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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Jennifer Leonard

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Strategies Information Technology Managers Use to Motivate Remote Employees

by

Jennifer Leonard

MS, University of Phoenix, 2007

BS, University of Phoenix, 2005

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2021

Abstract

Some managers are experiencing challenges keeping remote workers motivated. Managers are concerned with motivating remote employees to ensure production levels are met or exceeded. Grounded in Vroom's expectancy theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies information technology (IT) managers from five organizations in the Southeastern United States used to motivate remote employees. Data were collected from semistructured interviews with 5 business leaders, company website information, and other documentation provided by the IT leader. Data analysis involved recognizing frequent phenomena and coding meaningful and common themes, phrases, or key words. Four themes were evident: transformation leadership, communication, work-life balance through flexible work schedules, and employee engagement. A significant recommendation is precise communication and weekly team meetings to motivate remote employees. The implications for positive social change increase employee performance, reducing unemployment rates, and improving the local economy.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my family and friends who gave me the daily support necessary to continue my education. I am thankful for my husband, Robert, who always believed in me and my ambitions. I am thankful for my daughters, Antonia and Zandria for encouraging me to be “that” mom and lead by example by exploring my passion for education. To my mother who taught me how to be an independent woman, dedicated mother, and strong wife, I am so blessed to have you as my mother. To my grandparents who have departed this world, I am blessed to have had their love and guidance. I miss them dearly but will always remember my grandfather’s comments, “an easy school life makes a hard business life, and a hard school life makes an easy business life”. He passed in April 2021, but he continuously shared my accomplishments with everyone. My grandparents taught me to never give up and trust in the Lord. That message will always remain in my mind and in my heart because without God, I would not be who I am. Lastly, I am thankful for my best friend Gayle, who always knows what to say at just the right moment no matter the situation. I am forever grateful for my family and my friends.

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Life is full of opportunities and I was blessed enough to experience earning my doctorate at Walden University. I had no idea the obstacles I would face during my academic journey, but I always had the support. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Annie Brown and Dr. Mike Gottleib for guiding me through this phenomenal journey. This study would not be possible without your positive words of encouragement and recommendations. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Chad Sines who we lost in early 2021. Dr. Sines encouraged me to press forward when I was ready to end my academic adventure without my degree. His passion for education was inspiring and his method for motivation kept me engaged in my study. He was a fabulous mentor, and I will always be appreciative for his guidance.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Global and technology changes force business leaders to adjust from a brick-and-mortar establishment to employees working from home. Globally, 62% of employees work from a home office and 38% of employees prefer a shared public remote working environment (Chiru, 2017). Technology advancements such as cloud computing allow access to email, web development, social media, data storage, file hosting, and project management via the Internet (Tripathi & Nasina, 2017). Information technology infrastructure is the core of any organization's technical platform with the ability to diffuse and sustain hardware, software, communication, and data (Shibambu & Ditsa, 2017). Technology supports the working from home method; managers must possess the right skills to keep motivating employees to avoid business disruption.

Background of the Problem

The increase in use of a work from home model presents a challenge for managers and employees. Working from home requires employees and managers to understand the process, structure, and technology systems needed to maintain communication (Acharya, 2019). Working from home limits the amount of face-to-face communication between managers and employees, which impedes the human contact effect on employee motivation (Gupta & Pathak, 2018). While some organizational leaders are adapting to remote employee work programs, other leaders pursue methods for managing employees who work outside of the building (Jungsun & Gatling, 2018). The objective of this study was to explore effective strategies IT managers use to motivate employees who work remotely.

Problem Statement

Remote employees experience workplace demotivation because of seclusion, lack of reward and recognition, and lack of immediate engagement (Krishnan, 2018). According to a Gallup survey, two-thirds of American employees experience disengagement (Wolff, 2019). The general business problem was decreased engagement among remote IT employees negatively affects business productivity. The specific business problem was some IT managers lack strategies to motivate remote employees.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies IT managers use to motivate remote employees. The population included IT managers within five global IT solution firms in the southeastern United States who successfully motivated remote employees. Implications for positive social change include the potential to provide managers with effective strategies to motivate remote employees and lower environmental impact. Working remotely helps reduce environmental pollution for society and provides a flexible schedule to benefit employees' lifestyles.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative method was an appropriate choice for this study. Using qualitative research enables the researcher to gain an understanding of the personal experiences and viewpoints of the participants (Wilson et al., 2016). In contrast, a quantitative method requires analyzing statistical data to test variables' relationships or differences (Quan et al., 2017). A mixed methods approach uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. A mixed method approach involves statistical analysis, which was not needed to answer the

research question in this study. A mixed method was immaterial to my research objective. As I desired to identify and explore participants' personal experiences, a qualitative method was an appropriate choice for my study.

Using a case study design enables researchers to investigate a phenomenon thoroughly in an environmental setting (Ridder, 2017); examining two or more cases may offer the researcher more significant information (Yin, 2018). A multiple case study design enabled me to understand productive strategic managerial processes for successfully motivating remote employees. Other possible qualitative designs include phenomenology, ethnography, and narrative (Venkatesh et al., 2016). A phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study because my intention was not to examine the meaning of lived experiences of participants (see Alase, 2017). An ethnographic design requires long-term observations (Willgens et al., 2016). Because of limited time and resources, ethnography was not suitable for this study. Researchers who use a narrative approach accumulate and study individuals' accounts or stories (Willgens et al., 2016). A narrative approach did not work for this study because I was not seeking stories from participants' histories. A case study design enabled me to identify and explore strategies IT managers use to motivate remote employees.

Research Question

The central research question was as follows:

RQ: What strategies do IT managers use to motivate remote employees?

Interview Questions

1. What are your experiences with remote work and job satisfaction in the organization?
2. What strategies have you used to motivate remote employees?
3. What methods do you use to measure remote employee job satisfaction?
4. How do you verify that current remote employee programs benefit remote employees?
5. What additional information would you like to share regarding motivating IT remote employees?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework appropriate for this study was Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. Vroom's expectancy theory is useful for developing a process of motivation because of individuals' perceptions regarding the surroundings and actions in response to the employees' perceptions of the atmosphere (Maimako & Bambale, 2016). Vroom suggested people choose developmental paths of action based on perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs through motivation. During my analysis and findings, I applied Vroom's expectancy theory to demonstrate how motivation contributes to engagement. Vroom defines three components that determine motivational strength: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Vroom's theory is about associations individuals make toward an expected result and the contribution the individual produces toward the result. This conceptual framework allowed me to make conceptual distinctions and organize

ideas to answer the research question concerning what strategies IT managers use to motivate remote employees.

Operational Definitions

Authoritative leader: Authoritative leaders dictate directions to employees and force control without engaging or building relationships (Johnston et. al., 2019).

Democratic leader: Democratic leaders encourage employee creativity and exploration of ideas without limits (DeBell, 2019).

Great man theory: Great man theory introduced by Thomas Carlyle in 1840, is a nonscientific theory asserting leaders are born with natural leadership abilities (Shafique & Beh, 2017).

Laissez-fair leader: Laissez-faire leaders delegate responsibilities and are not engaged in team activities allowing the members to make the decisions without leadership guidance (Igiri et. al., 2019).

Trait theory: Trait theory developed by Allport, as psychologist asserts leaders inherit the leadership characteristics (Gyulavari & Malota, 2018).

Transactional leader: Transactional leaders determine employees' needs and direct employees on how to be successful without building a relationship. This type of leader observes and adheres to all deadlines, avoids risk, and operates within the organizational culture (Ronald & Marc, 2021).

Transformational leader: Transformational leaders build relationships with employees to share knowledge, empower employees to go beyond expectations, and keep employees motivated to continue productivity (Caniels et al., 2018).

Valence: Valence is the importance or value the employee places on the outcome of the reward (Ensour et al., 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts or procedures that the researcher cannot control through testing (Malhotra, 2018). During the interview process, I assumed the interviewees answered the interview questions honestly and accurately. I assumed the managers were currently motivating remote IT employees.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses or circumstances the researcher cannot control which would affect the outcomes of the study (Byrne, et al., 2017). One limitation of this study was managers interviewed were from a small region of the United States. The viewpoints of these participants may not represent the viewpoints of a global population. Another limitation was the presence of interviewer partiality. At the time of this study, I was a working IT manager with remote staff. I had to ensure that my viewpoints did not affect the conclusions of my study.

Delimitations

Delimitations narrow the scope of data and contribute to the main research question (Verboncu & Cochină, 2017). The three delimitations for this study were as follows. Managers in this study were from the southeastern United States. Managers only managed IT employees such as infrastructure engineers, web developers, and computer

support specialists. The third delimitation restricted the sample to managers of remote IT employees and exclude employee perspectives.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The results of this study may contribute to improved leadership practices such as communication, understanding diverse cultures, relationship building, and empowering employees. Engaged employees achieve results by connecting emotionally and physically to organizational leaders and goals (Geethalakshmi & Rodrigues, 2017). Organizational operational effectiveness depends on employee engagement and productivity. The results of this study may provide managers with strategies to reduce remote employee turnover, decrease employee absenteeism, decrease company costs, and increase productivity.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study may contribute to social change by revealing strategies that improve employee satisfaction, automobile emissions reduction, and catalyzing innovations in technology. Technological innovations provide instant access to digital resources, which enable employees to access information from any location (Marsan et al., 2017). Managers who strategically engage employees to increase productivity were expected to outperform their competitors and increase revenue (Witek-Crabb, 2016). Organizations that increase revenue contribute to the economy by offering opportunities for motivated, highly skilled persons in a workplace to apply education and talent and realize employee potential. Other social changes include ecological impacts that improve

societal living conditions (Huang & Li, 2017), as remote employees contribute less to air pollutants.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The objective of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies IT managers use to motivate remote employees. The findings of this study should be of value to IT managers in understanding and implementing effective strategies to motivate remote employees.

Search Strategy

The literature review comprises peer-reviewed research concerning strategies to motivate remote IT employees. Databases used to identify scholarly journals and peer-reviewed sources include EBSCOhost, Emerald Management Journals, Google Scholar, and ProQuest. I used the following keywords or phrases: *employee disengagement*, *employee engagement*, *employee motivation*, *employee performance*, *flexible scheduling*, *innovative leadership*, *performance management*, *telecommuting*, *transformational leadership style*, *Vroom's expectancy theory*, *work environment*, *working remotely*, and *workplace isolation*.

The literature review included 93% peer-reviewed articles published within 5 years of the expected date of receiving approval from the chief academic officer at Walden University and published between 2017 and 2021. The 360 references contained in this study include 354 scholarly peer-reviewed articles representing 98.33% of the total and six books representing 1.67% of the total. The literature review section includes

references published between 2017 and 2021, reflecting the last 5 years before the completion date for this study.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory

In 1964, Vroom, a professor at Yale University, developed expectancy theory for managers to address the motivational efforts of employees. Expectancy theory focuses on the individual's cognizant and emotional participation in deciding between numerous actions (Chan et al., 2018). This theory includes why people engage in certain behaviors when they have alternate options. The motivational process offers managers the ability to encourage positive employee productivity through rewards deemed valuable by the employees. Vroom explained employee motivation through leadership responsiveness (Kelechi et al., 2016). Managers use expectancy theory to understand employee decisions and what strategies motivate positive employee productivity.

Expectancy theory contains three main variables: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Expectancy refers to an employee's capabilities and confidence in the working skills necessary to perform well enough to receive a reward (Barba- Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017). Expectancy refers to the perception of an individual's goals and the association between purpose and performance, performance and reward, and reward and goal accomplishment (Suleman & Hussain, 2018). Employees are encouraged to achieve success if they consider the outcome to be a satisfying reward. Individual job satisfaction increases employee motivation and the ability to overcome negative factors.

Instrumentality refers to employees trusting management to deliver rewards to employees for positive performance (Fenech et al., 2018). Employees who trust

management attempt to complete a goal or project to receive a reward such as a promotion. Instrumentality or force motivates the individual to produce a successful outcome on required tasks (Johennesse & Chou, 2017).

Valence refers to the satisfaction of the need for a rewarding experience (Chopra, 2019). Rewards are monetary, additional time off, or a promotion. Building a successful business depends on the success of individual value (Tucker et al., 2017). Not all employees view the value of rewards or motivation in the same manner. Managers encourage positive performance and remove dissatisfying factors to avoid employee disengagement. Engagement requires participation from both management and employees.

