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# Successful Strategies of Small Business Owners to Recruit Veterans

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Michelle Duncan

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## Review Committee

Dr. Peter Anthony, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Teresa Jepma, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. James Savard, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer  
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2018

Abstract

Successful Strategies of Small Business Owners to Recruit Veterans

by

Michelle Tiffiney Duncan

MBA, Strayer University, 2014

BA, Strayer University, 2013

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2018

## Abstract

Approximately 300,000 highly skilled veterans leave military service every year, yet some small business owners lack strategies to recruit these skilled workers. The specific business problem addressed in this multiple case study was that some small information technology business leaders lack strategies to recruit military veterans. The research sample included 3 owners of small businesses serving the information technology industry in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States who developed and implemented successful strategies for recruiting veterans. Data were collected from interviews and review of documents. Data analysis resulted in the identification of 3 major themes: understanding of veterans as a means to determining organizational, job, and environmental fit; targeting veterans for recruitment and hiring; and retaining veterans as members of the small business civilian workforce. The implications for social change included the potential for a reduction of the unemployment rate among veterans and an increase in veterans' purchasing power in support of their local communities.

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## Dedication

I dedicate the achievement of my doctoral degree to my Angels, my late grandmother, Mrs. Linnie Cordelia Highwarden Taylor, and my late cousin, Ms. Florence Gabrielia Lewis. Both women instilled in me at an early age that through God's mercy anything is possible. To my mother, Ms. Lois Kebe, and father, Mr. Gary Hill, thank you for reminding me at my first residency that I had the fortitude and aptitude to complete this journey. To my prayer warrior sister, Mrs. Kanicka Miles, thank you for your unwavering support and many prayers. Lastly, to my niece Miss. Cordelia Hyle, you inspire me every day.

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Thank you to the small business owners (participants) who took time off their hectic schedule to participate in this study.

God bless you!

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

### **Background of the Problem**

Military veterans represent a pool of skilled workers who can help small business owners achieve their organizational goals (Lucke & Furtner, 2015). The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2017) estimated that the total veteran population in 2016 represents almost 10% of the U.S. population, with a substantial number of veterans experiencing greater unemployment, as a group, than the overall national unemployment rate (Golub & Bennett, 2014). Employment is a key component of community reintegration for veterans (Dillahunt-Aspillaga et al., 2014), who may offer suitable specialized education and training in fields such as information technology to enhance small business growth and prolong business survival (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014). Hartal, Kreiss, and Yavnai (2015) claimed that veterans can leverage their vocational assets gained through the military to equal or exceed the occupational potential of nonveterans. Recruiting and retaining skilled workers, such as military veterans, are necessary but often difficult tasks for small business owners (Abraham, 2015). The likelihood of employee engagement, talent retention, and loyalty increases when business leaders hire employees who are good fits with their organizations, environments, and available jobs (Boon & Biron, 2016). However, Gray (2014) described a need for solutions to the human resource challenges involving military veterans. This research involved the study of small business owners' strategies to recruit military veterans to attain skilled workers to meet their information technology needs.

### **Problem Statement**

A challenge some small business owners encounter is implementing strategic recruitment practices for the sustainability of their businesses (Greer, Carr, & Hipp, 2016). Approximately 300,000 highly skilled veterans leave military service every year (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015; Faurer, Rogers-Brodersen, & Bailie, 2014); at the same time, some small business owners are unaware of the strategies to recruit those highly skilled veterans into their workforce (Benmelech & Frydman, 2014; Delbourg-Delphis, 2014). The general business problem addressed is that some small business owners lack recruitment strategies to employ skilled candidates to fill positions. The specific business problem addressed is that some small information technology (IT) business owners lack strategies to recruit military veterans to attain skilled workers.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore recruitment strategies small IT business owners use to recruit veterans. The sample from the target population included three IT business owners located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States who developed and implemented successful strategies for recruiting veterans. Findings from this study supported the development of effective recruitment mechanisms to help small businesses reach a higher level of performance. The implications for social change included the potential for a reduction of the unemployment rate among veterans and an increase in their purchasing power for supporting communities.

### **Nature of the Study**

I used a qualitative research method for this study. Qualitative methods are effective means of exploring the emotions, intentions, barriers, norms and values, thoughts, cultural factors, and motivations of individuals or groups (Longfield et al., 2016). As the focus of my study was on in-depth information from small business owners who operate a sustainable IT business while recruiting veterans, qualitative methods were appropriate for this study. Quantitative methods involve collecting and analyzing numerical data and testing of hypotheses (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). This study did not include analyzing numerical data or testing hypotheses; therefore, a quantitative method was not suitable. Mixed method research involves both numerical and descriptive data, combining the strengths of both the qualitative and quantitative methods (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). Because my study did not include numerical data, the mixed method was unnecessary.

I used a multiple qualitative case study design for this research. Case study research can represent a balanced exploration of a topic, based on participants' experiences and perspectives (Taylor & Thomas-Gregory, 2015). Exploring participants' objective experiences in successfully solving specific business problems provides researchers information through the collection of comprehensive qualitative data; qualitative data includes those related experiences, detailed accounts of each experience, and the meanings behind their experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). This case study design involved the triangulation of multiple sources of qualitative data, appropriate to gain insights from the exploration of lived experiences of multiple participants derived

from several businesses. Phenomenology is a design involving exploration of the meanings of lived experiences (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). My study did not involve exploring the meanings of participants' lived experiences; therefore, phenomenology was not an ideal design. Ethnographic researchers study participants in their cultural settings, often through extensive immersion (Ranfagni, Guercini, & Crawford-Camicciottoli, 2014). Immersion in participants' cultural environments and study of their cultures were not ideas central to this research; therefore, ethnography was not the best choice for this design. Narrative designs involve studying stories of participants (Joyce, 2015). Because my research was not about participants' lifelong stories, a narrative design did not fit with the purpose of this study.

### **Research Question**

The central research question for this study was as follows: What strategies do small IT business owners use to recruit veterans?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies do you use to recruit veterans?
2. How do you determine the strategies to recruit and hire veterans who can help you meet your business needs?
3. How did you address the key challenges to implementing your strategies for recruiting veterans?
4. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies you use to recruit veterans?

5. Based upon your experience and discussion with your employees, why do you believe these strategies are successful?

6. What additional information about your strategies for recruiting veterans would you like to share?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was person-organization fit theory. This person-organization fit theory evolved from the attraction-selection-attrition framework developed by Schneider (1987). The person-organization fit theory revolves around the compatibility between a business owner and a potential employee (Chatman, 1989). Theorists consider this compatibility a *fit*; there are two types of fit: complementary and supplementary (Boon & Biron, 2016). A complementary fit involves one party providing something that another is missing and requires becoming whole (Jani & Saiyed, 2017). Recruitment of military veterans represents a valuable strategy for small business owners to experience complementary fits because of the educational development of military employees, training and certification for job performance, and the skills that transform these employees into decentralized problem solvers (Hall et al., 2014). A supplementary fit involves the two parties sharing similar attributes (Chatman, 1989). Researchers use the person-organization fit theory to understand the norms that exist between an applicant's attraction, the recruiter's selection process, and the intent to hire. I used the person-organization fit theory as the conceptual framework in the exploration of successful recruitment strategies small business owners use to recruit military veterans.



## Operational Definitions

This research involved context and operational definitions important to the understanding of the study. The definitions of terms allow readers the opportunities to apply appropriate meaning to the words used for a clearer understanding of the research study. The definitions represent established meanings providing readers with the coherence to appreciate the terms of this qualitative study.

*Armed Forces:* The armed forces branch of the United States military, including Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, among other special service branches (Knapik et al., 2014).

*Candidates:* Candidates are prospective employees or applicants to jobs who employers judge and consider with the purpose of making well-founded human resource decisions (Bäckström & Björklund, 2017).

*Military veterans:* Military veterans are individuals who were actively engaged in work for the armed forces during a service period and who transitioned from active duty to civilian life (Casad & Bryant, 2016).

*Retention of intellectual capital:* The retention of intellectual capital formally recognizes and mentors' internal talent to contribute and maintain knowledge that is relevant to the growth of the organization (Patidar et al., 2016).

*Small business:* Small businesses are companies operating for profit, which include fewer than 20 employees, comprising the majority of firms across all major sectors of the U.S. economy (Cunningham & Sinclair, 2015).

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

Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations in qualitative research represent the important contextual information for understanding the limits and applicability of the research results (Knafl, Leeman, Havill, Crandell, & Sandelowski, 2015). The assumptions outlined below are the conditions of the research that were likely true, although there was no way to substantiate them. The limitations that follow are the factors identified as beyond my control throughout the research process. The delimitations identified stemmed from how I conceptualized the boundaries of this qualitative study.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are reasonable accounts that the researcher accepts as truths, based on the interpretation of known facts, which Sutton and Austin (2015) claimed are necessary to discuss in qualitative research reports. I relied upon four assumptions in the collection and analysis of the study data. My first research assumption was that there is an interest of small business owners in recruiting and hiring military veterans. The second assumption concerned study participants being forthcoming and honest in their responses. I assumed I would be able to recruit the number of participants who could provide data necessary for data saturation and the identification of the answer to the overall research question. I assumed that my choices for data collection, which aligned with the method and design, were appropriate to acquire information useful to leaders.

**Limitations**

Limitations are potential deficiencies in the research design, data analysis, or information gathered during the interview out of the researcher's control (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). The goal of identifying limitations in both qualitative and quantitative research is to acknowledge the potential for inadequacies in gathering and analyzing the collected data (Morgado, Meireles, Neves, Amaral, & Ferreira, 2017). A limitation included the abilities of participants to fully verbalize in-depth experiences to help answer the research question. Other limitations of qualitative research include the subjectivity of the data collected and analyzed from a relatively small sample (Morgado et al., 2017).

**Delimitations**

Delimitations are investigative boundaries researchers use to narrow the scope of their research designs (Tanhueco-Tumapo, 2016). The delimitations of this study were (a) study location, (b) sample size, and (c) population. This research was an exploratory case study of small IT business owners who successfully hired military veterans. The location of the study was the mid-Atlantic region of the United States, which was another delimitation. The results of the study may not be transferable to populations outside of the stated boundaries for this case study. Descriptions of the population, sample, and research steps help others judge the transferability of findings to other populations and settings that were outside of the delimitations of this study.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings from the analysis of the data collected in this study are useful for small business owners to implement successful strategies to recruit skilled veterans. Understanding strategies is of value to small business owners interested in improving business practices to hire skilled military veterans. This study has significance for small business practices that might lead to a lower unemployment of veterans. Implications for social change include the potential for the improved life quality of veterans and their families that might be the result of small business employment.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The findings from this study represent strategies that some small business owners can use to develop and implement additional human resources and practices, which include expanding their efforts to include veteran retention and career development. These contributions help enhance the effectiveness of small business owners' methods for recruiting prospective veterans. Beauchesne and O'Hair (2013) concluded that military veterans typically experience numerous iterations of specialized vocational training, which results in the veterans acquiring unique on-the-job and educational experiences that manifest as they progress through their careers. The recruitment of veterans into the small business workforce may result in small business employees who can contribute leadership skills, teamwork, and core values to benefit their businesses.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Applications of the findings from this study may lead to an increase in small business owners' successes in hiring veterans, thereby reducing the unemployment of

veterans. Military veterans deserve ongoing employment opportunities and continued community support when they exit the military to counter the hardships faced upon a transition to civilian life (Dixon, 2014). Military veterans can contribute significantly to the economic and social well-being of United States (Benmelech & Frydman, 2014). Veterans can inspire a respect for the diversity of cultures, share knowledge of interactions among people and industries, and inspire the level of discipline required to keep businesses afloat (Stern, 2017). By improving recruitment strategies of veterans, the unemployment rate could drop, which would also reduce homelessness and other economic hardships that veterans face.

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

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore recruitment strategies small IT business owners use to recruit veterans. The literature review includes information about the related topics, such as research about veterans, their education, training, experiences, and what veterans may bring to organizations. The literature contained studies about veterans' transitions from service and adaptability to the public sector. Related topics in the literature were the need for human capital investment and the recruitment and hiring strategies of business leaders. Issues pertaining to information technology and small business leaders' hiring of veterans were also pertinent to this study. The process of reviewing the professional and academic literature led to the identification of the theory of person-environment fit, encompassing person-job fit and person-organization fit theories, which formed the conceptual framework for this study.

A search for the literature involved use of the Internet to access university and government research databases and libraries. Research databases accessed included Proquest, Research Gate, Business Source Complete-Premier, ABI-INFORM Complete, EBSCOhost, and PubMed Central. Germinal books, government data, and previously-published doctoral studies supplemented the peer-reviewed journal sources. Verification of peer-reviewed literature occurred using Ulrich's Serials Analysis Systems website. Combinations of keywords used in the search for literature included terms, such as *small business organizations, veterans, military, armed forces, human resources, employees, candidates, recruitment, personnel, hiring, and information technology*. The search for literature resulted in the identification of 115 peer-reviewed articles related to the topic. The criteria for peer-reviewed articles published within the 5 years prior to this study led to inclusion of peer-reviewed literature, of which 106 (approximately 92%) had publication dates between 2014 and 2018.

