

PROMOTION OF LEADERS BASED ON SKILLS NOT RELATED TO LEADERSHIP

by

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

A qualitative case study allowed for understanding the skills and achievements desired for individuals holding formal leadership positions in rural businesses located in Indiana. The general problem to be addressed was leaders being promoted based upon achievements and skills not related to leadership resulting in diminished morale and lower productivity. The purpose of the study was to add to the body of knowledge by expanding on the understanding of reasons behind promoting leaders based on non-leadership skills and abilities and the impact it has on employee morale and company productivity. Three primary research questions evaluated the skills and achievements of non-leadership employees compared to the items desired for leaders. The final research question surrounded the impact on morale and productivity that formal leaders have on the company. There were twenty-five, in-person, one-on-one interviews conducted resulting in six key themes emerging. The themes combined with existing academic research established the creation of three critical recommendations for businesses promoting individuals to formal leadership positions. With completion of this study, businesses are able to understand better the desired skills and achievements of leaders to contribute to the greatest success for an individual leader. Lastly, the recommendations provide the framework for promoting the best individuals to leadership positions.

Keywords: leadership, skills, promotion, coaching

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Dissertation

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Approvals

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my nephews. Always remember you can do absolutely anything of which you dream. There are no obstacles too big, challenges too great or other limitations in your way. The path is not always easy, but you both have the best smiles, most contagious laughs, and biggest and greatest hearts to carry you through this life in excellence. I love you both.

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“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians, 4:13). Each morning this verse greets me and provides me the courage and strength to take on the day. I am thankful for the Lord in allowing me to reach my dreams.

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Section One: Foundation of the Study

Business leaders are faced with a vast array of challenges. As leaders, the focus is on achieving organizational goals and objectives through their actions and the actions of the teams they lead. Finding the right people to lead at various levels of a business is challenging. The research sought to explore the impacts of promoting leaders based on current abilities through evaluation of multiple leadership concepts. Given the important role of leaders and front-line employees to perform tasks in achieving company goals and missions, the study intends to identify the factors most critical in promoting leaders. Before conducting research, the researcher examined academic literature to support the need for research in this area to reduce or eliminate a current problem faced by leaders. Existing academic literature provided a basis of understanding on the concepts of employees, leaders, and organizational outcomes. The research was intended to provide greater understanding of skills and abilities required of leaders allowing organizations to successfully determine appropriate individuals for promotion to leadership.

Background of the Problem

A common occurrence within organizations is that an individual is the top performer at the current job; therefore, they are promoted to management based on their current skills, abilities, and success (Ho, 2015). The Association for Talent Development and the Institute for Corporate Productivity reveal that 52 percent of organizations do not offer training to new managers (Ho, 2015). The skills necessary and expectations in the current role vary from that of leadership and the new role resulting in the mismatch of skills of the individual and the new leadership position (Henson, 2016). Individual expertise drives success for line level employees, while as managers the focus is on productivity and morale of the group (Hill, 2007).

According to Hill (2007), the struggles of new managers promoted based on current skills are the norm not the exception. Frequently, the new leaders fail to meet company or upper management expectations (Ellington-Booth & Cates, 2016). According to Kerfoot (2010), leaders revert back to what got them promoted, their skills and ability on the team. However, this does not align with the responsibilities of motivating the team that the leader is aiming to achieve (Kerfoot, 2010). Minimal attention and research exists regarding the challenges new leaders experience due to the lack of preparation by the company to promote them from a line level employee to a leader (Hill, 2007).

Problem Statement

The general problem to be addressed is leaders being promoted based upon achievements and skills not related to leadership resulting in diminished morale and lower productivity. A study performed by Buckman et al. (2018) indicated a primary challenge with promoting internally is individuals are promoted to leadership positions based on achievements not concomitant to leadership. The inability to separate staff level responsibilities and employee relationships from the responsibilities and expectations required as leaders contributes to diminished morale and productivity when existing leaders promote strictly based on an individual's current skills (Cavanaugh, 2017). Abbasi et al. (2018) indicated that leaders must effectively listen, think critically to solve problems, communicate with various levels of employees, and self-manage. The required skills of leaders are not the same as those of the staff employee contributing to the ineffectiveness in leadership as the required skills are not known by the leadership candidate (Abbasi et al., 2018). Cavanaugh (2017) shared that too often companies fail to mentor identified successors for a smooth transition to the management position. Leaders fail to coach individuals on how to transfer technical skills to a managerial mindset (Strickler et

al., 2016). Additionally, research indicates that existing leaders lack the ability to identify the skilled staff throughout their organization who are capable and qualified of being promoted to management positions (Bhanugopan et al., 2017). The specific problem to be addressed is leaders being promoted based upon achievements and skills not related to leadership within rural Indiana companies resulting in diminished morale and lower productivity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the qualitative case study was to add to the body of knowledge by expanding on the understanding of reasons behind promoting leaders based on non-leadership skills and abilities and the impact it has on employee morale and company productivity. Odierno (2015) discussed the leader development activity implemented by the United States Army, emphasizing the importance of identifying unique talents and abilities of young professionals early on, thus beginning the development of skills required for leadership. Petty (2017) shared that most leaders arrive at their first leadership position based on battlefield promotion. Managers believe the best option available is battlefield promotion, or reducing the risk of failure by promoting based on current achievements (Petty, 2017). Throughout the research, the larger problem was explored through an in-depth study of promoting leaders based on current achievements and the impact it had on morale and productivity within businesses in rural Midwestern companies. The study evaluated the factors utilized to promote leaders. Through the narrative method, responses of participants were analyzed to determine the relationship between leadership promotion based on skills not correlated to leadership to that of diminished morale and lower productivity, therefore allowing for the development of solutions to the specific problem statement.

Nature of the Study

The research utilized a qualitative research method with the utilization of a case study design. The qualitative research method was selected for this study as most appropriate rather than utilizing a quantitative or mixed methods strategy for conducting research. The researcher drew upon the academic literature in the section below to support the research method utilized. Within the qualitative method, several designs exist including case study, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative, and phenomenological. The researcher determined case study as the most appropriate design based on the specific problem being research. Academic sources support the selection of the design in the following section.

Discussion of Method

The qualitative research method was most appropriate due to the ability to analyze and interpret the non-numerical data throughout the data collection process (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The problem statement and research questions presented focused on understanding the situation through inductive logic through subjective matter, which is a characteristic of qualitative research methods (Agee, 2009). According to Gupta and Awasthy (2015), qualitative research is appropriate for gathering an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. Generalized or numeric responses are not appropriate for this research method, which would be common in a quantitative research method resulting in the ineffectiveness of that method (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Quantitative research seeks to measure the variables presented through quantification and standardization (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The quantitative research methodology is determined ineffective for the study due to the statistical nature while the study requires open-ended questions to acquire an in-depth understanding of the opinions and perspectives of research participants.

Discussion of Design

Qualitative research designs include case study, grounded theory, ethnography, narrative, and phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Case study design is selected for this qualitative research. The design focuses on studying a decision process or events that are bounded to establish defined parameters (Yin, 2018). The utilization of interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual material are methods the researcher may utilize to gather data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). When evaluating data, the researcher will categorize themes to create descriptions of information uncovered through the data collection process. A case study method of research frequently ends with conclusions formed by the researcher. The conclusions are viewed as general lessons that are learned from the research that was completed. Yin (2018) states that case studies allow the researcher to study a real-life social phenomenon through investigating and evaluating business processes. Other qualitative designs were not selected due to limitations that exist in relation to the study.

Grounded theory method focuses on a processes or action with distinct steps that occur over time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). When utilizing grounded theory, the researcher is attempting to explain an action or movement. In the end, the researcher strives to develop a theory of the process or action. The theory developed provides an explanation or understanding that draws together theoretical categories arranged to show how the theory works. When developing the theory the researcher writes down ideas as data are collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The processes of writing down ideas during the data analysis process are known as memoing. The data and analysis process are completed simultaneously and iteratively during the data collection process. The most common method of data collection for this design method is through interviews. The interview method of data collection allows the researcher to compare data from

each participant with the developing theory. The researcher is able to go back and forth to the theory, participants, and new participants to fill in missing information in the theory when completing data and analysis simultaneously.

The procedures for the design method can be structured and follow a specific pattern or less structured and based on developing a theory by putting together implicit meanings about a category (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The type of approach utilized impacts the procedure utilized. Systematic and constructivist approaches are two popular approaches utilizing in the grounded theory design method. The systematic approach involves categories, codes, and coding and the methodical procedures guided by continual assessment of data. The constructivist approach develops from co-construction processes dependent on the researchers' interactions with participants and the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Two common challenges the researcher faces when utilizing the grounded theory methodology are setting aside theoretical ideas to allow new theory to emerge and determining data saturation, or sufficient theory detail (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher must remember that despite the evolving nature of grounded theory research there is a systematic approach with specific steps in data analysis. To aid in developing new theory, the researcher needs to put existing theories and notations out of mind to allow for new substantive theories to emerge. Additionally, the researcher is faced with the challenge of determining when categories are sufficiently detailed, requiring no additional research or theories to develop or are saturated. Discriminant sampling is a method utilized to move toward saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is when the researcher gathers information from people other than the initial participants to ensure the theory developed holds true the additional participants. The utilization of discriminant

sampling allows the researcher to ensure theory with central phenomena, causal conditions, strategies, conditions and context, and conditions are developed.

The ethnographic design has several characteristics unique to the design structure. The design focuses on developing a complex, complete description of the culture of a group (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The cultural group being studied must have been interacting long enough to develop social behaviors identifiable to the group. The researcher looks for rituals, customary social behaviors, or regularities of the group's mental or material activities. The researcher is looking to identify the patterns of social organization and ideational systems. The design structure focuses on theory. The researcher begins with a broad explanation regarding what they hope to find. The initial explanation is drawn from cognitive science to understand ideas and beliefs or from materialist theory to study how people in the cultural group act and talk. The use of theory and identifying patterns involves extensive work. Data collection involves interviews, observations, symbols, artifacts, and other methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The participants view is relied upon for analysis of the data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants' insider view and verbatim quotes are utilized to synthesis data. Data is synthesized into the scientific perspective formulated by the researcher to create the cultural interpretation. The interpretation includes a description of the group and themes related to the theoretical concepts of the research study. Details of the groups' operation are frequently not known by the reader allowing them to develop new understandings of the cultural group being studied. The ultimate result of ethnographic research is an understanding of how the cultural group works (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethnographic design has many forms including confessional ethnography, life history, autoethnography, feminist ethnography, ethnographic novels, and visual ethnography (Creswell

& Poth, 2018). Realist ethnography is a traditional approach to the design method. The realist approach takes a stance towards the individuals being studied by the researcher. The approach is objective in nature, typically written in third-person, and objectively reports on the information learned from the participants. The researcher narrates the information from the study maintaining a style that contains no bias, political goals, and judgment. The researcher frequently reports mundane information regarding the participants' everyday life. The realist ethnographer identifies the cultural views through direct quotes, but has the final stance on the interpretation of those views (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Today ethnographic researchers typically utilize a more critical approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). They do so by including an advocacy perspective. The critical approach is a response to society that marginalizes different races, classes, and genders through systems of power, prestige, privilege, and authority. The researcher advocates for the emancipation of the specific group that is marginalized in society. Often, the researchers are politically minded who strive to utilize research to speak out against inequality and domination. The researcher will study issues of power, empowerment, inequality, inequity, dominance, repression, hegemony, and victimization in a critical ethnographic research study.

Challenges are present in this particular design as well. Researchers must have an understanding of cultural anthropology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Understanding cultural anthropology involves understanding the social cultural system and the concepts generally evaluated by those studying culture. Culture is an unstructured concept, developed when researchers seek to identify patterns of the social world. Culture includes the behaviors, language, and the possible tensions between what they do and should do. The researcher must identify a holistic perspective of the culture being studied. A second challenge is the extensive

amount of time required for data collection. The researcher must be able to devote a significant amount of time in the field collecting narratives from participants. If the researcher does not have adequate time to spend in the field, this design method would not be appropriate. Additionally, when collecting narratives, the participants typically provide them in the form of a story versus a scientific approach. Given the story-like nature the time commitment of the researcher continues to be involved with this approach. The literary nature of information presented by participants is attributed to the personal and sensitive nature of issues being studied, which can be an additional challenge for the researcher.

The narrative format gathers stories from people about their specific experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through gathering information in a story format people may tell the story individually or the researcher may have a large involvement through asking questions and dialogue between the participant and the researcher. The stories the person shares are their own individual stories that allow the researcher to better understand the identity of the person telling the story as well as understand how that person views themselves.

When the individual tells the story to the researcher they may share specific details about the situation or specific place such as descriptions of the physical, emotional, or social situations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). If the specific details are not shared the researcher will ask the questions to allow the research to feel as if they are in the story. However, not all stories are shared directly through an interview with the person. Interview is frequently the primary data collection method, but observations, documents, pictures and other qualitative data may be used to support the interview. Regardless of the manner through which the information is collected, the researcher will seek to chronologize events to help shape the understanding of the story by

the research. The person telling the story may not always provide information in chronological order as they have a temporal change when telling their personal story.

The researcher, through narrative design, collects information to analyze the information using a specific strategy. The strategy used may be thematic, structural, dialogic/performance, or visual (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A thematic strategy is when the researcher evaluates what was said. The structural approach looks at the nature of the story that was told. A dialogic or performance approach involves the researcher analyzing information based on whom the story was directed toward. The final common strategy is the visual approach, which allows the researcher to use images to interpret the story. Finally, narrative stories generally contain turning points. The items highlighted by the researcher include specific tensions, transitions, or interruptions that organize information for the lead-up and consequences of the story told to the researcher. The organization by the researcher allows for understanding of similarities, differences, changes, or coherence in the story to the reader of the research.

The narrative research design is an appropriate method when detailed stories or life experiences are involved (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The narrative approach is best utilized when involving a single individual or a small group of people, rather than large quantities of people. Due to the nature of interviewing and documenting detailed encounters or situations a time constraint would be evident if involving large number of people. Additionally, analyzing data would be a difficult process if the group extended more than one or a few people. The information gathered through personal stories or life experiences would allow the researcher to understand the individual through analyzing non-numerical data.

Utilization of the narrative design approach can be challenging for a researcher to implement in their qualitative research study. Two common challenges that the researcher will

face is collection of extensive information and power relations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Being mindful of potential challenges allows the researcher to be proactive in addressing them to ensure successful implementation of the research design method. Extensive data are required to be collected about the individual. The researcher must also have a clear and detailed understanding of the participant's life. Obtaining a clear and detailed understanding involves a significant time commitment by both the researcher and the individual involved in the research. Not only do both parties need to set aside a notable amount of time that may encompass an unknown timeframe, but also the researcher must be able to understand and uncover the details that capture the participant's story. The researcher will need to have an understanding of how to get to the details through listening and asking appropriate questions. Creswell and Poth (2018) describe the need for active collaboration with participants as an essential component in narrative design method. Gaining active collaboration may be challenging, thus the researcher must know and understand how to gain involvement with the particular individual. Each person is actively engaged in different ways, thus the researcher must be flexible and intuitive to uncover the appropriate method to identify the details of the story. Furthermore, researchers must be mindful of power relations with the person they are studying. The researcher is faced with issues regarding whose story it is to be told and shared, who can change the story, what version of the story is convincing and more. The research must identify the power relation from the initial onset of the research to ensure understanding and cooperation by the participant. Without the participants cooperation the researcher will face challenges in sharing and analyzing the story told to them for research purposes. Even with clear understanding initially, the individual could become uncooperative later in the process. When an individual seeks power in owning their story

they may become uncooperative rendering data unavailable for analysis. The result would then be the researcher being at the starting point again for the research project.

The study focused on a single concept (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, the study included a heterogeneous group that varied in size, but included a group of individuals who had all experienced the phenomenon. The collection of data in the phenomenology design method typically includes interviewing individuals. Despite interviews being the most common data collection method it can include poems, observations, and research too. The data collected is analyzed through narrow units and on to broader units, and finally to detailed descriptions that summarize the two units. The summary of the analysis includes what was experienced and how it was experienced. The ending to the phenomenology is a descriptive passage that describes the essence of the two units, with the essence being the culminating aspect of the study.

Hermeneutic phenomenology and empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology are the two most common approaches to a phenomenology study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The hermeneutical approach describes research toward lived experiences and interprets the story of life. First, researchers must identify a phenomenon that is of significant interest to them. Once the phenomenon is identified, they reflect on the essential themes and write a description of the phenomenon. Phenomenology is an interpretive process that requires the researcher to maintain strong relationship with the topic and make interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences shared by participants. The researcher must also focus on bracketing, which is setting aside their personal experiences to have a fresh perspective on the phenomenon being studied. The researcher seldom is able to completely set aside personal experiences, but the practice of bracketing allows them to do so more adequately. Researchers who embrace the idea of bracketing will outline their personal experiences with the phenomenon

prior to starting the research to allow them to focus on the experience of others. Empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology is the second type of approach to the phenomenology design approach. Through the approach, the researcher brackets their experiences, collects data, and then analyzes the data by reducing information to significant statements. The statements identified by the researcher are then organized into themes to allow the researcher to develop textural and structural descriptions. Textural descriptions are what the interviewee experienced. Structural descriptions are how they experienced the situations. Once the textural and structural descriptions are identified, the researcher is able to express the essence of the experience to complete the research method.

