keskes, 2014). These exchanges allow leaders to (a) accomplish performance objectives, (b) complete required tasks, (c) maintain current organizational situations, (d) motivate followers, and (e) adjust personal behaviors towards compliance with organizational rules (Keskes 2014; Zehira, Sehitoglu, & Erdogan, 2012).



Transactional leadership applies rationality when solving problems and making decisions. Rationality in general and decision rationality are important aspects of organizational leadership (Riaz & Khalili, 2014). Rational decisions involve objectively (a) collecting, (b) analyzing, and (c) evaluating information before making decisions, supporting a relationship between knowledge management and leadership (Keskes, 2014). Scholars believe transactional leaders are effective at operating within an existing system and efficient when providing feedback to employees (Du, Swaen, Lindgreen, & Sen, 2013).

Transactional leadership also consists of several different concepts. The concepts are (a) contingent reward, (b) active management by exception, and (c) passive management by exception (Keskes, 2014). Contingent reward puts forth a result of the developmental plan, which explains why employees desire success (Du et al., 2013). When automotive manufacturing senior leaders receive desired results, the leaders reward their employees for good performance. Also, automotive manufacturing senior leaders who focus on monetary rewards often ignore creativity and innovation. Active management occurs when a leader takes corrective action based on results (Riaz & Khalili, 2014).

Another term associated with transactional leadership is passive management. Passive management is the avoidance of leadership behaviors (Avolio & Bass, 1999). Management avoids making decisions and demonstrates a passive indifference to the completion of tasks and leading employees (Du et al., 2013). Leadership behaviors when

ignored, allow employees to create individual goals and plans (Keskes, 2014). This action can negatively influence organizational effectiveness and supports research on the failure of organizational strategies (Hargis, Watt, & Piotrowski, 2011).

Existing literature includes a contrast and criticism of transactional leadership. Burns (1978) argued that transactional leadership practices encourage a short-term exchange between the leader and a follower. The transactional approach is always susceptible because leadership is a mechanistic, bureaucratic procedure (Stevens, 2011). Some scholars alluded; transactional leadership relationships are simple temporary exchanges of gratification and often result in resentment between the participants (McCleskey, 2014). Transactional leadership also utilizes a one-size-fits-all approach that disregards situational and contextual factors related to organizational challenges (Hargis et al., 2011). When applying to the doctoral study, automotive manufacturing senior leaders may provide insight on how transactional leadership hinders or supports the implementation of organizational strategies.

### **Autocratic Leadership**

The final leadership style, identified for the study is autocratic leadership. Autocratic leaders are (a) arbitrary, (b) controlling, (c) power-oriented, and (d) closed-minded (Lopez & Ensari, 2014). Autocratic leaders make all the decisions for their employees. Autocratic leaders also do not solicit input from employees when making decisions and have little concern for employee welfare (Nwibere, 2013).

Autocratic leadership hinders employee outcomes such as job satisfaction.

Autocratic leadership supports employee burnout and reduces (a) self-determination, (b) creativity, and (c) autonomy (Chou, 2012). Autocratic leadership may also decrease employee sense of control and goal striving. Autocratic leaders provide employees the necessary information to accomplish daily tasks (Lopez & Ensari, 2014). Autocratic leaders offer rewards for compliance to workplace rules and punishment for employees who are defiant (Nwibere, 2013).

In comparison to transformational leaders, autocratic leaders are less concerned with emotional responses of (a) employees, (b) corporate structures, and (c) task orientation (Lopez & Ensari, 2014). When examining this style of leadership against the problem statement, autocratic leaders may not believe best practice solutions are necessary (Nwibere, 2013). Also, autocratic leaders may not believe a problem exists in the organization (Chou, 2012). Autocratic leaders may believe their decisions are in the best interest of the organization.

Per academic scholars, a vital challenge exists within the leadership field for developing leaders (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015; McCleskey, 2014). Business leaders must review their strategies and determine if the policies identified support (a) profitability, (b) growth, and (c) sustainability (Du et al., 2013). Autocratic leadership may hinder growth and development because the automotive manufacturing senior leader makes the decisions and may ignore the development of employees (Chou, 2012).

A conclusion from the literature review, suggested transformational and transactional leadership styles collectively, support an understanding of leadership perceptions necessary for senior leaders when designing best practice solutions that help front-line managers execute organizational strategies (Keskes, 2014). A significant challenge for senior leaders is defining the best strategy which leads to the greatest competitive advantage, maintaining profitability and sustainability

### **Transition**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore what senior leaders use as best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute business strategies (Bigler & Williams, 2013). Section 1 provided an overview of the business problem and purpose of research. Section 1 includes a literature review with a focus on motivation, leadership styles, and change management theories. The literature review provides an examination of how these theories may help senior leaders understand their role in leading and providing solutions for the front-line managers working in their organizations. Section 2 covers the (a) role of the researcher, (b) selection of participants, (c) sampling methods, (d) data collection, and (e) ethical concerns that support the validity and integrity of the research. The information in this section supports the business problem and purpose of research identified for the study. Section 3 covers (a) the purpose of the study, (b) restatement of the research question, (c) a presentation of the findings, (d) implications of social change, (e) recommendations for action, (f) recommendations for future study, (g) reflections, and (h) a take-home message.

## Section 2: The Project

This section includes a detailed description of the methodology and design that I applied to the study. The section opens with the purpose statement and includes a discussion of the (a) participants, (b) research method, (c) research design, (d) population, and (e) data collection process. Section 2 also includes a description of relationships associated with the problem statement and participants related to the framework identified for the study. Section 2 concludes with details surrounding (a) the ethical basis for research, (b) protection of participant's rights, and (c) the informed consent guidelines.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore what automotive manufacturing senior leaders use as best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute business strategies. The targeted population included 20 senior management personnel employed by automotive manufacturing firms in the state of Michigan. The information may be useful in helping senior leaders address (a) product safety recalls, (b) improve customer experience, (c) streamline production, and (d) manage global trade issues.

The alignment of strategy execution and internal business structures are essential for automotive manufacturing organizations when coordinating activities that maintain (a) business growth, (b) sustainability, and (c) profitability (Su, Yang, & Yang, 2012). Yee et al. (2015) stated that a lack of organizational commitment and reductions in

motivation could affect an employee's ability to remain engaged to complete daily job duties. Exploring automotive manufacturing senior leaders creation of best practice solutions for front-line managers may help support more successful strategy implementations that improve revenue and business growth (Bigler & Williams, 2013). The implication for social change encourages automotive manufacturing senior leaders to examine how the use of best practice solutions for front-line managers may contribute to new leadership insights that enhance employee engagement and corporate profitability.

### **Role of the Researcher**

When engaging in research, it is important to report all data and remove (a) personal biases, (c) perceptions, and (c) beliefs (Tufford & Newman, 2012). The researcher focuses on a particular topic to guide the study and derives findings that provide the basis for additional research (Moustakas, 1994). Reliability in qualitative research is reassurance that another researcher investigating the same issue using the same data, would derive the same or similar findings (Ali & Yosof, 2011). Therefore, to achieve reliability, the researcher must explain the methodological framework and the range of strategies used in the study (Marsh & Rossman, 2011).

My role as the researcher required that I, throughout the phase of conducting research, (a) maintained respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice as outlined in the Belmont Report (The Belmont Report, 1979). Respect for participants ensured that the participants are taking part in the research process voluntarily when providing information (The Belmont Report, 1979). Beneficence requires the researcher protect the

participant from harm (The Belmont Report, 1979). Protecting the participant from harm may be accomplished through protection and coding of participant data. Finally, justice requires all participants receive equal treatment. I explained to the participants the purpose of the study, potential risks, consequences, and benefits. I also assured the participants of their confidentiality and protection of the information, based on the ethical standards for researching associated to the Belmont report.

My role as the researcher was to gain an understanding of strategy execution by automotive manufacturing senior leaders by exploring if they created a set of best practice solutions to help their front-line managers. My role as the researcher required I maintained a role of an ideas person throughout the study, interpreting how participants come to develop certain meanings and practices relative to their experiences. An additional role of the researcher or scholar is to eliminate or minimize any bias that may affect data collection and analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

During the data collection process, I used a reflective journal to record all actions related to collecting, analyzing, and reporting the data to minimize bias. Hayman, Wilkes, and Jackson (2012) concluded that journals might reduce the potential for bias in research by providing a method for the researcher to contemplate on personal beliefs, values, and assumptions that could potentially influence results. Tufford and Newman (2012) suggested the maintenance of a journal enhances the researcher's ability to sustain a reflective viewpoint. In addition, a reflective journal supported the evaluation of information shared by the participants and the researcher (Holly, 2014).

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) concluded that a researcher's role is that of an insider or an outsider. When a researcher is an insider, the researcher shares the characteristic, role, or experience under study with a participant (Tufford & Newman, 2012). When a researcher is an outsider, the unity among participants may affect information provided by the participants, affecting the research results (Unluer, 2012). For this study, my role was both an insider with prior work experience, as well as an outsider who understands the industry. Previous professional experience in the automotive industry provided an understanding of the automotive work environment.