### **Person-Environment Fit**

The conceptual framework for this study included the theory of person-environment fit, encompassing the person-job fit, and person-organizational fit theories. Theoretical ideas involving person-environment fit (P-E fit) originated from the field of community psychology (Rappaport, 1977), with the majority of the theoretical and empirical development occurring in the context of industrial and organizational psychology (Schneider, 1987). Boon and Biron (2016) noted that the conceptual framework of the P-E fit theory has had significant implications from the growing applications of the framework to research conducted in the 21st century.

An assumption pertaining to the theory of P-E fit is that positive employer responses happen when candidates appear to fit with or match the overall business environment (Brandstätter, Job, & Schulze, 2016; Zacher & Schmitt, 2016). P-E fit is the broader conceptual framework, under which more specific theoretical elements exist; specifically, the idea of P-E fit pertains to the concepts of person-organization fit (P-O fit) and person-job fit (P-J fit), which are two of the most extensively applied conceptual orientations in the context of personnel selections (Boon & Biron 2016). Using the broader concept of P-E fit, Boon and Biron concluded that P-J fit may be more important than P-O fit during the early stages of selection (screening stages), and P-O fit has a greater influence on hiring decisions during later stages of candidate evaluations (e.g., in interview phases). As applied in modern work settings, there may also be a difference between the actual P-E, P-O, and P-J fits and the perceptions of candidates and employers about those fits (Brandstätter et al., 2016).

**Person-job fit.** The P-J fit is the match between an individual and job requirements, roles, and responsibilities (Wong & Tetrick, 2017). When determining the P-J fit, there may be a relatively greater employer focus on and evaluation of a candidate's knowledge and skills required for a specific job (Brandstätter et al., 2016). The idea of a P-J fit involves the goal to hire employees that offer the optimal levels of preparation for the job, which can minimize the time and efforts involved with training new employees (Wong & Tetrick, 2017). Deniz, Öznur, and Ertosun (2015) studied the effects of P-J fit based on the idea that optimal fits help organizations reduce the high costs of employees poorly matched with their jobs. The P-J concept also pertains to how

well candidates might perceive the demands of the job align with their interests, needs, and expectations about remuneration and benefits from the work they desire to perform (Boon & Biron, 2016; Denzin, Öznur, & Ertosun, 2015). Pedulla (2016) noted that a reason for a poor P-J fit might stem from attempts to avoid unemployment that lead millions of workers into jobs that are a mismatch to skills, educational achievements, or experiences.

To enhance the likelihood of arriving at useful conclusions of P-J fit, both the employer and prospective employee must be able to rely upon accurate and realistic job information offered during the recruitment and selection phases (Bäckström & Björklund, 2017). Prior researchers indicated an association between higher P-J fit and more positive work attitudes and outcomes, such as longer employee retention and reduced overall turnover, greater employee job satisfaction, lower job-related stress, reduced absenteeism, and enhanced work performance (Denzin et al., 2015; Wong & Tetrick, 2017). Boon and Biron (2016) highlighted the evolution of the simple concept of P-J fit that emerged in the scientific management literature to a P-J fit concept, potentially determinable through more sophisticated statistically reliable and valid processes to formally measure the concept.

Boon and Biron (2016) described P-J fit as an extended conceptualization of complementary fit. In personnel selection practices, techniques for assessing one's P-J fit include applications and résumés that list skills and origins of knowledge, various types of tests, references from previous employers or recommendations encompassing information about skills and abilities, and a variety of other evaluative tools (Boon &



Biron, 2016). Bäckström and Björklund (2017) studied systematic ways to evaluate prospective personnel and how well they fit with the basic qualities and requirements needed for specific jobs and concluded that systematic approaches to the determination of person-job fit led to the selection of more qualified candidates by employers in their study.

**Person-organization fit.** The P-O fit is the match between or alignment of an individual with the broader organizational attributes (Zhang, Yan, Wang, & Li, 2017). The broader organizational attributes considered regarding the P-O fit include the overall values and organizational culture of the company (Astakhova, Doty, & Hang, 2014). The evaluation of the P-O fit may include consideration of how a candidate may work well with and collaborate with colleagues already working in a business (Boon & Biron, 2016). P-O fit pertains to the compatibilities among staff in organizations.

The P-O fit research stems from the attraction-selection-attrition framework introduced by Schneider (1987), who claimed that people look constantly and continuously for situations attractive to them, self-select their introduction into situations, and remain if there is an acceptable level of P-O fit or leave in the cases where P-O fit does not feel acceptable. Situated in the attraction-selection-attrition developed by Schneider, the attraction between persons and organizations stems from similarities. Perceptions about these similarities related to P-O concepts may affect hiring decisions and a candidate's desire to pursue the job; empirical evidence led to the conclusion that an applicant's organizational-choice selection behaviors and an organization's personnel selection practices are both antecedents of P-O fit (Boon & Biron, 2016).

There is a relationship between higher levels of P-O fit and positive work-related outcomes, such as job satisfaction and organization commitment. P-O fit is also a suspected predictor of turnover intention and teamwork effectiveness (Zhang et al., 2017). P-O fit theory is critical to organizational change because it reduces risk, uncertainty, and discomfort when candidates proceed to explore new options to manage change (Duffy & Carlin, 2014). P-O fit theory is a prerequisite for assuming attraction-selection attrition framework, which requires new incumbents to be experts in their field of expertise (Schneider, 1987).

To reduce the cost of employee turnover, a company may adopt a culture that embraces P-O fit ideology, thereby increasing employees' engagement, retention of talent, and team loyalty (Duffy & Carlin, 2014). However, the debate revolving around the P-O theory pertains largely to the idea that the basic characteristics of people and organizations are difficult to conceptualize, especially in cross-cultural settings (Astakhova et al., 2014). Measures of the congruence between individuals and organizational values and goals are difficult to apply and understand (Boon & Biron, 2016). The ways of measuring a match between candidates' and employers' individual preferences and needs with the overall organizational structures and systems may be elusive; fit measures must stem from individual and organizational characteristics (Zhang et al., 2017). P-O fit theorists consider the match between an individual's characteristics, such as personality, and organizational climate or culture, often operationalized through the identification of reward systems, communication formats, socialization systems, and

employer expectations for workplace behaviors and organizational citizenship (Boon & Biron, 2016).

As baby boomers approach retirement age, organizations try to eliminate the knowledge gap by implementing P-O fit theory as a tool to maintain continuity in leadership (Lytle, Foley, & Cotter, 2015). In an era of technological advancement, hiring freezes, and changes in workforce demographics, it is important for small business owners to develop strategic plans that involve knowledge retention to promote recruitment strategies that facilitate P-O fit theory (Foley & Lytle, 2015). Strategically managing human resources fulfills the small business owner's common objective of attracting, training, and retaining the best human capital for the organization. To meet the objective of attaining an optimal P-O fit, Gutiérrez-Broncano, Jiménez-Estévez, and Zabala-Baños (2017) claimed that business leaders need to develop practices for recruiting, selecting, training, and developing human capital assets, while also developing and communicating to stakeholders the performance evaluations and remuneration systems applicable in the company. By doing so, small business owners participate directly in the optimization and implementation of policies and procedures pertaining to successful strategies for recruitment of human capital, including military veterans.

The consensus in the literature was that there are benefits (for both employees and employers) of hiring employees with good P-E, P-J, and P-O fits. For example, Denzin et al. (2015) noted greater efficiency in the workplace and reduced employee stress as part of these benefits. Boon and Biron (2016) warned that employers typically hire employees who may hold multiple positions with diverse tasks over extended periods of

employment, which may alter the P-J fit in the long-term. Therefore, the P-O fit may be a better determinant of optimal long-term matches and positive organizational outcomes associated with the new employee. Similarly, Wong and Tetrick (2017) described the P-J, P-O, and P-E concepts as dynamic concepts subject to differences over time stemming from changes in both people and organizations.

### **Military Veterans Research**

The armed forces represent the single largest employer of young American men, employing between 10% and 12% of the U.S. population of young men and growing numbers of women who serve at least one term in one of the branches of the armed forces (Teachman & Tedrow, 2013). Because of the recognition of the importance of these young men and women to a global society, military veterans represent a group of individuals who garner continuous interest in rigorous research efforts (Chamberland, 2015). Researchers' goals include conducting scholarly inquiries into military veterans' transitions to civilian life and experiences in the workplaces, educational settings, and general communities (Ahern et al., 2015; Golub & Bennett, 2014; Xue et al., 2015). Additional scholarly efforts included the study of family members of military veterans (Runge, Waller, MacKenzie, & McGuire, 2014; Vable et al., 2016; Vasterling et al., 2015). Researchers also examined the life course outcomes of military service members (Hartal et al., 2015; Spiro, Settersten, & Aldwin, 2016). Other peer-reviewed published studies addressed education and skills that enhance employability (Adler et al., 2015; Delbourg-Delphis, 2014; Lieberman et al., 2014), as well as the involvement of military

veterans in business leadership and small businesses operating in the United States (Benmelech & Frydman, 2014; SBA, 2016).

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2017) estimated the total veteran population in 2016 was approximately 22 million. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) reported a total of 21 million veterans living in the United States in 2015, almost 10% of the U.S. population. The U.S. Census report (2015) included a breakdown of veterans by era, including the Gulf War post-911 era with a cohort of approximately 3.5 million veterans representing 1.5% of the U.S. population. The pre-911 Gulf War veterans who served between 1990 and 2001 included approximately 3.4 million U.S. citizens, according to the Census report. The group of pre-911 and post-911 Gulf War veterans represented almost 3% of the U.S. population in 2015. Most veterans living in the United States include World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam era veterans, who represent almost nine million U.S. citizens, which is close to 4% of the U.S. population. Veterans classified in the U.S. Census as having served in another service period include those who served during peacetime periods, representing a cohort of more than five million U.S. citizens representing 25% of all military veterans of the U.S. armed forces. Approximately 200,000 people annually transition from active duty to civilian life (SBA, 2016).

The U.S. Census report (2015) also included a breakdown of the industries in which veterans gain employment when they transition to civilian life. Most employed veterans (approximately 71%) were salary and wage earners in private nonagricultural businesses (U.S. Census, 2015). Of the employed veterans working in those U.S.

businesses represented in the 2015 Census report, most were involved with privately owned manufacturing businesses (approximately 13%). In the 2015 Census report, other employed veterans worked in professional and business services (approximately 11%), retail markets (approximately 8.5%), and the education and health services (approximately 8.2%). Approximately 21% of employed veterans work in the public sector (SBA, 2016).

**Military veteran transitions.** Although the attitude of transitioning military veterans may be euphoria or relief, other veterans report challenges related to disabilities, loneliness, awkward social interactions, post-traumatic stress, and other mental health problems; including substance abuse, financial instability, and economic stress (Chamberland, 2015). Deployed military veterans often return to civilian life following the constant exposure to risk of injury and death (Xue et al., 2015). Exposure to traumatic events coincides with separation from healthy supportive connections with family and friends, leading to difficult homecoming transitions (Ahern et al., 2015). Veterans should have opportunities to integrate their personal identities with their professional identities, which could lead to positive job attitudes, work-related mental health, and general life satisfaction following military service (Casad & Bryant, 2016).

Meshberg-Cohen, Reid-Quiñones, Black, and Rosen (2015) called work a goal-directed activity that reduces the amount of free time that veterans would otherwise have to engage in substance abuse or other self-soothing activities for coping with transitional or post-traumatic stressors. Military veterans may feel empowered when they are recognized for their skills, and many work autonomously for future leadership positions

after leaving the military, which are goals that can help reduce transitional difficulties (Chamberland, 2015). Meshberg-Cohen et al. reported employment successes related to decreased substance use and improvements in medical and physical status, legal and financial stability, family and social functioning, and mental and psychiatric well-being. Unemployment and underemployment pose substantial barriers to the healthy reintegration of veterans into civilian society; employment is a beneficial support component in the rehabilitative course of veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, or other post service transitional challenges (Meshberg-Cohen et al., 2015).

Knowledge of difficult transitional issues prompted military leaders to focus on the development of skills during the military that apply in the private sector, thereby increasing the marketability of veterans in the civilian workforce when they exit service (Chamberland, 2015). The development of many community and government-based transitional resources may be helpful to facilitate the reintegration of service veterans into civilian life (Ahern et al., 2015). Transitional programs and supportive services include educational resources, psycho-social support, housing and welfare programs, and employment assistance; the goals of these programs are to help individuals identify relevant experiences, skills, and knowledge that can be beneficial to various industries and businesses (Arendt & Sapp, 2014). The Department of Defense sponsors the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) that helps armed forces veterans develop job-seeking tools, such as resumes and interview skills, and helps business owners in the

recruitment process for paid workers and internships (Hall, Harrell, Bicksler, Stewart, & Fisher, 2014).

Expert help with job-seeking tools, such as resumes, includes assisting veterans with aligning resume terminology with language that civilian business owners are likely to understand and appreciate (Hall et al., 2014). The SBA (2016) called these types of assistance programs ones that help veterans transition from *boots to businesses*. Arendt and Sapp (2014) also suggested aligning resumes with private sector expectations and educating potential employers about military terminology to help them comprehend benefits of the prospective employees.