The phenomenology design approach can be challenging for a researcher to implement. Two common challenges that the researcher will face is the structured nature and selection of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Being mindful of potential challenges allows the researcher to be proactive in addressing them to ensure successful implementation of the research design method. The phenomenology research method is structured in nature and falls somewhere on the continuum of qualitative and quantitative research, although officially categorized as a qualitative design method. Due to the structured design method and the quantitative design elements the method is sometimes too structured for researchers interested in a qualitative design method. The method is particularly well suited for beginner researchers with limited experience as it provides structure. Additionally, researchers may struggle to find enough participants who have experienced the specific phenomenon they are studying. The size of the study group may vary from only a few individuals to many individuals. However, all participants interviewed must have experienced the exact same specific phenomenon and not a similar

version. Unless all participants have experienced the same specific phenomenon, the researcher is not able to convey the essences of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary of the Nature of the Study

The qualitative case method design allows for interviews and discussions with individuals to evaluate how leadership skills affect the promotion of leaders, the ability engage employees, and encourage organizational success. The case study method requires in-depth interviews to be conducted to understand the full scope of the research, therefore limiting the sample size. The researcher's study covered several businesses and multiple individuals within each to ensure an appropriate sample size was evaluated. Through an adequate sample size, the results may assist leaders in understanding the factors that impact the promotion of leaders based on current skills and abilities. Therefore, allowing recommendations for successful promotion to engage employees and ensure high levels of productivity.

The study was bounded, with a specific sample size and geographical area, to meet the requirement of a case study method (Stake, 1995). For the specific study, two rural communities in Indiana were identified including Huntington and Wabash. Both communities have a similar population size of 10,000 to 20,000 people. The communities are known to be rural and located in northern Indiana. Within both communities, service oriented companies were selected for research. Companies ranged in size within the communities, but did not include very small companies with fewer than twenty-five employees.

The researcher obtained permission from senior management within the company to gather research from leaders within the company. A minimum of five leaders within each company was interviewed to gather in-depth knowledge and understanding of the specific situation within their organization. Different levels of management, including frontline, middle,

senior, and executive level leaders were included in the study to develop a complete range of perspectives.

Research Questions

The research project focused on individuals being promoted based upon achievements and skills not related to leadership. Utilization of a qualitative research method led to the research questions being presented as open-ended questions, allowing the researcher to develop understanding and meaning to the specific problem presented. Questions were presented to interviewees in a live environment at their place of employment. In-person interviews allowed the interviewer to present open-ended questions, which created the ability for the researcher to understand why and how actions were occurring. The research questions below sought to guide the researcher throughout the study.

RQ1: How are employees promoted to leadership positions?

RQ1.a: What are the advantages of promoting based on current abilities?

RQ1.b: What are the disadvantages of promoting based on current abilities?

RQ2: How do current skills and achievements for employees differ from skills required for leadership?

RQ2.a: How are current skills similar to skills required for leadership?

RQ2.b: How are current achievements similar to skills required for leadership?

RQ2.c: How are leadership attributes determined by the company?

RQ3: In what ways do morale diminish and productivity lower when promoting leaders based on non-leadership skills?

Conceptual Framework

According to Green (2014), the conceptual framework provides understanding and clarity of the research goals. It provided guidance and direction throughout this qualitative research study. Organizational coaching and interpersonal leadership form the framework that guided the research.

Organizational Coaching

Coaching is defined in a variety of ways, but the common theme among definitions is it involves the relationship between two colleagues who work together to improve effectiveness (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). Research identifies the success of executive coaching within organizations. Employees are more likely to be successful in their positions when coaching is part of the culture. The culture for coaching involves the individual, team, and company perspectives (Underhill et al., 2007). Company culture provides the ability for individual employees to demonstrate and achieve greater value. When coaches evaluate the culture through all three perspectives they are able to integrate solutions more readily that enable employees to more effectively utilize resources. When companies provide resources to create a culture of coaching it allows employees to be more successful in their positions. When employees are provided resources, through coaching, to improve in their positions the business benefits from knowledgeable staff to best serve the organization.

When coaching is implemented in organizations, it creates the ability for leadership development. Coaching involves watching employees work in their natural work environment, taking time to observe specific practices, steps, and methods for performing daily responsibilities (Hunt & Weintraub, 2017). When coaches observe the employee and provide feedback including specific suggestions for improvement, personal growth is granted and encouraged for the employee being coached. Support of coaching throughout all levels of the organization

encourages the appropriate mindset for success. Creating a mindset that focuses on the development of the employees rather than the coach performing the work for the employee is important. Dedicating time needed to observe and practice with the employee encourages improvement and success (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). Coaching within organizations demonstrates the organization's commitment to employees through enhancement of internal advancement opportunities (McGill & Clarke, 2019).

Coaching focuses on development of capabilities of the employees with a task oriented approach that increases the employees' professional abilities (Hunt & Weintraub, 2017). Coaching is appropriate in the workplace to allow individuals to grow and develop in their current positions or advance to another position. Coaching is a practical concept to implement to enhance performance and productivity of employees through empowering them to be better.

Coaching encourages employee retention, performance improvement, and career and personal growth. Underhill et al. (2007) state that coaching demonstrates the business's commitment to developing employees to create key leaders and enhance internal advancement. Enhancing employee performance is important for the employee to allow them to find work meaningful. Additionally, it provides opportunities to grow within the company with the potential of promotion from employee to leader. Coaching creates seamless transitions for employees from staff level to managers as they already understand and know the company policy, practices, and culture (McGill & Clarke, 2019). Companies find coaching important as it encourages employee retention and performance improvement.

Transformational Leadership

Leaders who have mastered interpersonal skills have the ability to connect with others in a positive way. The leadership style focuses on the relationship between the leader and the

follower experiencing a level of growth. The skill set includes emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals (Northouse, 2019). The focus is on meeting the needs of both the leader and follower with mutual respect being present (Northouse, 2019). Frequently the leaders implementing a transformational leadership approach are charismatic, adding to their ability to motivate employees (Northouse, 2019).

Le and Lei (2018) describe transformational leadership as one of the most effective leadership styles because leaders motivate followers to set aside self-interest in favor of the goals of the organization. Building on the idea of mutual respect, trust is the central feature of this leadership style, as leaders must trust followers to do their part while followers must trust that leaders will do what they say. In essence, the transformational leader begins by building a culture of trust (Le & Lei, 2018). Liborius (2017) notes that the two most important traits for transformational leaders are integrity and forgiveness.

Trustworthiness allows the leader to create strong relationships with employees to aid in the achievement of goals. Leaders who exhibit charismatic leadership and personalities are able to entice employees to follow their actions (Northouse, 2019). Further, when these leaders displace high levels of moral and ethical conduct they gain notable trust from followers.

With the utilization of common goals, transformational leaders produce increased effort from employees. Increased effort is created through motivation in accomplishing common goals. The leader encourages the employee to make individual changes through their own decision-making (Jacob et al., 2017). Transformational leaders create buy-in to the shared vision of the company through leading employees to accomplish more than can be done individually (Northouse, 2019).

Transformational leaders deliver intellectual stimulation. They practice new problem-solving techniques and teach how to develop coherent solutions to problems (Jacob et al., 2017). Northouse (2019) describes this intellectual stimulation as the innovation that drives followers to challenge their own values and beliefs, pushing the organization to new levels.

Individual consideration is amongst the most important characteristics of transformational leadership. Leaders devote individual attention to employees' needs and provide positive feedback for their accomplishments. Through these actions leaders improve their employees' self-efficacy and drive the creation of mutual respect (Jacob et al., 2017). Transformational leaders act as coaches, encouraging employees' best performance and providing support.

Research shows that when not engaged, employees cost their organizations between \$292 and \$355 billion annually (Ellehuus, 2011). The steep cost can be mitigated with the organizational adoption of transformational leadership. The benefits of this leadership method are an open and communicative culture, higher employee satisfaction, improved retention, and lower attrition. It also promotes higher productivity and increased profitability. Other benefits are lower employee absenteeism and the coveted bonus of employee loyalty. Transformational leadership is a viable approach to cultivating a positive workspace where the company is fiscally viable; employees are satisfied, loyal and more productive (Ellehuus, 2011). The onus is on firms to ensure that they are hiring leaders vested in the methodology and providing training to implement the approach. Transformational leadership is imperative today and in the future. This leadership style is the differentiator organizations need to succeed.

Relation to Study

The conceptual framework of organizational coaching was appropriate for this study as the concept focuses on the employee's skills and enhancing the potential of the individual (Milner et al., 2018). The leader or coach acts as a facilitator of learning in the professional setting focusing on specific behaviors or actions to allow the coachee to learn and develop. Listening, questioning, feedback, and goal setting are amongst the most prominent ways that coaches facilitate learning and enhance employee performance through coaching. These items allow the employee or coachee to develop their own ideas, thoughts, and answers instead of being told the solution or answer to a problem. Not only does coaching enhance the potential of the employee through helping them to be independent critical thinkers it empowers them by allowing the employee to develop the solution in preparation for future promotion to leadership themselves (Milner et al., 2018).

Through the utilization of organizational coaching, new and emerging leaders adopted a transformational leadership style. A leadership style that engages others is necessary for the greatest organizational success. Transformational leadership style related to the study as it focused on achieving employee engagement and maintaining morale. The characteristics related to the leadership style are influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Organizations that have not progressed to this level see the negative effects. The most powerful of which is employees with a willingness to leave an organization when leadership fails to meet these basic standards (Ellehuus, 2011).

Addressing the Research Questions

The concept of organizational coaching addressed the research questions by focusing on the development of employees to leadership positions. Through coaching, current skills and future skills necessary for leadership are developed. Employees are more likely to be successful in their positions when coaching is part of the culture (Underhill et al., 2007). Through coaching, current skills and skills of leaders are identified within the coachee with understanding of what skills are important for success.

The concepts of transformational leadership correlated to the research question by identifying the way morale was diminished and productivity lowered. Further, the leadership concept focused on the desired characteristics of leaders for success in their position. Through striving for a transformational leadership style versus an authoritarian leadership approach, historically popular throughout organizations, companies can seek to better identify the skills desired of leaders compared to the skill of line level employees.

Potential Themes

Through the qualitative research project, the researcher expected to find that skills for daily job responsibilities and skills of leaders differed. The disadvantages of promoting based solely on current skills was expected to outweigh those of promoting based heavily on the skills required of leaders. The theory of organizational coaching was expected to help guide organizations to developing employees for future leadership positions through coaching future skills of problem solving and motivating to avoid lower productivity and diminished morale within the company.

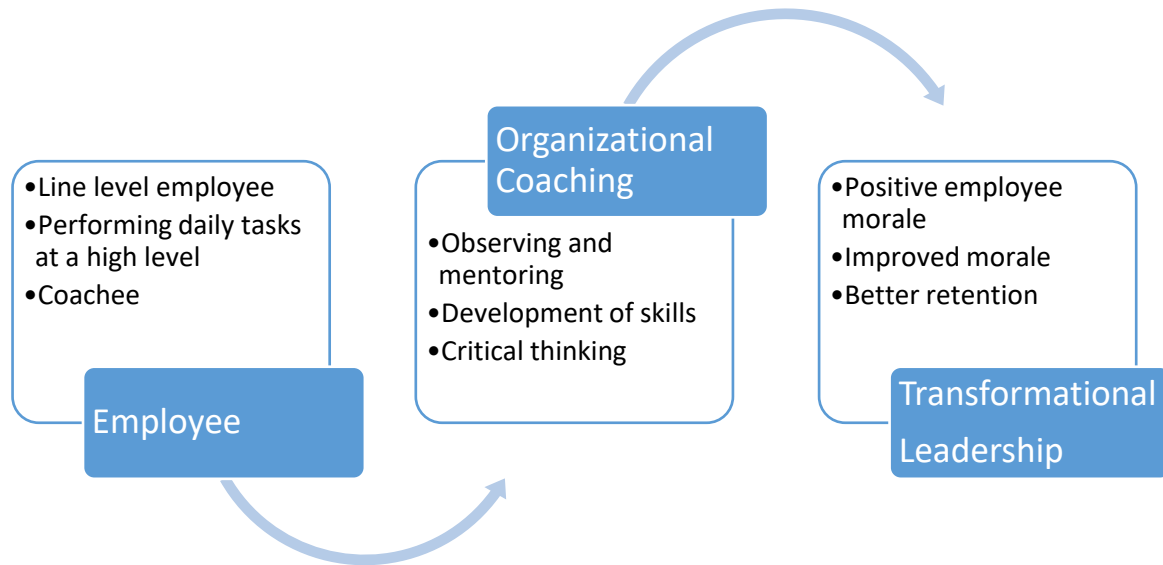


Figure 1. Relationship between concepts

Definition of Terms

Throughout the study several terms were utilized, which are defined below for consistent understanding and reference.

Skills: The actions or tasks an individual performs well (Zheng et al., 2019).

Organizational Coaching: The individualized, one-on-one method of two individuals who work together to improve effectiveness (Al-Nasser & Behery, 2015).

Transformational Leadership: The process when a person engages others and creates a connection that increases motivation and morale in the leader and follower (Northouse, 2019).

Morale: The level of satisfaction of employee needs and desire resulting in engagement of the individual. Morale does not strictly focus on the satisfaction (Bhasin, 2018).

Productivity: The ratio between levels of input from human capital (employee) to output (Altinkemer et al., 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

Assumptions

The research made several assumptions. The first assumption was that participants spoke honestly and openly when presented with research questions. Specific factors were established to aid in providing a safe and confidential environment for participants, primarily the confidentiality and anonymity in the research project (Kingsley et al., 2010). The sample size of five businesses and various levels of leaders within the companies provides a full representation and understanding of skills required of leaders regardless of leadership position. Furthermore, the researcher did not allow the influence of any personal beliefs or bias to affect the nature of the research through presenting coherent and consistent open-ended questions to participants. Through development of probing and open-ended questions, the researcher reduces assumptions or personal beliefs to generate discussion. The interview guide served as the structure for the interview to ensure consistency in gathering information, but provided flexibility for the participant to provide additional information through open-ended questions.

Limitations

Limitations existed in the research conducted. The researcher sought to mitigate and minimize potential limitations throughout the research. The utilization of in-person interviews created limitations. Through conducting interviews, the potential for accessing participants, researcher bias, and inequality of participants to effectively communicate responses to interview questions created limitations. Moreover, the research was limited to businesses in rural Indiana therefore limiting the population size. The findings of the research cannot be generalized to all businesses or organizations specifically those in urban cities due to the scope of the research conducted. The focus was on businesses in rural communities, further limiting the sample size.

Readers should not seek to apply findings to business in large cities. The research sought to mitigate the limitation from the sample size through selecting various businesses within the service sector.

The researcher sought to eliminate bias and maintain objectivity during the interview process as well as during evaluation and interpretation of findings. The researcher also sought to maintain an open mind during interviews by keeping personal beliefs, ideas, or anticipation of responses out of the interview questions. Through creating objective, non-leading questions the research demonstrated the reduction of this potential bias and avoided skewing data collected. The researcher stayed attentive in the present time during the interview and focused on the person being interviewed to avoid missing key information shared by the participant from a wondering mind.

Furthermore, bias was sought to be eliminated through validity and reliability as measures of qualitative research that ensure research is conducted and interpreted at the highest quality. Thomas (2011) defines the idea of validity and reliability in qualitative research as rigor, while the terms validity and reliability are utilized to define the concepts associated with quantitative research. Traditionally validity of qualitative research involves the degree that the researcher's claims correspond to the reality being studied (Cho & Trent, 2006). Both validity and reliability are ways to establish trust or confidence in the research and findings presented by the researcher (Thomas, 2011). The measures within qualitative research involve credibility, transferability, and dependability (Liberty University, n.d.). Transferability is established by providing detailed descriptions of the population studied including demographics and geographic boundaries (Thomas, 2011). Through doing so, it allows another person to replicate the study. The final concept is dependability, which relates to reliability in quantitative research (Thomas,

2011). Dependability occurs when another researcher follows the decision trail that was utilized in the study (Thomas, 2011). The decision trail is accomplished by describing the specific purpose of the study, discussing how and why the participants were selected, describing how data was collected and time period of data collection, explaining how data was transformed for analysis, discussing interpretation and presentation of findings, and communicating specific techniques used to determine credibility of data (Thomas, 2011).

Delimitations

The focus of the research was narrow and specific in nature allowing for an in-depth understanding and analysis of the research problem. The research included communities in rural locations of Indiana with population between 10,000 and 20,000. Through maintaining a consistent population size, it allowed for clarity that the communities are rural in nature compared to large urban cities. The research did not include businesses located within large cities as they have increased potential for larger candidate pools. The research sought to identify outcomes with smaller candidate pools for leadership positions, due to the smaller communities with lower population size only. The focus was on service-oriented businesses such as healthcare, public service, and financial institutions. The research did not include other business sectors as the scope became too large with potential for non-conclusive results.

The focus of the research was on the specific skills needed by leaders. These skills were compared to line level employees. Through identification of skills, the researcher was able to focus on the promotion of leaders. The research did not include developing existing leaders, but rather identification and selection of future leaders for the greatest success as evaluated by increased productivity and employee morale.

Significance of Study

The research allowed for a reduction of existing gaps in research, integration of Biblical concepts and practices, and relationship to the field of leadership. The following section identifies each of the three areas in greater detail providing the reader with a clear understanding of the importance of the study.

Reduction of Gaps

The qualitative research sought to evaluate the different skills required of employees and leaders, while understanding how management determines whom to promote to leadership positions. The research sought to reduce the gaps faced by leadership in promoting individuals to leadership positions. The following literature review evaluated, in detail, the differences between front-line level employee skills and skills of leaders (Abbasi et al., 2018; Buckman et al., 2018). Through the study, the research pursued to provide leaders and businesses with the knowledge and skills to improve productivity and experience positive morale through promoting the proper individuals to leadership positions.