Managers use Vroom's expectancy theory to understand individual factors for employee motivation in the business environment. Expectancy theory enables managers to understand the psychological process that causes employee motivation (Gupta & Goyal, 2018). A positive work environment, climate, and culture increase employee productivity by identifying motivating and demotivating factors (Iqbal & Dastgeer, 2017). Organizational leaders reward employees for performance as part of building a motivational strategy (Yanuar, 2017). Managerial behavior inspires the positive performance of employees through proper goal setting, defined skill requirements, and effective communication (Pons et al., 2017). Managers who desire positive productivity understand the value an employee places on rewards. After understanding the value of the reward, managers establish performance goals and reward the employee after goal accomplishment.

The disadvantage of Vroom's expectancy theory is that some managers fail to participate in motivational techniques (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Building a relationship with employees allows management to design effective motivational strategies (Lazaroiu, 2015). Employee rewards must be of value to the employee to avoid demotivational behavior and negative performance (Maimako & Bambale, 2016). Managers without performance goals fail to understand employee skills do not openly communicate with employees are unavailable for guidance, and are unable to motive staff (Waddimba et al., 2020).

Leadership

Employees and leaders who work together build a bond that encourages company growth and meets customer expectations through positive productivity. Influential leaders engage all employees through building positive teams, open communication, and knowledge alignment with company visions, customer expectations, and organizational goals (Voegtlin et al., 2019). Employee disengagement that does not align with company goals causes business disruption (Underwood, 2016). Leaders who build relationships with employees earn the interest and trust of employees. These leaders are motivational leaders who strive to work with employees to build a solid relationship (Sumra, 2019). Leaders perform many functions in business, but motivating employees is the most significant and complex task (Kane et al., 2019). Leaders who do not implement motivational strategies face decreased productivity in the workplace.

Toxic leaders provide ineffective strategies and create interdepartmental conflict. Toxic leaders damage the organizational culture and break employee trust, leading to a

negative or hostile working environment, employee turnover, and high costs to the organization (Malik et al., 2019; Winn & Dykes, 2019). Toxic leaders possess narcissist tendencies, consistently promote self-worth, and are mentally and verbally abusive (Özer et al., 2017). Toxic leaders appear malevolent, unorthodox, and apprehensive (Fisher, 2019). These leaders are incapable of managing employees and foster poor job performance and low productivity (Burke, 2017). Toxic leaders are hard-hearted, distant, and avoid explaining the method used to make decisions.

Toxic leaders appear destructive to the business. Through passive-aggressive behaviors destructive leaders sabotage organizational goals, resources, and employee motivation (Mishra, 2017). Calheiros (2018) surveyed 2,539 business professionals and found approximately 50% of respondents experiencing destructive leadership behavior. In another study, 215 call center employees responded to a survey identifying job stress and low motivation in the environment because of destructive leadership (Khan et al., 2019). Researchers agree that destructive leadership behavior demotivates employees and increases employee turnover (Fors Brandebo et al., 2016). Because leaders are the driving force of organizational goals, a destructive leadership style negatively affects the organization's sustainability (Robinson et al., 2017). Destructive leaders create a hostile environment problematic for employees to tolerate, causing low morale and demotivating employees.

Leaders demonstrate skills through different styles, and each style's effectiveness depending on positions, different situations, and industry. Leadership skills and styles, when used proactively, allow the achievement of organizational goals (Iordanoglou,

2018). Leaders achieve organizational goals by using an appropriate leadership style or a combination of leadership styles in a situation (Segun-Adeniran, 2015). Leaders can positively motivate employee performance to attain organizational goals (Walthall & Dent, 2016). Business leaders gain a competitive advantage through the implementation of positive leadership styles.

Leadership Styles and Theories

There are many leadership styles and theories influencing leadership behavior. A leadership style provides direction, implements strategies, and motivates individuals (Curtis, 2018). In 1939, Lewin identified three leadership styles: laissez-faire, authoritative, and democratic (Gandolfi & Stone, 2017). Leadership styles offer behaviors an individual may develop to increase their leadership abilities (Li et al., 2018). Leadership theories such as great man, trait theory, behavioral theory, contingency theory, transactional theory, and transformational theory influence individual behavior (Shafique & Beh, 2017). All leadership styles and theories are not scientific but contribute to the data found in this study.

Laissez-faire leaders use a delegating approach allowing employees to make decisions without leadership guidance. Laissez-faire leaders offer limited direction and allow team members to make the final decision (Boyer-Davis, 2018). Laissez-faire leaders do not engage in decision-making with employees and appear to be an absent member (Al Rahbi et al., 2017). This type of leader will not provide guidance or direction in problem-solving activities and solely depends on the employees for the resolution. Aliekperova (2018) stated that the laissez-faire leader is absent, avoids responsibilities,

will not satisfy employee needs, and demotivates employees. Laissez-faire leaders increase employee stress and negatively impact employees' mental health (Sesen et al., 2019). Laissez-faire leaders show no motivation to engage with employees or provide leadership and appear to display isolated independence (Gatti et al., 2019). While this leadership style appears to offer negative consequences to employee motivation, laissez-faire leadership positively impacts employee motivation by empowering employees to formulate decisions and solve business problems (Fiaz, et al., 2017). The laissez-faire leadership style is most effective when employees are dexterous, seasoned, and have advanced education (Pahi & Hamid, 2016). Employees lacking skills, education, or motivation will fail under this leadership style.

Authoritative leaders appear as experts who dictate instructions towards managing the business and controlling business functions. Goleman (1995) introduced the authoritative leadership style in his theory of emotional intelligence (Eketu & Ayondu, 2017). Authoritative leaders provide the vision with detailed instructions and set explicit expectations for accomplishments and methods for task completion (Gandolfi & Stone, 2017). This leadership style focuses on commands from the leader and actions from the team members (Al Rahbi et al., 2017). Authoritative leaders do not elicit suggestions or recommendations from team members (Rawat & Lyndon, 2016). In the long-term, authoritative leaders can be detrimental to organizational success because they must always be correct in their decisions (Al Rahbi et al., 2017). These types of leaders make decisions and expect employees to complete their actions. Authoritative leaders are

successful when an immediate decision from the most knowledgeable member promotes a positive outcome.

Democratic leadership is a transparent leadership style that enables employees to grow through self-development to perform efficiently. Democratic leaders provide team members with guidance and a final decision, promoting positive psychological measurements and an ethical environment that encourages self-awareness and moral perspective while balancing and processing information (Lyubovnikova et al., 2017). Employees feel empowered, allowing for decision-making and accountability. This type of leader promotes a comfortable, engaging environment for team members, and employees are accountable for their decisions, actions, and group disposition (Al Rahbi et al., 2017). Team members are part of the decision-making process and have an essential role with the team. This style leads to positive outcomes at the employee level, including productivity, employee engagement, creativity, and job satisfaction (Farooq et al., 2018). A democratic leader encourages employee self-development by empowering employees to make decisions, encouraging additional responsibilities, and promoting positive employee performance.

Many leaders possess positive characteristics and exceptional leadership skills displayed through decisions and outcomes. The great man theory is a nonscientific theory asserting leaders possess personal or great characteristics (Maskaly & Jennings, 2016). Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish philosopher, introduced this theory in 1840, promoting his idea that great men were born with leadership qualities. (Shafique & Beh, 2017). According to the great man theory, leaders are naturally born as dictators or authoritative

figures such as military or political leaders (Magombo-Bwanali, 2019). According to the great man theory, leaders are not made but are born with leadership traits and characteristics (Pafford & Schaefer, 2017). A great man in a leadership role makes decisions, motivates others, and delivers a positive outcome (Stringham, 2017). While this theory is not scientific, this theory posits that leaders possess the identified characteristics required for successful organizational leaders.

Trait theory is like the great man theory because trait theory discloses that people are born with certain qualities or characteristics. Trait theory suggests individuals inherit certain qualities, and these traits making those individuals better leaders (Xu et al., 2017). Allport, a psychologist, developed this theory through dictionary research, notating descriptive personality trait words to analyze and classify (Nadeem et al., 2016). Allport defined leadership traits to avoid generalization and specify inherited characteristics (Gyulavari & Malota, 2018). These traits identified by Allport provide the foundation of a person's characteristics but do not qualify everyone with these traits as a leader (Anyzova, 2017). These five personality traits are experience, meticulousness, extraversion, sociability, and neuroticism (Bhattacharjee et al., 2018). Leaders do not have specific traits that make leaders, but certain physical features such as being tall, personality factors such as being well-liked, and possess a higher education assists an individual to gain a leadership position (Marturano, 2016). Leaders have individual dominant factors such as knowledge, physical features, proper appearance, and social qualities (Magombo-Bwanali, 2019). Individuals may have one style that is dominant but

effective leaders possess skills, social awareness, and style as part of their competencies and knowledge that encourages others to follow.

Transactional leaders focus on supervising staff and organizational performance. A transactional leader motivates employees through directional leadership with organizational accomplishments as the primary goal (Dartey-Baah & Emmanuel, 2016). Transactional leaders, through exchange transactions, motivate employees with established processes and procedures through rewards or reprimands (Aminu et al., 2017; Boyer-Davis, 2018). Effective transactional leadership assists in employee goal setting; and tracking progress, and in addition to rewards or punishment for performance (Cote, 2017). Employees working for transactional leaders understand the directions and expectations of organizational objectives because leaders articulate the conditions and expectations clearly.

Transformational leaders inspire motivation, are intellectually stimulating, provide personalized attention, and idealize followers (Raffo & Williams, 2018). Transformational leaders help transform the employee by creating a positive and valuable atmosphere (Nazim & Mahmood, 2018). These leaders form teams to produce positive results through employee motivation (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019). Transformational leaders understand the employee through relationship building and meet the employees' needs for continuous production improvements (Mittal, 2016). Leaders build trust with employees, which increases employee satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Employee job satisfaction exists through motivating factors such as proper training, open communication, merit increases, and wellness programs. Factors for job

dissatisfaction are stress, lack of communication, poor mental health conditions, and disorganized leadership methods, resulting in low job performance (Saha, 2016). Transformational leaders use engagement and inspiration to gain the trust of employees and improve organizational performance (Yi-Ying, 2016). Leaders with positive guidance generate positive outcomes and encourage productivity through motivational efforts (Malik et al., 2017). When a leader builds a relationship with employees, the employee can succeed beyond expectations (Ho, 2016). Transformational leaders influence employee actions, promote self-confidence, and encourage positive behavior.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize and understand emotions to manage personal behavior and relationships. Goleman introduced this concept in his book in 1995, defining emotional intelligence as a person's ability to recognize and understand their own emotional makeup (Dubey & Bakhshi, 2018). Emotionally intelligent leaders integrate emotions, judgments, and performance to inspire employees and build employee relationships (Jimenez, 2018). Leaders use emotional intelligence to alter employee emotions, build trust in employees, and inspire employees to achieve goals (McClellan & DiClementi, 2017). Leaders with the ability to recognize feelings and emotions encourage positive behavior and motivate employees.

Employee Motivation

In the organizational setting, employee motivation is the inner desire that leads an individual to work harder. Since 1930, scholars and psychologists continue to research the concept of motivation (Sihag, 2016). Various factors such as disengaged leaders, lack

of leader communication, and lack of work clarification may influence a person's behavior (Minhas & Nirupama, 2017). Motivation is the strength of the internal and external factors affecting the individual's action (Tanku & Tanku, 2017). Managers motivate employees to perform effectively and efficiently if the reward for the performance is valuable to the employee (Franco & Haase, 2017). Managers who understand the desires and expectations of employees may promote motivational strategies for effective operational performance (Komal, 2018). Managers without experience and proper skills to motivate employees may experience operational failures (Armstrong, 2019). Employees without motivation may experience low productivity.

Motivating satisfied employees supports positive productivity and increases business sustainability. Motivational theories offer managers various options to build strategies to motivate employees (Pilvelyte & Urboniene, 2018). Najjar and Fares (2017) discussed four theories from the 1950s for developing motivational workplace performance practices: Maslow's hierarchy of needs, McGregor's X and Y theory, Herzberg's two-factor theory, and McClelland's theory of needs. Managers motivate employees when the manager understands the employees' needs and does not assume employee desires (Tsvangirai & Chinyamurindi, 2019). Managers design motivational practices according to the needs of the employees through successful strategies (Bulto & Markos, 2017). Without employee motivation, business productivity goals may not be met resulting in financial loss.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

In 1943, Maslow presented the hierarchy of needs theory (Rakić & Živković, 2017). Maslow identified five needs in a defined order, explaining lower-level needs must be satisfied first before the next level of need can be satisfied (Rego, 2017). The first need is physiological, such as the need for food, water, and sleep. The second need is safety, such as security in residence and family. The third need is the social need such as for love and belonging, that may be found in religion, workgroups, or families, and the need to feel accepted by others. The fourth need is self-esteem or confidence in personal competency. The fifth need is self-actualization, or the desire to grow and become more. Maslow's theory reveals individuals must satisfy lower-level needs before moving to the next level (D'Souza & Gurin, 2017). A person must achieve the satisfaction of the lower needs, such as physiological, safety, and belonging needs, before satisfying higher needs such as recognition, esteem, and self-actualization (Abun et al., 2020). A disruption in any of these needs demotivates an employee, which could result in a production delay.