**Military veterans' unemployment.** Military veterans confront psychological, emotional, sociocultural, vocational, and financial challenges that could affect sustainable employment after active duty (Chamberland, 2015). Military veterans transition from active duty personnel to working members of the civilian community, experiencing greater unemployment than nonveterans (Golub & Bennett, 2014). Each year, almost a quarter of a million U.S. service members leave their branches of the U.S. armed forces and transition to veteran status; in their transitions to civilian lives, many veterans realize the difficulties of finding new work (Meshberg-Cohen, Reid-Quiñones, Black, & Rosen, 2014). In 2015, the unemployment rate for veterans, published in the US Census (2015) was 13% among the group of post-9/11 Gulf War male veterans, compared to general unemployment rates of approximately 5% (Lee et al., 2015). The unemployment rate of female post-9/11 Gulf War veterans dropped to 6.4% in the 2015 US Census report from the 8.5% rate reported in the previous year, but the unemployment rate for males and



females were higher than the overall rate for the U.S. population. The unemployment rate of African-American post-9/11 Gulf War veterans was 9.4% in 2015, and there was 6.5% unemployment rate for Hispanic post-911 Gulf war veterans (US Census, 2015).

According to the US Department of Veteran Affairs (2012), the economic and industrial handicaps that veterans must be able to overcome when they reintegrate into civilian society are reasons for unemployment. Because of limited employment opportunities and competition among skilled workers, military veterans may end up working in businesses that do not well align with their prior training and experiences or may not find any employment at all (Gray, 2014). Some job seeking cohorts, such as veterans, might broaden their searches to consider more, rather than fewer, occupational opportunities following military service, to avoid unemployment (Pager & Pedulla, 2015).

Veterans experiencing relatively greater social adjustment issues during their transitions to their civilian lifestyles may be particularly vulnerable to long-term unemployment, exacerbating social adjustment issues (Mallen, Schumacher, Leskela, Thuras, & Frenzel, 2014). Higher rates of unemployment among veterans lead to higher rates of homelessness (Sprio et al., 2016). The unemployment of military veterans may also continue a dysfunctional or clinical cycle, as demonstrated by researchers who revealed that unemployed military veterans experienced more post combat post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (Xue et al., 2015). Ahern et al. (2015) noted that the struggles veterans face may stem from a sense of lacking structure and purpose in civilian life, which is made worse in an economic period when securing employment may be difficult.

Cotner et al. (2015) studied predictors of veterans' employment, which included male gender, higher motivation, previous employment, and higher educational levels. Regarding education, Spiro et al. (2016) discussed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (G.I. Bill) as a bridge to social mobility at the critical junctures of veterans' lives. Blosnich, Kopacz, McCarten, and Bossarte (2015) highlighted the era in which veterans' greater access to higher education began, starting with F.D. Roosevelt's endorsement of the G.I. Bill that helped more than 830,000 veterans (the majority of which were post-911 Gulf War veterans) pursue post-secondary education in 2011. Vable et al. (2016) noted although veterans may have G.I. Bill benefits to access higher education, veterans may not use those benefits or the outcomes of the use of those benefits may be inconsistent or not decisively positive. Although veterans face unemployment possibilities and post service higher education challenges, Vable et al. noted that those who do access G.I. Bills are likely to experience improved educational outcomes linked to higher incomes and occupational statuses. Spiro et al. (2016) discussed how veterans and their families could realize the cumulative advantages of better employment leading to higher lifetime earnings, by using the G.I. Bill benefits.

**Military veterans' employability.** Employment is a key component of community reintegration for veterans (Dillahunt-Aspillaga et al., 2014). In their quantitative study of veterans' post service work experiences, Meshberg-Cohen et al. (2015) found that veterans, with varying degrees of post service trauma or challenges, rated the significance of work in their lives as relatively high. According to Mutanda et al. (2014), reducing poverty and facilitating employment are part of the United Nations

Millennium Development goals, achievable with the help of business leaders and other employers. The collective efforts of business owners led to the employment of more than 240,000 veterans by 2015, representing progress but not a complete solution for the problem of veteran unemployment in America (Veterans Job Mission, 2015). Many leaders of governmental agencies, in association with the public and private sectors, continuously seek ways to help veterans transition from active duty to meaningful post service employment (SBA, 2016).

Lieberman et al. (2014) noted assets that military personnel develop while on active study, including: leadership, initiative, perseverance, dedication, loyalty, and commitment. Core military values, such as: a strong work ethic, accountability, consistency, and respect for authority theoretically make veterans attractive candidates to help fill the needs of business leaders (Lieberman et al., 2014). Hall et al. (2014) and Cacioppo et al. (2015) added resilience as a skill developed by military personnel that small business leaders may find attractive in their employees. These military skills typically readily transfer well to diverse private sector job settings (Franke & Felfe, 2015).

Veterans demonstrated they are trainable (Lucke & Furtner, 2015). Soldiers receive training opportunities that are unavailable to the civilian workforce (Adler et al., 2015). Routon (2014), Hall et al. (2014), and Bahadori et al. (2015) highlighted the education and training during the military that help veterans qualify for civilian opportunities to contribute positively to the private sector. Veterans typically proved their abilities to learn and apply new knowledge in changing circumstances (Thomas &

Taylor, 2016). Newly hired employees require training to ensure that the individual acquires the knowledge needed to maintain a continuum in leadership, such as familiarity with the firm's culture, and vision, and the grooming required to be effective in their positions (Horner & Valenti, 2012).

Military veterans often have experiences in different countries that leads to sensitivity to culturally diverse people and settings (Thomas & Taylor, 2016). The nature of the collaborative and leadership-oriented structure of the armed forces enhances the abilities of military personnel to work in teams and demonstrate accountability in diverse workplace settings (Routon, 2014). Military veterans may offer small business owners skills and abilities developed in the context of the necessary cultural competence, mental agility, ethical climate, and physical requirements necessary to fulfill a military mission, which can transfer to the mission of the business (Toner, 2015).

Bahadori et al. (2015) explained how the theoretical and practical training and skill development of armed forces personnel (both initially and in-service) affects their jobs, incomes, and the knowledge they take with them when they leave military service. That specialized training and education typically pertain to a service person's mission and job requirements in the military, such as the mission and job requirements of working in missile systems (Bahadori et al., 2015). The specialized education and training, available to military personnel that veterans take with them when they exit the armed forces, make them especially useful in technologically-intensive industries, such as in information technology, engineering and manufacturing, and security and intelligence fields (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014).

Military veterans with suitable education and training may help enhance small business growth and prolong business survival through the successful applications of their particular experiences to fill the needs of the companies and industries to which they contribute (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014). Hartal et al. (2015) claimed that, despite the erratic nature of the working life of military personnel, veterans can leverage their vocational assets gained through the military to equal or exceed the occupational potential of nonveterans. Adler et al. (2015) studied the skills and abilities of active duty, compared to workers in the civilian workforce, and noted that many military personnel outperform other members of the civilian workforce, based on physical, cognitive, and intellectual capabilities, strengthened through military experiences that can apply to the private sector.

In addition to some of the physical, intellectual, and practical on-the-job training and education military personnel receive while on active duty, a growing number of service members seize opportunities to attend college (Blosnich et al., 2015). College attendance, concurrently while on active duty, occurs through either in face-to-face settings or online formats, as service men and women access tuition assistance programs during active service to complete undergraduate studies or pursue graduate degrees (Hall et al., 2014). Almost a half a million military post-911 Gulf War veterans utilized their educational benefits while a growing number of military men and women enroll in post secondary educational programs while on active duty (Blosnich et al., 2015).

Spiro et al. (2016) brought attention to some of the differences that existed in training and hiring practices following each war in American history. For example, Spiro

et al. described veterans of World War II as relatively more proactively and fully integrated into the labor force and civic landscape of the country when they returned from war, because the training and rehiring of World War II veterans was especially generous. Veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars did not experience the same benefits, which Spiro et al. attributed to significant differences in the political and public sentiments associated with those wars. Despite the range of ages, experiences, and benefits that might contribute to specialized knowledge in particular industries or areas of expertise, veterans tend to be committed and loyal employees (Adler et al., 2015).

### **Small Business Employment of Veterans**

Involvement in small businesses represents meaningful satisfying employment experiences for veterans who engage with those businesses, often in professional, scientific, technical, and information systems industries (Chamberland, 2015). Recruiting and retaining skilled workers are necessary but often difficult tasks for small business owners operating in specialized industries in the United States (Abraham, 2015). Finding qualified military veterans may present challenges for some business owners across the United States who lack strategies for addressing the problem surrounding the shortage of qualified leaders or who may overlook the potential in veteran applicants. Gray (2014) revealed the solution for retaining the skills and expertise of qualified military veterans within an organization is the early identification and grooming of talented employees to eliminate the cost of external hire.

Small business owners routinely seek optimal human resources who help fulfill needs they have in their businesses but operate with limited time and financial resources

for their recruiting efforts (Ghee, Ibrahim, & Abdul-Halim, 2015). To maximize returns for their human resource investments, small business owners who are conscious of overhead costs may be particularly selective in their hiring processes (Babu, Sathyanarayana, Ketharam, Kar, & Detels, 2015). Military veterans represent a pool of skilled workers who can help small business owners achieve their organizational goals (Lucke & Furtner, 2015). The study of small business owners who hire military veterans reveals overall satisfaction with the hiring choices and acceptable expected organizational productivity stemming from those hiring choices (Hall et al., 2014).

Companies led by veterans may also hire other veterans, based on commonalities, a sense of belonging, and a shared work ethic (Harrell & Berglass, 2012). Delbourg-Delphis (2014) studied the statistical data available through the Department of Labor that indicated the helpfulness of military veterans in the hiring process of other military veterans. Day et al. (2014) stated that the strength of future leaders and the effectiveness of employees depends on the skills and training received internally and trusting relationships creating transparency. Military veterans may forge trusting relationships with each other nurtured by transparency and a mutual desire to learn and improve upon skills and abilities.

Approximately 15% of veterans from the military access self-employment options, including starting small businesses (Bressler et al., 2013). The American government also supports the formation of small businesses by military veterans through incentives and small business support offered in association with the Small Business Administration (Chamberland, 2015). Military veterans interested in pursuing small

business ownership may receive assistance completing business plans and access to a small business mentor to help them learn about funding, business opportunities for veterans, and small business planning (SBA, 2016).

Sharing of knowledge acquired from small business owners within organizations occurs through mentoring, training programs, and networking to improve the efficiency of the organization and promote a continuum in organizational success (Cunningham, Seaman, & McGuire, 2016). The knowledge new hires bring to companies is a part of the important strategies used by small business owners to facilitate P-J and P-O fit to foster competitive advantages (Donate & Sánchez de Pablo, 2015). Military veterans may represent knowledge capital that could promote innovation and a higher level of business performance. Balsmeier, Buchwald, and Zimmermann, (2013) stated there is a greater demand for recruiting military veterans based on their impeccable reputation in boosting performance, experience, and ingenuity in mitigating business risks.

External sources of leadership and human capital may bring value, innovation, and experience to an organization to improve performance measures typically overlooked by internal personnel (Sung & Choi, 2014). Recruited employees represent a source of potentially innovative human capital that might interject new ideas and skills that could improve the company's performance and profitability (McGuirk, Lenihan, Hart, 2015). Another reason for hiring new employees, according to Balsmeier et al. (2013), is a relatively lack of leniency in replacing underperforming internal personnel who do not exhibit a vested interest in the company's values and goals. Rachpradit, Tang, and Khang (2012) reported that new leaders recruited externally may be impartial and fearless in



challenging the ability of other employees to ensure consistency in productivity and financial stability. Leaders within an organization may prefer to hire military veterans because of their fit with a brand or idea, industry or market (Flatt et al., 2013).

P-O fit theory provides a pathway for optimal recruitment and employment decisions, leadership development, and the retention of intellectual capital to ensure that small business maintain a competitive edge. The retention of talent, according to Singh and Sharma (2015), is one of the primary metrics surrounding the preservation of human capital that improves business performance in a cost-efficient manner. Small business owners can promote the internal development of human capital comprised of employees, such as veterans, with the knowledge and skill-set to overcome the challenges of daily business operations to prevent disruptions and instability during workplace growth and change (Azmi, Desai, & Jayakrishnan, 2014). The implementation of P-O fit frameworks and training regimens might promote stability to overcome a myriad of challenges that typically stem from organizational change, including a transition among leadership and the hire of new employees (Zatzick & Zatzick, 2013).

Small business owners often struggle with issues such as succession concerns, overtime, employee morale, and diversity (Hyytinen et al., 2015). Small businesses typically succeed because of their owners' commitment, skills, knowledge, and abilities that materialize in experiences applied beneficially to promote and sustain the small business sector (Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014). Small business owners' experiences, motivations, and ideologies affect the strategies they use to sustain their businesses, including hiring practices (Jaouen & Lasch, 2015). Spiro et al. (2016) referenced the

screening hypothesis that encompasses the ideas that prospective employers use their knowledge about an applicant's veteran status in the hiring process. As Spiro discussed, a hiring agent's ideologies about veterans and political or personal views of the war and military service may influence the hiring process, leading to more or less favorable employment outcomes for veteran applicants.

Delbourg-Delphis (2014) similarly highlighted some misconceptions or prejudices that may result in employers overlooking military veterans in the hiring process. Business owners may be aware of some of the challenges veterans might face and may hesitate to hire veterans who may struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, or other temperamental, emotional, or social issues or stereotypes relatively common among combat-experienced or deployed members of the armed forces (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013). Despite the possibility of unique challenges experienced by veterans of the armed forces, these skilled workers tend to be adaptable, quick learners, and able to apply their skills in a variety of situations, including those that may involve little to no supervision (Thomas & Taylor, 2016).