Implications for Biblical Integration

Incorporating faith into research is a common practice with the ethical component being one way faith is incorporated (Mogra, 2017). Every person has different values and morals, which often, at least partially, were influenced by their spiritual background (Mogra, 2017). An assumption is that a faith component adds a level of credibility to the ethical component of the research. Focusing on the Christian faith, the assumption holds merit based on the scriptures calling to the researcher to be ethical in all they do.

Incorporating faith allows the researcher to know they have aligned their research with personal beliefs and standards. Researchers use the Christian worldview to help support and validate the ethical nature of the research project. The incorporation of scripture into the research

adds the accountability to the ethical nature. Including spirituality and faith to the research process leads to transparency (Soto, 2017).

Individuals who know they are improving their daily duties to become experts in their position find work to be more meaningful. Meaning is added to their work by realizing their leader is invested in helping them grow and knowing they are experts in their field serving to better their company, the customer's experience, or responsibilities for their peers. Keller and Alsdorf, discuss the importance of integrating God into daily activities for the most meaningful work (2012). When conducting business transactions it is important to honor God to realize meaningful and fruitful work. Kelly (2006) explains meaningful work as work that allows a person to perform duties for the greater good. Kelly does not specifically indicate that businesses perform work for the greater good, but it appears the concept readily applies to a business as well as the individuals employed at the company. Keller and Alsdorf (2012) share that society creates a lack of fruitfulness in work and that accomplishments often fall short of expectations as a result. Work on earth is not the final piece of life, but while here, God calls His followers to work for Him and not for others (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012; Kelly, 2006).

Through maintaining core values, regardless of results, leaders are most effective. Keller and Alsdorf (2012) encourage work to be performed as if serving the Lord at all times. To do so, leaders must be fully engaged giving their heads, hearts, and hands entirely to ensure their work is performed for Him and in a manner that holds true His commandments. Remembering God's dominance is essential, allowing individuals to know they are where He wants them to be in life, despite the difficult trials and tribulations that are faced in their work (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012). God calls His followers to love each other, serve those around them including their occupations. Through doing so, people are drawn together to unite and serve a greater purpose. Coaching

focuses on the relationships built and developed with one another. Providing advice and a better understanding of the workplace and their profession is the goal of the coach (Underhill et al., 2007).

Barnabas exemplifies leadership qualities that are important in the development of quality executive coaches. Barnabas was a young leader called by God. He exhibits personal courage when he brings Saul forward to the apostles. Barnabas risks his reputation and life when he does so, but his ethical attitude of listening to others and acting notably is his foundational leadership characteristics that leaders should apply in executive coaching. Barnabas was implementing an aspirational coaching method. Barnabas sought to bring out the values and aspirations. He built trust through listening to those around him offering input only after he heard and understood what was being shared with him.

The prophet Jeremiah gives hopes to young leaders that God calls them to be leaders and coaches in their organization. Jeremiah was called by God and responded that he was only a youth, indicating he was unworthy or incapable of such calling. However, we are reminded, as was Jeremiah, that He will be with him, guide him, and put words in his mouth to lead and coach those who surround him. God equips those He calls to be the coaches providing all that is necessary to coach and fulfill His work. Jeremiah chose his words carefully, influenced and formed close relationships with all people. Through his unwavering relationships with people, regardless of status, and his focus on fairness and truthfulness he maintains order within society. Jeremiah set expectations and demands for people that were clear. Applying his ways to business today can help leaders excel and be more prominent coaches in organizations. Jeremiah's coaching technique focused on engagement coaching. He sought to build and improve

interpersonal relationship even when the stakes were high. Jeremiah focused on the personal relationships with others.

Relationship to Leadership Cognate

The research was directly related to the field of leadership. Promotion of leaders based on current skills and achievements identified a challenge within the field of leadership. Elwell and Elikofer (2015) define leadership as providing guidance and direction. Becoming a leader is not an easy task, despite the promotion of leaders based on non-leadership characteristics. Leaders and managers are not always the same thing, as leadership focuses on dedication, motivation, and passion. Organizations may have managers, but leaders are imperative to the future and growth of the company, therefore the development of future leaders is important. New leaders face numerous challenges including earning trust, establishing credibility, understanding the goals of the organization, learning management priorities and showing respect (Petty, 2017). Because of challenges faced by new leaders, the first three months are often the most essential for entry-level managers resulting in the need for organizations and existing leaders to develop action plans to more successfully prepare leaders for the responsibility of leading (O'Neil et al., 2017). Morale and productivity are key characteristics in measuring leader success further linking the topic to the field of leadership (Belmore, 2019).

Summary of the Significance of the Study

The significance of the study allowed for detailed understanding of successful promotion of individuals to leadership roles. The initial period of promotion to leadership position are identified as the most critical for leaders resulting in the need to prepare individuals in advance for promotion. Utilizing a Biblical perspective allows leaders to keep morals and integrity at the forefront of decision making to best achieve success and maintain morale and productivity.

Reducing the existing gap in understanding front-line skills and leadership skills prepares companies to better identify future individuals for leadership positions with greater success.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

A comprehensive review of existing academic literature follows to provide understanding and foundation for the study. The research conducted focuses on employees, leaders, and organizational outcomes. Various databases were utilized for conducting research of existing academic literature including Jerry Falwell Library, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and academic textbooks from related courses at Liberty University. The most common search terms included employee skills, leadership, servant leadership, employee morale, and organizational outcomes. Variations of the mentioned terms were utilized to provide a more compressive review of literature. Existing literature was extensive in nature providing foundation for the study, but limited research exists regarding the outcomes of promoting leaders based on current skills rather than leadership skills. The review of recent academic literature allowed for correlation of key ideas to provide a conceptual framework relating the topics to organizational coaching and transformational leadership style. The following comprehensive summary of literature provided the groundwork for the research.

Employees

Employees are amongst the most valuable resources within any company (Van Hoye, 2013). Recruiting, retaining, and developing employees are imperative for any organization. Organizations find both soft and hard skills to be imperious for a well-rounded understanding of their employees' potential and likelihood of success. Soft skills focus on skills not specific to a job or industry, but rather the interpersonal skills that are sought out by businesses and leaders to develop the greatest teams (Hurrell, 2015). Conversely, hard skills focus on the specific traits

and skills needed for a particular job (Hendarman & Cantner, 2018). A thorough review of soft and hard skills provides the background regarding traits of employees for the first component of the review of academic sources supporting the research.

Soft Skills. Businesses value the technical or hard skills employees possess as well as their soft skills that contribute to high-level functioning (Stewart et al., 2016). Hurrell (2015) defines soft skills as the non-technical, interpersonal, applied skills of employees. The soft skills that an employee practices in their daily work are critical for professional success within the company (Stewart et al., 2016). Stewart et al. (2016) indicate that these skills cannot be taught through textbooks or academics; rather they are learned and acquired by employees through doing and practice. Conversely, Chakravarti and Chakraborty (2018) share that training and development of soft skills is required and imperative by business leaders with a fully developed curriculum advisable for companies. Regardless of whether the soft skills are taught or inherent they are difficult to measure (Nusrat & Sultana, 2019). Despite the challenges of measuring the desired skills, employers state that many employees lack them (Hurrell, 2015). Various factors are blamed for the lack of soft skills, but ultimately leaders are responsible for developing these skills within their employees (Hurrell, 2015).

Communication. Communication is a highly rated soft skill desired by employers (Hurrell, 2015). Communication involves both oral and written communication. Increasing technology has resulted in a decline in exemplary communication due to auto-correction tools (Stewart et al., 2016). Business leaders fear losing business relationship due to the poor communication skills individuals demonstrate. Being professional in interactions with management, peers, customers, vendors, suppliers, and another internal or external individuals impacts not only the reputation of the specific employee, but the company as a whole (Masa' deh

et al., 2019). With increasing competitiveness, it is imperative that employees demonstrate high quality and professional communication skills to maintain a positive image for the company to develop good relationships (Masa'deh et al., 2019). Employees who demonstrate high quality communication skills are able to deliver messages that achieve the intended result (Wikaningrum & Yuniawan, 2018). Individuals utilize a combination of gestures, language, and voice to deliver effective communication to the end user (Wikaningrum & Yuniawan, 2018). Overall, the high quality communication ability influences appearance of the individual employee and company, which in turn creates positive experiences for third parties or customers (Masa'deh et al., 2019).

Communication skills go beyond the actual words being shared, but through the non-verbal communication (Chakravarti & Chakraborty, 2018). Courtesy, clarity, conciseness, concreteness, consideration, and completeness are the seven components identified as leading to the best communication. Being mindful of these seven traits allows employees to develop and improve their communication skills. Combining these seven traits with understanding others, engaging in verbal communication, listening and responding to others, creating communication channels, incorporating non-verbal communication, and adapting communication to the specific person and situation fulfill companies desires and goals for communication skills for its employees. With improved communication, employees increase their chances for success and further professional rank.

Teamwork. Teamwork is noted as being amongst the highest rated skills sought by organizations (Parlami & Monnot, 2018). The ability to work effectively in teams is cited as a key criterion in the hiring of new employees (Brock et al., 2017). Despite the popularity of this soft skill many organizations and employees indicate that organizational teams are dysfunctional and ineffective (Brock et al., 2017). A variety of tools exist to aid in measuring the effectiveness

of teams (Brock et al., 2017). Lack of communication, trust, and leadership drive the failure of ineffective teams (Brock et al., 2017). Leaders or members of the team who have egos frequently clash with others creating conflict (Brock et al., 2017). Despite the frequent poor perception of teams, the soft skill is still identified as a critical skill. To develop teamwork skills in organizations leaders must strive to create open and honest communication, avoiding egos, and building trust (Brock et al., 2017).

A focus on teams allows leaders to encourage everyone on the team to have a part in the activities performed. With an increasingly complex work environment, globalization, and flattening of organizational structures a team approach is an important aspect to incorporate into leadership styles (Northouse, 2019). When leaders and employees on the team work together productivity increases, increased innovation, and better decisions are made. Teams are successful when the leader demonstrates traits of self-confidence and intelligence to guide the team. Team approaches require all individuals to build trust with one another and to be adaptive to different personalities and situations.

Critical Thinking. Critical thinking is a highly desired soft skill (Stewart et al., 2016). Individuals who are able to think critically are more effective in resolving conflict, finding solutions to problems, offering suggestions for process improvement, generating innovation, and developing into leaders (Tripathy, 2018). Finding solutions to conflict is challenging when individuals fail to see the root cause of the problem causing the conflict. Recognizing and understanding the root cause allows for the person to approach the situation with all involved to find a solution that solves the original problem, not the conflict that appears on the surface of personality or opinions clashing. Contributing to idea sharing allows an employee to aid the company in achieving goals through providing ideas for forward movement. Providing ideas that

are innovative and efficient through the ability to evaluate the big picture of the organization displays critical thinking skills. Those individuals who display critical thinking skills are increasingly likely to succeed in leadership positions. Their ability to visualize solutions and ideas fosters achievement of business goals through quality judgment, flexibility, resourcefulness, and reasonable risk taking (Tripathy, 2018).

Emotional Intelligence. Emotional intelligence is a set of abilities that include the capability to perceive emotions in one's self and in others, use emotions to facilitate performance, understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and regulate emotions both in one's self and in others (Nguyen et al., 2019). In today's evolving marketplace, teams have become a crucial part of the workplace. Being able to operate effectively on the team and in the workplace to lead the company to success, one must be able to control their emotions. This is due to the complex process of working within the organizational team (Lee & Wong, 2019). When individuals can perceive emotions in themselves, they are more readily able to facilitate emotions in others so that excellent business decisions are made.

On the other hand, when individuals have a strong sense of emotional intelligence they can actually use this skill to manipulate others. Particularly if an individual has self-serving motives they may try to undermine a co-worker to achieve the desired result but with a negative impact (Furnham & Rosen, 2016). Some argue that there are times that emotional intelligence is not relevant for a job depending on the position and level of the job and is actually more of a liability than an asset (Furnham & Rosen, 2016).

Companies hiring new employees should consider that emotional intelligence helps individuals to manage their own emotions, improve their own decisions, and enhance their own motivation allowing them to be more effective in the work place. According to Wong and Law

(2019), employees' emotional intelligence affects their job satisfaction and performance. As an individual recognizes their emotions, they can further understand those feelings in their peers allowing them to work together more effectively. The idea that cognitive testing is a good predictor of work performance is not necessarily accurate, as those individuals may not work well in the growing team environment. Furthermore, jobs require an individual to understand and control their emotions in an effective manner resulting in high importance being placed on emotional intelligence rather than cognitive testing.

Hard Skills. Hard skills are the technical skills required to complete tasks and jobs, often evaluating the knowledge and education a person has acquired (Hendarman & Cantner, 2018). These skills vary for each specific position and industry an employee works. Despite the vast possibilities of technical skills depending on a specific position or job, these skills focus on knowledge and cognitive ability. Cognitive ability is the general mental ability used in complex information processing, often referred to as intelligence (Dohmen et al., 2018). Cognitive ability tests are used to assess an individual's reasoning, perception, memory, and problem solving skills to predict their success. The tests present questions that are designed to estimate the potential to use mental processes to solve work-related problems or to acquire new knowledge related to the job (Dohmen et al., 2018).

Cognitive tests may be beneficial for organizations that are looking to have a consistent standard for interpreting results. This allows organizations to obtain test results from a variety of candidates and interpret each score in the same manner. However, companies must ensure that the cognitive abilities that are being tested are essential to the job. These tests can have high validity and be used repetitively by the organization. Cognitive tests are beneficial as a first step in a large hiring process as it will narrow down potential applicants based on standardized results

(New South Wales Government: Public Service Commission, 2018). By administering a cognitive ability test a company can hire individuals who score high on these tests indicating they will be very knowledgeable in the subject matter.

In actuality, cognitive tests tend to be standardized and may not be specific to the job or organization that is administering them to potential new employees (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2019). If the test is not specific to the job it may not accurately measure the individual's level of cognitive intelligence for that specific job, thus not relevant to their future potential. These testing scores are often influenced by the numbers of years of education, as this is what is taught in school (Rezvani et al., 2016). Higher test scores do not necessarily mean better job performance. For example, an individual may have superior verbal ability and test higher; however, they may not use that ability to express one's thoughts (Stenberg, 2018). They may in other words talk the talk but not walk the walk. By scoring high on tests, they are not necessarily performing better or going to last longer within the organization (Stenberg, 2018). If a company relies primarily on cognitive testing, it could find the new employee is not a good fit for the company in the long run despite scoring high on tests of cognitive intelligence (Stenberg, 2018). In order for the individuals to function as part of the team, they need to express themselves effectively.

Leadership

When leading either formally or informally individuals are presented with a variety of different foundational leadership concepts. These concepts provide the foundation and groundwork into understanding the research. Leadership styles, types of leaders, and skills create the basis for organizations to identify and develop individuals into the desired leadership

positions that contribute to the greatest success for the company. While evaluating the vast range of possibilities and methods that leaders may implement research indicates challenges that new leaders experience along the way. Promotion processes and succession planning further determine the way individuals are prepared for future leadership positions.

Leadership Styles. Various leadership styles exist. Each style is characterized by its own unique sets of factors including strengths and drawbacks resulting in the individual styles being suited best for certain individuals or situations compared to others (Myer & Meijers, 2017). Leaders understanding of their preferred style and the understanding of all styles allow them to be more effective in switching styles as most appropriate for a given situation.

Trait Approach. The trait approach to leadership indicates that personality traits influence the leader's abilities and effectiveness (Colbert et al., 2012). The completion of the trait assessment allows leaders to evaluate themselves as leaders, which can enhance their performance and ultimately the company performance. The utilization of a trait assessment for existing employees, as well as potential employees, helps align company direction with that of existing and potential staff (Northouse, 2019). The trait assessment is a useful tool in bringing awareness of a leader's strengths and weaknesses in a particular trait. Incorporating results into the leadership development program will help enhance the current leaders' skills. Further, it will allow management of the organization to strive to develop overall training and development around the key traits, to enhance all employees throughout their tenure with the company (Northouse, 2019).

One of the drawbacks to the trait approach is that there is minimal research that validates the processes that people acquire the capacity for leadership (Fleenor, 2017). It is indicated that possessing the so-called leadership traits does not indicate that a person is likely to become a

leader. Critics have referred to the trait approach as the dust-bowl empiricism due to the lack of support and validity to the effectiveness of the approach.

Situational Leadership. Situational leadership considers many variables including the knowledge and training background a leader possess. Walls (2019) describes the leadership styles as a strategy that studies the specific person and tasks that are required. The leader evaluates the employee to create an action plan that focuses on the specific employee (Delk, 2019). The various personality traits, learning ability, and motivational desires affect the manner that the leader adopts when guiding and mentoring (Delk, 2019). Situational leaders must recognize the differences of each individual employee and eliminate the utilization of broad techniques that try to encompass the masses of employees. Three major types of situational leadership exist: unplanned, responsive, and planned (Delk, 2019). Unplanned situational leadership is what a leader does in unexpected situations. Responsive refers how individuals respond to opportunities or challenges that are presented to a leader. Finally, planned leadership is an intentional and deliberate plan to a situation.

