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## Collaborative Strategies that would Minimize Interruption in Work Output in a Human Resources Development Department during an Acquisition

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COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES THAT WOULD MINIMIZE INTERRUPTION IN  
WORK OUTPUT IN A HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
DURING AN ACQUISITION

A RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL AND TECHNICAL STUDIES  
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN OCCUPATIONAL AND TECHNICAL STUDIES

BY  
CRYSTAL E. LILLY

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APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Crystal E. Lilly under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies.

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5-7-04  
Date

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Many companies are committed to strategic growth through mergers and acquisitions. The impact of an acquisition for a business can be disadvantageous if the company does not forecast the changes in operations for support organizations within the company. One of the critical success factors that can be considered during an acquisition is customer satisfaction. While customer satisfaction is important to an acquisition, employee care should be as equally important. It is the employee who produces the work output and who would help retain the customers in the first place. As a company prepares to acquire another entity, it is imperative to consider what the impact would be on existing work processes. This study is designed to demonstrate the impact of acquisitions and mergers on work processes within companies.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to identify collaborative strategies that would minimize interruption in work output in a Human Resources Development department during an acquisition.

#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study will accomplish the following objectives:

1. Determine collaborative strategies used by Human Resource Development departments in an organization during an acquisition.
2. Determine which collaborative strategies assisted most in minimizing work interruptions.

3. Determine which strategies were most beneficial to a Human Resource Development department during a company acquisition.
4. Recommend strategies that would be beneficial to a Human Resource Development department during an acquisition.

### BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

There is never too much planning when it comes to understanding the impact of an acquisition on corporate culture. Human Resources, a department within an organization whose overall focus is human capital, plays a vital role when a company is acquired. According to Bruzzese (1997), the role of human resources is critical in preventing culture clashes during organizational mergers and acquisitions. The human factor in acquisitions is more likely to derail a merger than financial implications. It is helpful to do a cultural investigation early in the acquisition process to help integrate the merging cultures. The Human Resource Development department would be responsible for conducting such an assessment as well as other organizational development initiatives. Implementing unexpected activities in the normal workflow would disrupt the usual day-to-day functions of HRD and the entire company. Unplanned work activities are often overlooked during an acquisition and can cause disruption in work activities that are hard to recover from, such as new reporting structures, communication gaps, and synchronization of newly implemented work processes. These disruptions can result in low employee morale: burn out, quality of work output, and quantity of work output. According to John Gutknecht (1993), there is a need for systematic preparation for change as a key element to maintaining morale of employees and managers.

This study is important to assist in the development of a standardized process for planning and implementing work processes during an acquisition. Human resources development responsibilities range from providing orientation programs to deploying performance appraisal processes across the organizations. Their involvement requires fully dedicated resources to each of these activities. HRD is relied upon to maintain stellar training programs and offer professional development programs throughout the organization while simultaneously providing services during an acquisition.

The Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) (2002) found that one of the major obstacles to acquisition success was the loss of productivity. Human resource development departments need to have the ability to fully integrate the needs of newly acquired employees into their work processes without disruption in daily operations and consequently a loss of productivity.

The information presented in other studies that focus on the role of human resources during acquisitions and mergers reported data targeted toward employee benefits, compensation and employee relations. This research is designed to capture human resource development workflow processes from a detailed operational perspective. According to Messner (1998), it is critical that human resource practitioners have a view of the type of information that is needed prior to the acquisition to assess and look for areas of potential problems or concerns. She provided an example checklist that human resource professionals could use to ensure employee-focused tasks were reviewed. The list included two main topics: Employee Benefit Plans and Employee Relations. Examples of areas that were listed under these topics included retirement plans, employee termination, employee handbook, and workers compensation. Although



the list covers an array of employee areas, there is not representation in areas that focus specifically on work process interruptions or the impact on employee performance as a result of an acquisition. This study will provide human resource development professionals with an overall view of the work processes that will be impacted during an acquisition, as well as the human factors that should be considered as an important component in a successful acquisition.