**Small IT business employment of veterans.** Information technology continues to impact almost all aspects of life in a modern society, including in the economy, businesses, government, and military. The globalization of the economy, driven by a rapidly-changing knowledge-intensive business environment, rests on the fundamental transformations advanced by information technology that continues to revolutionize the business world (Mikalef & Pateli, 2017). According to Beley and Bhatarkar (2013), modern small and medium sized businesses who are not themselves directly responsible

for advances in information technology depend on IT for their competitive advantages, survival, and growth (Mikalef & Pateli, 2017).

The use of technology in the armed forces is expansive, from simulations, monitoring, equipment reduction, tracking, surveillance, operations, scheduling, energy use, and maintenance, among many other uses including cyber-intelligence (Mattern, Felker, Borum, & Bamford, 2014). Modernization in the armed forces includes an emphasis and reliance on automated systems and information technology to reduce manual tasks and the size of the required labor force. Kott (2017) discussed the military's close collaborations with the research community, especially with technological advancement, describing related efforts as both exciting and challenging with fundamental scientific endeavors aimed toward integration of extensive operationally-oriented systems. Much of the research aligns with the requirement that the implementation of new technology training must be acceptable to learners (Hathaway & Cross, 2016). Additional academic research efforts extended to the development of a broader understanding of how multi-generational networks of people and information communications influence each other while undergoing complex dynamic transformations (Kott, 2017).

This shift from manual to automated technological processes depends on knowledge and capabilities developed for handling the systems to ensure proper operation and safety of personnel (Lindahl, Bredariol, Donnal, & Leeb, 2017). The armed forces recruitment and enlistment processes include means for assessing technology-related knowledge and skills. For example, Trippe, Moriarty, Russell, Carretta, and

Beatty (2014) studied military enlistment battery tests used for personnel selections, job classifications, psychometrics, and psychology assessments, and developed recommendations for definition and measures of information technology and computer literacies. According to Trippe et al., initial assessments of technology-related knowledge and skills include tests as well as final school grades in technical training courses. In-house training and development programs can supplement high levels of competency for new employees (Rachpradit et al., 2012).

Hathaway and Cross (2016) noted that, to reduce costs in armed forces budgets, military leaders endorsed new technologies as adjuncts to traditional training elements. Khizhnaya, Kutepov, Gladkova, Gladkov, and Dvornikova (2016) highlighted the practice of enhancing the information technology component in military training and conducted a comparative analysis of educational standards to substantiate the effectiveness and relevance of information technology training. Conclusions drawn were that information technology education can continue to be a valuable part of military training for many cadets at the level of the initial training. Hathaway and Cross similarly studied the mandatory technology education of military members, military technology learners, and the acceptance of new technology by military learners, based on the technology acceptance model. Conclusions drawn by Hathaway and Cross were that military learners stay current with evolving technologies and that trainers and educational developers can continue to adapt technology for programs that can transfer to other industries in the civilian workforce and associated business training arenas.

## **Recruitment and Selection Strategies**

Personnel selections are critical human resource decisions (Law, Bourdage, & O'Neill, 2016). Bäckström and Björklund (2017) described recruitment and hiring of employees as no trivial task for small business owners, who must filter out the information they deem relevant to various jobs and judge candidates with the purpose of making well-founded human resource decisions. The multicriteria nature involving both qualitative and quantitative information that employers consider during their hiring processes makes employee selections potentially complex events (Alguliyev, Aliguliyev, & Mahmudova, 2015). Small business owners who are working toward achieving their organizational goals know that their successes and failures may stem from the people they employ (Benmelech & Frydman, 2014).

Morgeson, Spitzmuller, Garza, and Campion (2016) warned against carelessness with human resource judgements. There is a significant financial risk associated with recruiting and selecting candidates who may abruptly resign before contributing to the growth of the organization (Sung & Choi, 2014). Small business owner practices that limit decision-makers in the selection and grooming of a potential applicant may led to selection bias, the practice of nepotism, and deterioration in corporate morale (Gutiérrez-Broncano et al., 2017). Financial costs of mistakes in hiring decisions could be more than an employee's yearly pay, which is a cost that increases as the complexity of jobs rise (Law et al., 2016). Enslin and Schulz (2015) reported that the annual cost of replacing an employee may be as high as 250% of their annual salary.

Recognizing and routinely identifying the best-fit candidates for opportunities adds value to the organization and eliminates the gap in leadership replacement (Gutiérrez-Broncano et al., 2017). Hiring processes ideally involve reliable valid information about multiple alternatives. Personnel recruitment and selection requires the capable collection, evaluation, and comparisons of distinct kinds of job-relevant and personal judgment criteria with the clarity to make optimal decisions about alternatives and options (Alguliyev et al., 2015). Boon and Biron (2016) divided employee selection into prescriptive and descriptive approaches. The prescriptive approach is what a hiring agent should do to find, recruit, and hire the best candidate, based on criteria-related valuation decisions, while the descriptive approach is what actually happens in employee selection processes (Boon & Biron, 2016).

Alguliyev et al. (2015) similarly characterized the hiring process as involving a finite set of decision-related alternatives, each with their own multiple and often conflicting benefits and potential drawbacks. Bäckström and Björklund (2017) described personnel recruitment and selection processes that should ideally include systematic and analytically methodical decision-making steps. According to Bäckström and Björklund, those steps involve needs and job analyses, the selection and evaluation of human resource instruments, information gathering tools, and ways to evaluate the process itself.

Personnel recruitment and selection involves the goal of maximizing benefits and minimizing costs of new employees (Alguliyev et al., 2015). The hiring process typically involves evaluations of applicants who offer different qualities relevant to the job (Bäckström & Björklund, 2017). The objectives of personnel selection include increasing

the probability that hiring the most optimal candidates will lead to the organizational incorporation of individuals with the skills to perform well for the company in ways needed for business successes (Law et al., 2016). At the same time, the hiring agent seeks to decrease the probability that they will hire undesirable prospects, which Law et al. (2016) described as low job fits with organizations and jobs.

A large body of published human resource research appears to pertain to employers' preferences and decision-making paradigms that can enhance employee retention and reduce employee turnover. There has been over a century of human resource and personnel selection, with a primary focus on psychological, personality, and skills testing that recruiters rely upon in conjunction with interviews that shape their holistic judgments about candidates (Ryan & Ployhart, 2014). Bäckström and Alguliyev et al. (2015) explained how the conventional tools and techniques for hiring new employees, include application forms, interviews, employment tests, and background checks; the authors called classical criteria the information about a candidate's age and experiences. Common methods used by business leaders and human resources staff in the process of filling organizational needs include interviews in conjunction with administering and evaluating tests of mental abilities, personalities, and various work skills (Law et al., 2016). Bäckström and Björklund (2017) studied how human resource support tools, when properly used, can lead to better employment decisions, as employers use those various tools to help them select the best employees from the applicants or candidates that may be more, less, or equally competent.

Industrial and organizational psychologists recommend systematic hiring process, although there is little information about the effects of various decision-making tools on outcomes associated with selected candidates and businesses (Bäckström & Björklund, 2017). The evaluation of candidates for a position in a company, based on the various recruitment and employment tools and techniques available to employers, is a potentially complex process involving multiple factors evaluated simultaneously to make critical decisions (Alguliyev et al., 2015). Bäckström and Björklund (2017) concluded that the selection quality of candidates should increase with each tool that recruiters use in their intended ways. Similarly, Alguliyev et al. (2015) explored the uses of new technology-based tools recommended to employers for evaluating personnel characteristics related to work behaviors, job performance, and retention. Relatively newer human resource practices include computer and internet testing, multimedia simulations, telephone and video interviewing, and computer programs that help hiring agents test or evaluate multiple applicants simultaneously, thereby reducing time and money investments in hiring decisions (Alguliyev et al., 2015).

The evaluative process of candidates and a company's hiring practices are important parts of human resource management (Morgeson et al., 2016). Alguliyev et al. (2015) discussed the subjectivity of the judgments employers make in hiring new employees, which can lead to questionable or suboptimal decisions. Systematic approaches to employee selections that include instrumental processes following structured methods may be preferable to more unstructured and subjective judgmental decisions (Bäckström & Björklund, 2017). Alguliyev et al. (2015) noted several



drawbacks of conventional hiring techniques, including changing laws, among other workplace and societal changes that influenced personnel evaluations and recruiting efforts.

Alguliyev et al. (2015) discussed the need to compare and rank objects when choosing among alternatives and that employers should make decisions based on data about known criteria, in a systematic fashion. Bäckström and Björklund (2017) questioned the extent to which increasing systematicity (the systematic use of recruitment methods and prepared tools in the employee selection process) could help recruiters make better employee selection decisions. Planned and coordinated use of recruitment methods and prepared tools corresponded with employers' motivations to invest more time and efforts into the recruitment and hiring process leading to the selection of more qualified candidates (Bäckström & Björklund, 2017).

The matching process of employees with employers is two-sided, with employee candidates self-selecting themselves to job openings and employers hiring candidates by selecting them from among those individuals who apply for or are willing to take the jobs (Pager & Pedulla, 2015). An ideal employee selection process, when considered from the side of employers involves critical job and business needs analyses that results in specific criteria for judgmental purposes, based on information collected from elaborated methods, leading to transparent hiring decisions based on the combination of data (Bäckström & Björklund, 2017). Employers, as decision-makers must be able to express preferences and performance criteria at the beginning of the recruitment and hiring processes (Alguliyev et al., 2015). Job candidates differ by educational levels and work

experiences, among other characteristics, which themselves may account for a large part of the differential sorting based on preferences and performance criteria of employers (Pager & Pedulla, 2015).

Pager and Pedulla (2015) claimed that there is little existing knowledge about how job seekers, such as veterans, decide where to search for work and how job-matching processes evolve in companies such as small businesses. Most scholarly inquiries into hiring processes had a focus on the demand side of labor markets and employer preferences, tools, and activities. For example, Pager and Pedulla claimed that known patterns of labor market placements include those that pertain to supply-side search strategies and the demand-side influences on hiring selections. Scholarship revolving around job-seekers pertained largely to their behaviors, such as in interviews. The interview is one of the most frequently used ways employers assess the fit of the candidate to the job, organization, and environment (Boon & Biron, 2016). Job applicants typically engage in interviews with prospective employers to articulate their skills and the knowledge and abilities they possess that can benefit employers and businesses (Law et al., 2016). Law et al. (2016) described impression management as an important aspect of candidates' interviews, which is how candidates manipulate their images they choose to project to others.

Regarding work searches, Pager and Pedulla (2015) described the belief that the economics and sociology thoughts about work searches are that wages are the key drivers of the work-search behaviors of applicants; however, the authors also noted that there is a combination of preferences and perceived opportunities that represent important factors

in an applicant's interests in a job. Pedulla (2016) did acknowledge that, although job-seekers are typically aware of their preferences, skills, abilities, and interests, millions in the workforce are in positions that are not ideal matches with their actual skills, educational background, or work experiences. Pager and Pedulla did note that most job seekers attempt to target positions in their work searches that match their beliefs about the kinds of employers they think will hire them.

At least half of all job placements stem from initial contacts with prospective employers established through personal connections, such as friends and family members (Pager & Pedulla, 2015). There is otherwise a lack of information about the pool of jobs to which veterans apply, before finding and accepting positions, although the twenty-first century research publications included documentation of the persistent barriers facing veterans in their work searches. Barriers reported by Cotner et al. (2015) included a service-related disability and transportation issues. Stereotypes can also threaten job identification or placement, job engagement or satisfaction, career aspirations, and interpersonal receptivity (Casad & Bryant, 2016).

Pager and Pedulla (2015) discussed the branch of economic theory that encompasses the idea that job seekers who believe they will confront discrimination may tailor their work searches to minimize the possibility of encountering discriminatory prospective employers. Business level strategies that can reduce stereotyping in hiring practices include valuing diversity, broadening organizational mindsets and worldviews, utility-values and values-affirmation, and being aware of stereotypes that may threaten optimal workplace actions and decision-making (Casad & Bryant, 2016). However, when

applicants narrow search strategies and shrink their prospective job pool, they may ultimately or inadvertently reinforce segmented labor market placements (Pager & Pedulla, 2015).

Recruitment and hiring decisions by employers are crucial for improving employment rates among veterans (Bäckström & Björklund, 2017). However, business owners may be unaware of the benefits and strategies to hiring military (Arendt & Sapp, 2014). Employers receptive to hiring veterans may be more likely to notice veterans among their applicant pools. Adler et al. (2015) described batch recruitment and continuous recruitment as human resource strategies; continuous recruitment involves ongoing access to potential applicants with batch recruitment may occur less frequently. Beyond the development of the technical language of recruitment and the evolving strategies involving advances in technology, Bäckström and Björklund (2017) claimed there is a gap between how academics claim people should recruit and hire employees and what employers actually do in the process of selecting new employees for their businesses.

### **Transition**

The structure of an organization, such as a small business, includes human resources developed by practices requiring communications and a systematic process for their efforts in recruitment, retention, and human resource development. P-O fit theory may be pertinent to recruiting and selecting candidates such as military veterans for essential roles in businesses. Small business owners develop a readiness to practice the identification and development of internal talent to shape future leaders and their

followers who can help ensure organizational success. Additionally, strategically designing a system for small business owners, P-O fit considerations might be instrumental in their recruitment of talented veterans with the leadership skill-set needed to replace outgoing leaders. Effective implementation of P-J fit theoretical tenets may require a thorough assessment of the military veterans' current levels of skills and competence.