Employee motivational needs differ from one employee to another because each employee demonstrates a different attitude, personality, and ability to obtain knowledge (Kotni & Karumuri, 2018). While most factors of Maslow's hierarchy are understandable, self-actualization is a continuous process leading to creative utilization or complete boredom as the human mind continues to learn (Rodrigues & Deuskar, 2018). Maslow believed the psychology of the human mind is powerful, and anyone has the control potential to master any task (Tripathi & Moakumla, 2018). Employees achieve self-actualization through fulfilling personal growth.

McGregor's X and Y Theory

In 1960, McGregor introduced X and Y theory to explain how managers motivate in opposite patterns (Rakić & Živković, 2017). This theory identifies the different management styles in X or Y. Theory X managers disengage in teamwork and direct employees. Theory X managers believe in monitoring all employee activities and rewarding or reprimanding the employee according to the results (Brdulak et al., 2017). Theory Y managers engage in teamwork and encourage critical thinking or friendly competition as a motivational tactic (Gandolfi & Stone, 2017). Theory X managers assume employees have no ambition to work, while Theory Y managers assume employees desire work and achieve satisfaction (Hommellhoff, 2017). Theory X managers assume negativity about employee behavior, whereas Theory Y managers assume the opposite (Braha, 2018). Theory X managers manipulate motivation through rewards and punishment without encouraging employees. Theory Y managers inspire employees to contribute personal abilities and execute ideas.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Employee motivation is higher when motivating factors and hygiene factors are favorable. Herzberg's two-factor theory explains job factors that provide employee satisfaction and other job or hygiene factors that lead to employee dissatisfaction (Kotni & Karumuri, 2018). The two-factor theory offers a robust foundation for comprehending employee job satisfaction (Ward, 2019). Employee motivating factors include combining accomplishments, job acknowledgment, type of work, responsibility, development, and growth opportunities (Appelbaum et al., 2018). Hygiene factors include organization

planning, management, relationship with management, work environments, friends, compensation, work-life balance, and job security (Rahman et al., 2017). Herzberg researched nine different organizations with 200 respondents notating motivational factors create job satisfaction and, hygiene factors create dissatisfied employees because motivational factors are absent (Kotni & Karumuri, 2018). A decrease in motivating factors can diminish employee motivation, encouraging a dissatisfied employee.

McClelland's Theory of Needs

Employee motivation differs for each employee because employees require different desires. McClelland's theory of needs involves motivation, expectations, and incentives (Moodley et al., 2018). Employee motivation drives actions, and, through actions, employees may achieve power, drive positive expectations, and earn incentives (Barusman & Siswadi, 2018). Managers use motivational tactics to encourage positive production when demotivating events, such as employee activity competition or passed over for a promotion (Cote, 2019). According to Moodley et al., (2018), money and stimulating work link McClelland's theory to motivating employees. Employee expectations decrease when motivation lessens. Managers who use positive incentives in demotivating instances yield positive results for both management and employees (Panait & Panait, 2018). Managers design strategies to meet employee needs and encourage employee motivation through understanding and documenting employee desires.

Leaders encourage employees to manage stress and avoid burnout by using flextime, telecommuting, and PTO. Leaders want to attract the best talent and offer flexible work programs such as working from home and unlimited PTO (Trusic et al.,

2017). Managers who focus more on their employees' actual needs instead of assuming the needs of employees provide an opportunity to motivate employees (Diskiene et al., 2019). Managers who implement motivational programs meet the employee's needs, increase job satisfaction, and successfully motivate employees (Sweis et al., 2019). Employee programs assist with employee motivation and encourage job satisfaction.

Some IT business leaders use employee engagement survey results to understand what may motivate employees to build motivational programs. Surveys provide opportunities for employees to elaborate on desires from business leaders (Schneider, 2020). Google, for example, uses scientific methods to study and discover the best programs for IT employees (Jha & Mishra, 2016). The purpose of the survey at Google provided leaders with information on what motivational programs may work in different parts of the world. In the survey, employees receive the opportunity to relate character, attitudes, work culture, projects, and working with others. Google leaders encourage no e-mails after dark but will not penalize any employee who does not uphold this directive (Jha & Mishra, 2016). Through surveys, Google leaders learned that employees wanted to continue educational activities. As a method to motivate employees, Google business leaders offer tuition services for continuing education.

Employee Demotivation

Employees without motivation produce less work, may fail to complete tasks, or leave an organization. Demotivated employees negatively impact growth and productivity (Moodley et al., 2018). The challenges managers experience with employee demotivation occur from various factors such as burnout, lack of career advancement,

lack of executive commitment, and lack of training and development (Hee et al., 2016). Employees without motivation experience negative emotions, leading to decreased productivity and possible turnover (Sukhumvito, et. al., 2020). Organizational leader commitment decreases turnover when task performances and organizational goal accomplishments maintain employee trust (Vasudevan & Mahadi, 2017). Other factors that demotivate employees include discrimination, favoritism, and corruption (Irfan & Marzuki, 2018). When managers express value to employees through appreciation and recognition, they encourage employee motivation (Leyer et al., 2017). Leaders encourage a healthy organizational culture and address demotivational concerns, which may prevent a negative impact on business productivity (Duncombe, 2019). Leaders increase motivation by understanding an employee's desires and, when possible, implementing strategies such as rewards, recognition, or other benefits.

Working Remotely

Working remotely or telecommuting is one method leaders use to motivate employees. Working remotely or on a flexible schedule provides varying working hours, less commute time, and less stress (Avis, 2018). A 1979 news article revealed the working from home concept, but the flexible working arrangement did not apply to all types of work (Chiru, 2017). Flexible working arrangements create more opportunities for employees to work anywhere (Neirotti et al, 2017). Employers with telecommuting or remote programs in an organization use advanced technology such as cloud computing and upgraded telephone systems to increase response times for production outages (Beliz et al., 2019). Information technology advancements enable remote employees to respond

quickly to production problems and client requirements (Zuofa & Ochieng, 2017). Technological advancements created mobile stability, making remote work possible (Lee, et al., 2016).

Business leader motivational techniques encourage employee participation and commitment. Leaders of a remote workforce may experience decreased absenteeism, improved employee performance, and increased acceptance of organizational changes because employee participation increases through employee motivation (Silcox, 2016). In a Stanford University study, Crunden (2016) found that remote workers were 13% more productive than office-based employees. Business leaders who empower employees to work remotely reported employee commitment, engagement, and higher performance (Michielsens et al., 2014). Employee motivations depend on leadership style, employee, and job characteristics. Financial and non-financial benefits encourage employees to work. Technology is so accessible for an employee that works life and home life begin to blend (Schlegel, 2017). Remote employees work from anywhere, and while this is appealing, it creates longer working hours and less family time.

Employees working in a remote environment reduce the company's cost, may increase employee production, and improve work-life balance (Vesala & Tuomivaara, 2019). Employees who work remotely experience less stress may experience enthusiasm about their jobs and may experience less work-family conflict (Masuda et al., 2017). Employees with less stress experience an increase in job satisfaction. The diverse work cultures within a remote workforce offer organizational leaders the advantage of global staffing with financial impact reduction (Magnier-Watanabe et al., 2017). Global staffing

provides leaders with various employees with different personalities and employee availability outside of regular business hours. These advantages encourage leaders to review and implement working remote programs.

Virtual Teams

Leaders implement virtual teams to attract and hire the best employees. Business leaders increase the number of virtual teams in many organizations because of resource limitations and geographical boundaries (Magnier-Watanabe et al., 2017). Leaders with multiple global resources have access to members from all locations, bringing an opulence of knowledge and experience (Krishnan, 2018). Technology advancements drive the global economy, and the importance of clear and repetitive communication allows virtual employees opportunities to perform successfully (Maes & Weldy, 2018). Technology advancements provide business leaders with access to attract and retain a global virtual workforce.

Virtual or remote teams include individuals from any location globally (Dumitrascu & Dumitrascu, 2015). Global searches for subject matter experts are an advantage for the business (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017). Business leaders have a larger talent pool when searching globally rather than locally for employees. Leaders must understand how to communicate when managing a global workforce to avoid missed deadlines and low productivity.

There are several disadvantages for leaders who use virtual or remote teams. Disadvantages to using remote teams include the cost of technology, team conflicts, less control, unskilled team members, lack of trust, and social isolation (Cicei, 2015). The

absence of work culture, peer communication, and non-flexible scheduling is another disadvantage for remote teams (Solís, 2017). Promotion, rewards, and positive recognition are disadvantages for remote teams because members are physically unavailable onsite, team members appear invisible (Chithambo, 2015). Proper employee and manager training provides procedures to avoid the disadvantages of remote teams (Maniam et al., 2016). Leadership training guides leaders and encourages positive methods to avoid negative impacts on virtual or remote teams.

Employee Isolation

Employee isolation occurs when employees receive minimal communication, discouragement, or experience minimal team social engagements. Business leaders with motivational methods avoid employee isolation from the office environment (Chekwa, 2018). Employee isolation is a result of nonverbal activities, minimal social interaction, lack of trust in other team members or leadership, cultural differences, and demotivation. Employees must feel part of the team through engagement and appreciation (Caillier, 2016). Organizations with leaders who provide open communication between supervisors with flexible leadership styles have a more significant positive impact on the communication satisfaction of subordinates and are less likely to experience employee isolation (Madlock, 2018). Remote workers do not engage in office nonverbal activities. Managers encourage open communication with all employees to avoid employee isolation.

Employee isolation occurs with an employee at any level of employment. Employee isolation can occur for various reasons regardless of workplace location

(Orhan et al., 2016). A remote employee withdrawn from coordination and collaboration appears isolated through self-infliction (White, 2018). An employee experiences isolation or disconnection from senior leadership if not engaged on a professional or personal level (Jacobs, 2017). An overload of e-mail communication and no face-to-face contact encourages employee isolation (Estévez-Mujica, & Quintane, 2018). Employees who engage with all leadership levels and receive encouragement from direct management are less likely to experience separation.

A transformational leader inspires employees through relationship building and encourages employee engagement. A transformational leadership style reduces the amount of employee isolation by building relationships with employees (Munir et al., 2016). Transformational leaders work with employees regarding career progression, isolation, and lack of appreciation by other leaders (Franics, 2017). Transformational leaders understand the importance of employee motivation and how to remove employee isolation (Busse & Czekala, 2018). Unlike the transformational leader, leaders who focus primarily on business objectives and monetary gain may encourage employee seclusion.

Work-Life Balance

Employees with a work-life balance experience an increase in job satisfaction and have an increase in workplace productivity. Employees without work-life balance experience increased absenteeism, a decrease in job satisfaction, and an increase in employee turnover (Agha et al., 2017). Job satisfaction changes when an employee experiences a disturbance in work-life balance (Knox, 2016). Information technology employees maintain flexible schedules to boost positive productivity (Crespi-Vallbona &

Mascarilla- Miró, 2018). A flexible schedule provides opportunities for the employee to attend personal events such as doctor appointments (Braun & Peus, 2018). Employee-friendly policies encourage employees to work with leadership when schedules do not correlate.

Workplace flexibility inspires a stronger relationship with managers and employees. The benefits of working remotely intrigue managers and encourage organizational leaders to adopt remote working practices (Zhang, 2016). Vilhelmson and Thulin (2016) noted that telework is valuable and remote work should be a flexible practice for employees but not a full-time option. When managers support this function, provide trust in employees, and encourage a flexible working environment, employees trust leadership and enjoy flexibility, thus satisfying the employee (Dizaho et al., 2017). Timesaving, work-life balance improvements for families, transportation reduction, environmental protection, energy use, office space, job opportunities, and economic growth in other areas attract teleworkers.