Although I have previous experience and contacts in the automotive sector, an interview protocol provides a procedural guideline for managing the interview process. According to Jacob and Furgerson (2012), an interview protocol becomes a procedural guideline for directing qualitative researchers through the interview process. The interview protocol included a script I used before the interview, the questions I asked during the interview and a script I used at the conclusion of the interview (see Appendix A). The use of an interview protocol helped control my reactions to the participant's responses and mitigated the effect of bias

A nonprobability sampling method uses elements for the sample based on the judgment of the researcher (Daniel, 2012). According to Rao (2012), a participant's role of a purposeful sampling group through knowledge and contribution can assist with comprehensive research and the results. For this doctoral study, my goal was to use research to explore best practice solutions created by automotive manufacturing senior



leaders to help front-line managers satisfy specific inclusion and exclusion criteria related to the problem statement and participation in the study (Grady & Grady, 2013). By following the interview protocol, I covered all relevant topics in the same guided manner with every participant.

### **Participants**

The qualifying criterion for involvement in the study included the following: (a) 18 years of age, (b) currently working in the United States automotive manufacturing industry and (c) a senior leader steering, supporting, and executing organizational strategies. Age, diversity, gender, education, and work experience of the participants provided a variety of perceptions associated with (a) leadership, (b) motivation, (c) and execution of organizational strategies (Grady & Grady, 2013). The participants also had the authority to provide information and participate in the study.

I selected participants based on a single case within multiple locations. A researcher can conduct qualitative research with a single unit having multiple locations (Yin, 2012). When focusing on participants, Rocha Pereira (2012) suggested that a qualitative descriptive study sample size ranges between 5 to 25 participants. When focusing on the sample size, Rao (2012) noted that sample sizes for descriptive studies should reflect the population studied and a sample size of 20 was sufficient. Through a follow-up process with participants, 20 individuals agreed to participate in the study. The individuals selected had prior and current experience as automotive senior management leaders and able to participate in the interview process (Bernard, 2013).

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I sent a letter to the human resources department, as an invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix D). After receiving a signed letter of cooperation from the human resources department (see Appendix E) the human resources department provided each prospective participant a copy of the study introduction letter (see Appendix F). The human resources department provided me the email addresses of the individuals who received the letter so I could follow-up. After follow-up emails, 20 automotive manufacturing senior leaders provided their consent to participate in the interview process. After participants had agreed to participate in the study, I coordinated the interview times, locations, and all required procedures to maintain the integrity of the research process.

### **Research Method and Design**

This section discusses the qualitative research method and design used in the study. This section includes justifications for the method and design related to the problem and purpose statement. This qualitative descriptive study allowed me to explore how senior leaders use best practice solutions to help front line managers execute business strategies. The results from the study may contribute additional information on how best practices may lead to effective (a) employee engagement, (b) business growth, and (c) organizational improvements.

### **Research Method**

There are three methods suitable for a doctoral study: quantitative,

qualitative, and mixed methods (Bernard, 2013). The goal of a qualitative methodology allowed for the expansion of knowledge through an understanding of shared experiences (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). The qualitative research method supported the problem statement, allowing me to explore whether senior leaders created a set of best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute organizational strategies (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

Qualitative research helps researchers (a) describe, (b) decode, and (c) translate the meaning of a naturally occurring experience in the social world (Reybold, Lammert, & Stribling, 2013). Qualitative descriptive research is a categorical alternative for inquiry, providing the researcher several methods for the translation of data (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). Existing research on this topic stated a strong reason for choosing a qualitative method is that qualitative researchers may acquire a timelier response than researchers utilizing quantitative research designs (O’Kane & Cunningham, 2013).

Qualitative and quantitative research methods support different research findings. Qualitative research allows for a broad range of interpretative models to evaluate the responses obtained from the participants (Bailey, 2014). Quantitative research measures outcomes in numbers and seeks out new information (Symonds & Gorard, 2010). A quantitative research format would have focused on a hypothesis and limited the study to one measure (Bernard, 2013). Based on results from a quantitative research method, quantitative research did not meet the needs as a research method for this study.

Qualitative research allowed me to gain in-depth understanding of participants' experiences based on their perceptions of best practice solutions (Patton, 2015)

### **Research Design**

Research designs are reflective of the researcher because the researcher determines how they will approach a study (Maxwell, 2013). Another method associated with qualitative research is the use of qualitative descriptive studies. Qualitative descriptive studies draw from a naturalistic inquiry which denotes a commitment to studying something in a natural state (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). This descriptive format supports the proposed doctoral research.

Husserl and Heidegger (Hopkins, 2013), considered early philosophers of phenomenological methodologies focused research on a descriptive phenomenological approach (Gill, 2014). The descriptive phenomenological design requires information to be explored based on the perceptions of the participants. Husserl focused research on a descriptive phenomenological approach, which sought to describe the essence of a personal experience (Gill, 2014; Moran, 2000).

Husserl stated that the term phenomenology defined two key mechanisms: a new descriptive method making a breakthrough in philosophy at the turn of the century and *a priori science* resulting from it (Gill 2014; Hopkins 2013). Husserl labeled his descriptive method as *reduction* and the term *a priori scientific* knowledge independent of experience (Husserl 1973; Moran, 2000). Husserl also suggested that reductions require

bracketing when disconnecting from the natural attitude of the routine life (Husserl, 1973).

The term reductions, in this example, essentially created a filtered phenomenon uninhibited from everyday assumptions (Gill, 2014). Husserl described his descriptive method as a reduction, which highlights the analytical process for some descriptive methodologies (Hopkins, 2013). The attitude of analysis includes the adoption of reduction, a psychological perspective requiring a special sensitivity to the phenomenon researched (Moran, 2000).

The overarching research question helped determine what senior leaders created as best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute business strategies (Xiaojun & Venkatesh, 2013). The experiences of the automotive manufacturing senior leaders associated with their length of employment provided data on how senior leaders developed best practice solutions that supported leadership and direction for critical personnel while executing business strategies. The information may benefit the automotive industry when analyzing business practices associated with (a) 2012 product safety recalls, (b) government regulations, and (c) customer concerns.

A case study design was appropriate for the study. Case study research involves the study of a case within a real-world setting (Yin, 2014). Case study research includes a detailed question exploring why something happens (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Case study research also requires insight into related conditions, placing increased emphasis on the circumstances surrounding the experiences versus actual lived

experiences (Yin, 2014). Due to the requirement for comprehensive data and experiences associated with multiple participants, case study research was not selected for this study. Also, the researcher cannot act as an observer when attempting to solicit specific information associated with the central research question. The research method selected for the study focused on a question, based on the experience and perceptions of the participants.

The qualitative descriptive research design suits the needs of the study because the goal was to understand the impact of best practice solution implementation by senior leaders and the impact on front-line managers when executing organizational strategies. To support the research design and data saturation, I analyzed the data based on themes selected for the study. Through utilization of a descriptive design, rich data from the interviews provided appropriate responses to the overarching research question.

### **Population and Sampling**

A population defines a group supporting research through a coordinated effort (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormsto, 2013). The targeted population for this study included automotive manufacturing senior leaders working in the automotive manufacturing environment in Southeastern Michigan. This population's perception of creating best practice solutions for front-line managers provided information on (a) leadership, (b) workplace motivation, and (c) strategy execution. This population also influences the front-line manager's ability for success because these leaders execute the daily operation and management of the organization (Grady & Grady, 2013).

To help answer the central research question, the interview questions I asked the participants, focused on their experiences and perceptions related to best practice solutions and how these best practice solutions supported a front-line manager's ability to execute business strategies. Participants for this qualitative descriptive study shared their lived experiences in executing organizational business strategies (Flick, 2014). The population in the automotive industry allowed an evaluation of workplace leadership skills, required for the execution of organizational business strategies following (a) 2012 product safety issues, (b) lawsuits, and (c) global trade issues.

Xie, Wu, Lou, and Hu (2012) suggested descriptive studies, provide appropriate means of selecting participants using a purposeful sampling method. The process of population selection included a purposeful sampling of senior leaders employed for at least one year in the automotive manufacturing environment throughout southeastern Michigan. The length of employment for the senior leaders supported the general and specific problem statements, regarding the development of best practice solutions that may help their front-line managers execute business strategies (Conway & Monks, 2011). The data obtained from the senior leaders through the interview process allowed me to conduct a thorough analysis and synthesis of how best practice solutions, could help front-line managers execute business strategies (Flick, 2014).

For the doctoral study, a cohesive sampling process supported the study. Cohesive sampling allows the participants to come from the same group. (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). When members are part of the sample group, members validate

the theories identified for the proposed doctoral study (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Using members of the same group, also allowed me to review and analyze their data for common themes and new theories based on the participant's perception of leadership skill sets and best practice solution development for front-line managers (Flick, 2014).

To engage potential participants, I contacted human resources managers working in the automotive industry. I provided these managers copies of my invitation letter for participation (see Appendix D). While adhering to Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements approved for my study, I asked the human resources managers for a letter of cooperation (see Appendix E) and to share my study invitation letter with the automotive manufacturing senior leaders working for their organizations. I was successful in obtaining support and participation from an organization. This organization signed the letter of cooperation and shared my letter of invitation with their senior leadership staff. The organization also provided me a copy of their email addresses, so I could follow up with the participants. After the automotive manufacturing senior leaders had responded to the invitation letter provided by the human resources manager; I emailed the consent form to them for review and signature.