The approach of situational leadership is beneficial in developing relationships between the leader and followers. The leadership style is one of the most taught leadership styles in management and organizations throughout corporate America (Frame & Hein, 2017). The method is popular due to the leader adjusting to the specific situation providing the best possible leadership. However, when leaders adjust to the varying situations some followers may not relate or become confused by the apparent change of the leader's style (Frame & Hein, 2017)

Transformational Leadership. Transformational leadership focuses on the relationship of the leader and the employee (Northouse, 2019). The leadership style focuses on the emotions,

standards, long-term goals, ethics, and values of the employee and leader. The four key elements are influence, motivation, intellectual incentive, and consideration of the individual. Both individuals recognize the needs of the other thereby maintaining and developing respect for the other. The responsibility of the leader is to motivate the follower by putting aside egocentricity for the better good of the company (Le & Lei, 2018). Mutual respect and trust are imperative features of the leadership style with both parties trusting the other and doing what they say and are expected to do. Integrity and humanity are key elements of transformational leadership as well. Transformational leaders have positive attitudes striving to be energetic, open, and receptive to change (Le & Lei, 2018). These types of leaders thrive in new situations and seek opportunities for development. Given the high level of energy these types of leaders permeate, they are able to motivate followers effectively to achieve results. The leader engages and motivates through a role model approach when utilizing the transformational leadership style (Sosik, 2017)

Interpersonal Leadership. Interpersonal leadership focuses on maximizing employee engagement. The emphasis of interpersonal leadership is leaders' ability to empathize, understand and evaluate others, and demonstrate diplomacy and tact (Ching-Yuan et al., 2016). The approach encourages leaders to reflect on themselves as leaders to build relationships with those around them to motivate others to do their best. Interpersonal leadership focuses on the relationships with others (Hansen et al., 2017). Leaders are required to practice active listening, provide open communication, encourage teamwork, show patience, and empathize. Through the use of interpersonal leadership techniques, leaders are able to connect with others to achieve

results. When employees are not engaged it costs the organizations financially as productivity and performance suffer.

With the increase in technology, interpersonal communication, a key factor in interpersonal leadership, is threatened. With the reduction in face-to-face communication, leaders lack the opportunity to engage in active listening as communication happens via electronic modes. As a result, the ability to effectively engage in meaningful conversation is severely limited (Long & Vaughan, 2017).

Types of Leaders. Three primary types of leaders exist, including authoritarian, participative, and laissez-faire (Bârgău, 2015). Each of these types of leaders has common characteristics that define the leadership type. The advantages and disadvantages of each leadership type provide understanding and perspective to leaders when evaluating how to lead a team.

Authoritarian. The focus of the authoritarian leader is on independently making decisions, being in complete control, and exercising sole authority for decisions (Bârgău, 2015). With complete control of the decision making process the views of the leader are forced upon employee followers. Employees are required to follow the direction of the leader without proposing new ideas or challenging decisions. The authoritarian leader typically leads based on the desire to achieve results and objectives. Both advantages and disadvantages exist when an authoritarian leader is present within a business.

Employees who require direct close supervision and guidance in order to complete tasks within strict timelines often flourish under authoritarian leadership (Bârgău, 2015). When productivity is the primary driver in work and employees lack motivation, the authoritarian leader is able to increase productivity through making decisions and executing plans directly and

with no discussion or challenging of ideas (Bârgău, 2015). Organizations such as the Catholic Church implement this style of leadership with one person responsible for making decisions. The method is effective and part of the long-standing culture of the church.

Employees seeking creativity and team centered individuals struggle with authoritarian leaders due to the lack of input and contribution to the results (Bârgău, 2015). Further, employee motivation and morale decreases when they are excluded from having a voice in decision-making processes. Not only do some employees resent the leadership style, leaders often experience more stress. Increased stress in the end is common due to the leader carrying all responsibility for decisions without input and collaboration from others (Bârgău, 2015).

Participative. Leaders focusing on a participative style aim to seek out and listen to their employees' ideas prior to making final decisions (Bârgău, 2015). The leader makes the final decision, but only after careful review and insight from subordinates. In change situations, participative leaders experience greater success than other forms of leadership due to employees contributing and having a voice in the decision made. Employees' participation in decisions contributes to buy-in from them when it is time to implement the change. Additionally, leaders experience increased dedication and commitment from employees due to the value the employees feel from being included and having a voice with their leader. A collaborative and team centered culture is created when individuals understand and recognize the entire team contributes to the results, decreasing errors. Turnover decreases as employees become increasingly invested in the company as they recognize the leader's investment to them personally (Bârgău, 2015). Overall, the participative leader experiences dedicated loyal employees who work hard to deliver the best possible outcomes while sharing in their team successes.

Conversely, drawbacks exist with the participative leader too. When including all employees in the decision making process the time to make a decision is much longer (Bârgău, 2015). Employees experience resentment and frustrations when a leader must make a decision independently or in an authoritative manner if they typically are a participative leader. Employees feel left out and if their opinion did not matter in the specific situation rather than seeing the greater need for a quick decision. Leaders struggle to find a balance of making decisions independently and consulting employees creating challenges.

Laissez-faire. The laissez-faire leader gives no routine or regular feedback and provides minimal to no supervision to employees (Bârgău, 2015). Employees view these leaders as not leading well creating a lack of motivation of employees. The leader does not have much control over employees or situations given their hands-off type of leading. The laissez-faire leader allows employees the freedom to do what they want including making decisions and accepting responsibility for decisions.

Employees who are creative and visionary thrive with this type of leader given their complete freedom in daily and long-term work responsibilities (Bârgău, 2015). The lack of supervision and ability to work independently promotes trust and responsibility of subordinates. Leaders have little responsibility, which may create the lack of motivation for employees who see the leader contributing little. Although freedom is granted and creativity encouraged, productivity deficiencies exist from employees' lack of motivation, direction, or ability to be well equipped to perform their job (Bârgău, 2015). When the leader fails to provide guidance and direction to individuals they may not appropriately prioritize work intentionally or unintentionally.

Servant Leaders. Businesses seek servant leaders and individuals desire to be one. Robert K. Greenleaf is credited to coining the phrase servant-leadership in the 1970s in his book, *The Servant as a Leader* (Spears, 1996). To be a servant leader it is essential to understand the key ideas associated with servant leadership. Servant leadership is frequently viewed from either a Christ-centered or man-centered approach. The Christ-centered approach involves the leader utilizing the Gospel and God's teachings to lead decisions and actions of servant leadership (Sachdeva & Prakash, 2017). This approach is about not only serving others but also serving God (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Conversely, a man-centered approach tends to focus on personal achievements (Duff, 2013). The leader with a man-centered approach does not put others first, but rather themselves (Duff, 2013).

Servant leaders often find themselves embracing this leadership style through natural feelings and action (Spears, 2004). Others frequently describe individuals who seek to further embrace and grow as a servant leader as humble (Souyri, 2014). Blanchard and Hodges (2003) discusses that servant leaders think about themselves less and others more, not that they devalue themselves or others. This means that the servant leader does what is right for the company and others regardless of the personal implication (Lohrey & Guillaume, 2015). Additionally, the servant leader is empowered. Through empowering people, organizations create a culture of accountability and service towards others (van Dierendonck, 2011).

Leaders may take any role in life, business, or organization. A leader is not identified as strictly being someone with a formal title in an organization (Blanchard et al., 2016). The servant leader does not seek traditional hierarchy, but rather seeks to serve those around them to create a genuine care for them that lead to empowerment and sense of non-traditional hierarchy

(Panaccio et al., 2015). Servant leaders do not always hold the most prestigious title and may not hold a title at all (Fahlberg & Toomey, 2016).

Skills of Leaders. Research identifies a variety of skills leaders should possess for the greatest success. Identifying and labeling the specific skills great leaders possess is a challenging concept with many different terms and skills available to describe leaders. Skills span a wide range of focus for a well-rounded leader. Decision-making, communication, self-awareness, people skills, and mentorship are amongst the most cited skills (Moodie, 2016; Small business trends, 2019). Each skill identified serves a specific purpose in aiding in effective leadership. Various other skills exist and may be important in specific industries or situations; however, the skills discussed are identified as general and transferable across leadership positions in various industries and levels of leadership positions.

Decision-making skills focus on the leader's ability to solve problems through their ability to research situations or problems or through existing knowledge and expertise (Moodie, 2016). Communication is important amongst other leaders, superiors, and subordinates to ensure clear, cohesive messages are delivered through verbal and written communication or actions. Effective communication further allows the leader to ensure followers understand expectations and goals. A leader's ability to advocate for employees and situations is another demonstration of their communication skills. Self-awareness relates to understanding one's self including efforts to improve, discipline, and accountability (Small business trends, 2019). Seeking continual improvement through formal or informal training in technical skills or leadership allows leaders to grow and remain effective (Moodie, 2016). Asking for feedback, reviewing and reflecting on work and results, seeking a personal mentor, personal development reading, or participating in training or courses are all ways leaders can continually grow and seek

improvement efforts (Moodie, 2016). Being accountable as a leader includes taking responsibility for actions and being a reliable source for employees (Small business trends, 2019). Self-discipline includes committing and following through on items or tasks, the leader says they are going to do (Small business trends, 2019). Self-discipline may relate to deadlines, following up with employees, and being consistent and committed (Small business trends, 2019). Leading through example is a common method for demonstrating accountability as a leader and driving similar behavior from employees.

People skills are a broad term utilized to describe the capability of interacting and working with other individuals. Composure, open-mindedness, empathy, and motivation are encompassed within this skill. Composure relates to the ability to stay collected in high pressure or intense situations (Small business trends, 2019). The ability to seek opinions and viewpoints of others in a sincere manner reveals an individual's ability to be open minded. Kindness, caring, and desire to help others are actions leaders who are empathetic display. Through being empathetic leaders build trust, loyalty, and respect from their followers and peers. Motivation of employees is particularly important when business leaders want employees to succeed, creating a fundamental skill for leaders to possess (Sale, 2017). Mentorship allows the leader to serve as a role model through sharing their knowledge, experiences, skills, and attitudes to help develop others into successful employees and potential future leaders (Moodie, 2016; Small business trends, 2019).

Leader Success. Success of leaders is dependent on a variety of factors including industry, cultures, business size and age, as well macro-level factors (Finkelstein et al., 2017). Macro-level factors include areas such as economic condition, laws and regulations, and competition. To truly understand and identify leader success the company must define success.

The ability for the leader to obtain results faster and further than the incumbent is one common definition of leader success utilized by companies. Finkelstein et al. (2017) described success as satisfaction of a leader's accomplishments, value assessment such as highly ethical leader, positive change within the company and followers, or by achieving and fulfilling organizational missions and goals. For success to be identified and measured the company must adequately define what leader success is to them specifically.

Cognitive Abilities. An individual's cognitive ability is a common indicator of leadership success (Finkelstein et al., 2017). Cognitive abilities are identifiable early on in employees leading to the increased reliance on this ability for determining success. Research indicates that cognitive ability is infrequently taught therefore, without early signs of cognitive ability, leaders are not likely to acquire or learn this once promoted to leadership positions. Cognitive ability for leaders includes critical thinking and decision making skills (Finkelstein et al., 2017).

Personality. The personality of a leader is a key driver in success as a leader as it evaluates the ability to handle the demands of leadership in a suitable temperament (Finkelstein et al., 2017). Dominance, need for achievement, emotional stability, and sociability are cited as key traits of effective leaders. These traits are viewed as contributing to success of a leader as a result of the leader's need to be persuasive, interact with a wide variety and levels of individuals, and operate in stressful and high-pressure situations. The ability to put the team first including prioritizing their satisfaction and interests is a personality trait displayed by effective and successful leaders (Wang et al., 2019). The ability to help their subordinates grow shows a leader's commitment to the team and organizational objectives.

The social competence of the leader is another facet of personality that frequently determines success. Finkelstein et al. (2017) share that controversial and political situations often

arise within the organization and the leader must navigate these situations with ease and tact. Social competence includes the ability to create trust amongst the leader and subordinates, communicate effectively with all parties, have social influence, and display characteristics commonly associated with extroversion. It is imperative that organizations recognize the difference between social competence and people who are charming through manipulation. Leaders who are most effective utilize social competence for the good of the employees and organization not for their personal growth and benefit.

Learning Agility. The ability for a person to learn from prior situations and then apply those lessons to future challenges is described as their learning agility (De Meuse, 2019). Studies indicate that over 62 percent of companies utilize learning agility as a measure of leadership potential. Leaders who seek to diversify their skills and engage in continuous learning experiences enjoy greater success as leaders (De Meuse, 2019). The ability to have a growth mindset ensures the leader is continually adapting to situations while still utilizing prior knowledge to aid in working through a specific situation. Leaders displaying a flexible mindset are more open and welcome to feedback from others including their employees than an individual with a fixed mindset. The work-in-progress mentality aids leaders in reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses to lead to improvement in their leadership abilities (De Meuse, 2019). The fixed mindset leader is less likely to spend time developing subordinates through coaching, creating challenges, and increasing subordinates potential.

Transitional Challenges. Promotion to a leadership position results in challenges for the individual promoted. Frequently leadership transitions fail due to a vast array of reasons. Spears (2018) sights the existing team was already achieving peak results leaving no room for the new leader to increase productivity, the new leader had false expectations that their presence alone

would increase productivity of the team members, not enough thought and understanding was put into the transition, and the leader was promoted based on skills not needed or required in the leadership position or on the team. Promotion of the star performer to leadership is a frequent factor within companies (Hill, 2007). As a result, new leaders find that the skills they excelled at previously are vastly different from the skills required to lead a team. The success the individual previously experienced was based primarily on their own contributions and efforts, while as a leader their success is viewed from the perspective of the team (Hill, 2007). The lack of preparation for the transition and focus of promoting star performers rather than focusing on individuals who possess leadership skills results in challenges and failures for the new leader (Spears, 2018).

Nichols and McBride (2017) state that individuals promoted from within frequently experience feelings of isolation or resentment, creating increased chances of failure for the new leader. Feelings of isolation often occur due to a different relationship with their former peers and supervisors (Nichols & McBride, 2017). The difference from peer to supervisor created changes in working relationship with favors being requested from those employees with whom the new leader had previously worked side-by-side. Resentment is experienced by those who were passed up for the leadership position creating conflict in the workplace that leads to increased failure for the new leader. The increase in failure is due to the lack of training or coaching in dealing with these situations and even lack of organizational support from higher ranking leaders. New leaders who try to continue fitting in or maintaining the same friendship level relationships are faced with being viewed as providing preferential treatment, but the converse holds true that when they seek to be the leader instead of the friend they are viewed as being by-the-book or unreasonable (Nichols & McBride, 2017).

Leadership transition is not only challenging for new leaders, but also existing leaders promoted to higher ranks. Throughout the ranks of leadership, different skills and thinking behaviors are essential for success (Terblanche et al., 2017). Higher-ranking leadership positions require thinking to become more strategically focused on the organization. The need for more organizational strategic focus is driven by increasingly complex situations faced by the leaders. Coaching is a prevalent method for reducing the challenges faced by new and experienced leaders promoted to new leadership positions.

Promotion Process. Identifying future leaders is important for business success. Carnes et al. (2015) found personality to be a primary contributor to promotion selection during the interview process. Interviewers focus more on current abilities and achievements rather than seeking out qualities and characteristics of the ideal future leader. Traditional methods for selection through in-person interviews are highly relied on for both internal and external leadership positions. Other organizations, such as the United States Federal Service, focus on education and experience to determine promotion of individuals to leadership roles (Johnson & Walker, 2018). Limited existing data is available on the specific details of promotion process within organizations and the success or failures of such methods.

Succession Planning. Succession planning in organizations is increasingly important as the baby boomer generation focuses on retirement with the next generation flooding the workforce. The millennial generation, those born between 1980 and 2000, make up approximately 50 percent of the workforce (Kosterlitz & Lewis, 2017). With the change of generations is the fear of loss of knowledge, therefore succession planning is critical to ensuring successful transfer of knowledge within organizational leadership positions (Sibbald et al., 2017). Through the utilization of succession planning within businesses, leaders are able to aid in

ensuring the appropriate individual is selected to lead within the company at a later date. Further, through planning it allows for preparation for unexpected events by having an individual identified for the position as well as having begun the transfer of knowledge.

Succession planning may be viewed as a component of talent management or the human resources department, but it goes beyond that to the current organizational leaders (Sibbald et al., 2017). The process of handing the leadership reins to either an internal or external successor is frequently a behind the scenes process for the leader, rather than openly discussed with human resources and other organizational leaders. When planning for the transition of the leader's role to a successor, timing is cited as being crucial (Sibbald et al., 2017). An open and transparent means of communication of the succession planning aids in improving the first impression that is so critical in the timing of the transition. Mentoring is at the heart of succession planning with leaders needing to focus on helping to develop those identified as future leaders (Fray & Sherman, 2017). When organizations lack formal mentoring or coaching programs it is much less frequently implemented due to cost and lack of organizational support.

Strategic priority is one practice that is useful to aid in more intentional engagement of succession planning within a business (Barton, 2019). The practice of strategic priority begins with direct involvement and commitment of the company's senior leaders. These individuals recognize the importance of their human capital as an organizational whole creating the understanding that employees, although associated with a specific department, contribute to the organizational whole. Organizations experience greater success when succession planning is not narrowly focused on top management or executive level, but throughout all levels in the business including first-level managers. Through the broader scope to succession planning, it allows for greater focus on future leader development creating more learning opportunities including

identifying early on individuals who may not be best suited for top management positions (Barton, 2019). When leaders offer assignments outside of an employee's normal daily activities, it creates the ability to evaluate future leadership potential. Some businesses implement job rotations, stretch assignments, or special projects to allow potential future leaders to experience different functions (Barton, 2019). The various options of exploring other job responsibilities gives the individual support from more seasoned individuals through collaboration and mentorship. Finally, the practice of being transparent contributes to succession planning success. When companies are transparent, display trust, and formality as part of the organizational culture regarding internal succession planning, they are able to retain talent that supports the development of future leaders. Employees are better able to understanding expectations, how they are doing, and steps to take to be considered for advancement (Barton, 2019). Ultimately, these practices aid in risk mitigation through preparing and mentoring future organizational leaders early on and engaging employees for greater institutional performance, success, and sustainability.