### LIMITATIONS

The following limitations were utilized during this research study:

1. The study was performed by sending a questionnaire to human resource development professionals, human resource development executives, and project managers to geographically dispersed companies.
2. The study was limited to Washington D.C. metro and North Carolina companies that have recently undergone an acquisition.
3. The study was limited to computer technology companies and a financial institution.

### BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

When conducting research, there are circumstances that must be assumed. The following assumptions were made for this study:

1. Acquisitions and mergers interrupt work processes in companies causing adverse impacts on work overload and employee morale.
2. Quality of work output decreases as a result of an acquisition.
3. Strategically planned work processes during an acquisition will minimize the amount of interruptions that occur during an acquisition.

4. The impact of an acquisition on the human resource development staff increases the number of employees requiring training, performance management, and professional development solutions.
5. Acquisitions require customization of employee learning programs.
6. A survey can be developed to capture reliable information for this study.
7. Acquisitions require an increase in the amount of work output in addition to regular job assignments.

## PROCEDURES

Data will be collected through distribution of a questionnaire to staff members of human resource development departments, project managers, and human resource development executives. The questionnaire will contain questions specifically addressing the employee's perspective when experiencing an acquisition. The questions will also address what the employee's perspective was regarding other employees in their department. It will take the format of open-ended questions.

Project managers are responsible for assigning tasks to the project team during an acquisition and it is important to get their perspective on how they decide who does what and when. Information from project managers will assist in understanding the role of HRD and its stakeholders during an acquisition. The information would help validate why the involvement of HRD is critical at the inception of an acquisition. The questionnaire will be distributed electronically. Prior to sending the questionnaire each participant will be notified requesting his or her assistance.

The target audience will be participants who are in the Washington D.C., metro area and Charlotte, North Carolina, area. The distribution method to deliver the

questionnaire is electronically. Information from the questionnaire will be documented in a spreadsheet. The information will be categorized based on the role and method of questioning. It is important to keep the information separate to identify common themes among participants who share the same roles. It is equally important to keep the data separate in order to accurately identify the common themes. Each participant will be randomly assigned a number and his or her responses to the questions will correspond to the number assignment. For example, the first questionnaire that is being reviewed will be participant number one and so on.

Once all information has been received and recorded in an individual spreadsheet, the data will be collated to identify gaps or trends among the aggregate group. The trends and gaps identified will assist in accomplishing the objectives set for this study. The responses to the questionnaire will then be tabulated and analyzed to determine the most beneficial collaborative strategies a human resource development organization can implement during an acquisition.

#### DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The following terms are provided to assist the reader with this study:

**Human Resources Development:** A comprehensive learning system for the release of the organization's human potential; a system that includes both vicarious learning experiences and experiential, on-the-job experiences. (Nadler & Wiggs, 1986)

**Merger:** A combination of a number of commercial interests or companies into one.

**Acquisition:** "The act of acquiring; anything gained or won." (Webster, 2002 p. 6)

**Common Themes:** reoccurring facts that help validate and support recommendations.

## OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter I of this research study dealt with the problem of collaborative strategies that would minimize interruption in work output in a human resources development department during an acquisition. Included in this chapter were the statement of problem, background and significance of the study, limitations and basic assumptions. Definitions of terms were also included to help the reader with this study. Lastly included is an overview of the chapters to follow in this research study.

The problem of this study was chosen with the intent to directly impact a department that is not often viewed as a stakeholder in the acquisition process. An acquisition can often have an adverse impact on HRD employees, services offered and overall success of the department. Outside of reviewing previously written literature on the impact of acquisitions on HRD, questionnaires will be distributed and analyzed.