I used purposeful sampling through the selection of the population to support the study. Qualitative sampling allows researchers to select a small unit of specialists to represent a population on a key subject (Strand, 2013). Accordingly, Rocha Pereira (2012) suggested a good sample size ranges between five to 25 participants. Qualitative sampling helps researchers confirm variation, which describes a consensus of information



using a systematic process (Trotter II, 2012). Twenty individuals agreed to participate in the study.

O'Reilly and Parker (2013) defined data saturation as a stage in the research process where all relevant information on the research topic is received. Rohde and Ross-Gordon (2012) suggested the number of participants depends on the variation of the (a) people, (b) phenomenon, and (c) setting when achieving saturation. I interviewed 20 participants, and the interviews continued until data saturation ensured no new information or experiences appeared from the participants (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013).

To maintain confidentiality, I assigned each participant a code of P#. Interviews with the participants occurred in a setting where participants felt comfortable to answer the interview questions (Appendix B). Follow-up probing questions varied per the interview question and responses provided by the participants. The purpose of the probing questions created an atmosphere where the participant could expound on their experience.

I used Researchware data analysis software to input and store data for coding and exploration of themes. I started the process by transcribing all participant interviews. Files were recorded using a data recorder and after each interview was completed, copied to a zip drive for additional storage and protection. I saved all audio files by alphanumeric codes and in my journal, documented their names to ensure the right

recording would be provided to the correct participant during the transcript review process.

I used transcript review to ensure that I had captured the meaning of each participant's response. I saved the participant's interview by alphanumeric code names and referred to my journal to double check the right interview transcript connected to the right participant for review. I shared a copy of the interview transcript with each participant for their approval and validation. This process served as the transcript review. The participants validated their information. This process also provided an opportunity to identify whether new information existed. After receiving each participant's approval of the data collected, I coded the data using data analysis software. During this process, no new information was received. All participants agreed and signed off after reviewing their transcribed interview.

### **Ethical Research**

I adhered to all ethical elements presented in the Belmont Report. The ethical elements require respect for (a) persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Belmont Report, 1979). Respect for persons incorporates two ethical elements. First, I treated individuals as autonomous agents and persons with diminished autonomy including their right to protection (Belmont Report, 1979). Beneficence required I treat individuals in an ethical manner that respects their decisions and protects them from harm. The third element is justice and demands that when conducting research, I adhere to a sense of fairness when

conducting research (Belmont Report, 1979). To protect participants, respect their rights, and build trust I assigned a code of P# throughout the interview process. Interviews occurred in a setting where participants felt comfortable to provide detailed responses to 7 open-ended interview questions. I also assigned identifiers throughout the study and when presenting the findings from the research.

Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of this study, # 11-14-16-0386793 ensures the study complies with ethical standards regarding human participants. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) includes responsibility for guaranteeing that all Walden University research complies with the school's ethical standards and supports federal regulation (Center for Research Quality, 2015). After obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I sent letters to human resource managers, asking for their assistance in gaining access to participants for the study, based on participant criteria.

Appendix A includes an interview protocol I used during the interview process. Participants were provided a copy of the informed consent form to agree to the terms of the study. No incentives existed for participating in the study. Participants also maintained the right to remove themselves from the study, by submitting an email or written correspondence at any time without penalty. The informed consent form included withdrawal procedures. The researcher's signature on the informed consent form ensured the participants that information obtained was for research purposes only.

The informed consent form also included the data collection method, via the use of a digital voice recorder and note taking. Verbal confirmation of the informed consent form and permission to record participants took place before each interview. I assigned the participants an identifier to protect their privacy. I ensured data saturation by creating an excel spreadsheet that transformed the transcription data into codes and themes found in the responses and throughout the evaluation of the data. Data collected for the study will be stored in a locked cabinet for 5 years in my home. At the end of the storage period, I will destroy data associated with the doctoral study.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The doctoral research process selected included the use of open-ended questions (see Appendix B) and follow-up probing inquiries to evaluate participant perceptions associated with the doctoral study problem and central research question (Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy, 2013). The qualitative descriptive research process starts with a researcher who has a curiosity, turned into a research question (Finlay, 2013). I acted as the data collection instrument using open-ended questions to obtain information through semi-structured interviews on best practices created by front-line managers (see Appendix B)

In qualitative research, data collection includes (a) interviews, (b) observations, and (c) written documents (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Member checking, a strategy used to optimize the validity of qualitative research findings may occur after the participant's review and concurrence with the interpretation of the interview responses

(Sandelowski, 2008). Member checking also allows for the introduction of new information, that will be revalidated for inclusion into the study. I enhanced the reliability and validity of the study by assuming responsibility as the only data collection instrument. Member checking supported how participant responses address the research question, gathering of data, and analysis of data (Harper & Cole, 2012). I addressed member checking after the participant's review and concurrence with my interpretation of their interview responses.

The interview location and time were coordinated with participants. The interview format consisted of (a) introductions, (b) explanation of intent, (c) research question for study, and (d) documentation of the study results (see Appendix A). According to Moustakas (1994), researchers should prepare a set of questions to use as a guide when engaging in a phenomenological interview process. I prepared a set of interview questions, that were opened ended and allowed participants to provide information based on their lived experiences.

Rocha Pereira (2012) suggested a descriptive sample size should range between five to 25 participants. Subsequently, saturation of data means that no new information or experiences appear from the participants (Marshall et al., 2013). I interviewed a targeted sample of participants, and the interviews continued until data saturation produced no new information.

The experience of the automotive manufacturing senior leaders in developing best practice solutions for front-line managers may provide an understanding of strategy

execution considering (a) product safety recalls, (b) economic, and (c) global issues affecting the automotive industry (Bigler & Williams, 2013). The information may assist chief executive leaders and other members of the leadership team, with leadership development and sustainability of organizational initiatives.

By using a predetermined set of questions, participants received a consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) 11-14-16-0386793. The study included assignment of an identifier for privacy protection of the participants. According to Ali and Yusof (2011) obtaining accurate data in research projects is important. In-depth interviews can provide reliable, in-depth data and a reinforcement of the instrument to mitigate issues (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The in-depth interviews also included probing questions to provide the right balance of rigor and freedom necessary to collect data (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). The application of probing questions to the participants allows the researcher to obtain enough data to answer the research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Also, the data collection format plays a significant role in shaping (a) future research, (b) practice, and (c) perception (O'Reilly & Parker 2013).

### **Data Collection Technique**

The primary data collection method identified for this study used semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, with open-ended questions (see Appendix B). To describe an experience adequately, researchers must unload the participant's individual lived experiences, by considering what participants say or do not say and reprise interview

representations (Finlay, 2013). It is important the researcher use research questions that provide participants an understanding of the research concepts and the relationships that exist between the concepts (Eide & Showwalter, 2012).

Opdenakker (2006) advised that advantages and disadvantages exist for face-to-face interviews. A disadvantage may include signals that lead the participants into providing biased responses. After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I pre-tested the interview questions with 2-3 individuals working in the automotive industry to ensure questions would be understood and the responses documented. A pretest of the interview questions can bring to light flaws in the design of the research process and provides the researcher an opportunity to address them (Arain, Campbell, Cooper, & Lancaster, 2010). Opdenakker (2006) suggested voice modulation and body language supplement to the responses of data supporting the interview questions. Hyden (2014) recommended researchers review instruments during the interview process as an additional method that identifies errors and allows the researcher an opportunity for correction.

I used Researchware data analysis software to input and store data for coding and exploration of themes. I started the process by transcribing all participant interviews. Files were recorded using a data recorder and after each interview was completed, copied to a zip drive for additional storage and protection. I saved all audio files by alphanumeric codes and in my reflective journal, documented their names to ensure the

right recording would be provided to the correct participant during the transcript review process.

I used a semistructured interview process designed to elicit opinions from participants (Yin, 2014). The open-ended questions allowed me to collect information on best practice solutions development and their support for front-line personnel. Each interview was conducted at the corporate office in a secure meeting place. The interview process began with an introduction about the importance of the study and value the interviewee provided by participating in the study (Appendix B).

To support the integrity of the data collection process I used member checking techniques. Member checking optimizes the validity of qualitative research after the participant's review and concurrence with their interview responses (Sandelowski, 2008). This process also supported data saturation, by ensuring no additional new information is received.

I used transcript review to ensure that I had captured the meaning of each participant's response. I saved the participant's interview by alphanumeric code names and referred to my journal to double check the right interview transcript connected to the right participant for review. I shared the participant's interview with them for their approval and validation. This process served as the transcript review. The participants validated their information. This procedure also provided an opportunity to identify whether new information existed. After receiving their approval of the transcribed data, I coded the data using data analysis software, and during the participant's review of their



interview data, no new information was received. All participants agreed and signed off after reviewing their transcribed interview.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Protocols for data collection are used to collect the data, organize the data, archive the information obtained during the data collection process. I provided identifiers to all participants and the partner organization participating in the study, using the following labels P1 and P2. The data collected and transcribed was placed on a thumb drive in a password-protected file. The written transcripts and audio recordings were encrypted on a password-protected thumb drive for storage, and I created archival and data storage procedures for the protection of the information for the required protection period.

Gibson, Benson, and Brand (2013) suggested that the researcher achieves confidentiality and anonymity of each participant by assigning generic codes. Yin (2014) recommended using several procedures that support (a) documentation, (b) collection and (c) archival of records. Ruivo (2014) recommended clear security measures based on the type of data collected.