Coaching. Coaching is a key factor in successful transition of employee to leader. The term executive coaching was first coined in the 1980s to reduce the negative stigma associated with coaching (Nelson et al., 2018). The term still held a negative connotation for the next decade, but began to increase in popularity during the 1990s with businesses increasingly implementing executive coaching to address poor leadership problems. Executive coaching developed a positive perception during the late 2000s as many leaders have executive coaches who work closely with them on setting and achieving long-term goals, daily activities, and interpersonal skills.

Leadership development focuses on developing and maintaining positive changes in personal development and leadership behavior (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018). When senior executives coach employees and support coaching, successful coaching programs are more likely (Underhill et al., 2007). Through leadership's support of coaching, all levels of employees in the company may enhance their skills and improve in their jobs to allow the company to be a competitive performer.

Coaching involves observing employees perform their jobs for a specific amount of time and focusing on the steps and methods the employee takes (Hunt & Weintraub, 2017). A coach then discusses what they observed in a way that promotes personal growth for the employee. When the top leaders in a company do coach their employees it creates a stigma that coaching is for poor performers (Underhill et al., 2007).

Within an organization in the United Kingdom that has implemented coaching, approximately 37 percent of the coaching takes place with the line managers (McCarthy & Milner, 2013). Line managers bear the responsibility of the majority of coaching as research indicates that it leads to increased employee satisfaction, increased performance, and achieving organizational goals (Wheeler, 2011). Munteanu and Ratiu (2018) found that middle managers are offered the greatest opportunity to coach their subordinates. Middle managers are very similar to line managers working with the front line employees. Further, coaching is correlated to effective management behaviors and allows leadership theories to be implemented by managers (McCarthy & Milner, 2013).

Outside third party companies who focus on coaching executives often coach executives within organizations (Ladyshevsky, 2010). It is important that outside individuals do not only coach leaders, but also that internal coaching takes place throughout the organization. Ensuring

leaders have been coached themselves will help them to be less skeptical of implementing coaching with their employees. Positive experiences enjoyed by the leader will encourage them to want their subordinates to experience the same positive results. Leaders who have been coached, or trained on coaching, must also operate within a company culture that supports coaching if it is to be successful for their own employees (Lindbom, 2007).

Coaching is most successfully implemented in organizations when confidentiality, trust, and empathy are present between the coach and coachee (Rekalde et al., 2015). When coaching, the coach must be mindful of what the coachee is experiencing and feeling so they can take initiative to adapt the coaching to the comfort level of the coachee (Baron et al., 2011). The working or professional relationship between the coach and coachee is essential (Kilburg, 2001). The coachee's view of the learning potential or opportunity is important to ensure the greatest value from the experience. The level of interest that the coachee has in learning from a specific situation can vary from situation to situation resulting in certain coaching to be more effective than others (Hunt & Weintraub, 2017). When the coach is aware of what the coachee is interested in improving and learning from, it can help ensure the correct area of focus to further enhance the employee's performance, effectiveness of coaching, and overall company performance. Coaching for the sake of coaching with no objective results is of minimal benefit and can discourage employees from being engaged in future coaching opportunities.

Behavioral Coaching. Behavioral coaching involves engagement coaching, empowerment coaching, and opportunity coaching all of which connect directly to the employee's behavior (Bergquist & Mura, 2011). Engagement coaching is used with situations involving interpersonal relationship that have high stakes. The focus in this method is on one-on-one relationships. Empowerment coaching is utilized in relationships with a client and the groups

they participate in, with the goal of assisting the group to be effective. Lastly, opportunity coaching centers on preparing for special events. The coach is able to assist with the event to optimize likelihood of success.

Decisional Coaching. Decisional coaching is built around the decision-making process (Bergquist & Mura, 2011). Reflective coaching is a method of decisional coaching that involves the coach talking to the coachee through job related situations and developing problem solving skills and styles. Instrumental coaching involves the use of self-assessments to gain insight of a coachee's self-perceptions. Observational coaching is the final of the three decisional coaching methods. This allows the coachee to identify their strengths, which are evaluated through actual working conditions by the coach.

Aspirational Coaching. Aspirational coaching is the final technique of executive coaching. This method seeks to bring out the values and aspirations of the coachee (Bergquist & Mura, 2011). Philosophical, ethics-oriented, career, and spiritual coaching are the four methods for aspirational coaching. Philosophical coaching involves the coach encouraging and assisting the coachee in understanding their beliefs. Coaches assist the coachee with identifying important challenges regarding the identification of morals to decisions being made and actions taken in ethics-oriented coaching. Career coaching involves personal coaching and life review (Bergquist & Mura, 2011). Lastly, spiritual coaching provides meaning for complicated situations that reaches beyond the individual.

Coaches improve on each of these techniques through continued practice and understanding of the techniques. Being mindful of the variety of coaching techniques and utilization of the appropriate technique for a specific situation is essential for success in coaching. Coaches improve their coaching skills through practice and being coached themselves.

Teaching Leadership. The components of leadership are integral facets of an organization's success. Leaders work to assemble an efficient strategy that will allow employees to cohesively work towards a common goal (Falavigna et al., 2019). Many facets of leadership are intangible, but what can be learned from leadership efficiency is invaluable. Experience gained provides management the ability to handle the unpredictable situations that are unavoidable in business. Daft (2016) determined management must be able to deal with extreme complexity and look to expand boundaries to overcome obstacles. This knowledge to obtain optimal performance is gained through experience. The necessity to gain the needed experiences to handle many of the intangible challenges facing a leader makes teaching management in business school a necessity.

Unfortunately, teaching leadership from a textbook limits future leaders to only gaining a strong understanding of management terms. For example, a student may learn what a joint optimization is, which means that an organization functions best when the social and technical systems are designed to fit the needs of one another (Daft, 2016). But, the leader will not gain the experience needed to handle the intangible portions of achieving joint optimization. In addition, managers need to be able to handle emotions in troubling situations. This means managers need to understand emotional intelligence and a textbook may be able to explain this, but a lack of understanding on how to apply it becomes challenging. Employees will respond to the emotions of management, thus making it important for leadership to handle emotions accordingly (Schneider et al., 2017). Furthermore, management must implement theories learned from the textbook accordingly. To do this, experience must be gained on when and where to implement them.

Managers. Individuals are frequently tasked to be leaders through a management position. However, being a manager does not necessarily mean an individual is a leader. Leadership is an essential and important part of management (Lucia, 2018). Managers who are leaders set the vision and direction for the company through representing the interests of the team, protecting reputation, and taking care of identity. Leaders shape the success of the organization through leading teams to achieving company goals through their influential tactics. Both formal and informal leaders impact the organization's success through their ability to officially or unofficially influence those around them. Communication is a key quality in asserting formal and informal leadership (Lucia, 2018). Good communication with followers and subordinates is what propels a manager to be a quality leader.

Organizational Outcomes

The leader's trust in their employee fosters mutual trust from their employee (Serva et al., 2005). When trust exists and quality leadership is demonstrated, employee motivation and productivity are influenced. The organizational outcomes fostering improved potential for a company are evaluated to support the research. These two areas of organizational outcome seek to relate academic research to the problem addressed by the researcher.

Employee Motivation. When employees lack motivation and engagement in the workplace company performance deteriorates. Chapman and White have identified the five languages of appreciation to help engage and motivate employees (2012). The five languages are: express appreciation, increase loyalty, reduce cynicism and create a more positive environment, improve ability to show appreciation and physical touch in appropriate ways. Sale (2017) states a leader's ability to motivate employees is a fundamental component of employee development. Motivation of employees is particularly important when business leaders want

employees to succeed (Sale, 2017). According to Van der Laken et al. (2018), employee engagement can give a competitive advantage in the workplace through utilization of one of the company's greatest resources, its people. Utilization of intrinsic motivators aid businesses in engaging employees at work (Stumpf et al., 2016). Intrinsic motivators come directly from the work performed and provide a sense of ownership in work accomplished (Stumpf et al., 2016). When employees take ownership in their work it increases quality of work, which benefits the company. There is no limit to who can be involved in this processes and often the more people the better as it makes employees feel their opinions are valued (Van der Laken et al., 2018). Additionally, extrinsic motivators contribute to a more successful method of motivation for some employees (Law et al., 2017). Understanding specific motivators of employees in business is important due to motivation driving accomplishments in the workplace (Smith & Bititci, 2017). Motivation of employees leads to sustainable behavior in the workplace (Delmas & Pekovic, 2018).

Productivity. Employees that experience positive relationships with their leaders demonstrate higher levels of productivity (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2016). When the leader, employer, and environment are supportive from the perspective of the employee, increased levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment are achieved. An employee's increased commitment to the organization leads to increased tenure and production of high quality work. Further, empowerment and autonomy lead to greater involvement of the employee in their job (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2016). When an employee feels empowered, they will perform work at higher levels.

Training and development activities enhance the competencies of the employee (Otoo, 2019). Continuous and ongoing training is important to ensure that employee's skills and abilities align with the company mission. Human capital, the employees of the organization, is a valuable

resource that the company must continue to invest in through training and development (Mello, 2015). Training should focus on both employee skills and development to ensure clear understanding and communication of company values and strategic objectives (Otoo & Mishra, 2018). Through continual employee development, leaders can focus training efforts on what each individual can do to serve the company mission. When employees' skills are enhanced to their fullest potential their productivity and performance increases (Otoo, 2019).

Hardy (1990) discusses the positive impact social interactions in the workforce have on productivity. The efforts allow for meeting the human need for human development including self-actualization and social impact (Fairlie, 2011). People have a preferred self that motivates their interpretation of meaningful work. Creating engagement in employees requires meaningful work be presented.

Through engaging employees to utilize their knowledge, skills, and abilities, employees are increasingly more productive and performance is enhanced (Sung & Choi, 2014). However, organizations will not experience benefits in the return of employee retention, increased output, and ultimately profit margins if their leadership practices and efforts do not achieve employee buy-in. Employee buy-in of the efforts made by leadership is imperative for efforts to impact business success. Business success is commonly defined by financial standards, but other factors influence success as well. Goal attainment, system resource, strategic constituency, and competing values all influence and measure business effectiveness (Otoo, 2019). Organizations achieve a competitive advantage when they are able to leverage fully their employees.

Summary of Literature Review

The presented review of existing academic literature provided a foundation for the research conducted. A plethora of sources were utilized with the focus on research conducted in

2015 through 2020 to validate current relevance and display the most recent research findings in the areas evaluated. Employees, leadership, and organizational outcomes were the three primary concepts of the problem statement creating the framework for the review of literature to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the topics pertinent to this research project regarding the promotion of leaders based on current skills rather than leadership skills. The first section regarding employees evaluated the current skills. The second topic evaluated the various types of leaders, skills, abilities, and challenges faced providing a strong foundation for the research. Finally, the literature review ended with evaluation of the organizational outcomes, which the leader has influence.

Transition and Summary of Section

The foundation of the study was presented throughout the first section of this doctoral dissertation. The foundation focused on identification of the specific business problem based on an identifiable problem that businesses, specifically leaders, face within organizations. The researcher wanted to provide sound logical reason and create a need for the research conducted. The research questions presented allow for the foundation of the project to have focus and an ultimate end goal. Relating the topic to leadership provided relevance and the need for others to read the research project and ultimately the findings. Academic literature allowed the reader to have more detail on the project completed. The foundation created the groundwork for the following section divulging the actual research.

Section Two: The Project

The qualitative research project strived to evaluate and understand the reasons behind promoting leaders based on non-leadership skills and attributes. Promotion based on non-leadership skills leads to decreased employee morale and company productivity. The following section identifies the methods, design, and approach utilized for conducting the research project. The data collection processes is the focus for this section including the participants utilized, identification of the sample selected, and analysis of information gathered. The research established the methods for achieving qualitative research rigor consisting of reliability and validity of the research project.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the qualitative case study was to add to the body of knowledge by expanding on the understanding of reasons for promoting leaders based on non-leadership skills and abilities and the impact they have on employee morale and company productivity. Odierno (2015) discussed the leader development activity implemented by the United States Army emphasizing the importance of identifying unique talents and abilities of young professionals early on, thus beginning the development of skills required for leadership. Petty (2017) shared that most leaders arrive at their first leadership position based on battlefield promotion. Battlefield promotion is described as the best option available for promoting employees who existing managers believe will not screw up based on their current achievement (Petty, 2017). Throughout the research, the larger problem was explored through an in-depth study of promoting leaders based on current achievements and the impact it had on morale and productivity within businesses in rural Midwestern companies. The study evaluated the factors utilized to promote leaders. Through the narrative method, responses of participants were

analyzed to determine the relationship between leadership promotion based on skills not correlated to leadership to that of diminished morale and lower productivity therefore allowing for the development of solutions to the specific problem statement.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the individual performing the research project, but the specifics of the role the researcher plays are highly debated in qualitative research (Råheim et al., 2016). The researcher strives to minimize the distance and separation between themselves and the researched to improve relationships for quality gathering of information during the research process (Råheim et al., 2016). The researcher seeks to avoid personal bias or bringing personal opinions into questions presented to the participants of the study. Through avoiding bias, role conflict of the researcher is decreased. Bias are reduced by ensuring questions are presented in a non-leading manner providing the participant the ability to formulate honest and non-influenced responses.

The researcher has a vital role in the analysis process. It is essential that the researcher collect data from multiple sources (Pagan, 2019). In order to do so, the research must first ensure multiple sources of information are available. When collecting the data they must be reviewed thoroughly to ensure all information is interpreted accurately. Further, keeping an open mind when interviewing people is an important attribute the research must maintain. The research should not ask leading questions or anticipate responses. The interviewer must stay present in the interview and focused on the person being interviewed to avoid missing key information shared by the participant from a wondering mind (Yin, 2018). Not only is staying present imperative, but also being a good listener and being adaptive are important to conducting a high quality case study.

The researcher collects data in qualitative studies through completing interviews with participants (Rimando et al., 2015). Before a researcher can begin a study they must ensure the need for the study. The researcher then formulates the research project through identifying the problem or gaps in existing research for solving the current problem. The researcher must obtain approval from those participating in the study as well as their companies (Pagan, 2019). During the interview process the researcher must remain objective to obtain unbiased information (Rimando et al., 2015). Upon completion of the interviews the researcher compiles data for analysis to provide meaningful interpretation of information (Pagan, 2019).

Participants

Selection of participants for the study required approval from identified companies' appropriate leadership or human resource personnel. Permission from company leaders was obtained through written acknowledgement via email or signed letter. Individuals within the company were selected based on position and tenure in leadership roles with criteria provided to the leadership position granting approval to identify specific individuals fitting the criteria. Businesses selected were located in rural Northern Indiana communities, with a service focus for the business. These businesses included healthcare, public service, and financial services. The variety of service oriented businesses allowed for research findings to be applied to a variety of industries and businesses. Rural communities are smaller communities where candidate pools are frequently viewed as being smaller due to reduced population and attractive incentives offered in large cities or companies. Interviews were conducted utilizing face-to-face meetings. Zoom meetings were offered to participants given the Corona Virus (Covid-19) pandemic and need for social distancing.

When completing research, the researcher ensured the research and participants involved were put first to ensure the domains of validity and reliability were established. Validity and reliability are measures of qualitative research that ensure research is conducted and interpreted at the highest quality (Thomas, 2011). This included gaining consent, protecting privacy and confidentiality as appropriate, and equitable selection of participants was necessary (Yin, 2018). Formal institutional review board (IRB) approval was received prior to beginning research interviews for the case study performed (Yin, 2018). The IRB approval ensured attention was devoted to the participants' involvement in the case study (Yin, 2018).

Research Method and Design

A qualitative research method was selected for this research study. Specifically, a case study design was utilized. Historically, qualitative research has been under utilized within the field of leadership, with quantitative research prevailing (Klenke et al., 2015). The focus on a qualitative method allows the researcher to focus on a smaller sample size creating the ability to understand a deeper meaning to the topics being studied. The multidisciplinary nature of leadership allows for qualitative studies to be appropriate due to the researcher's ability to evaluate why questions versus how or what questions presented in quantitative studies. The case study design creates the ability for the researcher to utilize a qualitative method to study a current event allowing for gathering of information that is not forgotten over time (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Discussion of Method

Qualitative research was best suited for the problem presented within this research study due to the ability to collect data in a natural setting and interpret meanings as presented to the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Theoretical frameworks were presented regarding the topic of promoting leaders based on non-leadership skills creating the foundation for the study. The qualitative method allowed for inductive and deductive analysis that formed themes allowing for interpretation of the problem contributing to academic literature. In order for the researcher to evaluate the research questions presented, non-numerical data was necessary to be analyzed (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The in-depth understanding of the phenomenon that is achieved with qualitative studies results in the method being appropriate for the investigation of the leadership problem presented (Gupta & Awasthy, 2015).

Discussion of Design

Qualitative research design consists of a variety of different approaches. The case study design was selected for this study, as it was the best fit for answering the research questions presented. The study was bounded in nature resulting in specific geographic location and community size (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study involved collection of a wide variety of data through interviews with multiple individual leaders throughout the business including various levels of the organizational chart. Through a general list of open-ended questions, the researcher was able to evaluate the businesses selected for the case study that seeks to answer the research problem through a specific decision process of businesses. Case studies included the less defined entity such as presented in this study.