To present the findings of this study, information will first be represented by supporting knowledge of other research conducted. An analysis of previously written literature will help formulate an expert knowledge of this study. The next area of focus will explain in detail the methods in which the study will be conducted. In this section the study will examine what tools or instruments will be used to analyze, collect and organize the information. A full description and example of the model used to conduct the research will also be presented. After the data analysis the, findings will be presented. This section will present common themes, trends and gaps that have been identified as a result of the methods and procedures used to conduct the study. The findings will be presented in a collated format to show the relationship between the literature reviewed and the common themes uncovered in the information from the questionnaires. The last section

of this study will contain a summary of the content studied. This section will also contain proposed recommendations for HRD departments to implement during an acquisition.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will begin with a review of previously written literature regarding HRD and acquisitions. It is important to review what has already been written to identify gaps and to gain more insight into the study area. Reviewing previously written information will also provide an understanding of what is relevant to the study. The problem of this study was to identify collaborative strategies that would minimize interruption in work output in a Human Resources Development department during an acquisition. The literature reviewed in this study contains the following sections: (1) human resource management issues, (2) effective communication, (3) implementation and integration, and (4) transition assistance.

#### HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Acquisitions can be considered beneficial to corporate business, but it is becoming more apparent throughout organizations that are highly stressful for the people negatively affected by them. Employees are concerned about how the acquisition will affect their jobs, careers, and the company culture. Executives are becoming more aware that their employee's reactions to change are a major reason why more than half of all acquisitions ultimately turn out to be financial disappointments. Although, executives are aware of this fact they do not often take proactive steps to manage the human resource aspects of the acquisition process (Training and Development Journal, Messer, 1999, p. 30). Typically they are either unaware of the methods for facilitating change or they fail to recognize the negative consequences an acquisition may have on others. The lack of an executive's awareness for these potential problems provide challenges for the HRD

organization who recognize the symptoms of anxiety created within the acquired organization.

Human resource development professionals who clearly understand group process, communication skills and changes in management methods involved in an acquisition can play a critical role in the acquisition process (Hamilton, 1986, p. 30). They can be highly valuable in mitigating stress caused by the acquisition, maintain productivity, build employee commitment to the new organization and help ensure a smooth post-acquisition integration (Hamilton, 1986, p.19). Executives often avoid conducting open employee meetings soon after announcing a merger, because they feel they have few or no answers to employee questions and are fearful they will say something that will create unrealistic employee expectations. Some managers also have the perception that they are not able to communicate with the employee unless they have precise answers on what the organization will look like after the acquisition. From the employee's perspective, silence is not always the best approach, because it leads them to believe something negative is going to happen and allows too much opportunity for ambiguity (Hamilton, 1986, p. 30).

There are several issues an employee is concerned about when experiencing such drastic change as an acquisition. Typically the hierarchical status of the organization is at the forefront of those concerns. Often the acquiring company becomes the boss. The uncertainty of the new leadership structure causes an adverse effect on other processes that are related to the acquisition. Employees feel a loss in the knowledge of the company's procedures and processes, trusted internal networks and job description (Galosy, 1990, p. 90). Employees entrust leadership with security of their current jobs

and the future of their careers. When an organization is acquired it leads to feelings of betrayal and mistrust. Although an acquisition is considered progress for a company, it is easy for an executive to lose sight of an employee's true fears and anxieties. Leadership is under an extreme amount of pressure to ensure their employees are maintaining job productivity and have a positive outlook on the changes to come.

### EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

The communication of information through the management hierarchy should be used to regularly provide employees with information about issues affecting the organization. It is particularly important when an organization experiences a radical change such as an acquisition. Frequent communication to all stakeholders including employees, customers and suppliers is critical during and after the acquisition. There is difficulty in communication during a merger due to the fact that some employees already feel a sense of betrayal and are reluctant to believe what upper management has to say. In addition to a sense of betrayal from within, information is received from outside the organization that heightens the level of mistrust. Developing a solid communication strategy can help reduce the mistrust and feelings of betrayal during the acquisition.

The American Society of Training and Development recommends seven fundamental guidelines when implementing a communication strategy during an acquisition (See Table 1).

Table 1. Guidelines for Implementing Communication Strategies

1. Make few promises and keep all you make.
2. Increase the amount of communication.



3. If there is nothing to report, then provide facts about the acquired firm or new people.
4. Plan exactly what you will tell employees and follow up in every way possible; give information many times many ways to make sure everyone gets the message.
5. Clearly define the goals of the acquisition and give progress reports during and after the process.
6. Publicize anything that the two firms are doing together.
7. Communicate the fact that the firm is fair and cares about its people; in other words employees will hear things before the newspapers do.