The implementation of a remote working program benefits both employees and leaders at any organization. IT roles are popular options for remote work and offer IT managers the opportunity to attract top talent, maintain employee commitment, and maintain job satisfaction (Bentley et al., 2016). Despite the benefit of working remotely for employees, many leaders do not implement remote programs in IT (Chapman et al., 2018). Many managers believe employees must be physically located at a business office to perform office duties. Remote employees are productive through employee engagement, retention, and job satisfaction. Yahoo and Best Buy leaders removed the

working remotely program because working remotely did not allow for effective communication, collaboration, and trust (Zafari et al., 2019). Unlike the leaders at Yahoo or Best Buy, the remote workers for the federal government are successful because employees and managers built a relationship through effective communication (Brown et al., 2016). This type of program may benefit several organizational when implemented correctly.

Employees with successful work-life balance understand the importance of balancing both work and life activities. Work-life balance reflects an individual's ability to balance work and personal activities (Omar & Asif, 2016). Work-life balance leads to greater employee satisfaction because performance is higher because of a reduction in stress (Antony, 2018). Working in a remote environment offers work-life balance for employees through less stress, fewer disruptions, and a comfortable working environment (Manasa & Showry, 2018). For employers, the benefits of having remote employees include cost savings, increased productivity, easy recruitment, work-life balance, and employee retention (Jones, 2017). These benefits offer remote employees opportunities to run errands, increased family time, and avoid stress factors such as driving home from the office in heavy traffic.

Leaders and employees communicate to avoid complications in any working situation. Managers and employees who fail to communicate with staff complicate work-life balance (Dyer et al., 2018). Employees depend on email, instant message, and video conference technology for communication and engagement (Paczkowski & Kuruzovich, 2016). Organizational leaders who implement work-life balance programs offer

employees the opportunity to maintain positive production and live a healthy life (Oludayo, et al., 2018). Work-life balance programs such as job sharing, job redesign, flexible hours, and additional PTO are enhancement programs for employees (Sharma & Sudhesh, 2018). Successful telework includes training, manager and employee trust, communication, and positive commitment from all parties.

Leaders support work-life balance through leading, encouraging time off, maintaining open communication, and offering flexible schedules for employees. Managers and employees who build positive relationships use open communication to depict the goals and actions required for accomplishments (Lardy, 2016). Negative leadership expectations and lack of communication lead to employee disengagement and unexpected turnover (Hurst et al., 2017). Leaders inspire employee satisfaction by promoting work-life balance practices (Dyer & Yiran, 2018). Leaders encouraging work-life balance will retain engaging and satisfied employees.

Flexible Work

Flexible work programs encourage employee satisfaction. Flexible work schedules help employees avoid stress, burnout, and frustration; lessen daily demands; and promote healthy rest patterns (Obisi, 2017). Employees are more productive when working on a flexible schedule because employees can adjust their schedule for personal or professional obligations (Neirotti et al., 2017). Some employees experience a negative side effect from flexible work because the employee increased hours and adds unnecessary pressure, leading to health problems (Zafari et al., 2019). Flexible work arrangements are successful when employees and managers work together through

communication, empowerment, and work–life balance (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2018). Flexible work schedules decrease stress, encourage morale, and reduce absenteeism.

Information Technology Workforce

Information technology includes communication equipment used by IT professionals to conduct daily business. Information technology empowers organizational business leaders to develop a more effective and efficient business operation protocol (Ben, 2018). Business transformation through technological advances requires skilled IT professionals (Tarafdar, & Tanriverdi, 2018). An increase in global operations seeking a competitive advantage increased the demand of the IT workforce (Pataki-Bittó, 2018). Consequently, IT professionals are vital to the organization's performance (Pekmez, 2016). IT personnel use technology to perform business functions, including internal and external communication.

Information technology professionals include network architects, computer programmers, computer support specialists or analysts, computer system analysts, database administrators, and web, software, and cloud developers. Information technology professionals are responsible for administering the latest technology, developing technology structures and procedures to resolve business problems, and delivering technical support to end-users (King et al., 2017). These employees provide IT services and support for business products to clients (Wadesango et al., 2017). Many IT jobs are complex and require certifications, degrees, and skilled professionals from all over the world (Mardis et al., 2018). India has approximately four million technical workers (Singh et al., 2017). These employees are because of the type of education and

skill requirements necessary for performance in the IT sector (Damaraju et al., 2016). Many IT professionals obtain certifications or degrees to continue managing the world of technology.

In today's technological world, gender issues are common; most IT professional leaders are men (Pathak & Srivastava, 2017). Women are present in programming or lower-level positions in IT; unfortunately, very few are performing in higher-level IT positions (Long et al., 2016). Family responsibilities prevent women from working longer hours than male employees (Kaushik & Pullen, 2018). Women have a disadvantage in the IT industry because leaders expect women to resign from employment after marriage or starting a family; therefore, recruiters prefer male employees (Kaushik & Pullen, 2018). Women are less likely to progress in a higher-level IT career because women lack the interest to obtain current technical knowledge and focus on other priorities (Islahi & Nasrin, 2019). All employees should have equal opportunities to grow and advance in the workplace.

Employee Turnover

Employee turnover may occur for various reasons and may negatively impact business productivity. Employee turnover disrupts organizational productivity and decreases employee morale (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018). On average, employee attrition cost business leaders approximately 25–500% of an employee's compensation (Alatawi, 2017). According to Gartner, employee turnover costs business leaders two and a half times the annual salary of an IT professional (Gumussoy, 2016). Employee turnover occurs in IT because of increased employee stress, decreased supervisor support, and job

demotivation (Naidoo, 2018). In one study, out of 172 recipients, 48% of the IT professional's surveyed agree that employee turnover occurred because of a lack of organizational commitment and low job satisfaction (Carolina Machado Dias et al., 2018). Business leaders may implement rewards, recognition, and respect programs to avoid voluntary attrition (Kundu & Lata, 2017). Employee rewards may include gift cards, additional PTO, or incentive trips. Productive employees obtain rewards and recognition contingent upon attained deadlines (Langove & Isha, 2017). Avoiding employee turnover requires managers to understand the cause of the turnover and implement the right strategy to discourage turnover.

Employees leave organizations because of lack of motivation, burnout, and low morale. In a survey of 460 IT professionals in India, over half of respondents indicated reasons for leaving companies, such as frustration, job dissatisfaction, and occupational stress (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2016). An IT shared services survey revealed IT professional resignations occur from employees with nonsignificant tasks (Uruthirapathy & Grant, 2015). Turnover factors for IT professionals may be individual, organizational, or external (Lo, 2015). Job fulfillment and organizational assurance are the two leading factors in IT turnover (Eckhardt et al., 2016). In one study, an internal factor such as negative supervisor interaction increased IT engineer turnover (Iammartino et al., 2016). Leaders experience a decrease in IT turnover from employees with higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Azeez et al., 2016). Managers must ensure employee satisfaction through open communication, career growth, and employee engagement to avoid turnover.

Offshore Information Technology Employees

Many organizational leaders review cost-effective methods to avoid damaging business impacts. In the 1960s, business leaders outsourced low-value work to developing countries because labor costs were lower than in the United States (Chen & Lin, 2016). In the 1990s, business leaders began to offshore call center services and IT services to decrease production costs and to offer a global path for continuing business services (Gopalakrishnan et al., 2017). These cost-effective measures allow business leaders to expand into other countries and attract supplementary talent (Mukherjee, 2017). This expansion allows business leaders to focus and strengthen the core values of business operations (Awe et al., 2018). Offshore IT business expansion is successful when IT managers influence and attract top talent to reduce costs.

Employee Retention

Managers strive to find the right motivation to retain employees. Employee retention signifies positive employee motivation and encourages employees to maintain employment (Joubert et al., 2017). Employee retention is critical to organizations seeking skilled professionals and knowledgeable staff (Johennesse & Chou, 2017). Employee retention strategies allow business leaders to retain proficient staff, increase productivity and encourage positive morale (Covella et al., 2017). Employees with a career path, competitive compensation, and satisfaction maintain employment (Qing et al., 2018). Managers use strategic planning to maintain employee commitment.

Communication

Open communication from leaders influences commitment from employees establishes trust and builds positive relationships. Managers who use open communication in organizations establish an environment of trust with an open-door policy, allowing for two-way communication, feedback, and a willingness to listen from both parties (Chen & Adamson, 2015). Organizational leaders display a model of communication to encourage and engage employees to follow their example (Jiang & Luo, 2018). Influential leaders communicate to avoid problems, find solutions, and build employee trust (Justin et al., 2017). Business leaders and employees work together to resolve business problems through effective communication, improving business performance (Meintjes & Hofmeyr, 2018). Effective communication provides an open path for managers and employees to engage in conversation and build positive relationships.

When corresponding, employees and managers use different communication methods including face-to-face, email, text messages, and body language. A possibility is that the science of communication supports visual and auditory communication because humans remember more from visual than verbal sources; hence, face-to-face communication is preferable (Nickitas, 2019). Body language is an integral part of communication and can encourage or discourage conversation (Lu et al., 2018). Leaders believe fewer e-mails and more in-person communication increase employee engagement (Wikaningrum et al., 2018). On the contrary, a survey revealed that 222 remote employees did not require face-to-face meetings because technology provides open

communication through emails and instant messages (Madlock, 2018). Globalization and technological advances encourage online collaboration for virtual employees, delays in communication may contribute to misinterpretation of the message (Mclarnon et al., 2019). Leaders have several methods available when communicating with employees.

Effective communication is vital for human resource leaders. Human resources leaders communicate about the organization by communicating e-mail, employment meetings, and social networks (Rudney, 2016). Human resource communication provides opportunities for employees to attend corporate network events, online training or seminars, and awards for the employee or company outside of the typical working business day (Obedgiu, 2017). Employees adapt well to cultures that captivate their attention, offer accessible communication, and leaders that motivate their production (Arulrajah, 2017). Remote employees depend on communication from business leaders within the organization to stay informed of business progression.

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisals provide the employee with a positive or negative review of the employee's productivity from the manager. Human resources leaders work simultaneously with managers during the performance appraisal process (Arora, 2016). Performance appraisals expose influences such as positive and negative productivity, work-life balance, and stressful job situations (Ismail & Gali, 2017). Managers must understand the importance of using a performance appraisal and how the results contribute to understanding the employee's productivity. Work-life balance can create a problem for the employee, leading to a negative performance appraisal. If an employee

experiences stress and does not rectify the problem, the domino effect could lead to more significant problems and increase stress. Employee stress promotes difficulties for the employee and the organization; if not addressed, turnover may occur. Engaged leaders will assess the situation before escalation and address the problem to avoid turnover. Natural attrition in any organization is understandable but, business leaders depend on the HR team to devise an action plan to retain top talent. Leaders use performance appraisals to influence employee engagement.

Employee Engagement

Employer perks, positive work productivity, and work-life balance encourage employee engagement. Leaders use four ways to improve employee engagement (Wittman, 2017). Communication of roles and responsibilities is the first method to improve employee engagement. Communication gaps between leaders and employees discourage engagement (Dash & Mohanty, 2019). Thirteen percent of employees understand business communication and perform based on the information received from leadership (Wittman, 2017). The second method to improve engagement is investing in tools and training for employees (Wittman, 2017). An employee without proper tools or minimal training is less productive (Meswantri & Ilyas, 2018). The third method for leaders to improve employee engagement is to provide employees with a career path. Employees committed to a career path participate in positive performance (Wittman, 2017). Employee engagement encourages positive relationships among coworkers (Wittman, 2017). Engaged employees desire to be part of a team and part of the organization.

Engaged employees produce more work because of their level of individual involvement and commitment within the organization. Today, employee communication and engagement differ from many years ago because of technological advances (Meswantri & Ilyas, 2018). In a study of 599 C-level executives including business unit leaders and IT leaders, 54% reported technology encourages business productivity and provided other options for employee engagement such as tablets and cellular devices (Jungsun & Gatling, 2018). Mobile devices replace face-to-face interaction and influencing cross-collaboration among leaders and employees (Sharma & Nargotra, 2018). An engaged employee maintains open communication with organizational leaders, experiences gratification in the workplace, and delivers positive business productivity (Parent & Lovelace, 2018). Engaged employees experience higher commitment to work, an increase in productivity, and increase in job satisfaction.

Business leaders understand that the greatest asset to any organization is employees. Investing in an employee provides an increased opportunity for managers to promote strategic HR policies and the direction of organizational goals (Jungsun & Gatling, 2018). Engaged employees perform positively and effectively, reducing employee turnover and negative business operations (Mohanty, 2018). Leaders must understand how to motivate employees through organizationally designed processes, motivational people, and technology programs (Antony, 2018). Manager influence encourages employee relationships and employee engagement.