The case study presented in this project was a collective case study. A collective case study was selected to allow for one specific issue, why leaders are promoted based on current

abilities rather than leadership ability, to be evaluated (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher will utilize five companies or cases to study. Through the qualitative method the researcher was able to generalize the information due to the representative natures of the specific cases or businesses selected.

Overcoming potential challenges was essential for effective qualitative case study design method. The researcher selected a multiple case study, which resulted in challenges of time and depth of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Involving more cases required more time by the research, especially to complete in-depth interviews necessary for high quality results. The number of cases was identified as five to avoid being too large to achieve detailed interviews due to the study being conducted by a single researcher. Five cases were considered normal with four or five being typical (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary of Research Method and Design

The qualitative case study design was identified for this research study. The multi-case study approach created the ability for the researcher to evaluate the practices of promotion of leaders across multiple businesses creating the ability for more generalized application in businesses. The vast nature of leadership created the need for answering why questions versus obtaining numerical data through quantitative studies (Klenke et al., 2015). The problem addressed by the research created the need for understanding more than just numerical results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Collecting information through a current event with a bounded study involved geographic and community size bounds allowed for achieving desired results and fit the case study design.

Population and Sampling

The population for the qualitative case study included leaders of various ranks within companies in rural Northern Indiana communities. Businesses selected were service related. The convenience sampling method was utilized within the companies selected by the researcher. For inclusion in the study, the individual must be in a formal leadership position within the company as identified by title. The sample size included a minimum of five leaders from each business, which allowed saturation and depth in the data collection process.

Discussion of Population

Population refers to all possible cases available for the research study (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Determining the sample for this case study involved a four-point approach to define effectively the sample. The four-point approach included determining the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study (Robinson, 2013). The inclusion criterion included attributes that were required to be included in the study, while exclusion criteria are items that disqualified participation in the study. The inclusion and exclusion criteria created the boundary for the sample. Once the boundary was established the sample universe was identifiable, which was the total population available for interviewing (Robinson, 2013). From the available population specific individuals were selected for the study, which was the sample.

The criteria for inclusion were carefully evaluated to ensure a proper and accurate population was identified. For this study, the population included all leaders within the five rural, service related, Northern Indiana businesses. A formal leadership position through title, rank, and responsibilities was the population in this study. Individuals must hold a leadership position within the company at the time of participation. Gender, age, race, and experience were not inclusion criteria for the study. The size of the company was not a factor in selecting the

businesses for the case study. The primary criterion in this study included being an active leader in a rural business.

Discussion of Sampling

The sample was the selection from within the population (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Theoretical and practical considerations must be evaluated to determine an appropriate sample size for qualitative studies (Robinson, 2013). The case study for this research project primarily consisted of interviews, which focused on idiographic aim that allowed the sample size to be small enough for individual cases to have a defined perspective within the study and for an intensive analysis of each case to be performed. The sample size included enough participants to allow for developing cross-case generalities and gave identity to the individual participants. A sample size too large frequently results in the researcher becoming overloaded with data and time constraints limit the quality of the analysis.

Various methods are available for selecting the sample size including both probability and non-probability samples (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Probability samples allow for statistical representation of the likelihood of being included in the sample. Non-probability sampling is frequently utilized in small-scale qualitative research projects. The non-probability methods are easier to set up and acceptable when a statistical generalization to the population is not required, such as in this research project.

Convenience sampling includes selecting the nearest and most convenient people to serve as participants within the study (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Individuals are selected until the required sample size has been met. The method of sampling is common in research due to the ease of utilization and low cost. The method is ideal for building theory, but not for generalizing results. Accidental sample is another common description for this method of sampling. The term

is misleading in nature as it indicates randomness, while the method is often influenced by bias and influences on who is selected for participation in the study.

Convenience sampling method was selected for utilization in this qualitative case study. The method was selected as individual participants included are from businesses located in convenient location to the researcher. The expedience and no cost associated with this sampling method contribute to the appropriateness for this study. Personal networks were utilized to help facilitate the ease of the study with businesses selected based on the researcher having a personal connection to someone working in leadership within the company.

Summary of Population and Sampling

The convenience sampling method was utilized for selecting individual participants for the study. The sample was generated from the population of leaders currently in formal leadership positions with the specific businesses identified. The businesses were conveniently located to the researcher creating ease in conducting interviews as well as the researcher having a personal connection to an individual within the company. Length of time in a leadership position, gender, race, and age are not criterion for selection. The sample size was a minimum of twenty-five people allowing for in-depth interviews to be performed, while still spanning a wide enough number of participants for various viewpoints.

Data Collection

The data collection process sought to understand the thoughts and feelings of individuals regarding the phenomenon studied throughout the research project (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Instruments utilized for the study included the researcher and interview guide creating the foundation for collecting data. These instruments are common in qualitative case studies, especially one-on-one interviews, which was the selected technique for collecting data with this study. Upon completion of interviews, data was organized utilizing recordings and transcripts prior to beginning analysis.

Instruments

Two primary instruments were utilized for this research study. These two instruments include the researcher and the interview guide. Each served a pertinent role in the study conducted with each serving different purposes. Both were necessary for the effectiveness of the qualitative case study analysis.

The researcher was the primary instrument in the data collection process leading the interview through semi-structured interview process through obtaining participants, observing, and recording the interview, and analyzing data collected (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). The researcher's role in the data collection process was to gain insights regarding the thoughts and feelings of the individual participants through the specific data collection instrument utilized (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The researcher developed a rapport with the participants to encourage their engagement and open communication to obtain the most detailed and useful information. Maintaining confidentiality and safe guarding data was an essential responsibility of the researcher (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Throughout the interview process, it was inevitable the researcher had bias, rather than ignoring the bias reflection was necessary. Communicating the

perspective, worldview, or background with the interviewee and readers provided understanding in the questions that were asked, data collected, and analysis completed.

One-on-one interviews were selected for this research project. Interviews are a common data collection method for qualitative case study research (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Through completion of interviews, the researcher collected a large amount of data (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The interview guide, located in Appendix A, provides a complete list of questions developed and asked to each participant. The interview guide contains a complete list of questions asked to each participants in a logical order (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). The exact wording is provided, however, in some instances wording may have deviated some depending on the specific interview. Questions began with what and why questions, for each section of questions presented, before asking how questions (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Through structuring the interview guide in this manner it created the opportunity for the participant to share their individual situations and stories to explain the phenomena. The interview guide was divided into three parts to address the three research questions presented in Section One. The research questions developed sought to address the specific problem statement, with the interview questions providing the specific questions to the participant to develop answers to the presented research questions.

Data Collection Techniques

One-on-one interviewing is common data collection technique for qualitative case study research (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). For each interview, the researcher created an environment and rapport with the participant to encourage individual feelings, thoughts, and words to be expressed in response to each question (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). Creating a conversational and relatable tone through careful preparation of the interview guide created the greatest

outcome (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). A semi-structured approach helped provide comfort for the participant to talk freely (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). The semi-structured approach provided flexibility to alter the order of questions presented in the interview guide to maintain a conversational approach, as long as all questions were asked to every participant.

Despite the Coronavirus pandemic, commonly referred to as Covid-19, in-person interviews were permitted by all participating businesses and individual participants. In-person interviews, with audio recording, occurred in all situations that allow. Participants were given the option to utilize Zoom meetings with audio recording, but all declined. Field notes, notes taken by the researcher during the interview, were written on the interview guide printed for facilitating the interview process (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The notes allowed for comments to be made regarding non-verbal reactions and impressions observed by the researcher. The audio recording and notes are to both remain confidential and secure. Audio recordings were transcribed word for word by the researcher with any field notes added as appropriate.

Data Organization Techniques

Before data analysis occurred, the researcher transcribed interviews (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). When transcribing interviews, the researcher recorded the interview verbatim. The transcription process was tedious and time intensive as the researcher listened to short segments of the audio recording, paused the recording and typed the words. Once the words were typed, the researcher replayed that section of the recording to ensure it had been recorded verbatim. The researcher transcribed the audio recording utilizing electronic typing software, Microsoft Word. The researcher incorporated written notes into the transcribed document, particularly non-verbal cues noted by the researcher in the sections as appropriate. Non-verbal cues were noted through parenthetical comments. Each line was numbered in the transcribed

document to facilitate the data analysis and coding process. The typed document is currently and will continue to be stored on a password secured computer to maintain confidentiality and security of the interview. The information will be stored on the password-protected device for the required three year time period after approval of the research project and then destroyed.

Summary of Data Collection

The data collection process allowed for gathering of insight and information from the individual participants in the case study (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Collecting data through a semi-structured interview technique created comfort for the participant to open up their dialogue to provide the most detailed information to the researcher who sought to answer the research questions through asking all questions presented in the interview guide. The interview guide and the researcher were the two most important instruments in completing the data collection process. The creation of the interview guide ensured the best word choice for interview questions as well as providing a framework for presenting the questions and ensuring all questions were asked to each participant (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Upon completion of each interview, the audio recording was transcribed to an electronic written format that included any non-verbal notes documented by the researcher during the interview to create a practical and organized collection of data before beginning the analysis process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred after the interviews had taken place allowing the researcher to work through the process of coding data to allow for analysis and interpretation (Yin, 2016). To begin the researcher compiled all data including field notes and audio recordings into a logical and formal order. Once the data was arranged, the researcher began disassembling the data. The disassembling process separated data into smaller sections, coded based on the smaller subsection. It was important to go back and forth numerous times until all data was separated into smaller sections that were logical (Yin, 2016). The process of disassembling data into common themes required significant time of the researcher. Although the process of disassembling data was lengthy, the researcher became thoroughly familiar with the original data, which was imperative for credible qualitative research. With data identified into smaller sections, the researcher was able to reassemble data from the original field notes and interviews into different groupings that allowed for categorizing common themes or topics. Finally, the ability to interpret data appropriately was achieved.

Coding Process

The process of coding was imperative to allow the researcher to evaluate dense data collected verbally in order to make sense of the information (Creswell, 2015). To begin the coding process key themes were coded utilizing a word or short phrase to describe the idea (Elliott, 2018). When possible the words for codes utilize the exact word or phrase used by participants. Striving to code all relevant data allowed for a comprehensive coding process and ultimately more thorough understanding of data (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Verbal fillers or miscellaneous words were not coded, as they were not relevant to the project (Elliott, 2018). Some ideas appeared to fit into multiple codes, but only one code was assigned (Elliott, 2018).

The assigned code in these situations required the researcher to evaluate the data further to determine the primary intent of what the data was explaining.

The coding for this research project was completed manually, without coding software. The process began with open coding. Open coding refers to organizing data including identification information into categories that were useful (Blair, 2015). The research began with inductive coding utilizing the transcribed interviews (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). The first round of coding created codes based on themes that were very narrow and focused (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). The initial coding process occurred through a line-by-line review of the data (Blair, 2015).

A second round of coding, axial coding, occurred utilizing the codes created to develop higher level of codes to create a manageable number of codes (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). The specific number of codes was dependent on the data collected, but the researcher was mindful of maintaining a list of codes that were manageable for interpretation. The number of codes appropriate varies across literature, but typically does not exceed fifty codes (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). The number of codes may be much fewer than fifty, but should be comprehensive. Incorporating axial coding allowed for the relation of categories identified to subcategories (Wicks, 2010). The second level of coding focused on refining, identifying patterns, and categorizing the first cycle codes (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). The axial coding process created the ability to identify the various categories and their dimensions (Wicks, 2010). A paradigm was formed during this second round of coding through documentation of conditions, interactions and consequences related to the phenomenon studied in this qualitative case study (Wicks, 2010). The researcher was better able to understand the relationship between

categories and subcategories in this coding stage (Wicks, 2010). Finally, the researcher was able to evaluate how codes relate to one another with identification of six key themes (Wicks, 2010).

Summary of Data Analysis

The coding process created the ability for the researcher to review, evaluate, and identify paradigms in the plethora of data collected during the in-person interview process (Elliott, 2018). Inductive open coding began the coding process with many codes established (Blair, 2015). Following open coding, axial coding occurred to focus on the axis of each code previously identified in open coding to create a more manageable list of codes (Wicks, 2010). The researcher spent a significant amount of time reviewing the data through multiple layers of coding to create the most accurate codes to represent participants' opinions and viewpoints regarding the interview questions (Elliott, 2018). Through deep immersion into the data, the researcher developed the professional vision to understand the phenomenon and report on it through the six key themes (Elliott, 2018).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are measures of qualitative research that ensure research was conducted and interpreted at the highest quality. Thomas (2011) defines the idea of validity and reliability in qualitative research as rigor, while the terms validity and reliability are utilized to define the concepts associated with quantitative research. Traditionally validity of qualitative research involves the degree that the researcher's claims correspond to the reality being studied (Cho & Trent, 2006). Both reliability and validity are ways to establish trust or confidence in the research and findings presented by the researcher (Thomas, 2011). The measures within qualitative research involve credibility, transferability, and dependability (Liberty University, n.d.). Credibility is similar to internal validity that is utilized for quantitative research (Thomas,

2011). To establish credibility, the research must review individual transcripts looking for similarities within and across participants (Thomas, 2011). Credibility would be established when accurate descriptions and interpretations are present, which is confirmed when people who identify with or view similarities amongst participants. Transferability is another method of establishing rigor. This is the ability to transfer findings from one group to another, which is similar to the quantitative method of external validity (Liberty, n.d.; Thomas, 2011).

Transferability is established by providing detailed descriptions of the population studied including demographics and geographic boundaries (Thomas, 2011). Through doing so, it would allow another person to replicate the study. The final concept is dependability, which relates to reliability in quantitative research (Thomas, 2011). Dependability occurs when another researcher can follow the decision trail that was utilized in the study. The decision trail was accomplished by describing the specific purpose of the study, discussing how and why the participants were selected, describing how data was collected and time period of data collection, explaining how data was transformed for analysis, discussing interpretation and presentation of findings, and communicating specific techniques used to determine credibility of data (Thomas, 2011).

Reliability

The reliability depends on the validity (Davis, 1992). Rather than assuring the reliability of data qualitative research seeks to demonstrate the dependability of the data (Davis, 1992). Meticulous record keeping including audio recordings of the interviews, researcher notes during the interviews, and transcribing the recordings demonstrates consistent and transparent data collection (Noble & Smith, 2015). The recordings and transcriptions allow the researcher to revisit the data for accuracy and coding purposes. The researcher seeks to provide clarity

throughout data analysis and data interpretation to further aid in the reliability of the study.

Accounting for personal bias, which may have influenced research findings is clearly discussed within the researcher project. Validation and triangulation of data collection create the ability for duplication of the study demonstrating the reliability of the information collected and interpretation of findings. Furthermore, the interview guide served as a tool to ensure all participants were asked the same questions (Noble & Smith, 2015). Without the interview guide serving to ensure the same questions were asked of each participant, replication of the study would be difficult to impossible.

Validity

This research project utilized data triangulation to test the validity of information through merging of information from different sources (Carter et al., 2014). The qualitative study utilized individual interviews to collect data regarding the phenomena. Interviews allowed the researcher flexibility, spontaneity, and responsiveness to individuals, but conversely they required considerable time. The time involved in the number and depth of interviews allowed for proper data triangulation to occur. Data triangulation involved collecting data from various types of people to allow for a comprehensive collection of data that includes multiple perspective.. The multiple perspectives from the wide range of individuals created a validation of the data collected regarding the phenomena..

Adequate data saturation improved the quality of the research conducted and created increased validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). When acceptable information was obtained to replicate the study, when all new information had been exhausted, and no further coding was possible saturation had been achieved. The research study involved twenty-five interviews to aid in achieving saturation through quantity, but the focus was on the interview questions to create in-

depth understanding of the phenomena that creates data collection that is detailed, intricate, nuanced, and substantial (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation was not strictly achieved through numerous interviews or exhausting resources, but rather through quality selection of the sample selected. Saturation was achieved through asking all participants the same interview questions. Without asking the same questions saturation would have been a continual moving target. The researcher interviewed current leaders at all levels within the selected companies to create an exhaustive data collection process by avoiding specialized knowledge or perspective from a single level of leadership.

Summary of Reliability and Validity

Achieving reliability and validity within qualitative research required rigor to be established through credibility, transferability, and dependability (Thomas, 2011). The interview guide was a foundational resource in achieving reliability and validity as it ensured all participants were asked the same questions creating the ability for the study to be replicated (Thomas, 2011). The interview guide provided the foundation for creating an exhaustive list of themes by ensuring the same questions were asked creating the ability to code all data to a point that no further new information was able to be collected (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Saturation and triangulation aid in the demonstration of reliability and validity to readers.

Transition and Summary of Section Two

The previous section, The Project, summarized the specifics of the research study performed including the purpose, role of researcher and participants, the method and design, and population and sample selected. The researcher explained the data qualifications for participating in the study. These items included rationale for the decisions made to conduct the research study in the most thorough and appropriate manner to meet the goals of the study in answering the research questions presented in section one. Creating interview questions allowed for consistent data collection and ability to organize data. The researcher detailed the data collection, organization, and analysis processes while demonstrating the means for establishing rigor through reliability and validity in the qualitative research project.

Sections one and two created the ability for the application of professional practice and implication for change to occur. The final section, section three, provides an overview of the research study, anticipated themes, and presentations of finding from the data collected through individual interviews. The researcher connected ideas from the literature review, located in section one, to the themes gathered during data collection and analysis. Research questions were evaluated from the analysis and interpretation of data leading to the ability to apply the findings to professional practice. Recommendations for action and further study were presented by the researcher allowing the reader to take steps for implementing the findings to improve the professional workspace and to continue expanding on the body of work relating to leadership promotion. Personal perspective and bias were included within the final section through reflection by the researcher.