(Galosy, 1990, p. 90).

## IMPLEMENTATION AND INTEGRATION

There are several trends that are impacting the way organizations conduct business today. These new developments include increases in the number of companies involved in acquisitions, reengineering, downsizing and outsourcing. Departments within these organizations have to know how to respond quickly to change. Economic pressures and demands for higher quality products and services are turning what looks like routine work into work requiring thought (McLagan, 1999, p. 20). Organizations are expected to seek innovative ways of doing things and improve the products and services offered.

Technology builds pressure for and opens up the opportunity for integration of systems, culture, processes and procedures. During an acquisition companies have to move quickly to integrate employee information into the new systems. Newly acquired and existing employees must also be integrated into the new culture. One of the key

factors of success in an acquisition is a highly structured integration process, which starts well before the acquisition is announced. Other trends surfacing in the workplace include: flexible work-design practices, control through shared vision and values, planning processes to focus conversations, and continuous re-planning (McLagan, 1999). According to Tetenbaum (1989), there are seven practices that can improve organizational integration (See Table 2).

Table 2. Practices to Improve Organizational Integration

1. Provide input into the go/no-go decisions.
2. Build organizational capability.
3. Strategically align and implement appropriate systems and procedures.
4. Manage the culture.
5. Manage the post acquisition drift by managing the transition quickly.
6. Manage the information flow.
7. Build a standardized integration plan (Tetenbaum, 1989, p. 23).

#### TRANSITION ASSISTANCE

One of the critical factors in successful acquisition efforts is the role of human resources. Applying HR analyses, activities and methodologies in the planning, implementation and consolidation of acquisitions increases the likelihood that the initial objectives will be met (Hamilton, 1986, p. 30). Many acquisitions result in employee turnover problems and lower profits and performance due to a variety of factors, such as economic conditions, inadequate planning, and the loss of key employees.

The most critical factors to the success of an acquisition seem to fall within the human resources area. The human resources department can offer services before the

acquisition on issues involving staffing, restructuring and facilitating meetings. Post acquisition assistance may be offered related to developing a new corporate culture, coping with stress and transition methods.

#### SUMMARY

The merger and acquisition process is complex and demanding on all involved. It is an emotional and sometimes physically draining experience. As outlined in the review of literature, there are four critical areas that have been documented and analyzed. The areas that are critical during an acquisition are: human resource management issues, effective communication, implementation and integration and transition assistance. The lack of HR planning and support to the acquisition creates a risk that should be considered unacceptable to senior executives and shareholders in view of the high stakes involved (Roberts, 2002).

The overall outcome of the data revealed that proper planning of an acquisition is critical to its success. Organizational leaders should include HR in all phases of acquisition activities. Cultural issues must be resolved, management styles blended, hidden people-related costs avoided and highly talented people retained and motivated (Roberts, 2002). Human resources can assist with the activities before the acquisition and continue post-acquisition. In order to add value to their involvement, human resources leaders must be prepared to provide strategic input at all stages of the acquisition process and should ensure that their own skill sets will enable them to provide timely, relevant and valuable participation. Without proper planning and leveraging the appropriate resources, the success of the acquisition is at stake.

The next chapter in this study is titled Methods and Procedures. The main focus of this chapter is to detail the methods for collecting data and the procedures for analyzing the data collected. This chapter will provide an overview of the targeted population for collecting data. A description of the types of questions that were used in the instrument design will also be provided.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Chapter III will define the audience surveyed, the instrument and procedures for collecting data and statistical processes used. This chapter will summarize for the reader how the research was planned for this study.

### POPULATION

The population consisted of human resource development professionals, project managers, and human resource development executives in the Washington D.C., metro area, and Charlotte, North Carolina, areas. There were a total of 20 individuals in the targeted population. The subjects were separated into three groups:

1. Non-executive human resource development professionals
2. Project managers and
3. Human resource development executives.