Managers empower employees through engaging conversation and encouraging job satisfaction. Contented employees produce and maintain company standards by

meeting company goals (Yeo et al., 2018). Employee performance is higher for employees who maintain higher levels of involvement and commitment (Nazir & Islam, 2017). Engaged employees demonstrate pleasure, self-importance, self-motivation during their work and bring in their personalities (Pandita & Singhal, 2017). Employee engagement activities reveal dedication, devotion, and passion in work, which results in higher company revenues and delighted customers (Anindita & Seda, 2018). An engaged employee demonstrates positive behavior and reflects encouragement through daily activities. Employee engagement enhances growth through programs designed by business leaders and HR partners to implement motivational strategies.

Leader–Employee Relationships

Leader-member exchange theory (LMX) refers to working dynamics between the leader and the employee through positive relationship building. Employee productivity is more effective when employees engage in a strong relationship with their leader (Gandolfi & Stone, 2017). Employee engagement between managers and employees requires commitment from both parties. Strategic goals build a competitive advantage strategy for organizational stability in global organizations (Taneja et al., 2015). Leaders must connect with employees to facilitate the success of organizational goals (Peng et al., 2019). Successful LMX is the conversation between leaders and members exchanging support and commitment (Mehnaz et. al., 2018). This commitment builds trust over time between managers and employees with benefits towards both the employee and the leader with a positive outcome.

Social exchange theory in business revolves around human behavior, building relationships, and the risks of maintaining or dissolving the relationship. De Roeck and Maon (2018) found LMX has a strong theoretical rationale for explaining employee engagement. The social exchange theory proposes that people make choices based on rational decision-making of priorities (Gao & Wu, 2019). This theory provides a theoretical foundation to explain why employees continue to engage or disengage in their work and organization. Work engagement is an exchange relationship between leaders and employees. An engaged employee will receive resources and support to perform duties but an employee without necessary resources and support may not engage in performance (Jiang & Wang, 2018). Social exchange relationships are socio-emotional actions among employees, such as building trust and commitment towards leadership (Ahn et al., 2018). Engaged employees share a positive relationship with leadership that eventually will lead to commitment (Jena et al., 2017). Leader and employee relationships are part of the socialization process for successful performance and satisfaction (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). Employees with a strong relationship with leaders and perceived employer support have a positive effect on employee attitude and behavior (Gao & Wu, 2019). Emotional attachments between employees and managers reflect positively on employee engagement.

Satisfied IT employees influence positive workplace activity through engagement and motivation. 36% of satisfied employees improve workplace productivity and accomplish organizational objectives (Baltzley, 2016). When employees engaged in organizational goals and commitments, there is a reduction in employee turnover due to

employee satisfaction (Mete et al., 2016). When employees no longer engage in their position, unless through motivation or encouragement to progress, the employees seek alternate employment. Employees in IT experience challenges from motivational and influential problems and the demands of leadership. Managers must understand the psychological behavior of an IT employee to retain their services and satisfaction. Employees' attitudes toward job position and willingness to learn influence engagement (Caillier, 2016). The connection between employee engagement and organizational culture affect organizational performance. Managers encourage employee engagement through personal questions, exhibiting concern when problems arise and building a relationship of trust (Dash & Pravat, 2019). Leaders focus on trustworthy relationships and encourage organizational value because trustworthy relationships may lead to higher levels of productivity and employee engagement (Watson et al., 2018). Understanding how to satisfy employees, encourage higher production levels, and openly communicate for more employee involvement may influence the development of a positive workplace.

Employees want to work for organizations that align with personal values and promote positive social change. This is challenging for many organizations with a multigenerational workforce to lead. 69% of employees want an organizational culture aligned with their feelings about their job (Baltzley, 2016). One area of employee engagement that requires improvement is how an employee performs during mergers or acquisitions (Appelbaum et. al., 2017) Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and effective leadership development drive positive engagement for employees. The social involvement creates a positive corporate image that may increase business performance

and encourage positive employee engagement (Kowal & Roztocki, 2015). Three agile practices in maintaining employee engagement are repetitive planning, daily meetings, and repetitive demonstrations (Tripp & Thatcher, 2016). Leaders use open communication to maintain employee engagement and agile practices for team building (Jungsun & Gatlink, 2018). While there is no perfect method to prevent employee turnover, agile practice methods encourage and increase employee engagement (Mohanty, 2018). If business leaders fail to recognize the importance of employee engagement as a driving force to positive business outcomes, then the business will experience negative outcomes (Cooke et al., 2014). Managers must understand and drive positive change, communication, and employee engagement to avoid negative reactions to organizational changes.

Progressive programs for employee health, safety, work–life balance, and overall wellbeing inspire employee engagement (Joss et al., 2017). Organizational leaders seek cost-efficient methods to retain employees and keep employee engagement active (Albrecht et al., 2018). Positive activities to engage employees include workshops, social events, volunteer opportunities, work-life balance, and working remotely (Ajayi et al., 2017). Some organizational leaders offer programs for mental health activities, which provide a means to discuss stress factors and reduce tension to remain engaged and productive.

Employee Disengagement

Engaged employees are successful, whereas disengaged employees may promote failure. Disengaged employees do not trust company policies, believe the reward system

has flaws, believe in biased leadership, and misuse information (Aslam et al., 2018). Employee disengagement promotes meaningless interest in the company, lack of work commitment, and low employee morale (Allam, 2017). A disengaged employee will not trust nor build a relationship with leaders or other employees (Hejjas et al., 2019). When an employee does not trust leadership or peers, information becomes unavailable to the team. The disengaged employee may display a lack of confidence, lack of employee spirit, and undisciplined behavior (Deepika & Sampurna, 2018). Management promotes open communication to diffuse negative behavior and inspire positive actions, or the result may be employee turnover and decrease productivity.

Disengaged employees desire more profound relationships with leaders and other coworkers. According to an interview of 2000 employees and managers, 40% of remote employees did not experience face time with managers, encouraging disengagement (Schawbel, 2018). Another study of remote employees revealed that 65% of North American remote employees reported no performance recognition in 12 months (White, 2018). A third study revealed that 25% of remote employees surveyed admitted feeling isolated or alone when not in a traditional office environment (Hall, 2019). Employees with higher education require less leader motivation because of unique self-motivating techniques. In 2015, the Gallup Polling Institute reported remote workers to have higher education and higher salaries than administrative positions (Peng Hui & Lu, 2018). Managers must possess the ability to build relationships with higher educated employees to fulfill employee desires and avoid employee isolation. Managers avoid employee

disengagement by offering video chats, employee praise, and flexibility in remote or office locations.

Transition

The goal of this study was to explore strategies IT managers use to motivate remote employees. In Section 1, I outlined the framework for the strategies involving employee motivation. Vroom's expectancy theory provides the lens for viewing the phenomenon of employee motivation. I used Vroom's theory as my conceptual foundation for this study, to explore strategies managers may use to develop and implement successful motivational strategies. In Section 1, I identified leadership styles and theories that leaders may use to explore motivational methods. In Section 2, I address the research process, including the role of the researcher. I discuss the characterization of the participants and methods to collect the data. I present ethical considerations for the research. In Section 3, I present the findings and analysis of the data collection, provide implications for social change, recommend strategies to successfully implement change initiatives, provide areas for additional research, and conclude the study.

Section 2: The Project

This section includes the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, and the research method of the study. I discuss the research design, population and sample, ethical considerations, data collection instruments and methods, data organization, and data analysis procedures. I conclude with a discussion of the dependability, credibility, and confirmability of this study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies IT managers use to motivate remote employees. The population included IT managers in five global IT solution firms in the Southeastern United States who have successfully motivated remote employees. The implications for positive social change include the potential to provide managers with effective strategies to motivate remote employees and lower environmental impacts. Working remotely helps reduce environmental pollution for society and provides a flexible schedule to benefit employees' lifestyles.

Role of the Researcher

In my role as the researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument. Venselaar and Wamelink (2017), stated the role of the researcher is to provide information that contributes to knowledge of the phenomenon under study. A qualitative researcher takes a vigorous approach by transforming reliable information from interactions with participants into detailed data (Berry, 2016). The six steps in the research process are: (a) categorizing the research problem or case, (b) communicating with potential research participants, (c) leading field visits to acquire research, (d) data

analysis, (e) member checking, and (f) documentation of the results and formulating a conclusion (Kılıçoglu, 2018). As a researcher, I collected data from participants using semistructured interviews. I acquired company documentation from the company websites to review remote programs over the last 5 years. I collected data from the documents for methodological triangulation. Researchers alleviate favoritism through avoidance of participants with whom a past or current experience exists (Yin, 2018). I had no past or current personal or professional relationships with participants of the targeted population. The participants were IT leaders who implemented strategies to motivate remote employees. The geographic region of my study was the Southeastern United States based on my residency and professional experience of over 15 years.

A summary of ethical principles mandated by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects for Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979) was available from the Belmont Report. The *Belmont Report* describes the limitations for evaluating the risk/benefit standards used to decide the relevance of the research. I reviewed and prepared the interview protocol (see Appendix A). I selected participants and obtained their consent in accordance with the guidelines of the *Belmont Report*.

As the researcher, I respected the participants and maintained ethical behavior throughout my study. I provided the full scope of actions required for this study. I was responsible for the interviews and the data collected from the interviews. An effective interview process begins with open and honest dialogue between the researcher and the participants (Elliot, 2017). The interview procedure was intended to provide in-depth knowledge from the participants' experiences (Ticknor & Averett, 2017). I built a

relationship with each participant and encouraged the participants to confide with authentic dialogue prior to and during the interview process.

In my role as the researcher, I identified my own expectations and biases before I proceed to the data collection process. I avoided using a personal lens when viewing data through member checking. Researchers confirm accuracy of research data through member checking (Yeong et al., 2018). I asked participants to review the summary to ensure information was accurate, and then requested additional information. When no new data appears in the collection, then the member checking process was complete (Anderson, 2017). I relate to my topic because I am a remote IT employee and have managed remote IT employees over the last 10 years. As a leader in the IT field, I have experience motivating remote IT employees through day-to-day work activities. I observed leaders collaborating, motivating, and engaging employees in a professional setting.

An interview protocol is a process for both the interviewer and the participants to build a relationship, ensuring parties are comfortable participating in a supportive environment with no violation of personal rights throughout the interview (Yeong et al., 2018). The interview protocol provides the researcher with an emphasis on the critical influences during the interview process, increasing the reliability of the case study (Yin, 2018). I emailed the interview questions and procedures to each participant prior to the interview to ensure all participants were familiar with the focus of this study. By using the interview protocol, I had a preapproved questionnaire for my candidates to maintain organization of my interviews. Researchers ask open-ended questions for the participants

to discuss the phenomenon in detail, during the interview process (Yin, 2018). I adhered to the interview protocols by securing proper approvals to conduct interviews. I recorded these results through a coding system to ensure the protection of the identities of each participant.

Participants

The participant selection process began with choosing participants who had the required knowledge and experience of the phenomenon (Alase, 2017; Yin, 2018). I contacted participants on LinkedIn messenger after reviewing their profiles which included their job title and length of employment. I emailed the participants on LinkedIn and confirmed their job title, employment status, and if they successfully managed motivated remote employees. I did not use a particular script; I chose to communicate through LinkedIn messenger. In this case, participants were experienced managers who had used strategies to motivate remote IT employees successfully. I selected managers from five IT businesses using homogeneous sampling according to the following criteria (a) had managed remote IT staff, (b) had worked for at least 1 year within the organization, and (c) had at least 1 year of experience successfully motivating remote IT staff at this organization.

To gain access to participants, I reviewed LinkedIn for the appropriate business leaders and contacted the leader via email and telephone to obtain written commitment through a follow-up email. The researcher may review organizational databases as a method to conduct a business leader profile (Maramwidze-Merrison, 2016). Once profiling is complete, the researcher may determine if all participants meet the criteria for

the study (Maramwidze-Merrison, 2016). Researchers use effective communication to ensure participants understand their role in the study (Wray et al., 2017). By building a trusting working rapport with the participants, I avoided unnecessary conflict through open communication and set expectations.