I also had a reflective journal to record issues that might require clarification. A reflective journal can serve as a tool that supports the evaluation of information shared by the participants and the researcher (Holly, 2014). This journal can be useful in the coding and data interpretation phase (Finlay, 2013). According to Brown, McCracken & O’Kane (2011), reflective journals can also be used to help the learners engage in the material by examining their experiences.

A software package *HyperRESEACH* included the ability to analyze the audio files obtained from the in-depth interviews. *HyperRESEARCH* includes the capacity to analyze various forms of qualitative data whether audio, video, graphical or textual. The audio files and transcribed data obtained from the research will remain in a locked cabinet in my personal residence. I will destroy all physical and electronic data documents at the end of the fifth year of publication

### **Data Analysis**

Conducting qualitative research fosters complex data and requires sophisticated analysis to render meaningful interpretation (Luo, 2011). Data analysis involves a systematic review of data elements to interpret and to discover essential information (Finlay, 2013). Researchers must uncover the participant's individual experience by considering what participants say or do not say during the interview process when describing the experience (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014).

I used the modified van Kaam approach to perform analysis of the data and ensure reliability. When supporting reliability in qualitative research, the trustworthiness of data is crucial to the study (Golafshani, 2003). A modified van Kaam data analysis approach helped to provide a greater understanding of how the development of best practice solutions by senior leaders helped front-line managers execute organizational strategies (Moustakas, 1994). The modified van Kaam data analysis approach involved the following steps: (a) preliminary grouping of data, (b) eliminating irrelevant data, by testing each statement, (c) clustering the experiences into themes, creating core themes of

the experience, and (d) identifying themes by associating the themes against participant interview data (Moustakas, 1994). A conclusion supports the concept that a key goal of data analysis is to reveal key themes obtained during the data collection process (Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy, 2013).

I administered the modified van Kaam analysis approach through the development of an (a) interview protocol, (b) interview questions, and (c) review of data collected supporting analysis of the central research topic. The open-ended questions included an exploration of senior leaders' perceptions of best practice solutions and the implementation of the solutions for helping front-line managers. I also asked follow-up probing interview questions as needed for clarification of responses.

The first step in the data analysis process required I use semistructured interviews for data collection. Data analysis consists of (a) examining, (b) tabulating, or (c) testing evidence to address the initial propositions of a study (Yin, 2012). When conducting the interviews, I asked participants a unique set of interview questions, supporting a clear examination or evidence testing based on the research question (Harper & Cole, 2012).

Another component of data analysis involves coding of qualitative data. Qualitative coding is the process by which segments of data are connected to (a) the general idea, (b) theme, or (c) category (Glaser & Laudel, 2013). Whether coding manually or using software, devices support organization of data and ideas associated with it (Archibald, 2015). Coding enables easier categorization of data for (a)

similarities, (b) differences, (c) themes, (d) meanings and (e) relationships, an integral part of the analytic process (Bernard, 2013).

For the doctoral study, I used a bundled software package labeled *HyperRESEARCH* and *HyperTRANSCRIBE* to assist with the analysis of qualitative data. The bundled software supported (a) audio, (b) video, (c) graphical and (d) textual information (Researchware, 2015). The analysis procedure allowed for the interpretation of data in different ways and levels to connect (a) themes, (b) emotions, (c) actions, and (d) outcomes (Lewins & Silver, 2007). I used codes to help identify themes based on the research question and to identify new information that continued the need for data collection based on the participants' responses (Bernard, 2013). The codes also helped to pinpoint language and terminology used by participants (Glaser & Laudel, 2013).

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are essential when guaranteeing the credibility of the results of a study (Moustakas 1994). Noble and Smith (2015) suggested reliability is the basis researchers use to replicate studies with the anticipation of obtaining consistent findings. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) proposed that validity occurs after confirming the data represents the entire population.

#### **Reliability**

A goal of social science reveals processes that underlie observed social experiences (Boesch, Schwaninger, Weber, & Scholz, 2013). A qualitative study provides rich descriptions, supporting the purpose, design, and implementation ensuring

reliability. Gordon & Patterson, (13) inferred reliability occurs when the researcher establishes credibility by (a) describing the purpose of the study, (b) establishing a method for selecting participants, (c) data collection, (d) interpretation of the results, and (e) defining techniques that support validity.

A key component supporting reliability is a triangulation of the data.

Triangulation supports data completeness, cohesiveness and resides in a comprehensive explanation or holistic framework (Golafshani, 2003). Cox (2008) suggested triangulation of data combines information received from (a) difference sources, (b) different people, and (c) different times. Archibald (2015) suggested triangulation involves using multiple research methods, such as (a) interviews, (b) observations, or (c) analytic perspectives.

Discussions regarding data triangulation have been ongoing since Denzin's (1970) publications. Denzin suggested there were four forms of triangulation (Denzin, 1970). The four forms are (a) data triangulation, (b) methodological triangulation, (c) theoretical triangulation, and (d) investigator triangulation. Each method supports research reliability and validity. Investigator triangulation describes the use of different observers or interviews to balance out the subjective influences of individuals (Denzin). Theoretical triangulation allows the researcher to approach data from various theoretical angles used side by side to assess their usefulness (Archibald, 2015). Finally, methodological triangulation allows the researcher to maximize the validity of research by playing the methods against each other (Fan, 2013).

When reviewing the above triangulation methods, methodological triangulation supported the doctoral study. Methodological triangulation supports correlating data from multiple data collection methods (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Methodological triangulation also ensures data is rich in depth (Golafshani, 2003). In qualitative research, a key goal is to engage in research that provides for a deeper understanding, versus an examination of surface features (Harper & Cole, 2012). The methodology can link (a) issues, (b) theories, and (c) methods of an academic study or research program (Flick, Garms-Homolova, Herrmann, Kuck, & Rohnsch, 2012).

Dependability for qualitative research provides reassurance that someone else researching the same issue derives the same findings (Bernard, 2013). I explained the methodological framework and range of strategies used in the study. Dependability creates an audit trail of the activities and includes (a) the selection of participants, (b) data collection, (c) analysis of the data, and (d) presentation of the findings (Golafshani, 2003). Without an audit trail, dependability evades, and trustworthiness of the study weakened (Fan, 2013). Member checking allowed for the validity of the research findings obtained from the participant's review and concurrence with the interpretation of the interview responses (Sandelowski, 2008).

Member checking also aids in the dependability of the research process (Fan, 2013). In addition to member checking, a pre-test of the interview questions was conducted after receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The pretest allowed for the collection of information before conducting the actual research study

(Gibbs, 2012). The pre-test ensured that the interview questions asked participants were clearly understood and the data provided supported the central research question (Arain, Campbell, Cooper, & Lancaster, 2010).

To ensure transferability, readers should experience context wrapped in a superior design alignment, accurate sampling, and thorough data analysis procedures (Finlay, 2013). For this doctoral process, transferability took place with a solid definition of assumptions related to the fundamental research. The research goal was to explore the phenomenon of strategy execution by automotive manufacturing senior leaders and determine through data collection if these leaders had a set of best practice solutions when helping their front-line managers. I analyzed participants interview responses utilizing the modified van Kaam's method, to identify core themes based on responses.

Moustakas (1994) stated phenomenology is a solid research design for exploring the central research question that focuses on lived experience of a phenomenon. To support reliability and dependability of the data, the use of interview protocols increases the likelihood other researchers would attain the same conclusion given the same data and setting (Bernard, 2013). The participants and the researcher may have an opportunity to generate the narrative emerging from the interview process accuracy, which supports (a) member checking, (b) triangulation, and (c) reliability throughout the interview process (Fan, 2013). I provided all participants a written transcription of their interview for accuracy. All participants agreed with their responses after reviewing the

information. Please review Appendix A for information regarding the Interview Protocol.

### **Validity**

Validity in qualitative research indicates trustworthiness and consistency regarding activities associated with the phenomena identified for the study (Golafshani, 2003). Validity is the final goal of research that guarantees a commitment for authentic and accurate data collection (Fan, 2013). Kirk and Miller (1986) contended a measuring instrument that closely links to the phenomenon under observation unmistakably provides valid data. For any measurement to yield discovery, it must generate data unknown or identifiable as new data based on a theory already in place (Boesch et al., 2013). Moustakas (1994) stated validity depends on questions that provoke participant's recall of a lived experience. For this doctoral study, after interviewing 20 participants, no new information was received.

Another component associated with validity is confirmability of data. Confirmability of data refers to the degree to which others corroborate the results (Boesch et al., 2013). While supporting corroboration of the data, interview protocols must support (a) accuracy, (b) credibility, and (c) validity of the recorded interview (Harper & Cole, 2012). These protocols ensure confirmability of the data takes place following the interview process when the participants review their transcripts for authenticity (Archibald, 2015). The above procedures are also steps to ensure member checking and support of the results by participants (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). After



reviewing their transcribed interview, all participants agreed with their responses, which help authenticate the results.