### INSTRUMENT DESIGN

A questionnaire was developed and used for this study. The questionnaire was based on the objectives of this study these included:

1. Determine collaborative strategies used by HRD departments in an organization during an acquisition.
2. Determine which strategies assisted most in minimizing work interruptions.
3. Determine which strategies were most beneficial to a HRD department during a company acquisition.
4. Recommend strategies that would be beneficial to an HRD department during an acquisition.

The questionnaire was used to determine the respondent's role, the impact an acquisition has on their role, descriptions of their department and the impact an acquisition has on their department during an acquisition. The questionnaire was also used to identify strategies that have been implemented to minimize work interruptions during acquisitions. The questionnaire contained open-ended questions. See Appendix A for a sample of the questionnaire.

#### METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

A cover letter (Appendix B) was sent along with the questionnaire to all participants explaining the purpose of the study, and the value of their input. The questionnaire was first sent on April 1, 2004, and then a second time on April 14, 2004, for those who had not responded (See Appendix C).

#### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The responses to the questionnaire were sorted by the classification of the groups including human resource development professionals, project managers and human resource development executives. The responses were categorized into criteria established by the researcher for further data analysis. The statistics that were used to analyze the data were number and frequency.

#### SUMMARY

Chapter III outlined the population, instrument design and procedures for collecting and treatment of the data. Upon an analysis of the questionnaire responses, a determination of the most beneficial collaborative work strategies implemented in a human resource department during an acquisition will be made. The next chapter in this study will present the findings of the data collected.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings of the research study. The problem of this study was to identify collaborative strategies that would minimize interruption in work output in a Human Resources Development department during an acquisition.

A questionnaire was used to answer the following research goals:

1. Determine collaborative strategies used by Human Resources Development departments in an organization during an acquisition.
2. Determine which collaborative strategies assisted most in minimizing work interruptions.
3. Determine which strategies were most beneficial to a Human Resource Development department during a company acquisition.
4. Recommend strategies that would be beneficial to a Human Resource Development department during an acquisition.

The request for assistance was sent to 20 contacts throughout the Washington, D.C., metro area, and Charlotte, North Carolina. A total of 10 questionnaires were returned for a 50 percent response rate. The information gathered from the questionnaire dealt with the respondent's job role and the problems that arise as a result of an acquisition that impact a department and individual work outputs. The information gathered also demonstrated recommended strategies that can be implemented and beneficial to mitigate problems as a result of an acquisition.

## INDIVIDUAL KEY OUTPUTS

Question 1 asked respondents to list the key outputs of their individual job roles. Responses were categorized by common themes and put in rank order. Table 3 illustrates the responses by rank order listing the most popular response first and the least popular response last. Fifty percent of the population responded that they were in training and development roles. Thirty percent of the population responded that they performed organizational development job duties. Ten percent of the population responded that they performed performance management job duties. Ten percent of the population responded that they performed project manager job duties.

### QUESTION 1

#### QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

TABLE 3.

##### Key Outputs of Your Job Role

Rank Order	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percent
1	Training and Development	5	50%
2	Organizational Development	3	30%
3	Performance Management	1	10%
4	Project Management	1	10%

## EMPLOYEE MAJOR PROBLEMS

Question 2 dealt with the major problems encountered while completing the daily work outputs that were identified in Question 1. Table 4 illustrates the responses by rank order listing the most popular response first and the least popular response last. In rank order, the lack of available resources was the number one response. Forty percent of the



population responded that the lack of resources was a major problem during an acquisition. The next ranking was communication barriers. Thirty percent of the population responded that communication barriers were major problems during an acquisition. Twenty percent of the population responded that merging different cultures was a major problem. Ten percent of the population responded role identification as a major problem.

## QUESTION 2

### QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

TABLE 4.