Section 2 includes the descriptions of the research method and design elements, including the research population and sampling strategy and the ethical nature of the research study. The explanations of the plans for the study include the role of the researcher, the researcher as the instrument for data collection, the means for data collection and data analysis, and the ways to address the trustworthiness of this qualitative research study. Section 3 includes the results of the implementation of the research process and the findings that stemmed from the data collection and analysis, discussed relative to the conceptual framework and the published peer-reviewed literature pertaining to the study.

## Section 2: The Project

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore recruitment strategies small IT business owners used to recruit veterans. The sample from the target population included three IT business owners located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States who developed and implemented successful strategies for recruiting veterans. Findings from this study support the development of effective recruitment mechanisms to help small businesses reach a higher level of performance. The implications for social change include a reduction of unemployment rate among veterans and an increase in their purchasing power for supporting communities.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The roles of some qualitative researchers include developing and implementing their research methods and corresponding designs, which involves collecting and analyzing the qualitative data (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Researchers' roles also include recruiting and protecting the rights of participants and presenting the findings in an unbiased manner (Roller, 2015). My key role as the researcher in this study involved choosing and justifying the method and design, which included conducting data collection through semistructured, face-to-face interviews and document review, and adhering to protocols to minimize bias and protect the right of participants.

To adhere to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, as described by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979), I used an informed consent form. Through application of the

Belmont principles, I ensured participants understand their rights, risks, and responsibilities, including their right to withdraw from the study at any time (before, during, or after data collection begins). I also safeguarded participant's identities through confidentiality procedures.

Because qualitative researchers are the instruments in data collection from semistructured interviews, their roles are to act ethically in creating meaningful conversational spaces, while minimizing sources of bias (Garbarski, Schaeffer, & Dykema, 2016). I exercised the duty to employ a high level of reflexivity while engaging in the interview process with participants to avoid biases and emotions or thoughts that could have affected the authenticity of the data collection. Researchers identify sources of biases in the different steps of their implementation of the method and design (Hargittai, 2015). Yin (2016) recommended steps in mitigating bias in case studies, including recording the interviews and conducting member checking. Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013) claimed that bracketing can help to minimize bias. I recorded interviews, performed member checking, and engaged in bracketing, thereby acknowledging and setting aside personal biases. I also identified the assumptions, limitations, delimitations, similarities, and areas of divergence between my findings and those published in the established literature.

A systematic and well-justified data collection protocol also helps to minimize bias (Ranney et al., 2015). I developed and adhered to a comprehensive approved data collection protocol that included a guide for the semistructured interviews, document review, and member checking processes (see Appendix A). The protocol included an

opportunity to ask additional probing questions based on the data that emerged throughout the data collection process, thereby aligning the protocol with what Jacob and Furgeson (2012) and Grossoehme (2014) described as the semistructured approach to a data collection protocol. The data collection protocol including the initial open-ended interview questions followed a comprehensive review of the literature including the key concepts relevant to the study.

### **Participants**

In this qualitative case study, I interviewed three small IT business owners who successfully recruited and hired military veterans. Study subjects' inclusion criteria included being a small business with at least 5 years of sustainability who employed successful strategies for recruiting and hiring veterans. A way to ensure an informed sample is to identify the eligibility and processes for recruiting and enlisting participants in qualitative research (Jessiman, 2013). Researchers recruit participants who meet specific criteria through a process called purposeful sampling, which is a common way of recruiting participants for qualitative research (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013). I used an Internet search as the primary way of identifying and accessing research subjects who met the criteria established for being a part of the population and purposeful sample.

Researchers who use the World Wide Web and the Internet for the identification of prospective research participants may be able to identify informed prospects who meet the criteria for a specific role, type of company, industry, or location (Hirsch, Thompson, & Every, 2014). I used the Internet as the means for obtaining publicly available contact



information for prospective participants who appeared to meet the eligibility criteria for the study. Because it was reasonable to expect that veteran-owned small businesses may have owners with experience recruiting and hiring veterans, I also researched the Veterans Owned Business Association, and its' publicly available business directory located at [www.veteranownedbusiness.com](http://www.veteranownedbusiness.com).

Chen, Lei, Li, Huang, and Mu (2015) discussed recruitment and the importance of establishing transparent working relationships that can benefit both study participants and researchers. Dresser (2013) also claimed that the encouragement of honesty with subjects is an important part of unbiased research. Part of the informed consent forms often addresses the conditions of the working relationship to help establish honesty and transparency (Fink, 2015). I established a working relationship by sending formal invitations to prospective participants along with the informed consent form via the email through their publicly available contact information. I also asked participants if they met the eligibility criteria and to review an informed consent form, and if they were agreeable to the terms, before recorded interviews and related document review. To ensure transparency and a good start to the working relationship, I invited questions, remained accessible, and communicated professionally and respectfully.

### **Research Method and Design**

The method for this study was qualitative. The design selected from a qualitative methodology was the multiple case study. The elements of the qualitative method and case study design aligned with the purpose of the study and the nature of the data required to answer the research question.

## **Research Method**

I used a qualitative research method for this study. Qualitative methods are effective means of investigating the emotions, intentions, barriers, norms and values, thoughts, cultural factors, and motivation of individuals or groups (Longfield et al., 2016; Råheim, 2016). As the focus of my study was on in-depth information from small business owners who operate a sustainable IT business while recruiting veterans, qualitative methods were appropriate for this study. Quantitative methods involve collecting and analyzing numerical and testing of hypotheses (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). This study did not include analyzing numerical data or testing hypotheses; therefore, a quantitative method was not suitable for this study. Mixed method research involves both numerical and descriptive data, combining the strengths of both the qualitative and quantitative methods (Green et al., 2015). Because my study did not include numerical data, the mixed method was unnecessary in this study.

## **Research Design**

I chose a multiple case study design to explore the successful strategies small business owners use to recruit and hire veterans for IT positions. A qualitative case study is appropriate for the exploration of business processes occurring within organizational settings, where multiple sources of data are available (Yin, 2016). The distinctiveness of a case study design is that it allows researchers to gather data acquired from interviews and reviews of documents to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, event, entity, or intervention under examination (Yin, 2016). According to Taylor & Taylor-Gregory (2015), a case study design represents a balanced exploration of a topic, based

on participant's experiences and perspectives. The objective of case study research included using data about the research problem to gain an enhanced understanding of the answer to the research question, based on the participants' experiences and viewpoints (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). For this reason, a case study was the most appropriate design for this research about the experiences and viewpoints of small business owners. The narrative design involves studying stories of participants (Joyce, 2015). Because my research was not about participants' life stories, a narrative design did not fit with the purpose of my study. Ethnographic researchers study subjects in their cultural settings, often through extensive immersion (Ranfagni et al., 2014). Immersion in participants' cultural environments and study of their cultures were not ideas central to my research; therefore, ethnography was not the best choice for my design. Phenomenology involves an exploration of the meanings of lived experiences (Willis, Sullivan-Bolyai, Knafl, & Cohen, 2016). My study did not involve exploring the meanings of participants' lived experiences or the essence of the meanings of those experiences.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population was small IT business owners in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States.. The participants were three small business owners with a business sustainability of at least 5 years who successfully recruited and hired military veterans. A multiple case study design frequently includes a purposeful sample, appropriate if participants share the same level of experiences and backgrounds (Yin, 2016). I used purposeful sampling to select participants because, according to Palinkas et al. (2015),

purposeful sampling allows researchers conducting a qualitative study to gather data from informed participants.

Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) questioned an appropriate sample size in qualitative research, with conclusions drawn that data saturation may be even more relevant to sampling than the sample size. Data saturation is the point at which no new data emerge from repeated or ongoing data collection efforts (Varpio, Ajjawi, Monrouxe, O'Brien, & Rees, 2017). Malterud, Siersma and Guassora (2016) described data saturation as the prevailing determination of sample size in qualitative studies. Fusch and Ness (2015) similarly stressed the significance of data saturation in qualitative data collection. The likelihood of data saturation increases with the amount of relevant information the sample can share; therefore, data saturation occurs more often with a smaller informed sample than with a larger group of less informed participants (Malterud et al., 2016). Accordingly, I collected data from three informed participants until data saturation. Because data saturation depended on the quality of data and the information the three participants could share, I prepared to add more participants to the study or continue to collect data until the point at which no new data appears to emerge from sampling and data collection efforts.

### **Ethical Research**

Ferreira et al. (2015) emphasized the ethical aspects of qualitative research to protect human participants and ensure the process is acceptable to peers and the broader research community. Several steps in this research reflected the ethical nature of the research. Data collection did not start until after Walden University Institutional Review

Board (IRB) approval. The Walden IRB approval number is 05-09-18-0566170 and the approval expiration date is May 8, 2019. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time, before, during, or after data collection. There were no incentives for participation. I stored data securely, which will remain in storage for 5 years to protect confidentiality of participants and refrained from the use of the participants' names or their businesses in the work products and published documents. I replaced the names of participants and their companies with pseudonyms.

Ethical research studies typically involve voluntary participation of subjects (Dekking, van der Graaf, & van Delden, 2014) and the use of informed consent procedures (Check, Wolf, Dame, & Beskow, 2014). I collected data from volunteers for the study who read, accepted, and signed an informed consent form, located in Appendix B. The informed consent form helps demonstrate that subjects are aware of the responsibilities, risks, and rights of their participation (Brédart, Marrel, Abetz-Webb, Lasch, & Acquadro, 2014). The informed consent form for this study included the nature of the research, the requirements of participants, their rights, and an explanation that there were no more risks to them than they might encounter during their business and daily living.

Participants were not subject to any penalties for not choosing to participate in this study and there were no consequences for withdrawing from the study. To protect human research subjects from harm and to preserve the nature of a voluntary study, researchers allow participants to withdraw from research studies (Largent & Lynch, 2017). The informed consent form conveyed that participants had the right to withdraw

from the study at any time (before, during, or after data collection) through email or telephone calls. Melham et al. (2014) noted that subjects should not feel pressured and should have the right to withdraw at any time. The option to withdraw without penalties or consequences to participants ensures that participation is voluntary in nature (Dedking et al., 2014).

Researchers commonly present terms in the informed consent form that participation is voluntary and without tangible incentives (Fink, 2015). Chen, Lei, Li, Huang, and Mu (2015) discussed incentives for recruitment and participation, which is a debatable practice. Dresser (2013) described how incentives could introduce deception or bias. Therefore, as explained in the informed consent form, there were no incentives for participation in this study.

Protecting participants' identities could shield them from stress, embarrassments, retaliations, or other risks (Beskow, Check, & Ammarell, 2014; Fiske & Hauser, 2014). Therefore, I adhered to confidentiality procedures as a part of the ethical framework for this study. I used pseudonyms for the participants (P1, P2, and P3) and did not disclose the identities of the participants to other parties. Wallace and Sheldon (2015) who advocated for the protection of the identities of human research participants. Gyure et al. (2014) advised that research data remain securely stored, to protect participants' identities and preserve the integrity of data. Data analysis occurred on my password-protected personal computer located in my home. I am the only person who knows the password to access the computer files. Following the analysis of data on my password-protected home computer, I downloaded the data to an external hard drive, then will permanently

delete all electronic data files from my home computer. I will maintain the external hard drive with data in a locked cabinet in my home office. I am the only person with a key to the locked cabinet in my home office. After 5 years of secured storage of the external hard drive containing data, I will destroy the data through smashing the external hard drive and will discard the broken pieces in the trash.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The data collection for this qualitative multiple case study entailed interviewing three small IT business owners in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States, reviewing strategies used to successfully recruit military veterans. I was the primary data collection instrument for the semistructured face-to-face interviews and document analysis. The data collection involved open-ended face-to-face interview questions and review of documents related to the study to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. I requested written permission from all three participants to audio-record the interview, which was confidential and later encoded. I conducted member checking by email with each participant after the completion of the interview process to ensure that my interpretations of responses received from the participants were accurate.

I was the instrument for data collection using semistructured interviews and document review from multiple sources. Qualitative researchers commonly act as the instruments for data collection (Cope, 2014). Acting as an instrument involves interviewing study participants and describing the findings from the review of documents, thereby capturing data directly (Yin, 2016). Yeasmin and Rahman (2014)

described how case study researchers collect data from multiple data sources, as the instrument for data collection.

I conducted interviews by adhering to a protocol that reflected the semistructured nature of the face-to-face interviews (see Appendix A). Garbarski et al. (2016) described interviews as a way to collect rich and relevant data. A semistructured interview and document review protocol limits a researcher's opportunity to wander off-topic or lose focus yet allows researchers to clarify data through additional follow-up or probing questions (Yin, 2016). The collection of quality, honest, and thorough data may result from face-to-face interviews using an interview protocol (Ranney et al., Moylan, Derr, & Lindhorst, 2015). I collected data from face-to-face interviews, using an interview protocol for both interview and document review. Booth (2016) and Ranney et al. (2015) described the systematic protocol-driven strategy as helpful in disciplined research processes.