A final strategy involves research credibility. Credibility ensures that the results of the qualitative research are credible from the perspective of the participant's contribution to the research (Finlay, 2013). For this doctoral study, the automotive manufacturing senior leaders engaged in answering questions that related to their life experiences and provided in-depth insight supporting the central research question through the interview process (Harper & Cole, 2012). A purposeful sampling process supported the data collection associated with the overarching research question and required access to participants who could help classify information-rich cases (Suri, 2011)

To aid in credibility of the research findings, I performed the following activities: (a) used a journal to record notes from the interviews, (b) used an open process to reduce bias, (c) utilized a software for coding and consistency, (d) followed an interview protocol, and (e) used member checking for accuracy of participant responses. I will also archive the data for 5 years in a secured area with my personal residence. Golafshani (2003) suggested engaging in multiple methods, such as (a) observations, (b) interviews, and (c) data recordings support valid, reliable, and diverse construction of realities. Moustakas (1994) recommended bracketing for validating qualitative research through the suspension of judgment, in order to focus on the analysis of research. Toloie-

Eshlaghy, Chitsaz, Karimian, and Charkhchi (2011) stressed an understanding by researchers that, their lived experiences can affect the validity of the research.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 expanded the doctoral study through a restatement of the purpose statement. Also, included in Section 2 was a description of (a) the role of the researcher, (b) research method, (c) population, and (d) sampling procedures. Section 2 includes the documentation of ethical concerns, interview protocols and protection guidelines for the participants. Section 3 will cover (a) the purpose of the study, (b) restatement of the research question, (c) presentation of the findings, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommendations for action, (f) any recommendations for future study, (g) reflections, and (h) a take-home message.

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

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore what automotive manufacturing senior leaders created as best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute business strategies. As noted in Section 1, best practice solutions make strategy execution an increased priority when connecting to improvements in organizational outcomes (Bigler & Williams, 2013). However, the failure of organizational strategy execution may reduce profitability and business growth (Grady & Grady, 2013)

I conducted semistructured interviews with 20 automotive manufacturing senior leaders employed by automotive manufacturing firms located in Auburn Hills, Detroit, and Livonia, Michigan. The semistructured interviews provided the participants an opportunity to express their experiences and perceptions (Willog, 2013). The data collection process included a semistructured interview protocol, review, and comparison of the transcribed participant interviews (Harper & Cole, 2012).

I used alphanumeric codes to protect the confidentiality of the participants. After completing each interview, I added study data collected from the participants to the data analysis program to compare with previously coded data which assisted in identifying key themes to answer the overarching research question. Based on the findings of research collected, the following five themes emerged: (a) benchmarking, (b) training, (c) communication strategies, (d) change management, and (e) integrity.

## Presentation of the Findings

In this study, I addressed the overarching research question: What do automotive manufacturing senior leaders use as best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute business strategies? The phenomenon I intended to research was whether automotive manufacturing senior leaders created best practice solutions to help front-line managers' executive organizational strategies. Twenty senior leaders, adults 18 years and older, working in the automotive industry with a minimum year of experience as an automotive manufacturing senior leader, participated in the study. I achieved data saturation after 20 interviews were completed and the answers from interviews became repetitive.

I used HyperRESEARCH to transcribe the data received from the participant's responses to the interview questions (see Appendix B). I made a list of common codes shared by participants through their interview responses to find a connection to general themes. The participants responses and through member checking led to several common phrases used such as (a) weekly meetings, (b) resources, (c) cross training, (d) e-learning, (e) employee resistance to change, (f) employee motivation, (g) goal setting, (h) employee rewards, (i) education, and (j) risk management. From this list of common phrases, I grouped the information into five main themes, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Frequency of Themes related to the creation of Best Practice Solutions by Automotive Senior Leaders for front-line personnel*

Theme	<i>n</i>	% of frequency occurrence
Benchmarking	44	25%
Training	55	31%
Communication Strategies	33	18%
Organizational Change	25	14%
Integrity	22	12%

*N= primary and secondary data themes ranked by frequency*

Grouping the themes allowed me to gain a better understanding on whether the automotive senior leaders created best practice solutions to help front-line managers execute business strategies by applying Vroom's expectancy theory (1964) to the study findings. Vroom's expectancy theory focused on the premise employees engaged in workplace actions based on outcomes beneficial to their goals.

The conceptual framework for this study was Vroom's expectancy theory. The expectancy theory was conceptualized in 1964 by Vroom, and the theory indicated that employee performance supported (a) personality, (b) skill, (c) performance, (d) knowledge, and (e) abilities. Vroom's theory provided an opportunity to explore how automotive manufacturing senior leaders use best practice solutions for enhancing front-line manager's work performance.

In presenting the research findings, I discussed the participant's responses to the following themes (a) benchmarking, (b) training, (c) communication strategies, (d) integrity, and (e) organizational change. I explained how the data addressed the

overarching research question and aligned the study findings with existing research. Through semistructured face-to-face interviews, I gained an in-depth understanding of the automotive senior leaders understanding of best practice solutions for front-line personnel for successful strategy execution. By using semistructured interviews, data saturation occurred when no new themes or information emerged from the data collection.

### **Emergent Theme One: Benchmarking**

The first theme I identified was benchmarks. Interview Question 1 allowed the participants to share how (a) knowledge, (b) skills, and (c) abilities could be used when integrating best practice solutions. Participants emphasized the need for knowledge and skills when implementing and creating business processes throughout the organization. Participants saw benchmarking as a key to successful strategy execution and employee engagement. Benchmarking is a technique that allows for a continuous and systematic process which confronts effectiveness measured by (a) productivity, (c) quality, and (c) experience with organizations considered models of perfection (Kuzar, 2015).

Participants 1, 5, and 15 recommended that leaders study other departments and organizations and take the best policies and strategies created by outside firms and redistribute those policies within the organization. Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 15, and 20 considered benchmarking a strategy where management and the employees worked together to produce effective solutions. By working together, employees become engaged in the company's success and willing to share ideas and participate in success.

According to Vroom (1964), motivated employees pursue courses of actions that support outcomes they believe will occur.

Participants 1 and 20 suggested that benchmarks allowed departments and organizations to test processes already in place. Participant 1 stated, “if we operate under the assumption everything is fine and do not validate our efforts, we cannot validate our processes. By documenting policies and procedures, department leaders could reevaluate strategies, identify weaknesses, and assess the effectiveness of their procedures.

Participants also felt it was important to review benchmarks created by outside firms, but equally important to formalize internal strategies other firms may desire to implement. Thus, the same automotive departments could become leaders in creating benchmarks.

As I continued to ask subsequent questions for clarity, additional information regarding benchmarks was provided by the participants. Participants recommended benchmarks focus on empowering employees through (a) motivation, (b) career development and (c) a challenging work assignment. Participant 1 emphasized how they used on-the-job training, to test employee skills. By cross training employees in other work roles, senior leaders could (a) evaluate skills, (b) address work shortages, and (c) look at succession planning. Participant 10 concluded employees who felt empowered believed there were opportunities for advancement and their empowerment increased engagement and strengthen the firm’s profitability and sustainability.

Participants suggested leaders build confidence through (a) training, (c) career development, and (c) meaningful duties. Hynes (2012) advised that leaders use processes

that support employee needs and expectations. Senior leaders who provide additional (a) training, (b) career development, and (c) meaningful job duties may find a clear strategy that connects to the front-line manager's belief that good work performance supports their long-term goals. Participant 18 emphasized the importance of working with the human resources department to learn more about workplace engagement and determine what practices could be developed within the organization that addressed individual needs.

A consensus from the participants recommended that when creating business processes and benchmarks, leaders refrain from the pick of the day, but focused on creating solutions that impact real change. Finally, the participants believed that benchmarking of processes was an outlier of strong organizational success. A department or organization with clear solutions provides a venue for success when management leaders focus on world-class solutions designed to create success (Bigler & Williams, 2013).

The strategies of training and career development support the instrumentality model of Vroom's theory. In this case, instrumentality can describe a front-line manager's belief that good performance will lead to an intangible or intangible reward (Nimri, Bdair, & Al Bitar, 2015). Based on a review of existing peer-reviewed literature, employee expectancy as it relates to their beliefs regarding rewards can be used effectively by the automotive manufacturing senior leaders as an effective business practice.



### **Emergent Theme Two: Training**

The second theme centered on the importance of employee training. Several of the interview questions provided data that the participants considered training an important business practice, but acknowledged some possible flaws within that area. Senior leadership experience was a requirement for participation in this study. All participants had at least 1 year of professional experience in this field. The varied experience provided data that participants considered this a key business strategy and support of additional research as it related to an employee's expectancy of rewards within the workplace. Table 2 is representational of the years of senior automotive leadership experience from each participant and depth of the experience relative to the application of training.

Table 2

*Years of Experience Working as an Automotive Manufacturing Senior Leader*

Experience	Number	Percentage of total
1 year	20	100%
2- 5 years	20	100%
6-10 years	10	50%
11- 15 years	8	40%
16 -20 years	4	20%
21+ years	3	15%

Interview Question 1 allowed participants to share whether knowledge and skills qualified when integrating best practice solutions. Interview Question 2 allowed participants to share information on whether they used dynamic changes within the business environment, and Interview Question 3 allowed the participants to share information on the type of solutions they believed necessary for the organization.

Lee (2015) suggested that employee training is believed to have the potential to improve key workplace outcomes benefiting employees. All participants stressed the need for training. Participants believed that employees desired a challenge in their job duties and wanted to believe that senior leaders supported their efforts. Participants 2 and 4 stated that solid training led to career growth and empowerment, supporting job performance and engagement.

Some participants believed that procedures for training could be developed into successful best practice solutions. Participant 3 discussed how the creation of a training center led to improvements in employee performance. Participant 3 believed the training center was a key in creating solutions that benefited employee development. The training center allowed employees to learn by the computer as well as with an instructor.