Major Problems Encountered Completing Work Outputs during an Acquisition

Rank Order	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percent
1	Lack of resources	4	40%
2	Communication barriers	3	30%
3	Merging of different cultures	2	20%
4	Role identification	1	10%

### EMPLOYEE WORK STRATEGIES

Question 3 asked participants to identify the strategies implemented for the employees in addressing the key outputs of Question 1. Table 5 illustrates the responses by rank order listing the most popular response first and the least popular response last. Fifty percent of the population listed collaboration as the top response for strategies implemented during an acquisition. Twenty percent of the population listed executive sponsorship of activities and virtual work capabilities as strategies implemented. Ten

percent of the population listed points of contacts identified across organizations to act as subject matter experts as a strategy to help minimize work interruptions.

### QUESTION 3

#### QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

TABLE 5.

#### Strategies Implemented to Minimize Individual Work Interruptions

Rank Order	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percent
1	Collaboration of work across teams	5	50%
2	Executive sponsorship and support	2	20%
3	Virtual meeting and work capabilities	2	20%
4	Points of contact identified as subject matter experts	1	10%

#### BENEFITS TO INDIVIDUAL WORK OUTPUTS

Question 4 asked participants to identify how the strategies in Question 3 benefited their individual work outputs. Table 6 illustrates the responses by rank order listing the most popular response first and the least popular response last. Forty percent of the population responded that the strategies implemented mitigated communication barriers. Thirty percent of the population responded that the strategies decreased stress. Twenty percent of the population responded that these strategies help save time. Ten percent of the population responded that these strategies provided a better understanding of new processes and policies.

## QUESTION 4

### QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

TABLE 6.

#### Benefits of Strategies Implemented during an Acquisition

Rank Order	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percent
1	Mitigate communication barriers	4	40%
2	Lessened the level of stress	3	30%
3	Saved time	2	20%
4	Better understanding of new processes	1	10%

### DEPARTMENT KEY OUTPUTS

Question 5 asked respondents to list the key outputs of their departments. Table 7 illustrates the responses by rank order listing the most popular response first and the least popular response last. Fifty percent of the population responded that training and development initiatives were key department outputs. Thirty percent of the population listed organizational development duties as key outputs. Ten percent of the population listed performance management functions and project management functions as key outputs of their departments.

## QUESTION 5

### QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

TABLE 7.

#### Key Outputs of Your Department

Rank Order	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percent
1	Training and Development	5	50%
2	Organizational Development	3	30%
3	Performance Management	1	10%
4	Project Management	1	10%

## MAJOR DEPARTMENT PROBLEMS

Question 6 dealt with the major problems encountered while completing the daily departmental activities during an acquisition identified in Question 5. Table 8 illustrates the responses by rank order listing the most popular response first and the least popular response last. In rank order, the lack of available resources was the number one response. Forty percent of the population responded that the lack of resources was a major problem during an acquisition. The next ranking was communication barriers. Thirty percent of the population responded that communication is a major problem. Twenty percent of the population listed merging different cultures as a major problem. Ten percent of the population responded that overlap in job roles as a major problem for a department during an acquisition.

### QUESTION 6

#### QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

TABLE 8.

Major Problems Encountered in the Department during an Acquisition

Rank Order	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percent
1	Lack of resources	4	40%
2	Communication barriers	3	30%
3	Merging of different cultures	2	20%
4	Overlap in job roles	1	10%

## DEPARTMENT WORK STRATEGIES

Question 7 asked participants to identify the strategies implemented for the department in addressing the key outputs of Question 5. Table 9 illustrates the responses by rank order listing the most popular response first and the least popular response last.

The top response for strategies implemented during an acquisition was leveraging existing resources. Forty percent of the population listed leveraging existing resources as a strategy. Thirty percent of the population listed frequent staff meetings as a strategy. Twenty percent of the population listed educating newly acquired employees on new processes and procedures as a strategy. Ten percent of the population listed use of virtual meeting tools as a department work strategy implemented during an acquisition to minimize work interruptions.

### QUESTION 7

### QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

TABLE 9.