Building a solid relationship with the participants and being transparent regarding the intent of the study assists in increasing participation (Jack et al., 2016). I communicated the data collection process through emails and phone calls. The researcher must ensure the participant understands their role throughout the study (Roger et al., 2018). Participation for interviews require consent from the interviewee confirming agreement to the interview process (Hoyland et al., 2015). The relationship building process required that I keep the participants aware of and involved with the progress of the study. I explained on the initial phone conversation the steps in the research process and advised I would email a copy of my completed study. The researcher builds relationships with participants by engaging them throughout the process of the study (Wright et al., 2016). A final part of my relationship establishment was to ensure participant information was confidential and only used for the intent of the research. I protected the identity of each participant by coding the participant names in the study P1, P2, P3 and so on. The targeted population was five organizations in the Southeastern United States.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies IT managers use to motivate remote employees; therefore, I chose to use the qualitative research method. Qualitative research is a type of scientific exploration involving document investigation, observation, or interviews (Kılıçoglu, 2018). The qualitative method allows the researcher to explore, understand, interpret, and define data collected during the study (Roger et al., 2018). The interview method is the most used method for qualitative research (Gauche et al., 2017). Qualitative researchers must make a convincing observed case detailing the results and interpretations consistent with the data of the study (Kross & Giust, 2019). A qualitative method was more appropriate for this study than quantitative or mixed methods because my goal was to understand successful strategies managers use for motivating remote IT employees.

Quantitative researchers conduct deductive testing and statistical analysis of numerical data to address predefined questions (Hayashi et al., 2019). Quantitative researchers examine relationships between variables to understand the experiences of a larger population through testing hypotheses (Behar-Horenstein & Feng, 2017). I did not use statistical data nor test a hypothesis; therefore, a quantitative method was not appropriate for this study.

Mixed methods research highlights the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research methods (Yin, 2018). Mixed methods research allows researchers to explore diverse viewpoints and uncover relationships that exist between the complicated

layers of multilayered research questions (Dopp et al., 2019). Mixed-methods research allows the researcher to design a single research study from the participants' answers and the relationships between measured variables (Mitchell, 2018). A mixed-methods approach was not appropriate for this study because I did not test for inconsistencies in qualitative or quantitative data. I explored the success of managers who are using strategies to motivate remote IT employees.

Research Design

I reviewed four research designs: (a) phenomenology, (b) ethnography, (c) narrative inquiry, and (d) case study. I desired to gain deep understanding of the strategies managers use to motivate remote IT employees; therefore, I selected the multiple case study design. Alpi and Evans (2019) stated case studies require a variety of methodological approaches to explain the complexity of the results. The case study design is very popular but there are growing concerns of the credibility and limitations of the design (Smith, 2018). Multiple case studies are flexible and allow the use of duplicate logic to confirm external and internal validities and investigate different factors between theories and cases (Yin, 2018). Qualitative case study research includes listening to and understanding participants responses to open-ended questions (Au, 2019).

Phenomenological researchers seek to understand the meaning of the lived experiences of participants through interviews and observations (Alase, 2017; Priya, 2017; Van Manen, 2017). A phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study, because I did not collect data on the lived experiences of the participants.

Ethnographic research can take many years of research through collecting and analyzing documentation to validate participant observations and research confirmation (Albu, 2018). Researchers use ethnographic research to submerse themselves into the culture of participants to understand shared experiences (Carlos, 2018). Researchers become part of the culture when conducting extensive observation of the participants to obtain a better understanding of the culture's social norms (Sinead Ryan, 2017). Ethnographic research was not appropriate for my study because I did not focus on cultural behavior.

Researchers use narrative inquiry to collect stories of individuals' experiences (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Narrative inquiry provides an opportunity for the researcher to understand the dynamics of social and human processes (Anna-Maija et al., 2018). Stories offers the researcher an understanding of the complexity of the participants' lives based on the details within each story. Sahni and Sinha (2016) stated the narrative method allows the participant to share experiences and beliefs that facilitate knowledge for future studies. My study does not focus on individuals' stories; therefore, narrative inquiry was not appropriate.

A multiple case study allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategic method leaders used to motivate employees (Longhofer et al., 2017). A case study provides the researcher with understanding of real-world information and how the information was pertinent to the study (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). Five elements of a case study design include study questions, analysis, propositions, linking the data to propositions, and interpreting the information from the outcome of the research (Yin,

2018). Multiple case studies focus on interviewing more than one leader, the atmosphere, and environment of the population (Yin, 2018). In this study, I sought to understand strategies IT managers used to motivate employees. Because I strive for the truth, triangulation assisted with my findings. Triangulation is a research method used for various data resources, research methods, theories, and researchers to increase validity, reliability, and encompass credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of research results (Triangulation, 2019). I asked participants open-ended questions regarding their experience motivating remote IT employees; therefore, a multiple case design was my method of choice.

In this qualitative multiple case study, I used semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to explore strategies for motivating remote IT employees. Interviews are one technique that helped confirm data saturation. Researchers use participant interviews, documentation, observation, and archived records during case study research (Yin, 2018). Data saturation was fundamental to qualitative research. Saturation refers to the idea of new data fitting into a recognized theory without the need for modification (Weller et al., 2018). In data saturation, there is no single method toward attaining completion, but researchers agree the following principles are necessary to identify data saturation: no new data, themes, or codes emerge; and researchers can replicate the study (Gallo et al., 2018). Researchers who fail to attain data saturation must review and cover all relevant factors of the participant perspectives to avoid jeopardizing the credibility of the study results (Qiu et al., 2015). Data saturation in qualitative research is a way for the researcher to ensure the accomplishment of truthful and valid data. Data saturation was

achievable with the collection of participants, I performed semistructured interviews of participants to answer the research question and interview questions.

Triangulation involves collecting data from multiple sources to confirm the findings and increase understanding (Hayashi et al., 2019). The four types of triangulation are method, investigator, theory, and data source (Gallo et al., 2018). Through triangulation, researchers increase the credibility and validity of the study results (Smith, 2018). Data saturation was successful when no new evidence is available during the research (Mullet, 2018). I performed member checking by analyzing the interview data, documenting my summary of the interview transcripts, and requesting participants to verify the accuracy of the interpreted summary during the second meeting. I ensured data saturation by collecting rich data from the policy and training manual, and participants. I determined I had reached data saturation because the interview data became repetitive, and no new additional data emerged.

Population and Sampling

I used purposeful sampling to select a sample of leaders who used strategies to motivate remote employees. The target population for this qualitative multiple case study included a purposeful sample size of one business leader from five different businesses who have successfully implemented strategies to motivate IT remote employees. Participants for this study were managers who: (a) have managed remote IT staff, (b) have worked for at least 1 year within the organization, (c) have at least 1 year of experience successfully motivated remote IT staff at this organization. The participants included experienced IT managers who implemented successful motivational strategies in

their organization. Purposeful sampling was the method used in research for identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the topic of interest (Efrosyni et al., 2018). Purposeful sampling is a method a researcher used to achieve manageable amounts of data (Ames et al., 2019). I used purposeful sampling to select participants skilled to provide me with detailed descriptions of their strategies from their perspectives in relation to the phenomenon of my study. Kmita (2017), suggested the sample size should be 15 to 20 participants for a qualitative study. Weller et al., (2018) argued that qualitative research has no established rules for sample size, but the requirements of the study determined the sample size. By using purposeful sampling, I narrowed the targeted population to the sample population. Qualitative research samples are goal-directed, therefore smaller in size (Vasileiou et al., 2018). I chose five IT leaders; however, I was prepared to obtain additional participants had I not achieved data saturation.

I chose the population for this study as IT leaders in businesses located in the southeastern United States. Researchers should choose a sample size most effective to reach data saturation when identifying the appropriate population sample (Sherif, 2018). Researchers select participants in numbers that are small enough to capture the right amount of collected data and large enough to provide detailed information of their experience (Roger et al., 2018). The sample size for the research study was five IT businesses in the southeastern United States with leaders who have succeeded in implementing strategies to motivate remote IT employees.

Researchers use data saturation as a method to eliminate collecting data after no new information is available (Kross & Giust, 2019). Qualitative researchers use data saturation to establish effective data within the process of exploration (Belotto, 2018). Researchers must continue to collect data to achieve data saturation (Yin, 2018). When performing my research, data saturation was a priority and was deemed complete when no new data was developed from the interviews. Each day, I transcribed the interviews to verify the data and determine if new information emerged. During the interviews, participants answered five semistructured, open-ended questions, which allowed for flexibility in participants' responses. This approach allowed the participant to contribute alternative ideas that contribute to the study.

The location of the interview took place over WebEx and I was able to record the video call. The interview setting must be a quiet, neutral location, without distractions (Bakhtiari et. al., 2020). I requested the participants to meet me in private and quiet location of choice to conduct the semistructured interviews for the video WebEx call. The researcher and participants must meet in a neutral location (Haynes, 2019). The researcher and participants communicate without restrictions in a neutral setting (Brinkmann, 2016). In this multiple case study, I acquired information regarding participants' strategies used to motivate remote employee.

Ethical Research

The intent of this study was to explore strategies IT managers used to motivate remote employees. As the researcher, I complied with the rules of Walden University and obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the five businesses

operating in the Southeastern United States. Researchers obtain approvals from the ethics committee prior to performing the study (Greenwood, 2016). Upon receiving permission from the IRB (approval 02-26-21-0661472), I messaged the participant via LinkedIn requesting contribution to my study. I created an email address specifically for the study and provided the consent form as my introductory email from that address to the selected recipients. The informed consent process upholds the basic ethical principle of autonomy in human research (Sil & Das, 2017). I ensured each participant understood that any participation in this study was voluntary by requesting a reply to my email consenting to the interview. I informed the participants that they have the option to withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me via email. I did not offer an incentive for participating in the study but did offer a PDF copy of the final study.

The personal information provided to the researcher must remain confidential (Famenka, 2016). The researcher must protect the rights of participants, data storage, and data analysis (Yin, 2018). I only used the data collected for the purposes of the research study. I used alphanumeric codes, such as P1, P2, and P3 to identify the participants and their responses. I will maintain this data on a thumb drive for 5 years in a locked safe. After 5 years, I will destroy all documents and data pertaining to this study. The process to destroy all information and documentation from this study involves shredding papers and erasing electronic data containing any information related to this study.

Data Collection Instruments

The focus of this study was to explore strategies IT managers use to motivate remote employees. A researcher may use a direct interaction approach via individual

interviews or focus groups (Farooq & de Villiers, 2017). The main four methods of collecting data in qualitative research are individual interviews, focus groups, observations, and action research (Kmita, 2017). As the researcher, I was the primary data collector and used semistructured interviews to explore the viewpoints of each participant. A telephone interview does not allow for face-to-face communication and access to visible body language; therefore, it is not recommended as a data collection instrument (Farooq & de Villiers, 2017). I performed the interviews over WebEx application using both phone and recording through the WebEx application and took notes on Microsoft Word. I reviewed the company websites for the five participants and collected corporate remote policies.

I was the primary data collection tool and asked the participants five open-ended questions in a semistructured format to obtain strategies used to motivate remote IT employees. The open-ended research questions provide opportunity for the researcher to understand the participant's experiences (Kross & Giust, 2019). I asked five open-ended questions to each participant for an understanding of motivational strategies.

Researchers perform in-depth analysis during the study by using documentation (Roger et al., 2018). I requested company documentation such as attrition reports for remote employees, remote employee programs details, and the organizational handbook from the manager, and review the documents listed on the company website. The documentation collected by the researcher should be available for the participants to review during the study (Jadi & Jose, 2016). Researchers must avoid bias analysis of the data during data collection. Member checking provided the opportunity for the researcher

to validate the information and documentation from the participants (Lester & Allison, 2018). I used member checking to ensure accuracy of my data collection.

Data Collection Technique

For this qualitative multiple case study, I collected data using semistructured interviews containing five questions, company archival documentation, and company website content. I acquired approval from Walden University's IRB before beginning data collection. The data collection process was a methodical technique of collecting information about a research question. Researchers using a multiple case study obtain a more in-depth exploration of the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). The main data collection technique in this study was semistructured interviews.

The data collection techniques regarding the semistructured interviews began following an interview protocol (see Appendix). The interview protocol contained a set of interview questions and step-by-step directions guiding the interviewer through the interview process (Viles, 2016). The following steps were for data collection of this study; I obtained approval from the business leaders via email after confirming each leader met the required criteria for this study. I used a list from 15 IT solution organizations, obtained from a Google search, reviewed the organizations on LinkedIn and identified the potential participants for the study. I reviewed the LinkedIn profile of more than 20 participants and randomly selected 5 to begin recruitment. I made initial contact via LinkedIn messenger, after confirming each participant was a remote manager with more than 1 year experience at the organization. I sent a message to the participant via LinkedIn and when the participant confirmed successfully motivating remote

employees, I crafted an email using the consent form as my invitation and consent for participation. I applied these steps to 13 of the 20 participants on my list and after I confirmed my 5 participants, I no longer continued to recruit.