The protocol for interviews included a set of initial open-ended interview questions for a general framework for the semistructured interviews. Open-ended questions facilitate the collection of relevant data that would not stem from closed-ended questions (Rohrer, Brümmer, Schmukle, Goebel, & Wagner, 2017). Grossoehme (2014) similarly described how open-ended interview questions on an interview protocol used in semistructured interviews help researchers achieve data saturation beneficial for the research outcomes.

Methodological triangulation and member checking are means for mitigating bias and enhancing the trustworthiness of qualitative research studies (Hargittai, 2015).



Methodological triangulation in this study involved data collection from semistructured interviews and document reviews generating data collected from multiple sources.

According to Harvey (2015) and Zitomer and Goodwin (2014), member checking can enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Moniz et al. (2016) and Hussein, Jakubec, and Osuji (2015) recommended researchers invite participants to read initial interpretations of data, offer corrections, clarify or explain findings, and add new insights about the findings. I followed the steps recommended by Moniz et al. and Hussein et al. in the member checking process.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Techniques to collect data included following a protocol for semistructured interviews and the review of related documents. Yin (2016) discussed the multiple sources of data possible in case studies, which included document review and interviews. Although each type of data collection has advantages and disadvantages, semistructured interviews and document review are two of the common data collection techniques used by qualitative case study researchers (Chen, Hailey, Wang, & Yu, 2014; Cleland, 2017; Green et al., 2015). I field tested the interview questions and conducted member checking to enhance the data collection efforts.

A semistructured face-to-face interview was the data collection technique I used for my qualitative case study. Each interview lasted for 25-30 minutes. I took notes and audio recorded the interview sessions to ensure the accuracy of data. The audio recording also served as a checkpoint for the duration of each interview. Also, I restated the research and interview questions in an open-ended fashion before the commencement of

each interview and during the interview to avoid any deviation from the questions and to enhance the richness of the data received. The information gathered from the businesses websites added explanations to validate or refute the data obtained directly from participants. At the close of each interview, I thanked participants for their time in providing the data collection for my study and immediately terminated the recording.

The benefit of a semistructured face-to-face interview is the capability for a researcher to observe participants' facial expressions, body language, and vocal tone to determine the clearness of questions asked and having the ability to rephrase questions to avoid ambiguity (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Asking open-ended questions in semistructured interviews facilitates opportunities to gain insights from the data collection process (Grossoehme, 2014). A challenge is that interviews (especially when recorded and transcribed, as planned in this study) may lead to voluminous data, leading to challenging analysis processes (Cleland, 2017; Garbarski et al., 2016). A way to overcome the challenge of voluminous data was the use of computer software in the analysis process. I used QSR NVivo Version 11 software to help manage data collected from interviews and document review.

Reviewing documents for data enables a process of triangulation, described by Cleland (2017), Yin (2016), and Yeasmin (2014) as case study research steps.

Disadvantages of document reviews may be that documents are few or inadequate, not up-to-date, biased in some manner, inaccessible, or unavailable (Booth, 2016).

Describing the documents reviewed in detail and outwardly recognizing potential limitations helps the researcher judge the evidentiary value of the documents and allows

readers to consider their potential effects on the outcomes of the study (Forsythe et al., 2016).

Varpio et al. (2017) recommended triangulation, data saturation, and member checking to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative case study research. Accordingly, I included data triangulation processes, data saturation recognition, and member checking processes in the steps of my case study. I conducted member checking by reviewing data transcripts and providing an account to participants to solicit their feedback on my initial interpretations formed during the early stages of data analysis. Participants each received an email request to review and approve my initial analysis of their responses to ensure accuracy and to improve the trustworthiness of the study.

### **Data Organization Technique**

The data organization for this study began with the recording of interview data and the collection of documents for review. Grossoehme (2014) advised planned back-up devices and multiple power sources for recording to preserve quality data, which Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) also suggested in the careful planning of ways to organize and preserve interview data. I planned to record interviews on a fully charged smart phone, but also had a digital recorder and back-up power sources during the interviews. The accuracy of the interview data stems from the adequacy and preservation of recordings (Redlich-Amirav & Higginbottom, 2014). Therefore, I downloaded electronic audio files to my personal computer for transcription and preservation. Transcription of handwritten notes and verbatim textual documentation of audio recordings occurred on electronic files of my personal computer located in my home office. I transcribed interview data and

document review notes into Microsoft word files but used NVivo 11 data analysis software to organize textual data for analysis. NVivo 11 was software I used in my qualitative research study to organize, code, and sort related data to aid with data organization and subsequent analysis. Zamawe (2015) claimed that NVivo 11 has the capacity to help researchers organize data in ways that can help them identify themes based on the analysis of imported data content. This process of data organization facilitated an in-depth understanding of the data.

The data organization labeling technique that I employed consisted of using alphanumeric pseudonyms to identify each participant (P1, P2, and P3) to maintain the confidentiality of each participant's identity in the electronic files. I stored all raw data containing any participant pseudonyms as labels in a selected encrypted folder labeled Walden Research Study Participant (WRSP), on my personal computer at home, which contained participants' consent forms and a copy of their consents to participate in the study. The computer remains in my home and I am the only person with knowledge of the password to access the computer. Following final data analysis, I downloaded all the files to an external hard drive, delete the electronic files from my computer, and will store the external hard drive in a locked cabinet in my home office for 5 years. Protecting and storing data confidentially and in a timely manner is one of the ways to adhere to established research protocols and ethical expectations (Yin, 2016).

### **Data Analysis**

Optimal data analysis steps lead to accurate, verifiable thematic findings from the interpretations of qualitative data in a stepwise process (Stuckey, 2015). Goals of

qualitative data analysis include generating conceptual and interpretative conclusions from the data collected (Booth, 2016). Elo et al. (2014) described a content analysis process for qualitative data analysis. I used the content analysis process described by Elo et al. for the data analysis in this study. I focused on identifying accurate, verifiable themes and reported those thematic findings based on the interpretations of the content analysis, discussed considering the conceptual framework.

The data analysis for this study began with the reading and studying transcriptions of handwritten notes and verbatim textual documentation of audio recording to obtain an in-depth understanding of the case under investigation. I analyzed the data collected from the interviews that related to the overarching research question. I conducted data triangulation on responses collected during the interview process and my review of business documents.

Houghton et al. (2017) claimed that using NVivo can enhance comprehension, synthesis, rigor, and transparency of qualitative data analysis. I used NVivo 11 to assist in the management of data and the development of themes obtained from the face-to-face interviews and analysis of company documents, which I subsequently compared to the previously published research. NVivo software provides analysis, coding, storage, and data organization, leading to an in-depth understanding of the data (Bufoni, de Sousa Ferreira, & Oliveira, 2017). NVivo 11 was the software program I used in my qualitative research study to organize, code, and sort related data to aid with analysis. I used NVivo 11 data analysis software to identify data patterns within responses received from participants and documents. Zamawe (2015) claimed that NVivo 11 has the capacity to

help analysts identify themes that emerge from the imported data content. Therefore, I used NVivo 11 to assist with the identification of commonalities within data that I could not isolate easily from the transcripts manually.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The reliability and validity of research study findings require the use of an appropriate research method and data collection tool to ensure consistency and accuracy in data collection, analysis, interpretation, and conclusion drawn from findings (Leung, 2015). Determining the reliability and validity in qualitative research requires a degree of precision and consistency in questions asked during each interview to enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Kornbluh (2015) and Elo et al. (2015) suggested trustworthiness is comprised of credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability, used in qualitative research.

### **Credibility**

Credibility is synonymous to internal validity and is relevant in establishing a level of trustworthiness and accuracy of a study phenomenon in qualitative research (Morse, 2015). Credibility also involves observation, member checking, and triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I conducted member checking to enhance the accuracy of data recorded. Participants each received my analysis of their responses for review and feedback to determine the accuracy of data. Noble and Smith (2015) contended harmonization of the researcher's interpretation with that of the participant establishes credibility. I conducted a multiple qualitative case study, therefore; methodological

triangulation was the most suitable approach to integrate multiple sources of data within the interview protocol.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability pertains to the external scrutiny of a study (Anney, 2014). I stored data, demonstrate adherence to established research methods, and described the steps and member checking processes in this research. I included exemplary quotations from participants in the report of findings. Sutton and Austin (2015) called confirmability the demonstration that the reported research findings stem from the data and not researcher bias or interests. I demonstrated confirmability by transcribing audio recordings, so data were verbatim and available for audit or review. The triangulation of data and use of computer software adds to confirmability because it helps analysts identify errors, bias, and inconsistencies within the data (Brennan & Cotgrave, 2014). The use of QSR NVivo 11 software also helps preserve data, to augment confirmability (Cleland, 2017).

### **Dependability**

Anney (2014), Elo et al. (2015), and Sutton and Austin (2015) described dependability as the reporting of research findings that are consistent and repeatable, similar to reliability. Repeat studies were beyond the scope of this study. Data triangulation enhances dependability because reliance on multiple data sources allows one to corroborate evidence, leading to findings that are more likely consistent and repeatable (Noble & Smith, 2015). Data triangulation stemmed from analyzing data from multiple sources separately and together. I conducted member checking by asking participants to corroborate, refute, or clarify initial interpretations of data. Member

checking adds objectivity and ensures applicable interpretations of data so that the interpretations reflect what participants intended and are not reflections of researcher bias (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Noble & Smith, 2015). Member checking enhances trustworthiness, reliability, and dependability because participants can help the researcher report findings that are consistent with participants' actual experiences (Ranney et al., 2015).

### **Transferability**

Qualitative research transferability is similar to quantitative generalizability (Morse, 2015). Case study findings may not appropriately transfer to other types of cases, settings, or conditions (Cleland, 2017). Readers must make prudent judgments about the appropriateness of the transferability of the results of qualitative studies (Anney, 2014). Reported details about the research context help readers make appropriate judgments of transferability (Noble & Smith, 2015). I meticulously adhered to the data collection protocol and analysis techniques for the research design. I included details about the context of the study and the boundaries of the case, identifying the limitations, assumptions, and delimitations. Reflecting on and identifying the strengths, limitations, and choices made in qualitative research help other researchers consider the details of the case when contemplating the potential transferability of the results of the study (O'Cathain et al., 2015).

### **Transition and Summary**

This research, based on a qualitative methodology and case study design, was an exploration of the strategies small IT business owners use to recruit military veterans.



The participants were small business owners in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States who participated in interviews and provided related documents for review. This section included the explanation of ethics, including confidentiality, consent forms, and participants' right of withdrawal as parts of the IRB regulations discussed. Analysis of the data collected involved coding and the identification of themes through a content analysis process. Section 2 included the steps planned to heighten the trustworthiness of this qualitative research study. Section 3 includes the presentation of findings, applications of business practice, and social change impact. Section 3 concludes with the recommendation of facts for future studies, and my reflection of successful strategies small IT business owners use to recruit military veterans.

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

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore recruitment strategies small IT business owners use to recruit veterans. The sample from the target population included three IT business owners located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States who developed and implemented successful strategies for recruiting veterans. Section 3 includes the results from the sampling process and the steps applied for data analysis that culminated in the thematic findings derived from this study. The presentation of thematic findings includes the juxtaposition of those thematic findings to previous research results and a discussion of the findings in light of the conceptual framework for this study. This section continues with the identification of how these study findings apply to professional practice and positive social change. The applications to professional practice also relate to the recommendations for leadership. The discussion of the results of the study includes the additional explanations of the limitations of the research, along with suggestions for future research. Conclusions to the section follow my personal reflections on the findings and the research process.

#### **Presentation of the Findings**

The central research question for this study was as follows: What strategies do small IT business owners use to recruit veterans? I applied a computer-aided qualitative data analysis process to identify the major themes that emerged from the data, as detailed in this section. Three participants volunteered data for the study after completing the informed consent process. The data collection occurred through interviewing participants and collecting documents for review. I downloaded computerized audio files of the

recordings of the interviews to my personal computer and then transcribed the recorded audio data into textual data, representing the verbatim accounts of the interview answers. The transcription process occurred by typing into a word processing file; then NVivo served as an additional computer-aided qualitative data analysis tool.

I recruited three participants for this who successfully recruited and hired military veterans. Study subjects owned and operated their small businesses for more than 5 years while using successful strategies for recruiting and hiring veterans. The participants in this study owned and operated companies that represented leading solutions integrators in the fields of systems engineering, cybersecurity, and IT services and solutions in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The companies specialized in the support of clients through fulfilling IT and telecommunications needs. Based in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States with regional offices, their missions were a blend of innovative and practical IT solutions to help companies improve productivities and efficiencies while decreasing costs.

Documents reviewed for triangulation included human resource plans, job description statements, records indicating employee recruitment strategies and retention histories, and employee handbooks, including roles and responsibilities. Documents in support of the thematic findings included descriptions of project planning needs, certification requirements for various employees, and meeting agendas and reports. Other documents reviewed pertaining to the three major thematic finding included proposals of human resource development plans, proposals for management and review of human resource needs, and plans for employee preparation, coaching, training, and certification

planning. Additional documents examined included core competency outlines, job posts and descriptions, organizational development and workforce planning memorandums, and training, education, and human resource support manuals. The documents reviewed reflected the goals to successfully augment their staff with high quality, well trained, and optimally motivated talent, with claims of company objectives to employ innovative personnel through meaningful recruitment, hiring, and training processes.