Strategies Implemented to Minimize Department Work Interruptions

Rank Order	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percent
1	Leveraging of existing resources	4	40%
2	Frequent staff meetings	3	30%
3	Educating new employees on processes and procedures	2	20%
4	Equitable distribution of work	1	10%

### BENEFITS TO DEPARTMENT WORK OUTPUTS

Question 8 asked participants to identify how the strategies identified in Question 7 benefited the department during an acquisition. Table 10 illustrates the responses by rank order listing the most popular response first and the least popular response last. Sixty percent of the population responded that the strategies allowed new employees to have a smoother transition into a newer environment. Twenty percent of the population

responded that these strategies helped departments work more efficiently during an acquisition and reduce stress. Ten percent of the population responded that these strategies provided a better understanding of new processes and policies.

## QUESTION 8

### QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

TABLE 10.

Benefits of Implemented Strategies for a Department during an Acquisition

Rank Order	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percent
1	Smoother transition	6	60%
2	Reduced stress	2	20%
3	Saved time	1	10%
4	Better understanding of new processes and procedures	1	10%

## SUMMARY

The findings of this study were obtained from the questionnaire responses. Nine human resource development professionals and one project management professional completed the questionnaire. A total of ten questionnaires were received. In this chapter, the statistical information obtained from the study were tabulated and recorded. There were eight tables to illustrate the findings of the data collected. Tables were provided to illustrate the ranking of each common response. In Chapter V the research will be summarized, conclusions drawn and recommendations made on the findings.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize, draw conclusions, and make recommendations based on the findings of this research study. The problem of this study was to identify collaborative strategies that would minimize interruption in work output in a Human Resources Development department during an acquisition.

#### SUMMARY

This study was significant specifically to assist in the development of a standardized process for planning and implementing work processes during an acquisition. A questionnaire was designed to answer the four research goals. These were:

1. Determine collaborative strategies used by Human Resource Development departments in an organization during an acquisition.
2. Determine which collaborative strategies assisted most in minimizing work interruptions.
3. Determine which strategies were most beneficial to a Human Resource Development department during a company acquisition.
4. Recommend strategies that would be beneficial to a Human Resource Development department during an acquisition.

The following limitations were utilized during this research study:

1. The study was performed by sending a questionnaire to human resource development professionals, human resource development executives, and project managers to geographically dispersed companies.

2. The study was limited to Washington D.C. metro and North Carolina companies that have recently undergone an acquisition.
3. The study was limited to computer technology companies and a financial institution.

The cover letter along with a questionnaire was sent to 20 people in the human resources profession and in the project management profession requesting their assistance. A follow-up letter was sent to request their assistance a second time. There were a total of 10 questionnaires returned with a 50 percent return rate. After the surveys had been completed the responses were documented and analyzed.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data gathered, the following conclusions can be made for research goals 1, 2, and 3. Goal 4, recommending strategies that would be beneficial to a human resource development department during an acquisition, will be addressed in the recommendation section of this chapter.

### **Goal 1: Determine collaborative strategies used by Human Resource Development departments in an organization during an acquisition.**

Based on the findings, the top responses for strategies implemented during an acquisition included collaboration of work efforts across teams and leveraging existing resources. Question 3, had 50% of the respondents state that collaborating across teams assisted with their individual work output. For Question 7, 40% of respondents thought that leveraging existing resources within the company benefited the department during an acquisition.



**Goal 2: Determine which collaborative strategies assisted most in minimizing work interruptions.**

According to the findings, the top strategies that assisted individuals most in minimizing work interruptions during an acquisition include collaboration, executive sponsorship, and virtual work environment capabilities. The top strategies that assisted departments most in minimizing work interruptions during an acquisition include having frequent staff meetings and leveraging existing resources.

**Goal 3: Determine which strategies were most beneficial to a Human Resource Development department during a company acquisition.**

According to the findings, 60% of the respondents felt that a smoother transition was the end result of implementing the strategies identified in Questions 3 and 7. The top response for Question 3 was collaboration of work efforts and the top response for Question 7 was leveraging existing resources.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these conclusions, it was determined that the collaboration of work efforts and leveraging existing resources were strategies that were most beneficial to minimize interruption in individual and department work output during an acquisition. Recommendations were proposed to address the top problems that cause work interruptions during an acquisition. The top problems identified were lack of resources and communication barriers for both the individual and department. The following recommendations are made to mitigate these two major problems.