I emailed the consent form to the participants who met the requirements and desired to participate in the study with a return request within 24 hours. I scheduled interviews via telephone calls and confirmed those interviews via email. Once I met with the business leaders, I explained the purpose of the study and requested permission to collect data from the company. I sent each participant and emailed requesting participation using an e-mail script and attach a copy of the informed consent. Once I received the informed consent form returned to me from each of the 5 participants, I emailed the interview protocol to guide the interviews (see Appendix) and a scheduled time for each interview. These interviews were collected via WebEx using audio and video recording for each interview.

I used open-ended semistructured questions which allowed me to get the participants perspective on motivational strategies. I reviewed the company websites from the 5 participants and found limited information on remote working programs. I requested available remote program benefit information from each participant and received responses from 3 of the 5 participants. Advantages of using semistructured interviews included question preparation, open-ending responses, and encourage two-way conversation (Yin, 2018). Researchers prepare questions before the interview appeared confident to conduct research (Ngenye & Kreps, 2020). Using open-ended questions helped participants elaborate details and express their experiences (Gidengil et. al., 2019).

I used 5 open-ended interview questions and encouraged each participant to elebarate on strategic methods and programs used to motivate remote employees. Two-way conversations allow the researcher and participant to share experiences openly and encourage additional information that contributes to the study (Perrier & MacDonald, 2020). Archival documentation offered the researcher an advantage of collecting copious amounts of data pertaining to employees, competitors, and corporate annual reports (Das et al., 2018). This data was available at no cost and will allow the researcher to learn more about the organization.

I reviewed 5 different company websites and discovered 4 of the 5 companies offer remote working programs as part of their benefits package. The other company website did not list remote work as part of any program or benefit. I received company documents from 3 of the 5 participants. One set of documentation was initial hire information describing the work from home model. Another company document identified selected qualifying job titles such as IT employees, who had the benefit of working remotely. The last company document I received identified a full remote working program requiring internal courses, specific job titles, and job rankings.

Disadvantages of interviews included poorly articulated questions, poor data recollection, bias responses, and interviewees respond with what the researcher wants to hear (Yin, 2018). Researchers may experience the disadvantage of receiving and recording outdated data (Kýlýnç & Fırat, 2017). During the interview, the participant may withdraw from the interview creating a delay in data collection (Iqbal & Khan, 2020). My participants did not withdraw from the interview process although I was

prepared to recruit additional participants if any participant did withdraw. To address any disadvantages, I encouraged open dialog and participation through a meeting of 45-60 minutes. The conversations were informative, and I collected several strategies used to motivate remote employees. Another disadvantage in data collection through semistructured interviews include minimal responses from the participants (Aydın et al., 2019). The disadvantage of archival documentation includes difficulty of validating data, incomplete or erroneous data, and the researcher's lack of contribution and control in the data collection (Yin, 2018). The disadvantage I experienced during my data collection was lack of company documentation. Part of my data collection was to confirm motivational strategies for remote employees and this data was limited. The company websites were discreet about remote working programs however, the internal documentation described details on working remotely. I only received 3 of the 5 participants internal documentation with all 3 having similar requirements for remote programs.

I collected the data from the interviews and began to transcribe the information from the WebEx audio and visual recording, and from my notes in MS Word. The collection process allowed researchers to collect data from interviews and transcribed the data from the written and recorded interview and confirm accuracy through member checking (Cruz & Tantia, 2017). Researchers use member checking of the data collected to determine themes (Gabarre & Gabarre, 2016). Researchers confirm accuracy of research data through member checking (Yeong et al., 2018). At the end of the data collection process, I reviewed the details of my research with each member to ensure I

had the precise information. I emailed each participant my transcribed data and summary of all my notes for accurate data confirmation. I received confirmation from each of my 5 participants that my data was correct.

Data Organization Technique

The data collection process included collecting data, organizing the data, and archiving all information obtained during the process (Wilson et al., 2016). I recorded the interviews with WebEx audio and video functionality to store data for validity, for interpreting the interview, and transcribe the results of the interview. I saved all my data onto an external device once the interviews were completed. Each participant will remain confidential, and I will code and label the participant responses to differentiate, and I will complete a research log in Microsoft Word to document the process. Yin (2018) recommended using: (a) documentation, (b) collection, and (c) archiving records as support procedures. The identity of each business leader remained confidential and tracked as Participant (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), and so on, for ethical purposes and privacy rights. Researchers collected individual notes, journal records, and employee documentation from the company website (Alase, 2017). I used NVivo 12 software to categorize and organize the data. Researchers use data collection transcription and analysis to determine common patterns or themes (Akbas & Hardman, 2018). I reviewed the recordings and company website information to determine themes.

I separated the research data, documents, and files by unique identifier. I retained an electronic filing system for all information from the audio recording and supporting documentation. I stored the data I collect during the interview. Access to the digital data

requires a password. The digital data and the hardcopy will be kept in my locked home office safe for 5 years. After 5 years I will delete all digital data, erase audio recordings, mechanically shred the consent forms, transcription of the interviews, and any other records pertaining to the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis provided a means to discover themes within the research (Yin, 2018). Data triangulation allowed the researcher to collect data from multiple sources with the goal of substantiating the comparable results (Yin, 2018). Data quality improved through data triangulation and detailed interview process (Ward et al., 2018). I used methodological triangulation because my analysis process included collecting and analyzing data from multiple participants and company documentation. Methodological triangulation enables the researcher to obtain an inclusive view of the phenomenon through multiple resources of data collection (Smith, 2018). Researchers use a five-phased cycle to analyze the data: compile, disassemble, reassemble, interpret, and conclude (Yin, 2018).

I used NiVO software program in the data analysis process. This multistep process was used to categorized, charted, and realigned the data I collected. I linked existing literature and participants responses to strategies for motivating remote employees. I related the 4 themes to my conceptual framework. I kept exploring how the research topic interconnects with emerging findings on strategies mangers use to motivate remote employees and interrelated the key research themes with literature.

Compiling Data

Researchers compile data through multiple collection methods (McGowan et al., 2018). I collected minimal company data from 5 of the participants company websites and 3 of the 5 participants provided internal documentation on remote working programs. During the data collection process, I used WebEx to record audio and video responses from the participants. I used member checking after gathering and compiling the data to ensure accuracy and validate the data (Yin, 2018).

Dissembling Data

Researchers collected data and dissemble it into fragments for analysis (Yin, 2018). Researchers use NVivo software to collect, organize, and analyze various types of data (Chandra & Shang, 2017). This software supports researchers in organizing and dissembling large amounts of data. NVivo software tags common themes which the researcher can then review for quality analysis (Pudaruth et al., 2018). I used Microsoft Word and NVivo software to organize my data. I had the option to use HubSpot, but this software provides analytics for surveys and I conducted interviews. I reviewed Quirkos software because of the word cloud tool however, there was an associated cost for the tool. The audio converter tool, Raven's Eye, offered the audio file function with natural language analysis. If I were conducting phone conversations, this method was adequate, and the monthly charge was appropriate. I used NVivo to formulate themes into categories and linked them into topics from the literature review.

Reassembling Data

The data reassembly process placed data into common groups (Yin, 2018). Data collection in qualitative research included continuous analysis (Willgens et al., 2016). After I reassembled the data, I was able to classify common themes and patterns. Once I reassembled the date, through NVivo 12 software I defined key themes through data analysis.

Interpreting Data

Researchers collected data through participant interviews to gain knowledge of their experiences (Sherif, 2018). The data collected from these interviews and company documents helped to interpret the meanings of the information (Belotto, 2018). Researchers document interviews and information for interpreting the data through data analysis (Yin, 2018). I analyzed the data from the lens of Vroom's expectancy theory to determine motivational strategies and compared them to the meaning of the collected data and validated the data through member checking.

Drawing Conclusions

Drawing conclusions ties together the research questions, data, and analysis to identify common categories and themes (Cunningham et al., 2017; Smith, 2018; Yin, 2018). I analyzed the company documentation and my findings to support or gain new insights into strategies managers use to motivate remote IT employees.

Software Plan

I used NVivo 12 software to code and classify themes and common patterns as I performed data analysis. NVivo software allowed the researcher to assess the relevance

of data and the research topic for themes and relationships within the study (Guo, 2019). NVivo codes participant responses and creates nodes for data collection of precise themes (Brady & Espinosa, 2017; Paz et al., 2017). I used Microsoft Word to document the participant responses. I transcribed the participant data into NVivo. I used member checking for data validation. I used NVivo to identify trending topics from the literature review in this study.

Key Themes

Key themes from the literature review include leadership, leadership style, working remotely, employee motivation, employee engagement, and communication. During the interview process, I identified and documented the key themes and patterns. As I performed analysis, I used NVivo 12 software to classify patterns and themes. A general approach to data analysis allowed the researcher the opportunity to explore content and build themes (Bonello & Meehan, 2019). The development of key themes during data collection provided the researcher with answers to the research question (Heslop et al., 2017). The focus of this study was to understand motivational strategies for employees such as rewards, promotions, or improved benefits, as outlined in Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity were vital to ensure the integrity of the study results. Qualitative research with consistent findings through repeatable results refers to reliability (Hayashi et al., 2019). Validity was data representation confirmation (Oplatka, 2018). Qualitative researchers followed specific processes and procedures suggesting the

trustworthiness of their study results. I documented each step and procedure of the data collection and data analysis processes to confirm reliability. Data comparison from each participant through data triangulation confirmed reliability. I used member checking to address any data dependencies of the participants' responses and ensured trustworthiness and reliability the study (Nutov, 2019). Member checking allowed me to provide the transcription of the interview back to the participant for editing and accuracy. Methodological triangulation was a qualitative research approach used in testing the validity of data through the merging of information from difference sources of data (Kılıcoglu, 2018).

Dependability

Connelly (2016) stated dependability means stable data and conditions over the course of the study. The process to address dependability of a study required member checking of data, interpretation, transcript review, expert validation of the interview questions, interview procedures, and participant observations (Azodi et al., 2017). There were procedures for dependability that include audit logs, process documentation, and peer-to-peer communication (Connelly, 2016). Dependability was attainable through triangulation (Astroth & Chung, 2018). Dependability was the ability to duplicate the findings if the study reoccurred (Rainchuso & Salisbury, 2017). I used data saturation to assure I achieve dependability of the findings. Researchers used member checking to ensure no new information is present (French & Galvin, 2018). I asked probing questions to the participants and ensured dependability through member checking. I used

methodological triangulation to confirm dependability of the data. Researchers use triangulation as the strategy used to establish dependability (Ang et al., 2016).

Credibility

Researchers used member checking to increase the credibility of the research (Iivar, 2018). Researchers used data triangulation to obtain data from multiple sources, supporting the reliability and credibility of the study results (Yeong et al., 2018). I recorded all interviews using WebEx and Microsoft Word to establish credibility of my interpretation of the data collected. Researchers' data transcription and direct quotes from the participants answers reinforce research credibility (McInnes et al., 2017).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to confirm the participants' responses are not the researcher's viewpoints (Hayashi et al., 2019). I reviewed the data to determine common themes and patterns. The research achieved confirmability when data collection does not include biased results (Chase, 2017). I alleviated any bias that occurs through member checking. Member checking was validation of the participants' responses (Naidu & Prose, 2018).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the amount of the results from a qualitative study that can be transferred to other circumstances or settings with other respondents (Hayashi et al., 2019). I provided detailed descriptions of the setting, characteristics and selection of the participants, and the design process to allow others' determination of transferability. Researchers reinforced transferability through rich and thick descriptions that are usable

for another case or setting (Varadarajan & Malone, 2018). Researchers can determine the transferability of data content through the data collection process, including the member checking process (Roger et al., 2018). I ensured the credibility of my findings by collecting dependable data that may transfer to another case.

Data Saturation

Data saturation refers to the point that no new data is present during the research study (Gallo et al., 2018). I confirmed data saturation through member checking when there is no new information or themes observed during the data collection process. Data saturation was achievable when enough replicable data was available and no new information was present and no new coding was necessary (Kline, 2017). Data adequacy was attainable when the researcher achieved data saturation (Hancock et al., 2016).

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I reintroduced the purpose of the study and described my role as the researcher. I included research method and design, population sampling, ethical research, and data collection. In Section 3, I will present the findings and discuss applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further study, reflections, and the conclusion of the study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The objective of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies IT managers use to motivate remote employees. The target population was five IT managers from organizations in the Southeastern United States who successfully motivated remote employees. The data were collected by conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing public organizational information. I explored employee motivation through the lens of Vroom's expectancy theory. My findings consisted of four themes that IT managers use to motivate remote employees successfully (a) communication (b) employee engagement, (c) work-life balance with flexible schedules, and (d) transformational leadership.