Vroom (1964) stated that employees were motivated when their efforts led to good performance and they were rewarded. All participants believed that front-line personnel recognized the importance of some reward as it related to their performance. This knowledge can benefit automotive manufacturing senior leaders when tying workplace goals to rewards and other benefits. When looking at training for front-line

managers, Participants 1, 4, 7, 8, 11, 16, and 20 believed that the expectancy to meet job performance was related to the training provided by senior management personnel.

Participants 2, 3, 4, 9, 11 and 17 recommended the use of various training models that ensured all personnel received training.

Chen, Ellis, and Suresh (2016) suggested job tasks, plus individual and group environments influenced expectancy and valence. Task-level factors such as (a) difficulty, (b) progress, and (c) goal achievement reflect the nature of employees' work activities and associated goals. Through subsequent probing questions, Participant 4 and 15 shared information on how the use of group projects and the environment supported progress. Participant 4 stressed the importance of understanding group dynamics when encountering resistance to training and other workplace objectives. Task difficulty and progress influenced expectancy because they reflected the probability that the task could be accomplished.

In response to probing questions related to training, participants stated that on-the-job training was another key strategy. The on-the-job training helped senior leaders identify skill sets and allowed an effective method for cross training. On-the-job training could also be used to identify task difficulty and determine if additional employee training was required. On-the-job training could also be used to identify additional employees for leadership or other opportunities. Effective cross-training by automotive manufacturing senior leaders could aid in preparation for staffing shortages and succession planning.

Participants also considered goal setting another function of training. Goal setting could strengthen (a) skill sets, (b) knowledge, and (c) abilities. Goal setting affects valence as it motivates and regulates behaviors to achieve more valued outcomes (Madera, King, & Hebl, 2013). Individual factors represent employee characteristics like competence and skill sets. Competence affects expectancy because it represents the ability to accomplish goals effectively, and goal orientation affects valence due to the belief that skills and abilities can be increased to achieve success (Curşeu, Janssen, & Meeus, 2014).

Participants also provided information on the impact of group training, as it related to goal setting. Existing research suggested goal setting produced the same results when used for individual and group performance (Curşeu, Janssen, & Meeus, 2014) Participants 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 18, and 20 recommended that group-level activities include (a) communication training, (b) employee interactions, (c) coaching, and (d) mentorship. Participants 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 18, and 20 believed these types of activities could improve how individuals interact with others. These factors increased expectancy and valence by reducing (a) uncertainty, (b) risk, and (c) misperceptions associated with task achievement and performance expectations (Nahrgang et al., 2013). Participants 8, 11, 13, 14, 18, and 20 believed that through a variety of training methods improvements in strategy execution of company objectives was critical in understanding employee development, growth, and sustainability of corporate objectives.

In response to my probing questions, all participants answered that funds for training were underutilized. Participants recommended additional investment in training for employees, senior leaders, and CEOs. Participants suggested partnerships with other departments and key organizational leaders could be used as another approach to measure (a) best practice solutions, (b) employee growth, and (c) organizational success.

The theme of training provided clear information on the impact of Vroom's theory relative to enhancement and understanding of employee motivation. Expectancy refers to a front-line manager's perception of their role in improving their performance (Nimri, Bdair, & Al Bitar, 2015). This is determined by self-efficacy, goal difficulty, and perceived control in their ability to perform their job duties. The perceived control of the job can lead to a front-line manager's development of ownership and responsibility leading to higher workplace motivation. The demands of senior leaders require more than work assignments and focus on areas such as leading organizational change and developing relationships with other employees that encourage (a) commitment, (b) teamwork, and (c) collaboration. As new leaders are promoted into senior leadership roles, their management of employee needs can confirm the relevance of the theory as firms continue to look for ways to stay profitable within their industries.

### **Emergent Theme Three: Communication Strategies**

The third theme to emerge from the study was the importance of communication strategies. Effective communication plays a significant role in employee engagement and motivation (Welch, 2012). Communication is important for organizational success, and

without it, motivation, leadership, and productivity cannot survive (Holmes & Parker 2017). Participants emphasized the need for effective communication strategies. Effective communication strategies increase success when strategies include (a) clear direction, (b) planning, (c) stakeholder identification, and (d) employee goals (Craig & Rich, 2012). To achieve an effective communication strategy, each front-line manager must understand the organization's goals, and how their efforts tie into the company's mission for success (Holmes & Parker, 2017).

Participants also talked about the impact of the leader's verbal statements and their actions in relation to creating effective communication strategies for employees. Participant 2 stated the verbal actions of the leader were important when employees examined the leader's action. When a leader's verbal communication, differs from their workplace behavior, their actions can hinder (a) employee motivation, (b) empowerment, and (c) commitment to organizational goals (Holmes & Parker, 2017). This can impact growth, and build distrust within the organization. Thus, it is important for leaders, to look at how their actions impact organizational growth.

When relating the findings from the data collection to the conceptual framework, communication failures impact performance, because the automotive manufacturing senior leader may not deliver on a promise made to a front-line manager. The expectancy of results by the manager can change their work performance. All participants provided details on the importance of providing employees an opportunity to voice their concerns. Existing research findings conclude that when employees can share their ideas, they tend

to view themselves as valued members because their inputs become part of the decision-making process (Lam, Loi, Chan, & Liu, 2016). When employees feel valued by management, they reciprocate through empowerment, greater commitment and improved performance (Bouckennooghe, Zafar, & Raja, 2015). This supports the conceptual framework of expectancy because when the front-line manager's needs are met, their performance based on expectancy improves.

By asking probing questions on this topic, participants provided additional information related to verbal and written communication. All Participants expressed support for weekly briefings of company objectives, notification of departmental problems, and praise for employee efforts. Participants 2, 8, 4, 10 and 12 saw the weekly briefing as an opportunity to keep employees informed of departmental goals, and opportunities to measure department success. Participants 2, 8, 10,12, 13, 15, and 19 expressed support for informal meetings, to allow personnel the opportunity to express challenges.

All Participants provided information on the importance of providing employees progress reports and other written documentation to identify areas for improvements. All Participants stated written communication, through memos, and policy procedures supported information provided at weekly briefings or other informal settings. Written correspondence could also be used as support for discipline, evaluations and other strategy sessions.

Participants 1, 2, 4,5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 15, 16 and 20 acknowledged that communication was critical and challenging due to the nature of the environment to achieve success. The communication of corporate procedures whether verbal or written could be affected by key business factors, explanation, interpretation, acceptance, or rejection. As ideas and business processes were sometimes achieved, the interpretation of the information by employees could also lead to confusion, and it was important for automotive manufacturing senior leaders to communicate a clear vision. Prior scholarly literature, suggested a lack of direction by organizational leaders, supported a 68% failure rate in the execution of organizational strategies (Grady & Grady, 2013). Findings from the research may help automotive manufacturing senior leaders make changes in how strategies are communicated.

The final area for communication strategies, centered on the relationship between management and employees as it related to communication and workplace interaction. Vugt and Ronay (2013) acknowledged through survey data; employees considered interaction with immediate supervisors the most stressful aspect of their job duties. Participants shared through their interviews, the importance of ethical leadership and communication of strategies. Participants saw the importance of ethics in business decisions and the method of communication connected to a reduction in department expenses.

When leaders can share information accurately and offer employees an opportunity for clarification, employees are less likely to make mistakes. When looking



at the overarching research question, this is a critical area for front-line managers. When aligning the importance of communication to the conceptual framework, understanding goals and objectives communicated to the employee by the senior leaders supports their understanding of their roles and duties, and the expectations they will receive associated to their execution of workplace objectives (Grachev & Rakitsky, 2013). Understanding goals and objectives shared by automotive manufacturing senior leaders can hinder or improve strategy execution. Front-line managers may react positively or negatively to the strategies, based on the behavior of the senior leaders. Therefore, trust in how leaders share and communicate strategies a critical component associated with workplace communication.

#### **Emergent Theme Four: Organizational Change**

The fourth theme developed from the participant interviews focused on organizational change. The automotive industry is an environment characterized by competitiveness and under a constant need of change while focusing on business improvements. The interaction between management and employees is often a factor that hinders or improves the success of organizational strategies (Grama & Todericiu, 2016).

The complexities of the working relationship require corporate leaders implement various changes regarding their business strategy and organizational structure (Altamony, Tarhini, Al-Salti, Gharaibeh, & Elyas, 2016). Understanding why employees resist change and why change initiatives fail is important when crafting best practice solutions. The problem statement identified for this study emphasized that leaders recognized a

failure with the success of change initiatives. Existing scholarly research suggested an employee's resistance to change is sometimes related to cynicism because they believe the organization lacks integrity or leadership.

Participants suggested a key reason for the failure of organizational goals was due to employee resistance to change initiatives. Participants believed that this occurred for several reasons. Some of the reasons identified through probing questions included distrust in management, fear of employment, inability to understand new technology or a corporate culture that produces us against them attitude.

Participants felt a best practice solution that supported improvements in working relationships could strengthen the workplace. Participants also discussed the impact of transformational leadership. Leaders are catalysts for change and have the capacity to enhance employee performance with their leadership abilities (Brown, 2014). Leaders can also use this format, to communicate with employees, strategies, that enhance relationships (Nicholas & Erakovich, 2013).