Section Three: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The following section finalizes the research project with a presentation of the findings from the qualitative case regarding the promotion of leaders based on skills not related to leadership in rural Indiana communities. A summary of the study is provided to deliver focusing on how the research completed addresses how leaders are promoted, the difference in skills or abilities required for leadership compared to line level work, and the impact on productivity and morale promotion leaders have in the company. Anticipated themes are briefly discussed based on the literature reviewed and researcher's perspective. This is followed with an in-depth discussion of the presentation of the research findings from the field study. The findings are correlated to applications to the professional practice in the field of leadership along with recommendations for action for businesses. With the review of the research findings, additional information and questions arise presenting recommendation for future studies. Finally, the section concludes with the researcher's reflections on the study and summary of the most notable research findings.

Overview of Study

The qualitative case study conducted by the researcher intends to contribute to existing literature and research regarding the field of leadership, specifically on promoting leaders. In-person interviews conducted were structured to answer the research questions presented in Section One. Appendix A provides the interview questions asked to participants in the semi-structured interview processes. The questions created the ability that led to identifying common themes surrounding promoting leaders. Twenty-five individuals participated in the study ranging from less than one year to over thirty years of formal leadership experience. Positions held ranged from front-line or entry-level managers to the top leaders in a specific business or

department. Regardless of length of time in leadership or position held each participant was asked the same questions presented in the interview guide. The interviews were semi-structured allowing for follow-up questions to provide elaborated responses, when appropriate, from the respondent. Participants were selected based on convenience sampling from rural communities located in close proximity to the researcher.

Data was analyzed utilizing open and axial coding resulting in six primary themes emerging. The six themes that emerged align with the research questions presented in Section One. Each theme further contributes to the professional field of leadership with emphasis on promotion of leaders. Brief descriptions of the six themes are as follows:

- Communication. The ability to effectively communicate with others especially subordinates.
- Interpersonal Skills. General skills that are required across positions focusing on soft skills.
- Experience. The ability to know and understand the details of the job that a person is leading.
- Educational Growth. Demonstrating commitment to self-improvement to avoid becoming stagnant.
- Initiative. Desires to seek out responsibilities and tasks without being asked and exceeding expectations.
- Motivation. The capability to engage others to achieve results.

Anticipated Themes

Through the review of academic literature, it is identified that skills required differ from a focus on technical or hard skills in line level employees to soft skills in leadership positions. The

various types of leadership approaches and types of leaders contribute to the most effective type of leadership based on individuals and organizational cultures. The researcher expected to find that despite the plethora of information regarding coaching, businesses promote based on current skills, tenure, or other non-leadership related skills. Rural communities are smaller creating a smaller applicant pool for positions, particularly in leadership resulting in the highest achieving individuals to be promoted to leadership. The small communities and close-knit relationships that exist in these communities further enhanced the perception that this theme would be apparent in the field study interviews. Through interviewing individuals at several different businesses in various levels of leadership positions the researcher expected to validate the anticipated theme that leadership skills are not what results in employee promotion to leadership positions.

Presentation of the Findings

In-person interviews were conducted with twenty-five participants. Participants consisted of both males and females. Each individual held a formal leadership position at the time of the interview. All participants were over the age of 18. These were the only two criteria for eligibility in the research study. Participants worked for businesses that were located in rural communities, with the two communities utilized being Huntington and Wabash, Indiana. The gender mix consisted of 11 females and 14 males. Various formal leadership positions were held including first time leaders to seasoned veteran leaders providing varying perspective regarding the topic of leadership promotion. Years of leadership experience ranged from approximately 1 year to 35 years.

Upon completion of thorough open and axial coding, six common themes emerged. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim allowing for coding to take place. Research

notes were incorporated into the analysis processes but had minimal impact on the analysis completed. The emerging themes combined with the conceptual framework and reviews of existing academic literature support the research questions outlined for this study.

Credibility was established, as themes clearly emerged resulting in similar views and perspectives amongst participants. Transferability was evident as various industries were selected providing different perspective from individual leaders; however, themes remained similar across the different types of companies that participated. The junction of various perspectives to common themes demonstrates the evidence of data triangulation and saturation. After approximately fourteen interviews, no additional unique ideas or themes were identified. To ensure full saturation and perspective the interviews continued reaching the desired twenty-five participants. As a result, this qualitative research study findings create the ideal confirmation of data saturation and triangulation.

Communication

The top theme that emerged from participant interviews was regarding communication. Participants sited communication in a variety of different contexts but focused on the communication with subordinates. Interpersonal communication between leaders and followers is noted as a critical element of leadership process (Luo et al., 2016). The impact of quality and effective communication is a determining factor on selecting an individual for a leadership position according to majority of study participants. The participants noted that line level employees must effectively communicate for their success too. One participant stated, “Leaders must take it to the next level” (Participant 16, personal communication, October 20, 2020). Communication is important for all employees, but as a leader must “eloquently communicate

what they expect and what needs to be done” according to a top business leader (Participant 24, personal communication, September 22, 2020).

A seasoned leader shared that the most recent generation entering the workforce excels at electronic communication but lacks the ability to communicate verbally with others. He values the verbal communication particularly when providing positive or negative feedback to those they lead or manage because too often no feedback is given due to lack of communication skills (Participant 4, personal communication, September 18, 2020). Praising individuals promotes engagement and performance (Rathel et al., 2008). The study performed by Rathel et al. (2008) supports that positive feedback and praise should exceed negative feedback or reprimands, yet positive feedback is underutilized. Several participants discussed that they seek to have feedback from their leaders including both positive and negative to allow them to improve as leaders themselves. Participant 23 shared his approach to praise includes gathering the attention of others in a causal manner to allow him to praise publicly (personal communication, September 19, 2020). While the opposite holds true that, he only disciplines in private (Participant 23, personal communication, September 19, 2020). Participant 21 echoed the same words of participant 23 stating, “...the grand pappy of them all don’t ever put them down in front of the other(s)...” (personal communication, October 20, 2020). Participant 23 was responding to the interview question about what actions or behaviors do a leader take that diminishes moral.

Individuals in leadership positions should be available at any time for subordinates to talk to them shared many of the participants. Participant 15 spoke about her leaders’ communication and availability:

Open communication, I want to know that any time I can go in and talk to them about absolutely anything and get their input. I want to know that even if we don’t agree we can

come to a solution, just simply by talking it out and working through it (personal communication, October 7, 2020).

Interpersonal Skills

Riggio and Lee (2007) support the notion that interpersonal skills are important for leader effectiveness in the modern workplace. Interpersonal skills are the universal skills that are relevant across industries and businesses (Mencl et al., 2016). When individual leaders possess high levels of interpersonal skills, they reflect emotional intelligence. When a leader is positive, energized, and enthusiastic about their work and the company, team members increasingly feel similar emotions (Mencl et al., 2016). Participant 16 shared the following response regarding actions or behaviors a leader takes that diminishes moral “Their attitude. If I am having a bad day I can’t let it show here because I know the least little thing I do is being reflected on them,” (personal communication, October 8, 2020).

I have to come in here with the kind of attitude that I expect from my staff and if I don’t, I come in here angry, mad, disrespectful of any of them that’s exactly what I am going to get back. So, I have a responsibility to act how I want them to act (Participant 3, personal communication, September 18, 2020).

Participants explained that leaders’ support of their subordinates and others in the company is paramount. Mindfulness of how leaders support others relates directly to the interpersonal feelings and performance of those around them in the workplace (Dekeyser et al., 2008). Increased mindfulness, acting with consciousness, being non-judgmental and accepting of others creates increased morale, job satisfaction, and engagement. The increase in these areas improves productivity according to participants in this research study.

I want their backing. You know, if they tell me you're in charge of this, do what is best for the department, and I would never do anything without going to them first, I never have, I never have, even if there is an issue, I normally, a big issue little issues I take care of, but if there is a big issue I will go to them, but if they give me the okay to do something then I want to know they are going to be behind me. That I am not going to go to this person and get this corrected or taken care of and that person is going to go to them and it is all going to be changed, I don't want that. I want them to care about the place as much as I do (Participant 15, personal communication, October 7, 2020).

Participant three echoed the importance of support from their leaders. "I want them [leaders] to allow me to do my job. So really important I think if you're gonna give somebody the position of a manager that your manager not be [a] micromanager" (personal communication, September 18, 2020). Another participant explained, "you've got to stay positive with them and you gotta keep them upbeat and make sure they are staying upbeat with their people because again it's a trickle-down effect goal all the way down" (Participant 4, personal communication, September 18, 2020).

Experience

Experience in the position and being a top performer was overwhelmingly a requirement for promoting leaders. Participants noted that tenure is not the driving factor in promoting people to leadership positions, but rather they must be effective in their current role to excel in leadership. If an individual is not good in their current position then they will not stand out for promotion to leadership. Participant 8 spoke of this when asked the question how performance in their current job skill influences decisions to promote someone to leadership.

Really important how you're doing your current job will reflect how you lead in my opinion. If your just outstanding in your job looking for ways to improve efficiencies within your job or your department whatever that may be to me that tells that they're going to be okay and their going to do the best they can for the bank and for other employees here at the bank (Participant 8, personal communication, September 25, 2020).

Participants 13 and 21 both answered the question with the same initial response of "huge" during their one-on-one interviews with the researcher (personal communications, 2020). Both individuals along with others shared the reasoning behind current skill performance as necessary to best understand the big picture, provide improvements and solutions, and ability to help line level employees with everyday tasks when necessary.

I can't expect them to do something I wouldn't do myself. I would never ask someone to do something I would not do myself so I think it helps if you want to be a good leader know what your people do, know what their job is, and pitch in and help if necessary. I am never above going back and doing commissary work. I put my stuff to the side and go help (Participant 15, personal communication, October 7, 2020).

Participant 19 further elaborated the current performance is important, but just because someone is good at their current job does not indicate they will be a good leader (personal communication, September 23, 2020).

It is an advantage if we know them or a disadvantage. I think that's true because there are people who are very good clinically or technically at what they do and would not make good leaders. It is a different skill set. And I also think there are people who are not as clinically sound or technically as sound as they could be, because they are not all clinical,

who probably would probably be good leaders and we may never see that skill out of them because they struggle with their current job. So, that is probably a disadvantage to them and us. It's the Peter principal you promote someone outside of their expertise someone is a great clinician and they just can't do the leadership.

Other participants supported this claim in their interviews. Skills, achievements, and attributes of line level employees are all required of leaders, but leaders must also possess additional skills or take the line level skills to the next level.

Educational Growth

Continued growth in the professional working world is important for leaders. Individuals sought individuals for promotion based on their desire to further their professional development through formal education, additional course work, seminars, or other training activities. Existing leaders desired this skill as it indicates an individual's commitment to their growth and not remaining stagnant. Participants indicated preference for promotion of individuals to leadership positions who they believed who would continue to move the business forward. Educational growth included personal development, formal education, specializing in a specific area, or general seminars to expand their knowledge. Participant 23 mentioned his personal commitment to continued improvement and those courses that helped him, "I know what I have personally taken that has helped me drastically and I have suggested that, and there's just some going to leadership schools" (personal communication, September 19, 2020).

Participant 18 specifically seeks to the desire for leaders "to have certification in [their area]...anything to further yourself and further education in your career" (personal communication, October 6, 2020). She further shared the difference between general education and a Master's degree is in personal and management skills contributing to the importance for

individuals in leadership roles or desiring to be in leadership to continue their education for improvement as a leader (personal communication, October 6, 2020). Participants who spoke to education did not discuss this as a requirement for leadership, but moreover the best leaders desire to continue to improve themselves, thus seek out the additional educational opportunities through education, seminars, conferences, and other training that is outside of requirements. The educational growth allows leaders to continue to learn from prior experiences and situations to improve.

Initiative

Employees who want to go above and beyond are sought out for leadership promotions. Those individuals who do not go the extra mile, stay late, come in early, and help with whatever needs done are often not considered for leadership promotions summarized participants of this research study. The person may have other skills that make them a quality leader such as communication, experience, and being the best at their job, but if they do not see the bigger picture and take initiative to do the extra things outside their normal job functions, their ability to excel in leadership diminishes (Brutte & Fischbacher, 2013). One participant stated, “leaders aren’t made, they are born” (Participant 12, personal communication, October 5, 2020). His statement continued with explanation that the people who want to be leaders and be the best do all the things to set themselves apart from the group. If a company, wants to promote the best individuals to leaders it will be clear very early who those people will be when the time comes based on their initial work ethic, initiative, and interaction with others (Participant 12, personal communication, October 5, 2020).

Participants further shared that the people that are promoted to formal leadership roles are those who take on a leadership function in an informal capacity. To be a leader, you do not have

to hold a formal title, but rather be someone that people look to for help, support, and mentorship (Participant 11, personal communication, October 20, 2020). Participant 11 found himself in this position prior to being promoted and feels it was the contributing factor to him being selected as the official leader when the position became available. Another person stated that leaders are those people who just understand what needs to be done and can take the initiative to just get it done (participant 7, personal communication, October 8, 2020).

Motivation

The ability to motivate a team is imperative for success of the company, department, or group. Specific actions or behaviors of the leader influence productivity and morale. The leaders who motivate others are those who trust and empower their employees. Individuals were often quoted as saying, “who do not micromanage” are leaders that motivate them. Employees who are motivated through actions their leaders take creates successful companies (Sale, 2017).

Participants cited both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, but the intrinsic motivators were deemed the most valuable. Intrinsic motivators are those that result from engaging and empowering employees (Stumpf et al., 2016). The extrinsic motivators were those items participants enjoyed in the moment, but not what keeps them going. Several participants noted they purchased ice cream, Starbucks, candy, other foods or small gift cards for employees as gifts. Participant two explained these help encourage task completion and healthy competition, but are not sustainable for long-term motivation (personal communication, September 22, 2020).

Leaders desired individuals who use intrinsic motivators for when seeking future leaders. Participant 5 explains, “I empower them to make their own decision and as long as those are good faith decisions I will back them to the hilt, you know, even if it turns out bad” (personal communication, September 23, 2020). Participant 6 further emphasized the important of trust,

Trust the decisions we make. Don't micromanage obviously there are somethings leaders have to get involved with, but for the most part you've put us in the position we are in for a reason, so just trust we will make the decisions that is best for the bank or situation, so just go with it, you put us in this position for a reason, so just trust it. My biggest thing was always you can as the leader at the top, you can take the, tell, sell, yell approach, but it's like you've put all these individuals in a position for a reason so just trust them, empower them you know you've given them the best possible scenario to succeed so the decisions they make trust it. Don't micromanage it (personal communication, October 9, 2020).

In another personal communication, it was shared that leaders who are motivated lead by example, which motivates others.

They're not afraid to dive in and do the work themselves, so they can lead by example, but they also know how to motivate their staff so that they don't have to be the on doing the work they can get them do it (Participant 10, personal communication, October 13, 2020).

Companies seek to promote individuals who are motivated to get the job done, seek additional work, and are willing to put in extra hours (Participant 10 personal communication, October 13, 2020 and Participant 15, personal communication, October 7, 2020). Taking ownership of the job focuses on their own internal desires to do their best rather than being told by leadership and their willingness to help out in any area regardless of the job (Participant 23, personal communication, September 19, 2020). "If I need to clean toilets they know damn well know that I will" shared participant 22 regarding his ownership of his leadership role (personal communication, September 20, 2020). The participant went on to share that he is willing to do

anything that needs to be done and would never expect his employees to do things he would not do as well, which keeps them motivated to perform their best because he is alongside them doing it whenever he is able to (Participant 22, personal communication, September 20, 2020). His leader stated that he is always looking for more to do without being told, which was one of the primary factors for promoting him to the leadership position (Participant 23, personal communication, September 19, 2020).

Relationship of Themes

The themes are interrelated to one another as participant responses overlapped the ideas and concepts with each other throughout their responses. The interview questions were structured to aid in answering the three research questions presented in Section 1. The six themes discussed are each correlated to at least one of the research questions.

The first research question, how are employees promoted to leadership positions, is connected to each of the six themes. Individuals seek all six themes when considering a person for a leadership position. Ideally, individuals are not promoted unless all six are strongly evident in the leadership candidate. Participant 7 did share the struggles that rural communities face with obtaining all the ideal characteristics. Given the limited applicant pool, finding a person that exemplifies all the themes discussed is not always feasible.

In rural communities you can just get thrown into leadership position sometimes and you might not always have the mindset for or the background that would be ideal for that because you might happen to be the right face or happen to be you know kind of that next in line (Participant 7, personal communication, October 8, 2020).

The advantages and disadvantages of promoting based on current abilities were discussed throughout the interviews and themes. Individuals seek line level employees who possess all the

same skills and achievements but want those promoted to be at the top of the charts in these areas. Current abilities directly relate to the theme of experience. Individuals experience is “huge” contributor to the decision to promote individuals to leadership positions. Without the experience, a person is not able to understand the job to seek improved efficiencies and performance or to help subordinates when times are very busy or challenging. There were no citations of experience being a negative, although it was noted that it is not the single most important factor for promotion of leaders.

Research question two states, how do current skills and achievements differ from skills required for leadership. The question includes sub-questions understanding the similarity of current skills, achievements for the individual compared to a leader are similar, and how the company determines leadership attributes. Respondents noted the same general themes for line level employees compared to leaders. The distinction between the two is the individuals who excel and standouts are the ones that are desirable for leadership positions. Although the skills and achievements are the same prior to being promoted to leadership there is more emphasis and requirement that each of the themes be very evident in the leadership candidate.