Member checking followed the initial interpretation of data. Member checking led to the conclusions that my initial interpretations of data that culminated in three major themes adequately and accurately reflected strategies the subjects used for recruiting and hiring veterans. The subsections that follow contain the thematic findings that emerged from the data analysis process. The discussions of the three major thematic findings occur in light of conceptual framework for this study and previously-published research. These discussions revolve around the explanations about how the major themes relate to prior literature and the conceptual framework of the study. Elaboration on the relationships of the major themes include how my study results are consistent or inconsistent with the prior peer-reviewed study findings published by previous authors and the conceptual framework established for this qualitative case study. These discussions are in subsections organized in the order of the major themes that emerged from the data.

### **Theme 1: Understanding Military Veterans**

The first theme pertained to the idea of a developed understanding of veterans. Documentation offered in support of this theme included a review of various displays and

records of past military achievements and experiences that reflected experience with military personnel and success in working with specific military entities. Additional documents reviewed reflected the goals to successfully augment their staff with high quality, well trained, and optimally motivated talent, with claims of company objectives to employ innovative personnel through meaningful recruitment, hiring, and training processes. Table 1 includes the terms from the data that led to this first major thematic finding. There were responses pertaining to the concept of understanding. There were six allusions to the idea of recognizing veterans. Two avenues of discussion related ideas of a belief in veterans and being sensitive to veterans.

Table 1

*Understanding Military Veterans*

Major theme	Terms	Frequencies
Theme 1:	Understand(ing)	7
Understanding military veterans	Recognize	6
	Believe/Beliefs	2
	Sensitive	2

About understanding, recognition, and being sensitive, P1 said, “As a former military veteran, I understand that military veterans possess certain characteristics that work well within our culture.” About recognizing, P1 said, “We recognize that by recruiting and hiring military veterans we are building lasting relationships and creating development opportunities.” P2 explained, “Most of our talent pool is derived from the

military ...we are sensitive to the stressors.” P2 added, “We recognize that there is often a disparity of hiring and recruitment practices of military veterans who transition from the military into the civilian workforce.” P3 claimed, “We understand veterans.” P3 added, “We recognize that military veterans represent model employees. They are well trained and understand the Chain of Command... they contain what I call the X factor - see a problem [and] fix a problem.” The participants’ responses collectively indicated that understanding, recognizing, and being sensitive to military veterans was essential to the process of successfully recruiting, hiring, and retaining veterans for their small business needs.

Regarding beliefs and being sensitive, P1 said, "It is my belief that targeting military veterans and treating them well, highlighting their strengths not only benefits the military personnel but it also improves our bottom line.” P1 added, “We are culturally sensitive to a military veteran’s needs; for example, if a military veteran has PTSD, we pair the military veteran with a team member which in turn promotes a team building environment.” P2 claimed, “Most of our talent pool is derived from the military and we recognize job security is huge. We have National Guard employees and are sensitive to the stressors of not getting paid while a National Guard member is deployed.” About hiring veterans, P3 said, “We believe if you recruit and hire good people and treat them well, they will be loyal.”

Regarding P-O fit ideologies, congruence between individuals and organizational values and goals may difficult to form based on one’s understanding (Boon & Biron, 2016). Zhang et al. (2017) claimed that the ways of determining a match between

candidates' and employers' individual preferences and needs with the overall organizational structures and systems may be elusive, but that fit must stem from individual and organizational characteristics. These tenets of P-O fit theories are consistent with the data provided by participants that led to this first theme. The three employers in this study talked about a certain understanding of veterans that enabled them to make determinations about the ideal fit of veteran candidates to their organizations. Similarly, Hall et al. (2014) claimed that job-seeking tools, such as resumes, can assist veterans, but that terminology and language should align with civilian business owners' abilities to understand them. In this study, a strength the employers communicated was their abilities to understand and appreciate veterans because they themselves understood the language, terminology, and backgrounds communicated by veteran candidates.

A related minor finding, expressed by one participant, pertained to female veterans. Teachman and Tedrow (2013) highlighted the growing numbers of women who serve at least one term in one of the branches of the armed forces, also recognized by P1. Consistent with what Hall et al. (2014) described about the need for veterans to list attributes in ways understandable to civilians, P2 claimed, "Often women military veterans do not list all of their attributes which they have successfully achieved while serving as their counterparts and therefore do not sell themselves as effectively as men." P2 added, "Most of our talent pool is derived from the military ... In addition, the recruitment of more women military veterans is at the forefront, we recognize that there is often a disparity." The ideas expressed by P2 could be a possible explanation for a

sustained unemployment rate of female post-9/11 Gulf War veterans, which according to the 2015 U.S. Census, remained higher than the female civilian rate.

Pager and Pedulla (2015) noted that job seekers typically attempt to target positions in their work searches that match their beliefs about the kinds of employers they think will hire them. In this study, all of the participating veteran small business owners did tend to target and hire military veterans. One possible conclusion from these findings is that military veterans who own small businesses may be more likely to hire veterans because of their understanding, recognition, congruent belief systems, and sensitivity to veterans. Military veterans often have experiences leading to sensitivity to diverse people and settings (Thomas & Taylor, 2016), a sentiment echoed by all of the participants in this study.

The findings pertaining to the concept of recognition are consistent with prior research results indicating the importance of recognition of veterans to a global society in general and the workplace specifically (Chamberland, 2015). With respect to the fit of candidates with companies, recognizing and routinely identifying the best-fit candidates for opportunities adds value to the organization and eliminates the gap in leadership replacement (Gutiérrez-Broncano et al., 2017). These prior claims are consistent with the ideas expressed by all three participants in this study who recognized the value of veterans to their organizations and who explained that an ideal fit could reduce additional hiring costs. Berends, Smits, Reymen, and Podoyntsyna (2016) stressed how business performance stems largely from purposeful strategies, which is an idea consistent with the first thematic finding, indicating that the small business owners in this study



recognized the value of purposeful strategies, which aligned well with their beliefs in understanding and supporting veterans.

### **Theme 2: Targeting Military Veterans**

According to small business owners who participated in this study, strategies for recruiting and hiring military veterans began with targeting, identifying, and finding veterans that are an optimal fit for the jobs they need to fill. As shown in Table 2, the ideas of targeting, discovering, finding, and identifying veterans as potential fits for their business needs emerged from the data 14 times collectively, with many examples offered of how participants targeted, discovered, identified, and found candidates. In addition, the concept of training emerged from the data in relation to targeting, because although the small business employers in this study pursued a match between education, training, certification, and skills, they were also willing to provide training and education to ensure they were current with the necessary certification processes. Documents reviewed included staffing needs descriptions, referring to recruiting and hiring employees for temporary, temporary-to-permanent, and permanent positions. Other documents included competency outlines, job posts and descriptions, development and workforce planning memorandums, and training, education, and human resource support manuals.

Table 2

*Targeting Veterans for Hire*

Major theme	Terms	Frequencies
Theme 2:	Target	6
Targeting military veterans	Identify	5
	Train/Certify	5
	Discover/Find	3

Participants emphasized planning for and targeting veterans in their recruitment and hiring efforts. For example, P1 talked about, “targeting military veterans.” P1 mentioned, “military groups... job boards and word of mouth” as ways to target military veterans as recruits into small business employment. P2 said, “Our organization utilizes search engines in our recruiting and hiring of military veterans and those who are qualified go to the top of the list ...Military Hire, Clear Job, Clearances” and also brought up, “word of mouth and referral bonuses” as means to target veterans for hire. P2 mentioned, “Our organization is involved in many social outreach programs within the community” as a means to targeting military veterans for potential employment. P3 said, “We utilize the job board, recruiters, head hunters and word of mouth... We utilize job boards such as Clear Jobs, Indeed and Monster, however the job boards are not cheap.” P3 added, “We participate in military job fairs...the cost at the Convention Center is 5K. If we receive let’s say 20 resumes, perhaps 4 or 5 are good ones.”

About targeting military veterans, participants elaborated about the fit. P1 said, “Obviously we have a budget based on specific job opportunities and we match each job

opportunity with specific qualifications of military veterans.” About ideal fit, P1 said, “targeting military veterans and treating them well ... improves our bottom line ...our human resource department continues to do a great job of identifying specific military personnel for specific positions.” P3 offered, “If an employer for example is looking for an individual who has TS/SCI poly clearance, this is a prior military veteran... We target military veterans based on the specificity of the open position.” P3 offered several examples, such as, “At the business development level, look at the officer level of military personnel - these are the relationship builders. This is someone who has moved up the ranks and can make the introductions.” P3 explained that “At the mid –level, job fairs, word of mouth, and head hunters” are helpful. P3 added, “Birds of a feather - recruitment from within... [be] honest and transparent... If we find a candidate that we like, we are aggressive at recruiting and hiring them immediately.”

According to participants, sometimes candidates already fit the job and at other times, the participants invested in additional training, as necessary and appropriate for the job. For example, P1 said, “I would have to say identifying the military role to civilian role has become more transparent with so many veterans leaving the military particularly in this area. An example P1 offered was that, “Most military veterans have clearances which are a requirement for many of our customers.” P1 added, “However, they may not have the latest certification, so we work with our client to ensure that our folks have what they need based on the start date of a position.” P2 said, “We pair the military veteran with a team member which in turn promotes a team building environment.” P3 takes steps to ensure veterans become “model employees” and “well

trained.” P3 claimed to be “successful and effective at telling employees what they are doing great as well as those who are not performing... The biggest challenge is veterans transitioning from the military in technology have experience but not certifications.” P3 added that a lack of training or certifications could be a “hard sale to the client... [and] often this organization may have to negotiate with a client a 6-month waiver, which in turn provides the military veteran a 6-month window to earn the certification.”

The findings from this study regarding targeting in conjunction with training and certifications are consistent with prior authors’ reports that veterans may offer suitable specialized education and training in fields such as information technology to enhance small business growth (Delbourg-Delphis, 2014). The participants’ descriptions aligned with what Hall et al. (2014) described as a complementary fit, when the educational development of military employees, their training and certifications for job performance, and their skills fit well with what the employers need but may not have (Hall et al., 2014). Similar to the findings discovered by Beauchesne and O’Hair (2013), participants claimed that veterans typically experience specialized vocational training, leading to unique on-the-job and educational experiences that represent leadership skills, teamwork, and core competencies that can benefit civilian businesses. Similarly, participants in this study referred to the overall concepts of sharing of knowledge, mentoring as a type of training programs, and networking to improve organizational successes, as was also detailed by Cunningham, Seaman, and McGuire (2016).

Although the participants described some training and new certifications that may be necessary for veterans they hire, their recruitment and hiring efforts and motivations

were consistent with the idea of a P-J fit, which involves the goal to hire employees that offer the optimal levels of preparation for the job, which can minimize the time and efforts involved with training new employees (Wong & Tetrick, 2017). Participants in the study echoed what previous scholars noted about veterans being trainable (Lucke & Furtner, 2015), and about soldiers receiving unique training opportunities from the military that may be unavailable to the civilian workforce that helps veterans qualify for civilian opportunities to contribute positively to the private sector. According to Delbourg-Delphis et al. (2014) and participants in this study, military veterans with suitable education and training can enhance small business success through by the applications of their particular experiences to fill the needs of the companies.

### **Theme 3: Retaining Military Veterans**

The idea of employee retention emerged as a third major theme. Table 3 includes a summary of the terms in the data forming the third theme. Participants referred to the concept of employee retention in association with recruiting and hiring veterans on six occasions, along with the idea that veterans they hire tend to be loyal and dedicated to their companies. Documents consistent with this thematic finding included descriptions of project needs, certification requirements for various employees, and meeting agendas and reports highlighting hiring and retention goals. Additional documents reviewed in support of this thematic finding included proposals of human resource development plans, proposals for management and review of human resource needs, and plans for employee benefits, preparation, coaching, training, and certification planning.

Table 3

*Emphasis on Employee Retention*

Major theme	Terms	Frequencies
Theme 3:	Retention	6
Retaining military veterans	Loyalty/Dedication	4
	Relationships	2

About retention and loyalty, P1 described a, “low retention rate... they [veterans] will be loyal.” P1 added, “In the recruiting and hiring of veterans based on our recruiting numbers, again, we understand that by retaining talent improves our bottom line. Which we in turn use as bench marks for other initiatives to recruit and hire veterans.” P2 said, “As an organization 7 years young, under a CIO, former military we discovered that one of the advantages that works are hiring military personnel. Military personnel tend to have the strengths such as hard work, team-oriented and dedication.” P3 referred to their company’s “low turnover rate” crediting the hiring of veterans as well as a “generous benefit plan.” P3 added, “Also, we believe if you recruit and hire good people and treat them well, they will be loyal.”

Lieberman et al. (2014) noted that military personnel develop leadership, initiative, perseverance, dedication, loyalty, and commitment, which were all characteristics that participants in this study used to describe veteran employees. All participants in this study expressed ideas consistent with the prior published claims of Boon and Biron (2016) that the likelihood of employee engagement, talent retention, and loyalty increases when business leaders hire employees who are good fits with their

organizations, environments, and available jobs. The participants' emphasis on employee retention benefits through recruiting and hiring veterans for suitable positions aligns with the conceptual and practical fit framework; to reduce the incidence and costs of employee turnover, companies may embrace a culture shaped by P-O fit ideology, thereby increasing retention of talent and employee loyalty (Duffy & Carlin, 2014). The consensus in the data aligned well with the conclusions of Adler et al. (2015) that there are many veterans who might contribute to specialized knowledge in particular industries or areas of expertise, and one benefit to recruiting and hiring veterans is that they tend to be committed and loyal employees.