When looking at the overarching research question and the conceptual framework, participants focused on the impact leadership and organizational change has on employee expectancy. When a strong working relationship exists, employees can expect (a) support, (b) resources, (c) training, and (d) leadership from management. When there is no clear working relationship, employees respond to management, based on their perceived understanding of management responsibilities. This response can

create a positive or negative impact based on the front-line manager's understanding of duties and the perceived benefits they will receive based on the change policy.

Organizational change has been defined as a transformation observable in time, which temporarily affects the structure and functionality of the social organization of certain communities, shifting the course of its development (Blanca & Romana, 2016). Organizational change is a process that occurs over time; success is often found in the lack of safety of a system, creating a need for survival in an environment under constant economic change (Altamony et al., 2016).

#### **Emergent Theme Five: Integrity**

The fifth theme to emerge from the findings was related to the term integrity. Participant 2 believed leaders had an influential role in enhancing employee engagement. Leaders have been proven to influence and motivate employees by inspiration, integrity, and the promotion of teamwork. According to Hayyat (2012), leadership describes organizational behavior associated with the leader's ability to impact employee behavior. Ethical leadership within organizations is considered a vital component when making an organizational change or implementing strategies (McDermott et al., 2013). Leaders who are authentic, impact engagement of employees (Nicholas & Erakovich, 2013).

Palanski, Cullen, Gentry, and Nichols (2015) noted that integrity in the face of adversity could be viewed as a key characteristic of inspirational leadership. Through responses received from participants, the integrity of the leader was a critical component for strategy execution. Participants 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16 and 20 also

considered the importance of the leader's style through inspiration, creditability, and trustworthiness.

Participants 1, 2, 5, 7, 15, 19 and 20 also considered the communication of the leader as it related to workplace integrity. Employees who display enthusiasm in completing their duties display a strong bond between employee and leader. Leaders aid in this area, by being transparent in their decision making. When employees lose trust in leaders, the bond created that supports organizational goals is broken.

Participants 3, 4, 10, and 11 believed leaders could maintain integrity by giving credit to subordinates when their ideas produce cost savings. Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18 and 19 expressed the importance of team meetings where leaders could thank front-line personnel and other members for their support. Participants considered integrity a clear best practice, a key organizational goal. When applying the theme of integrity to Vroom's expectancy theory, front-line managers may have an expectancy of trust by management as it relates to their job duties and benefits. Any potential flaws with integrity can violate trust, and hinder the completion of organizational goals.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The results of this study provided strategies for automotive manufacturing senior leaders to manage the complexities related to the creation of best practice solutions when helping their front-line managers execute organizational strategies. The automotive manufacturing senior leaders who are often considered credible by their direct reports can impact the engagement of employees (Nicholas & Erakovich, 2012). From the research

findings, participants believed training of front-line personnel was important, to support employee engagement. Participants felt a bond existed between leaders and front-line managers that could be used to support profitability. Accordingly, Sadeghi and Pihie (2012) recommended organizations utilize the skill sets of leaders when seeking to achieve goals that support profitability. Tonkham (2013) offered a different approach, recommending leaders become creative change agents, applying different workplace strategies to achieve a variety of objectives.

Based on the findings from this research, automotive manufacturing organizations can attract employees who want engagement, and this engagement can lead to an increase in higher profitability (Bolman & Deal, 2014). When employees are not motivated to complete job duties, there is no expectancy of rewards and their behavior associated with this lack of expectancy, can hinder their support and workplace performance (Bersin, 2014). It is imperative that business leaders understand what engages or disengages employees and how the results of engagement or disengagement impact organizational sustainability.

To gain and improve overall business results, automotive business leaders should strive to motivate employees to perform. Employees motivated to improve their job performance, often become loyal to the organization. Research from the findings suggested leaders who implement best practice solutions can achieve a higher level of employee engagement, improvements in productivity and corporate profits (Blattner & Walter, 2015).

As noted by participants, automotive manufacturing senior leaders who understand why employees are disengaged can develop solutions that enhance workplace motivation and employee expectancy. According to Vroom (1964), (a) valence, (b) instrumentality, and (c) expectancy independently influence motivation, but when combined create powerful workplace results (Estes & Polnick, 2012; Vroom, 1964). Employees make decisions that are based on expected results (Hayyat, 2012).

Anitha (2014) recommended organizational leaders (a) value respect, (b) create fairness, and (c) development emotional connectivity in the workplace. Workplace motivation and employee performance are fostered when leaders provide employees with the opportunity to communicate issues they experience. The use of an open-door communication strategy supports an atmosphere for career development and growth.

Five themes emerged from this research, (a) benchmarks, (b) training, (c) communication strategies, (d) organizational change, and (e) integrity. If automotive manufacturing senior leaders incorporate specific strategies into their business models associated with the themes identified in this study, this will help expand growth potential for the organization. All participants confirmed that they are supportive of workplace solutions that increase employee engagement and expectancy. Participants believed their efforts have worked in the past but felt efforts should be monitored to maintain growth and sustainability. Reaching the top within your marketplace is one goal and staying on top within your marketplace another goal.

Nasomboon (2014) suggested determinants of organizational effectiveness are job involvement and leadership trust. Therefore, automotive manufacturing senior leaders should foster workplace settings that help create employee motivation and employee expectancy towards achieving and reaching those goals (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). By applying effective workplace strategies, automotive manufacturing leaders can improve employee performance and greater yields of organizational success.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The results from this study might affect social change by providing an understanding of the relationship between (a) social commitment, (b) employee involvement, (c) local partnerships, and (d) new attitudes towards community responsibilities. For automotive manufacturing senior leaders, understanding employee actions as it relates to job performance and work engagement can be useful in connecting their efforts to organizational goals. Automotive manufacturing businesses are focused on creating more sustainable practices, and the benefits are not limited to organizational profits. Employees employed by firms with strong social values tend to absorb these core values and gain a more social awareness of the community around them.

Business leaders who ignore the impact of low employee engagement, may not understand how low employee engagement impacts economic stability. Automotive manufacturing leaders have the responsibility to provide for the needs of employees through training, improvements in communication, leadership and fostering a meaningful workplace environment. Employees, in turn, have a responsibility to provide meaningful

contributions to the organization when they acknowledge management addressing their concerns (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). By understanding employee expectations and how to connect their needs with corporate goals, automotive manufacturing leaders can find solutions that increase engagement and organizational profitability, as they have found solutions that help employees find an attachment to the firm's mission (Bigler & Williams 2013).

When organizations achieve financial success, these leaders have more opportunities, (a) to create new jobs within the community, (b) expand their industries and markets, and (c) improve business relationships. Automotive senior leaders through enhancements in employee performance can find improvements in retention, employee engagement, and business sustainability. Through the transfer of knowledge, an experienced and committed workforce will be able to leave their legacy to the new generation of automotive employees the importance of skill development, customer satisfaction, and community goodwill, which strengthens partnerships, community engagement, and local resident support.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Effective best practices solutions should matter to both management and the employee associated with any organization. Sorensen and Royal (2015) suggested organizations of all sizes face anxiety when determining how to manage workplace talent effectively. Automotive manufacturing senior leaders need best practice solutions that



foster working relationships with (a) employee unions, (b) suppliers, and (c) customers.

The failure of any relationship can impede the attainment of organizational goals.

Based on the results, I have listed the following recommendations for actions.

The first recommendation is for automotive manufacturing senior leaders to review training practices and procedures for effectiveness. Automotive manufacturing senior leaders must also understand how training dollars are allocated and budgeted for their departments. Automotive Senior leaders should also identify front-line managers whose skills can be enhanced to meet the needs of the organization, but also connect to workplace expectancy goals of the employee. Thus, creating a win for the organization and employee

My second recommendation is that automotive manufacturing senior leaders review communication strategies. This allows senior leaders to review how (a) organizational goals, (b) workplace strategies, and (c) business processes are shared with employees. Automotive manufacturing senior leaders may find (a) current meeting schedules, (b) written memos, and (c) informal briefings, address these issues or there is room for improvement.

My third recommendation is for automotive manufacturing senior leaders to review their open-door policies as it relates to employees. Automotive manufacturing senior leaders can review their best practices for managing employee issues by conducting an internal assessment, which helps them understand (a) corporate culture, (b) senior leader flexibility, (c) communication with customers and suppliers, (d) hiring and

maintaining a skilled workforce and (e) training and mentorship. The automotive manufacturing senior leaders should ask questions that help them understand how comfortable employees feel about sharing workplace issues. Utilizing effective communication strategies allows management an opportunity to assess employee engagement strategies and match the skill sets of the employee with the firm's strategic goals.

My fourth recommendation is to review the relationship between management and employees as it relates to integrity and trust. Information provided by the participants suggested the impact of integrity is important when building trust between automotive manufacturing senior leaders and their front-line personnel. Leaders should review practices, to identify areas for improvement, or the creation of best practices if none exist. Participants considered leadership imperative to maintaining employee engagement. Automotive senior leaders should understand the relationship between employee engagement, profitability and the level of investment provided by the organization.

Well-developed best practice solutions can close the gap between expectancy, workplace motivation, and job performance. The fifth and last recommendation is for automotive senior business leaders to review results from the study, to identify current best practice solutions and determine if current business processes enhance employee engagement and job performance. Automotive Senior leaders can conduct (a) employee surveys, (b) informal meetings, (c) brown bag lunch sessions, and (d) monitor workplace

strategies that are designed to help them measure progress and maintain organizational effectiveness.