Finally, research question three seeks to answer the question in what ways does morale diminish and productivity lower from promoting leaders based on non-leadership skills. The theme of motivation most obviously answers this research question. Without the ability to be motivated themselves, they lack the ability to motivate others. When leaders are promoted that are not the best at the soft skills identified, employees are likely to mimic their actions thus decreasing morale and productivity.

The themes connect back to the conceptual framework of organizational coaching and transformational leadership. When businesses implement formal or informal coaching they are

able to help set individuals up for success in leadership promotion through coaching. The coach is able to lead by example and provide the coachee with feedback to improve in specific areas. Participants commented on their companies coaching with no formal coaching programs being identified. However, participants felt informal coaching occurred, which is what leads to the promotion of leaders to leadership position. Several summarized that they were or have taken some “under their wing” who stood out to them as having the foundation of each theme listed above and helped them grow and develop those areas further.

Summary of Findings

This qualitative case study sought to answer the three primary research questions from section one. The researcher was able to achieve this through conducting 25 in-person interviews. Participants were required to be at least 18 years old and hold a formal leadership position. Each participant answered a series of questions regarding skill, achievements, and attributes of line-level employees and leaders concluding with questions regarding the leaders influence on morale and productivity. The interviews were semi-structured resulting in each participant being asked essentially the same questions but allowed for follow-up questions to be asked in some instances. Once the interviews were completed and transcribed open and axial coding took place. The findings are supported through multiple personal communications as well as existing academic literature providing triangulation of data.

The six themes provide understanding and answers to the research questions. The themes include communication, interpersonal skills, experience, educational growth, imitative, and motivation. Each theme is supported by direct quotes from participants. Communication was the most popular theme identified. The theme focuses on all forms of communication, but centers on the need for leaders’ abilities to communicate effectively with subordinates. This theme connects

with the need for interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills encompass a vast range. Participants in this study described this primarily as their ability to be positive, encourage, and empower their employees. Although people did not feel that tenure was a requirement it was noted that experience was important. Without prior experience participants expressed that the leader could not fully understand employee responsibilities and duties to help solve problems or create improved efficiencies. Education was a skill that is desirable for leaders regardless of the specific industry as participants stated further education or training demonstrated the desire for continual improvement in the leader, department, or company. People that took initiative were those who were described as going above and beyond, staying late, coming in early, and doing the jobs others may not want to do without being told. This theme was described as those individuals who were proactive. Finally, motivation of self and others was the final theme. Motivation includes intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that ultimately contribute to employee morale and productivity. Each theme is supported not only through multiple participants in the study, but existing academic literature relating to the field of leadership.

Applications to Professional Practice

This qualitative case study contributes to the professional practice of leadership within businesses related to the promotion of leaders to ensure the greatest success of individual leaders and on employee morale and productivity. The research completed concentrates on individuals already in formal leadership positions with a variety of backgrounds for their journey to leadership. Businesses in rural communities are limited to a smaller applicant pool than large urban cities. Research pertaining to leadership promotion is minimal especially when considering the geographic area of smaller communities. The case study completed provides results on what skills and achievements are desirable for leadership promotion instead of promotion based on

current performance. Businesses that utilize the findings from this study will be able to identify the key areas of focus for promotion of leaders to ensure the greatest success of those leaders.

Leadership is more than managing or supervising a group of people, but also involves providing guidance and direction to others (Elwell & Elikofer, 2015). Leadership is based on dedication, motivation, and passion, which are necessary for a company to move beyond the status quo. Current abilities are important for leadership promotion, but individuals must go above-and-beyond in those areas according to most participants in the case study research. The passion of the leader creates a distinction between leader and employee.

The research questions for the qualitative research study focused on how employees are promoted to leadership position including specifically what skills and achievements are necessary. Henson (2016) finds that the skills necessary for leaders differs from that of line level employees. Line level employees seek to perform tasks and focus on their expertise to perform the job. Leaders must understand the job, but they must also be able to achieve productivity and positive morale from their subordinates. Given the leaders' responsibility for engaging employees the research questions include ways that leaders improve morale and productivity to fill the existing gap in academic literature and research. The questions further sought to understand the impact of current skills, achievements, or abilities compared to those desired amongst formal leaders. The three primary research questions allow companies to evaluate the current leadership promotion process, understand the desirable skills for the greatest leader success evaluated on their ability to increase morale and productivity. The research findings identify the key areas of focus with recommendations for action that allow businesses to prepare and select the best candidates for leadership promotion.

Abundant existing academic literature encompasses the field of leadership within businesses. The existing literature was utilized to support this study with organizational coaching and transformational leadership concepts as the focal points. Organizational coaching involves the relationship between two individuals who work together to advance success in the individual (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). Coaching creates a culture for success of individuals, including those who the company puts in the essential and critical function of leading others. McGill and Clarke (2019) find that when companies demonstrate commitment to employees through the enhancement, training, and mentoring with internal functions the company realizes improved success. Coaching involves all aspects of the employee, but the research findings support the concept pertaining to transformational leadership. Transformational leadership concentrates on the relationship between the leader and the follower, while engaging mutual respect between them (Northouse, 2019). The skill set of transformational leaders focuses on soft skills includes emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term plans. Research study participants echoed these factors as important as the leader sets aside personal motivates in favor of the company goals and growth of their followers (Le & Lei, 2018). A transformational leader is frequently described as one who provides coaching, support, and encourages employees to reach their best performance.

The data collected from participants identified six key themes, which directly affect the field of leadership. Each theme focuses on the key attributes that leaders should possess at the highest level to improve organizational outcomes of effective leadership, positive morale, and increased productivity. When individuals are identified early on for future leadership positions, the development of skills required for leadership can be coached by existing leaders in the company (Odierno, 2015). Businesses that are aware of the major themes presented are more

informed and educated, thus creating enhanced leadership selection. The themes allow for improved evaluation of potential leadership candidates to select the individual most appropriate for leadership instead of evaluating the candidates based on current skills not related to leadership. When leaders are selected based on the desired skills compared to current skills, morale and productivity trend positively given the effectiveness of the leader to promote improvement.

Coaches and transformational leaders who lead with their heads, hearts, and hands are able to instill the Christian worldview into their approach to leadership. Through incorporation of the Christian principles and biblical perspective, leaders are able to portray the skills desired of leaders in an effective and ethical manner. Through maintaining a biblical perspective, leaders will naturally encompass the identified themes and seek to build relationships with their subordinates to achieve the greatest morale and productivity amongst their group.

Recommendations for Action

The general problem the qualitative research sought to address is leaders being promoted based upon achievements and skills not related to leadership resulting in diminished morale and lower productivity. This study focused on businesses located in rural communities in Northern Indiana. The field study data resulted in six themes: communication, interpersonal skills, experience, educational growth, initiative, and motivation. Recommendations developed are based on the in-personal one-on-one interviews conducted with existing organizational leaders holding various ranks within the five companies selected for the case study. The three recommendations presented allow businesses to improve the process for promoting leaders creating increased likelihood of successful employee morale and increased productivity.

Encourage Informal Leadership Opportunities

The research findings concluded that the most successful and desirable leaders possess skills, achievements, and attributes that far exceed that of line level employees. Although current abilities are important, it is imperative that leaders excel beyond the average employee. Engaging in informal leadership opportunities is the first recommendation. People who are natural leaders will rise as informal leaders. Giving opportunities to employees to be informal leaders creates increased opportunity for successful selection of future formal leaders. The informal leadership opportunity creates the ability to evaluate the person based on the six themes in a leadership setting versus as a line level employee. Businesses that promote autonomy, critical thinking, and empowerment of employees create an advantage in identifying individuals who excel at communicating with others and provide encouragement for those around them. Further, when employees are encouraged to make decisions and think critically, leaders are able to identify people who demonstrate initiative and continued education. Participants in the study agreed that leaders are generally identified very early on based on their work ethic, desire for continual growth and improvement, communication, and interpersonal skills. Businesses should be encouraged and engaged by these people from the very beginning creating opportunities to lead and challenge the person.

To implement this recommendation, businesses need to encourage existing leaders to give followers opportunities for taking the lead on projects, mentoring or coaching, and to make decisions on their own. Veteran leaders must engage in continual coaching of employees paying particular attention to those who initially stand out. Giving employees the opportunity for informal leadership opportunities allows for identification of how challenges and pressure of formal leadership may be handled. The skills identified are coachable, but those considered for leadership must have the desire to be coached in all areas to demonstrate continual improvement.

Organizational Coaching

The second recommendation focuses on organizational coaching. Existing leaders must understand their role in identifying and coaching future leaders. Formal leaders serve a much more significant role than simply being a manager or supervisor. Leaders set the vision and direction of the company through the relationship developed with peers and subordinates (Northouse, 2019). It is imperative that existing leaders put aside egocentricity and focus on supporting, developing, and coaching others. Leaders who implement a role model approach set up a natural avenue for coaching others. When a leader's primary focus is on serving others an increased likelihood of successful coaching will occur ultimately contributing to successful selection of future leaders. When a leader is not readily available to subordinates, both morale and productivity diminish because employees are not being served appropriately. A leader's primary responsibility is serving those they seek to lead. The leader has a great deal of other responsibilities as they are most often in a managerial position, but the first priority for greatest company success is their followers.

Organizational coaching can exist formally or informally within companies. To implement organizational coaching it is recommended that informal coaching be the primary method. When human resource departments and all levels of leaders in the company promote a culture of informal coaching the process is more natural and effective. This requires a great deal of time and effort from the front-line leaders as they begin the initial coaching and development of future leaders. However, all levels of leadership must participate to encourage continued growth and development. Additionally, when all levels are engaged in coaching it creates a uniformed culture of developing internal employees. Secondly, when implementing formal coaching programs in conjunction with informal coaching future leader development excels.

Implementing a formal coaching program that allows potential future leaders to meet with and learn from leaders throughout the company can help develop the greatest learning environment. When a person is able to hear perspective and stories from top ranking leaders, they are able to understand the journey to achieve the highest levels of successes in each of the six themes identified from the field study. Detailed formal coaching programs should be specific to the company and implemented by organizational leaders with the support of human resource departments.

Evaluation of Current Formal Leaders

The success of promoting future leaders begins with current leadership. Companies must ensure their existing formal leaders possess the skills, achievements, and attributes outlined in the six key themes to the highest levels. If these individuals are responsible for developing future leaders, they must exemplify the essential themes. The third recommendation to businesses is to ensure existing leaders are in the right position. This is the most challenging recommendation; it requires a critical evaluation of existing leaders. For leaders who do not excel at or portray all the essential themes, company leaders must start with organizational coaching and development of those individuals. The research and prior recommendations focus on the future of leadership promotion but, given existing leaders' critical role in development and coaching, the existing leaders must be exceptionally well suited for leadership.

If the existing leaders are not well suited, coaching and training should be the first step in developing them into the desired leaders. These leaders must be willing to be coached in the area of leadership even though they have held their position or title in leadership for potentially numerous years. Ultimately, if the person is not coachable, for whatever reason, the company must make the tough decision to find the more appropriate position, likely reverting back to the

position from which they were promoted. This recommendation has potential for numerous negative implications therefore must be followed through with great caution, support, and encouragement of executives, managers, and human resources. To improve employee morale and increase productivity the existing leaders are vital.

Implementation of Recommendations

The three recommendations presented will assist in the success of promoting individuals to leadership positions. To implement the recommendations successfully executives, managers, and human resources must each be involved in implementation and follow through. The executive level support and buy-in of the recommendations permeates throughout a company. Regardless of the organizational structure, when the highest-ranking individuals support, promote, and champion the cause, buy-in increases from those below them. Secondly, the managers throughout the company are essential to implementing recommendations. The managers drive implementation and follow-through of the recommendations. Success is dependent on the effectiveness, efficiency, and dedication of management working directly with leadership candidates. Lastly, human resources must provide the tools and training necessary for existing leaders and managers to succeed. The support of this department creates a streamlined process for monitoring the development of leaders.

When executives, managers, and human resources work in conjunction with one another the implementation of the recommendations will be more fluent. Not all companies included in this case study have a formal dedicated human resources department, therefore, a focus group may be necessary to serve this function. Disseminating information to executive leaders in a top down approach creates the culture necessary for effective implementation. Providing the information through a presentation to businesses allows for customized presentation and

addressing specific questions pertaining to that business. To disseminate information to a larger group, outside of the participants of the case study, written publication creates the ability to share the research findings.

Recommendations for Further Study

With the findings of this study presented, additional topics for continued research became evident. The first recommendation for further study is researching employees' perspectives on what skills, achievements, or attributes motivate them to achieve the highest productivity, positive morale, and trust. Line level employees' perceptions of desirable leader characteristics would seek to fill the gap between existing leaders' desire and perception to those of line level employees with no leadership experience. Categorizing employees into groups based on those who have desires to become a formal leader and those who do not have the desire for formal leadership would be recommended to determine if differences exist between the two groups.

Another area for future research potential is regarding internal versus external leadership candidates. Questions presented to the research participants did not specify internal versus external candidate evaluation for leadership positions. However, the majority of responses were within the context of promoting internal individuals to leadership positions. A study researching the impact of external hiring for front line, middle, and executive management level positions would allow businesses to implement the most effective leadership candidates for company success, including impacts on employee engagement and organizational change. The field of leadership covers a vast array of topics with future research potential with the two recommendations directly related to the research performed in this study regarding promotion of leaders. Through continuing research on the promotion of leaders, academic literature will continue to enhance the practical application in professional practice.

Reflections

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to contribute to existing academic literature in an area that was underdeveloped. The promotion of leaders to leadership positions was an area that lacked specific research to understanding the skills and achievements for promoting leaders to formal leadership positions. Specifically the research sought to add to the body of knowledge by expanding on the understanding of reasons behind promoting leaders based on non-leadership skills and abilities and the impact it has on employee morale and company productivity. The research study interviewed 25 participants employed at service related businesses in rural Indiana. The convenience sampling method narrowed down the participants to two rural communities located in close proximity to the researcher. Participants were required to be in a formal leadership position to provide understanding from the perspective of existing leaders throughout various ranks in the organizational charts of the five businesses selected for the case study.

Participants were not given significant detail outside of the consent form prior to the interview allowing for natural and first instinct responses to be provided. The researcher sought to eliminate any scripted answers based on what an individual thought might be the desired response. Leaders gave varying depth to the response to each open-ended questions with some providing specific examples, while the researcher prompted additional discussion from others. The responses of participants provided a plethora of information for the researcher to code and provided substantial support for the themes identified and ultimately enhancing the existing body of research in the field of leadership.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The general problem of this qualitative case study analysis was addressing leaders being promoted based upon achievements and skills not related to leadership resulting in diminished morale and lower productivity. In-person interviews were conducted with 25 individuals who held formal leadership positions in various levels of the case study businesses. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded identifying six common themes support the research questions presented. The themes included communication, interpersonal skills, experience, educational growth, initiative, and motivation. Themes were consistent amongst participants regardless of level of leadership with data saturation being achieved prior to the completion of all 25 interviews.

The findings apparent in the research, key themes, and existing literature resulted in three recommendations for implementation in professional practice. Encouraging informal leadership opportunities, implementing organizational coaching, and evaluating existing leaders against the key themes and findings are the recommendations for business leaders to achieve success in the promotion of leaders to avoid promotion based on skills not related to leadership. The research findings, application to professional leadership practice and recommendations for businesses contributes to the body of knowledge regarding promotion of leaders to formal leadership roles. The research begins to close the gap in existing academic literature related to promotion of leaders based on skills not related to leadership. Through closing this gap businesses are able to identify, more clearly, the important skills, achievements, and attributes to achieve the greatest employee morale and increased productivity through proper leadership selection.

A plethora of existing research exists and intrigues scholars regarding the discipline of leadership creating foundational groundwork for leaders. The conclusion of this study allows businesses to understand the most imperative factors for evaluating leaders and

recommendations to achieve successful leadership promotion. Leaders influence employee well-being including the morale and productivity of the entire company thereby creating the need for selecting the best leaders to hold formal leadership positions (Vincent-Höper & Stein, 2019).

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Appendix

Interview Guide

The interview questions presented below were developed to provide a guide for the interview processes. The intent of the questions is to develop answers to the research questions presented. The questions are separated into three parts to correspond to the three primary research questions. The interview will be semi-structured following the order below, unless individual responses promote a different order to maintain conversational tone and flow.

Part One

1. What do you look for in a potential leadership candidate?
2. What skills positively influence a decision to hire someone for a leadership position?
3. What skills negatively influence a decision to hire someone for a leadership position?
4. What current achievements are desired in a leadership candidate?
5. What current achievements are not desirable for a leadership candidate?
6. How does performance with current job skills influence your decision?
7. Have you selected a leader in the past?
 - a. If yes, how long ago?
 - b. If yes, what influenced your selection of the leader?
 - i. Is the leader still employed in a leadership position?
 - ii. If no, why not?

Part Two

8. What skills are important for a line level employee?
9. What skills are important for a leader?
10. What achievements are important for a line level employee?

11. What achievements are important for a leader?
12. What leadership attributes do you desire in a leader?
13. What leadership attributes does your company desire in a leader?
14. How are leadership attributes determined or measured by your company?
 - a. How are leadership attributes determined or measured by you?
15. How does your company promote individuals to leadership positions?

Part Three

16. How does a leader influence morale?
17. How does a leader influence productivity?
18. How does a leader diminish morale?
 - a. What types of actions or behaviors?
19. How does a leader diminish productivity?
 - a. What types of actions or behaviors?
20. How do you promote morale in your employees?
21. How do you promote productivity in your employees?

All responses will be audio recorded and transcribed. The information will remain confidential and secure. After three years from approval of the research, the interviews will be destroyed.