HRD organizations should assess early on what changes in work output will be imposed on existing employees. This will involve data collection and analysis, planning

and redesign of work strategies. Once the needs have been assessed, there is a need to determine the best approach for educating newly transitioned employees and identify change agents from the acquired organization to take the lead on deploying the new and unfamiliar processes to the new employee population. This would benefit the new employee population, because they had a resource person that could relate and understand their concerns. It would be beneficial for the HRD department because it would lessen the work responsibilities of the department by transferring ownership to the new group.

All too often executives of organizations made the mistake of believing that others understood the issues and saw the new direction as clearly as they did. It is critical that the leaders of organizations communicate changes to employees. HRD departments should communicate from the bottom to the top. The communication should provide employees the right information at the right time and solicit their input and feedback. This would require over communication through multiple communication channels.

Based on this study, there were beneficial strategies implemented to assist with minimizing work interruptions during an acquisition. The results of this study supported collaboration of work efforts and leveraging existing resources have been successful to both employees and departments alike during acquisitions.

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## APPENDICIES

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

## HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT DURING AN ACQUISITION

**Purpose:** The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify collaborative strategies that would minimize interruption in work output in a Human Resources Development organization during an acquisition.

**Directions:** Answer each question by filling in the blanks provided. Where indicated please add any additional comments you feel are relevant to this questionnaire.

Questions:

1. List the key outputs of your job role.

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Additional comments:

2. What are the major problems you encounter completing these outputs during an acquisition?

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Additional comments:

3. What strategies are implemented for your role to minimize work interruptions during an acquisition?

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Additional comments:

4. How have these strategies been beneficial to your work outputs during an acquisition?

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Additional comments:

5. What are the key outputs of your department?

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Additional comments:

6. What are the major problems your department encounters during an acquisition?

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Additional comments:



7. What strategies are implemented in your department to minimize work interruptions during an acquisition?

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Additional comments:

8. How have these strategies been beneficial to your department during an acquisition?

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Additional comments:

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE COVER LETTER

April 1, 2004

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am currently a graduate student in the Darden College of Education at Old Dominion University and am working on a graduate studies paper dealing with the impact acquisitions and mergers have on work processes within companies. The purpose of my study is to identify collaborative strategies that would minimize interruption in work output in a Human Resources Development organization during an acquisition. I am writing you to ask for your assistance in determining collaborative strategies that you have implemented or found beneficial in your organization during an acquisition.

Please find the attached questionnaire that I am asking you to respond to. It should take no more than ten minutes to complete. To assure the privacy of your responses, your name will not be identified in my study. Instead I will use a numerical coding process to label and identify my data. No one will have access to the coding method or the surveys except for the researcher. Once the surveys have been completed and responses have been documented and analyzed, the surveys and the coding will be destroyed.

I deeply appreciate your cooperation and support. Without you I would not be able to complete this research project.

If you have further questions, feel free to contact me at 703.876.1174.

Sincerely,

Crystal E. Lilly

## APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE FOLLOW-UP LETTER

April 14, 2004

Dear Sir or Madam:

This is a follow-up to a previous letter that was sent asking you for assistance in determining collaborative strategies that you have implemented or found beneficial in your organization during an acquisition. Please find the attached questionnaire that I am asking you to respond to. It should take no more than ten minutes to complete. To assure the privacy of your responses, your name will not be identified in my study. Instead I will use a numerical coding process to label and identify my data. No one will have access to the coding method or the surveys except for the researcher. Once the surveys have been completed and responses have been documented and analyzed, the surveys and the coding will be destroyed.

I deeply appreciate your cooperation and support. Without you I would not be able to complete this research project.

If you have further questions, feel free to contact me at 703.876.1174.

Sincerely,

Crystal E. Lilly