The findings from this study are important to automotive business leaders and comprehensible to business leaders and management professionals in other sectors. The results can be shared at leadership conferences, through business publications, and publication in peer-reviewed journals. I will also share my findings through seminars and training on best practice solutions, leadership, and workplace training. These forums provide opportunities to present insights regarding this study. I will send a copy of the study findings and recommendations to all participants. I may also provide consulting services to organizations regarding leadership, training, and employee engagement strategies.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore what best practice solutions created by automotive manufacturing senior leaders help front line managers execute organizational strategies. All researchers have a responsibility to describe limitations of the data and the implications when reporting the results (Boyko, 2013). Although I was successful in reaching data saturation with 20 participants, this qualitative study had limitations. One of the first limitations identified was reviewing the data based on the lived experience of the participants. I recommend future research take place using a different sample within the automotive manufacturing population. Using other members of the organization can confirm the relevance of Vroom's (1964) theory within the

current century, addressing a gap as limited peer reviewed articles exist. I also recommend a quantitative or mixed method study to complement findings of this qualitative study and the evaluation of the effectiveness of best practice solutions.

As this study was limited to the automotive industry, I recommend future research be conducted within other business markets which can offer a complement of the information or contradiction possibly identifying an industry-related problem. Another limitation was no documents or forms were reviewed. A review of workplace policies could have enhanced the participant's responses and identified best practices already used by the organization.

All participants in this study emphasized the importance of training and benchmarking of processes important when crafting a clear business strategy. However, there is a limited amount of peer reviewed literature that extends the conversation on best practice solutions. Therefore, I recommend additional research regarding best practice solutions within a business environment to fill an existing gap. In this study, I explored the creation of best practice solutions by automotive manufacturing senior leaders for their front-line personnel working in Michigan. Therefore, my final recommendation is for researchers to conduct this study in other geographical locations, to ascertain if a problem with strategy execution can be defined by geographical locations

### **Reflections**

As I reflect on my doctoral journey, the Doctor of Business Administration Program at Walden University has been rewarding and challenging. From the beginning

of being accepted into the program, I was excited about learning and the challenge that lied ahead of me. My original goal in conducting this qualitative case study was to build my competence as a researcher while exploring a business practice that could enhance employee engagement as it related to workplace performance and organizational profitability. This journey has transformed my mindset because I now view many issues through a broader lens.

I found through academic research that Vroom's expectancy theory was very popular in its introduction and often criticized by the academic community. After conducting the study, I believe there is still a need for business leaders to fully understand employee motivation as organizations attempt to connect employee work performance to organizational goals. Understanding the essence of best practice solutions has been a personal and professional interest since my departure from the automotive industry. I wanted to see how the industry survived after product recalls, and other financial challenges.

The study involved twenty participants working in southeastern Michigan. Each participant shared their lived experiences about best practice solutions, used to help front line managers execute business strategies. Through the data collection process, my insight was enhanced with knowledge from the automotive manufacturing senior leaders on how they viewed their roles when helping their front-line managers execute business strategies

Throughout this process, I refrain from including my personal bias when conducting research. I conducted the interviews and allowed the participants to share information based on their lived experience. During the interviews, I observed the physical environment, body language, and other nonverbal cues, I thought would be irrelevant to a study. I was also nervous about the sample population because they were automotive manufacturing senior leaders who might not want to participate in academic research.

What was most impressive was the reaction of the participants and their willingness to share information. From the participants, I gained a greater understanding of leadership styles, workplace solutions and how everyone associated with an organization, plays a role in the firm's success. The findings from this study have encouraged me to look at how best practices can improve other business sectors by improving employee engagement and organizational efficiency.

### **Conclusion**

The automotive industry has survived many challenges in the wake of globalization. Maintaining a competitive advantage under the umbrella of (a) political globalization, (b) intellectual property protection, and (c) social responsibility can hinder a firm's success. At the same time, organizational leaders must also manage one of their most important assets, their human capital talent.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore best practice solutions, created by automotive business leaders for their front-line personnel for successful

strategy execution. Five main themes emerged after a rigorous data collection and transcription review process: (a) benchmarking, (b) training, (c) communication strategies, (d) organizational change, and (e) integrity. The findings revealed that (a) benchmarking processes, (b) training employees, (c) communication of a shared vision, (d) achieving successful organizational change, and (e) maintaining integrity critical for organizational success. Business leaders should implement workplace solutions that (a) define benchmarks, (b) enhance employee development, (c) communicates effectively, (d) implements successful organizational change, and (e) maintains integrity within the business community and everyone associated with the organization succeeds (Menguc, Auh, Fisher, & Haddad, 2013).

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Participants will be emailed a copy of the Informed Consent form, acknowledging their consent to participate as unpaid volunteers in the study. The following statements provide structure and procedure protocols for the interview:

1. Send participants a calendar with available times and days for the interview.
2. Review informed consent form to answer any questions and confirm approval to record interview
3. If the participants agree to the audio recording, move on to protocol 4.
4. Begin the audio recording
5. If the participants do not agree to the audio recording, participants are advised that the researcher will take notes during the interview.
6. Ask the participant if they read the consent form in its entirety and agree to continue as a participant.
7. Welcome each participant with opening remarks
8. Follow the procedure to introduce participants with a pseudonym; note the date and time.
9. Begin interview with Question 1 and follow through to the final question.
10. Follow up with additional questions.
11. End interview sequence.
12. Thank participants
13. End the protocol

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What major elements such as personal, professional or knowledge-based information, qualify as important when integrating best practice solutions?
2. What are some of the dynamic changes you have to make to your current business infrastructure to integrate best practice solutions?
3. How have you identified any best practice solutions you believe are needed for the organization?
4. As a corporate leader, how do you communicate best practice solution concerns to front-line managers?
5. As a corporate leader, what best practice solutions have you created in the past you consider successful?
6. What actions have hindered your employees from embracing best practice solutions that support organizational change?
7. How do you measure the success of your best practice solutions?

### Appendix C: Telephone Interview Protocol

Participants will be emailed a copy of the Informed Consent form, acknowledging their consent to participate as unpaid volunteers in the study. The following statements provide structure and procedure protocols for the interview:

1. Send participants a calendar with available times and days for the interview.
2. Ask the participant if they read the consent form in its entirety and agree to continue as a participant.
3. Have participants return the signed form by mail or email.
4. Welcome each participant with opening remarks
5. Turn on the recording device.
6. Follow the procedure to introduce participants with a pseudonym, note the date and time.
7. Begin interview with question #1 and follow through to the final question.
8. Follow-up with additional questions
9. End interview sequence.
10. Thank the participants for their part in the study. Reiterate contact numbers for follow-up questions and concerns from participants.
11. End the protocol.

## Appendix D: Partnership Agreement for Participation

Organization

Date:

Dear: Facility Administrator,

I am a doctoral student conducting research on best practice solution development for front-line managers. I would greatly appreciate your organization's participation in my study by allowing senior leaders to participate in a short interview. The participant's information will remain confidential and used for no other purpose than academic research. Therefore, I respectfully request that you forward the attached invitation letter to all members of your senior leadership team on my behalf. In addition, please provide an email directory so that I can follow up with the participants directly.

Employees will contact me directly to express their interest in participation. Upon their acceptance of the invitation, additional information will be provided to the participants regarding confidentiality and retention of the information. Results of this research will be available once the study is published. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Regina Banks-Hall

## Appendix E: Letter of Cooperation

## Sample Letter of Cooperation from a Research Partner

Community Research Partner Name  
Contact Information

Date

Dear Regina Banks-Hall,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Exploration of Leadership Skill Sets for Organizational Strategy Execution within the Insert Name of Community Partner. In support of the study, I will forward the study invitation letter to all senior leadership members of the organization. I will provide an email directory so that you can follow up directly with the participants. Participation by the senior leaders will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: distribution of the of the invitation letter to our senior leadership team and facility support for holding the face-to-face interviews. We also reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and will not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,  
Authorization Official  
Contact Information

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions

Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

## Appendix F: Study Introduction Letter

Name  
Organization  
Address

Dear: Sir/Madam\_\_\_\_\_

My name is Regina Banks-Hall, and I am a candidate for the Doctor of Business Administration Program in Leadership at Walden University. I am conducting a dissertation research study on best practice solution development for front-line managers. I am conducting the study under the guidance of Dr. Kathleen Barclay, a Walden Faculty member and Chair of my dissertation committee. Study participants will include senior leaders from the operations, human resources, production, manufacturing, legal, marketing, etc.

The study allows me to fulfill the requirements of the DBA program adding value to the exploration of best practice solutions for front-line managers' execution of organizational strategies. The study findings may contribute to positive social change and improve business practice by providing information regarding best practice solutions and the impact on front-line manager success. I am requesting your participation in a face-to-face interview. I understand that your time is valuable. The face-to-face interview includes seven questions and is anticipated to take no longer than 45 minutes. You will receive an abbreviated copy of the study results after the study is published.

After your acceptance to participate, I will contact you to arrange an opportunity to provide an overview of the study and finalize a face-to-face interview at a time convenient for you. The research process ensures full confidentiality of your responses, company identification and retention of the information. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Regina Banks-Hall  
DBA Doctoral Candidate