### **Summary of Thematic Findings**

This case study led to three major themes, based on triangulation using qualitative data from multiple sources. The thematic findings pertained to the understanding of veterans as a means to determining ideal organization, job, and environmental fit. The targeting of veterans for recruitment and hiring was a second thematic finding. The third thematic finding pertained to the concept of veteran retention in the small business workforce.

The first major concept that emerged from the data was that the small business owners in this study, who successfully used strategies to recruit and hire veterans, felt they understood veterans. The related idea expressed is that there should be recognition of the skills and attributed that veterans can offer, and employers should also be willing to learn about the unique skills or core competencies veterans can offer. One minor

related finding pertained to women, who may have even more difficulties being understood, recruited, and hired, for the various reasons cited.

Second, participants reported the need to target veterans in the recruitment and hiring process and shared several ways to identify and find suitable candidates likely to offer optimal fits for small business needs. Related to this second major thematic finding were the concepts of training, education, and certifications. Employers ideally sought veterans who were already trained in specialized areas and claimed that veterans could offer specialized skills and core competencies that civilians may not be able to offer. However, there was also agreement that additional training and education may be ongoing needs to keep certifications and knowledge current and relevant to the changing job requirements.

A third major theme stemmed from participants' emphasis on the benefits of employee retention. According to participants, the idea of low turnover associated with the recruitment and hiring of veterans stems from the idea that veterans can be loyal and dedicated. However, veterans like other employees are more likely to be loyal and dedicated with optimal job, organizational, and environmental fits and must also have incentives and reasons to be dedicated and loyal to their companies and employers.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The three major themes that emerged from the data apply to professional practices of small business owners. The findings of this study pertain directly to the professional practices of small business leaders who are interested in recruiting and hiring military veterans. This study is significant to the fields of business management and human



resources, helping to fill a gap in the existing literature about small business human resource practices and the recruitment and hiring of military veterans to fill needs in small businesses. The three themes are relevant to small business owners and military veterans who seek meaningful employment following their exit from the armed forces.

Applications to professional practice include contributions of new knowledge to the fields of business management and human resources leadership. The findings of this study include the conveyance of the importance of understanding potential employees and their fit with organizations. The results of the study represent support for the extension of the applications of the P-O, P-J, and P-E fit theories in that leaders can continue to rely upon the tenets of the theories as they prepare for optimal recruitment and hiring of employees for their organizations. Concerning the hiring of military veterans, the participants in this study offered several examples and resources for recruiting veterans into their candidate pools and for evaluating the fit of those employees with their business needs. Bäckström and Björklund (2017) claimed there is a gap between how academics claim people should recruit, hire, and retain employees and what employers do in the process of selecting new employees for their businesses. Applying the steps and utilizing the specific resources suggested by participants in the study can help close the gap between research findings a professional practice.

According to participants in this study, hiring veterans with optimal fits can reduce employee turnover and the associated risks of small business failures. The findings from this study encourage small business leaders to think about the value of understanding and targeting military veterans for their organizational needs and how

veterans may actually fit with their organizations, based on that understanding. To decrease the likelihood of hiring poor fits, the hiring process typically involves evaluations of applicants who offer different qualities relevant to the job (Law et al., 2016); therefore, understanding the qualities veterans can offer is a first step in improving professional practices related to the recruitment and hiring of veterans using targeting approaches. Strategic hiring and knowledge about recruiting and hiring military veterans can help small business owners consider diverse sources of human capital they may otherwise overlook.

Professional practice applications based on the findings from this study may lead to an increase in small business owners' successes in recruiting and hiring veterans, thereby reducing the unemployment of veterans. Military veterans who represent ideal employment fits can benefit from the applications of the findings of this study to reduce unemployment and to enhance the collective skills and core competencies of the civilian workforce (Dixon, 2014). Military veterans, who contribute significantly to the economic and social well-being of United States (Benmelech & Frydman, 2014), are also small business owners, who can benefit from the professional practice applications based on the findings from this study. Small business owners in this study expressed a respect for military veterans and the sharing of knowledge that Stern (2017) claimed can inspire action based on research results to keep businesses afloat.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The implications associated with the findings from this study apply directly and indirectly to individuals, businesses, and society in general, with the potential to bring

about positive social change. The considerations of small business owners, based on the results of the study, may lead to the reduction of veteran unemployment, additional small business and veteran research, and the personal and economic benefits that can stem from research-driven action. Positive social change opportunities include small business owners using the findings from this study to enhance their businesses and business opportunities, helping to reduce unemployment, generating greater tax bases, and stimulating an innovative and progressive society. Small business owners, leaders, and scholars can extend their own practices to encompass action based on research findings to support American economic development, decrease unemployment, enhance innovation, and generate tax revenues to fund the various needs of society (Van Looy & Shafagatova, 2016).

By understanding, targeting, and retaining military veterans, the unemployment rate could drop, which would also reduce homelessness and other economic hardships that veterans face. Military veterans need ongoing employment opportunities and community support when they exit the military, to counter the hardships of transitions to civilian life (Dixon, 2014). Applications of the findings from this study may lead to an increase in small business owners' successes in hiring veterans, thereby reducing the unemployment and poverty rate of veterans and their families. Employed military veterans can help sustain the economic and social well-being of United States (Benmelech & Frydman, 2014).

### **Recommendations for Action**

Three major themes emerged from the data collected and analyzed during the research study, which led to the recommendations for action that follow. Small business leaders can make use of the results of this study because they are in positions to directly apply the findings in the professional practices of their businesses. The recommendations outlined below are in the same organizational order as the three major thematic findings that emerged as findings from this study.

The first major theme pertained to an understanding of veterans and recognition that military veterans may possess certain characteristics that work well within organizational cultures. To determine such an ideal organizational fit, a leader should be aware of their own organizational culture and be willing to learn about veterans in general and the specific skills, competencies, and talents they can offer employers. Employers can consider the value of building lasting relationships and creating development opportunities that encompass military veterans. Small business employers can recognize that there may be benefits to hiring military veterans who transition from the military into the civilian workforce.

Leaders should be able to evaluate potential employee strengths and how those strengths and assets may benefit the military personnel and the company's bottom line. Alguliyev et al. (2015) reported on how employers compare and rank the needs and culture of their organizations with skills and abilities of potential employees when choosing from among alternatives, recommending that employers make decisions based on data about known about prospects. These recommendations align with the thematic

finding of understanding and then targeting veterans for a suitable fit with organizational goals and climate. Participants in the study also recommended being sensitive to military veterans' needs and to pair military veterans with other team members to promote team building environments.

The third major theme revolved around retention of military veteran employees. Participants recommended treating employees well, being understanding of family and health needs, offering attractive benefits, and matching training, education, and certification to job expectations to reap the potential benefits of employee loyalty. As suggested by Casad and Bryant (2016), veterans should have opportunities to integrate their personal identities with their professional identities, which could lead to positive job attitudes, work-related mental health, and the type of general life and work satisfaction following military service that enhances dedication to their developed networks such as employers.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Ongoing scholarly research leads to knowledge that can bridge the academic and business arenas to maximize small business success, contribute to positive social change, and improve professional practices. Accordingly, suggestions for future research based on the results of this study follow. The suggestions for future research stem from the three major themes that emerged from the data collected and analyzed in this study. Future research can help fill gaps in the related body of knowledge, improve upon the findings from this study, lead to additional practical applications for small businesses, and extend the research in ways that could overcome the limitations of this study.

The first major thematic finding was about understanding veterans. The participants in this study either were veterans or had a close affiliation with veterans and therefore could express an understanding of veterans or recognition of their unique skills and attributes. Additional qualitative study of business owners' understanding of military veterans may lead to findings that could expand strategies for successful recruitment of veterans by those small business owners who do not have a history of military service. In addition, there were references to female veterans, whose experiences may differ from those of male prospective employees. Further qualitative research focusing on the hiring of female veterans may be of value to help illuminate the special challenges and experiences they may face in the civilian job market.

The second major theme pertained to targeting veterans for recruitment and hiring. In this study, the three participants owned and operated IT businesses in and around the mid-Atlantic region of the United States, which has a relatively large veteran population. Results might differ from research of small business owners in other specific industries and locations and comparisons of qualitative and quantitative data may be of scholarly value. Small business owners with divergent backgrounds and experiences or from different industries or locations may offer different strategies for recruiting and hiring military veterans. The second major theme also had references to fit for education, training, and certification, which are subjects ripe for additional research. The three study subjects discussed how veterans contribute to business competencies, which leads to additional questions about specific strategies small business leaders might utilize to align hiring practices with the competencies required for their industries and positions in need

of filling. Future research could include small business leadership focus on the alignment of human resource development with training and staffing needs of military veterans. Because the ideas of mentoring and team-building emerged, additional research about civilian mentoring with military veterans in small businesses may be of interest in future scholarly endeavors.

The third theme pertained to retention. There were various reasons offered by participants for their perceptions of loyalty and dedication of military veterans they hired. This study did not revolve around the idea of retention and turnover of military veterans as small business employees. However, the thematic finding, along with prior scholarly interests in turnover reduction and are indications that these associated concepts are worth of additional qualitative and quantitative study.

### **Reflections**

During my first residency I knew that I wanted my doctoral study to shine a light on veterans. However, I was not certain how to incorporate military veterans into a specific business need. Under the direction of my chair, I had an opportunity to develop an understanding for a problem that needed a solution and from that the purpose of this study formed. Specifically capturing two entities for which I have a great amount of admiration, this study contributed to the literature by providing meaningful information about small businesses owners and military veterans. While there have been many studies written on both entities, I discovered during my research that there was sparse data or limited research about successful small businesses who recruit and hire veterans and I did

not find any studies on specifically identifying such strategies applied in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States IT field.

After numerous reviews, edits and revisions as part of the peer-review process inherent in doctoral studies, I received IRB approval to gather my data. I then entered into what I like to refer to as unfamiliar terrain, uncertain about which small business owners would answer my many emails, phone calls, and prayers. However, to my surprise the response from small business owners was heart-warming, although the challenge discovered was getting on the calendar for a meeting, which took longer than expected. While each participant provided insight on best practices their businesses used for recruiting and hiring of veterans, each participant also identified how they stayed connected with their D.C. community as a step towards social change. Whether it through the various outreach programs or other strategies shared to assist veterans with their transitions to civilian life, positive social impact and meaningful change was at the forefront of intentions.

Following data collection, I soon discovered that analysis and conclusions drawn from qualitative data took longer than originally projected, a shared sentiment with past scholars who applied best practices in research methodology moving through various levels of their doctoral studies. I learned there are always more questions to ask during my doctoral journey and as a future scholar. My closing reflections are, while my doctoral study took a bit longer than some, if I had to go through my journey again, I would not change much, except for perhaps asking more questions for clarification at the



beginning of my study. I believe that I would have been better prepared for the various stages of the doctoral process that culminated in the findings that can benefit others.

### **Conclusions**

The three small business leaders who provided the data for this qualitative case study managed well the intersection of IT services with their human capital. They combined successfully the people in their organizations with the processes and IT goals for intended value creation. With their distinctive competencies, they uniquely positioned their human capital to support a wide variety of IT projects while also employing military veterans. The general consensus was that it is important to embrace change within the small business industry to include consideration of the recruitment, hiring, and retention of military veterans as part of the small business civilian workforce. The fit of employees with their organizations stemmed from an understanding of veterans and that to compete, small business leaders must recruit and retain ideal human capital in areas specific to the requirements of their customers. The three main themes that emerged from the study led to recommendations for understanding veterans, targeting veterans through specific strategies for the recruitment and hiring processes, and retaining veterans as assets to small businesses, valuable to IT small business success. Further research in the areas of leadership understanding of veterans, ways to target veterans in various locations and industries, and the retention of veterans in the civilian small business employment pool can build on the findings of this study to continue to advance positive social change and additional tools for valuable professional small business human resource practices.

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## Appendix A: Data Collection Protocol

Interview Protocol

Participant:

Date and Time of Interview:

- Greet participant.
- Adjust room conditions for comfort and privacy.
- Review informed consent form.
- Invite additional questions.
- Begin recording equipment.
- Begin interview questions.

Questions:

1. What strategies do you use to recruit veterans?
2. How do you determine the strategies to recruit and hire veterans who can help you meet your business needs?
3. How did you address the key challenges to implementing your strategies for recruiting veterans?
4. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies you use to recruit veterans?
5. Based upon your experience and discussion with your employees, why do you believe these strategies are successful?
6. What additional information about your strategies for recruiting veterans would you like to share?

- Invite participant to provide documents related to their expressed experiences.
- Collect documents from participant and remind participant of contact information for forwarding additional documents.
- Thank participant.
- Remind participant member checking process that will occur at a future date.

#### Document Review Protocol

Participant:

Name of document:

Relation to study:

Description of document:

Additional notes:

#### Member Checking Protocol

Email summary of initial interpretations, with a note of gratitude and an invitation to answer the following questions:

1. What interpretations of data do you feel are most correct, based on your own experiences and the data you intended to provide for this study?
2. What interpretations of data do you feel are errors or incorrect interpretations, based on your own experiences and the data you intended to provide for this study?
3. Regarding these interpretations, what would you like to add or clarify?

Thank each participant again with a reminder they will receive a summary of the final published study.