Presentation of the Findings

One overarching research question guided the current study:

RQ: What strategies do IT managers use to motivate remote employees? I conducted semistructured interviews with five IT managers who had experience implementing successful strategies motivating remote employees. After I completed my summaries, I used member checking to confirm that my interpretations of my participants' responses were exact. I used methodological triangulation to support the validity of this study. The resources used to collect data were from participants' interviews, company website information, and organizational documents. After the fifth interview during the data coding session, I realized no new themes emerged indicating data saturation. Four themes emerged from the data analysis (see Table1).

Table 1

Emerging Themes and Frequencies

Themes	Frequency	Percentage of total
Communication	242	63.1%
Employee engagement	183	51.1%
Work-life balance with flexible schedules	88	43.8%
Transformational leadership	78	39.7%

Theme 1: Communication

Communication was the first theme that emerged from the interviews. The business leaders expressed how communication as a strategy developed employee goals, affirmed responses, encouraged employee participation, and helped leaders understand what employees desired to be successful. Organizations without effective communication methods create a disconnect with employees, leading to miscommunication, disengagement, or demotivation (Young, 2021). All participants said they immediately began open communications with team members. Communication methods described were audio and visual team meetings, individual meetings, text messages, instant messages, and emails. Each participant holds team meetings and advised that top business leaders hold quarterly and annual town hall meetings for the entire organization.

P1 said, "Our leadership team believes in over-communicating to employees to help drive the message and encourage additional communication. With a diverse

workforce we must find a variety of ways to communicate to employees so that the message is clear." The other participants echoed a similar response as P1, repeating the importance of effective communication. P3 explained, "We use communication to define our objectives, understand how best to educate our employees, and what ways we can involve the employee in corporate events." P2 stated, "Communication is the focus of our daily behaviors. As a leader, I use communication to explain company goals, set team objectives, target employee initiatives, and create a path to share information." P4 stated, "Communication is the driving force for our success. We build reward programs based on learning and understanding what motivates the employee. We learn this through communication." P5 stated,

> My strategic approach is effective communication through daily meetings. Talking over the phone or via TEAMS chat is vital for daily work and to understand company goals. Communication for my team is not always verbal, we use messenger and email daily. Working remotely, we talk over the phone however, our conference calls force the use of written communication in addition to verbal communication.

P2 stated that Communication was the key to great success in the organization because, without communication, employees would not be successful. P2 explained,

> As a leader I am responsible to ensure my staff understands business objectives. To be successful, I must deliver those objectives to my staff through communication. My strategic method for positive communication is team meetings with an appropriate agenda and then follow-up with a summary of the

> meeting in an email. Verbal messages are important, but we forget the information because our daily work builds as the hours continue so an email after our call with a summary of the meeting is another method of communication.

P3 stated that the number one communication method began with email, but there were no limitations because success ascended from the details in the communications. P4 explained how a daily meeting of open communication helps them set and meet business goals all while maintaining employee motivation. P4 stated,

> Each day my team and I discuss our daily and weekly objectives. This is my strategy to keep communication lines open. I believe that our success is driven by our willingness to share ideas and work together. We cannot be successful if we do not communicate. I know for some of my employees, there are challenges with voicing their opinion, but our environment is friendly. We promote an open and free speaking group so that everyone feels welcome to share their comments and ideas even if those ideas are different from other employee ideas.

Like P4, P5 holds daily video call meetings to discuss important information, set expectations, and keep employees motivated to meet business goals. P5 confirmed, “I like video calls in the morning because we are all fresh and can start our day on a positive note. We list our daily goals and offer to assist each other.”

P3 confirmed that without communication, employee motivation would not exist in the organization. P3 said, "Our communication strategy is to over-communicate using all available resources such as email, meetings, intranet, and town halls. Employees in

our organization crave communication because we believe in transparency because we are all in this together." P5 echoed,

> Transparency motivates remote employees because employees know and understand more about the company even when working remotely. Every leader must build a communication strategy that works for their team to maintain employee commitment. Without communication, employees are unable to meet expectations, follow rules, and understand how to perform job duties.

P1 stated that transparency could confuse because, in global organizations, a language barrier may disrupt the flow of communication. P1 continued to clarify that additional translations of communication are necessary in a global workforce to remove any misinterpretation and confusion of any communication throughout the organization.

The finding is that open communication aligns with Vroom's expectancy theory. Successful managers use communication to understand what employees' value as motivators or rewards. This is valance in Vroom's expectancy theory. Leaders use communication skills to inspire and encourage employees to accomplish business goals and maintain productivity. This finding confirms the research of Velasco and Sansone (2019), who noted how an open dialogue between leaders and managers was an effective strategy for managers to anticipate the desires of employees. Leaders who encourage open dialogue, reduce on-the-job stress, and influence employee engagement through effective communication (Mattar, 2020). This finding confirms the research of Milton et al. (2020) who noted that communication is an essential factor in behavioral change strategy for training and obtaining knowledge of employee desires. Managers may take

this knowledge and build rewards based on employee desires to maintain employee motivation as this information correlates to Vroom's expectancy theory.

Communication is consistent with existing literature on strategies to motive remote employees. The participants described strategic methods of communications to successfully motivate employees. McGregor's Y manager inspire employees to contribute and execute ideas. Herzberg's two- factor theory of motivation reveal motivational and demotivational factors. A demotivational factor is lack of communication and a motivational factor is open communication. Table 2 shows the communication strategies and percentage of use of Theme 1.

Table 2

Strategies for Implementing Communication

Strategies	Percentage of use by participants
Weekly team meetings	100%
Daily stand-up meetings	50%
Company town hall meetings	100%

Theme 2: Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is the emotional connection the employee has to the organization and the commitment to the organizational goals. Employee engagement is necessary for retaining employees in an organization. Employee engagement is more than just the employee's work; it is the commitment to the team, the customer, and the

organization (Gangan et al., 2020). An engaged workforce contains employees with commitment, energy, and readiness to achieve business success. The manager must be physically, mentally, and emotionally able to engage with employees and leaders to meet expectations (Veshne et al., 2020). Managers focusing on employees build a foundation for positive engagement. Managers must understand the importance of retaining committed employees and actively pursue employee expectations and preferences.

Each participant offered similar responses about employee engagement and the importance of building relationships to understand employee desires and commitment. While all leaders encourage employees to engage, it was P4 who confirmed that all employees are not the same and not all of them will fully engage. P4 stated, “We have a few employees that are working for a paycheck with acceptable performance. We keep these employees because they are producing but this behavior discourages others on the team.” Disengaged employees are less comfortable and less likely to fulfill efforts and will not fully build a relationship or complete commitments (Toby et al., 2021). P4 explained

> Disengaged employees performance declines and can pose a threat to the business. It is difficult to build or maintain a relationship with a disengaged employee because essentially, they have become less active and sometimes will be non-responsive. My strategy for keeping employees engaged involve my full commitment to the team and the organization however, I know there are a selected few employee that will never give full commitment.

P3 commented positively about how all team members were fully engaged and committed to all expectations of the organization. P3 stated,

> We have an active engagement committed that survey's our employees to understand what drives their commitments. Our employee engagement committee designed this program, and we adopted this program as part of our leadership strategy to retain top talent in our organization. Over the last six months we have experienced positive results and salvaged several partnerships with employees that we deemed flight risks from our organization. Another program added to our leadership strategy for employee engagement is our robust rewards program. This program rewards top performers quarterly based on productivity and annually based on leader review. While we do have a few average performers, we are concentrating on the high performers and making those our examples during team meetings and town halls.

P1 echoed similar statements as P3 and added that employee engagement was an objective for all leaders that ranked very high on the list for employee engagement. P1 stated,

> Our rewards program is one of the best in our industry and the best strategic move our leadership implemented for employee engagement. We offer flexible schedules, unlimited paid time off, low-cost insurance, pet insurance, and various leave programs with pay. If our employees are committed to our business, then we are committed to rewarding our employees.

P2 added that employee engagement assisted in employee retention along with other leadership strategies. P2 commented "We have low attrition because we offer valuable rewards, promote from within, managers build lasting relationships with employees, and believe in quarterly reviews to help drive engagement. It is through reviews that expectations are set, and goals are defined."

P2 commented that engaged employees are dedicated when the manager displays the same dedicated behavior. P2 clarified, "If my staff does not see me engaged, why should they be engaged. I am a devoted leader but if I am not leading by example, I should not expect my staff to do what I am not doing." P4 echoed the same because it was important for the manager to lead by example for the employee. P4 explained,

> My staff and I work on many projects and each of us contribute based on our strengths. As a leader, I am as involved as each team member because I am committed. My team knows my commitment level, and they are just as dedicated as am I.

Employee engagement depends on the level of engagement from leadership and if the leaders do not reflect engagement, the employee will mimic the same behavior. P5 made similar comments as the other leaders concerning the lack of employee engagement directly resulted from lack of leadership engagement. P5 stated, "My employees see my passion and that shows each of them my commitment. Our high performers are invested in their careers and they know the rewards will come as they continue to produce for our customers." P1 did not discuss manager engagement; however, this leader has several managers in the reporting structure based on our conversation.

Vroom's (1967) expectancy theory served as this study's conceptual framework as a possible means for understating motivational strategies IT managers use for remote employees. According to Vroom's expectancy theory, three factors of employee motivation are (a) expectancy, (b) instrumentality, and (c) valence. Participants claimed that provisions of rewards were motivational strategies to increase employee engagement. Expectancy was a finding in this study because the employee believed that rewards would follow the acceptable performance as noted by the participants. Employee performance increases when employees receive incentives, including compensation increases, additional benefits, and employee discounts (Adegboye et al., 2021). Instrumentality was a finding in this study because participants claimed employees believed that positive performance would equal an anticipated reward. Valence was a finding in this study because reward programs and benefits are available based on what employees deemed valuable as described by the participants. Employees' mental and physical health in the business will determine the level of engagement and employee performance (Flovik et al., 2020). As noted by the participants, rewards such as flexible schedules and competitive benefits were motivational strategies that increased employee engagement.

Employees are more prolific and active when presented with a motivator. Managers can use different ideas to encourage employees to increase employee performance. The findings align with the research by Das et. al., (2021), who noted that employees empowered to voice their concerns display engagement and connection passionately. Empowered employees are engaged and focused on achieving business

goals that benefits both employee and corporate profits. The findings align with the research of Dubey (2020), who noted that employees are passionate advocates of their organization's principles and goals through engagement and commitment. Managers can increase motivation by identifying the employee's desires and applying Vroom's expectancy theory to increase employee motivation.

Employee engagement is consistent with the existing literature on strategies to motivate remote employees. A disengaged employee does not committee to the team and causes disruption in the workload. An engaged employee experiences job satisfaction because all desired outcomes are achievable. McClelland's Theory of Needs linked from the literature describes employee desires as different. Managers use the knowledge of these desires to design strategic employee engagement programs to motivate employees. Table 3 shows the employee engagement strategies and percentage that form Theme 2.

Table 3

Strategies for Implementing Employee Engagement

Strategies	Percentage of use by participants
Employee engagement committee	25%
Rewards	100%
Manager involvement	75%

Theme 3: Work-Life Balance Through Flexible Schedules

A flexible working schedule is a nontraditional schedule allowing employees to work a schedule with varying arrival and departure times. Managers implement a flexible working schedule to improve work-life balance for employees (White et al., 2020). A flexible schedule allows the employee to attend to personal business during typical business hours to alleviate unnecessary stress from the employee. P1 stated,

> We experienced employee turnover a few years ago and designed a strategic program to reduce turnover by offering a variety of benefits based on location, job title, and job rank. We know some our employees want to work early hours use flex time to run errands, go to doctor appointments, go to the gym, or get groceries and avoid crows, to remove unwanted stress so we promote that benefit. This program allows for those types of errands and allows the employee to have a life outside of the work. Additionally, we have higher productivity because our employees are happy.

P4 agreed that flexible schedules promoted a healthy work-life balance and did improve employee performance. P2 commented,

> Organized employees can handle a flexible schedule and will give 100% of their time to their work; however, an employee is not organized, the flexible schedule is a complication that can demotivate the employee or discourage work performance. Part of our strategy for implementing work-life balance is to assist employees who do not adapt well to change with flexible schedules. If the employee performance decreases on a flexible schedule, then the flexible

> schedule is not the right fit. We agree not all employees work well in this program however, we are confident that we will do what is best for the employee to ensure work-life balance.

P 4 stated, “Employees enjoy the flexible schedules for various reasons and appreciate this benefit. We have seen an increase in performance because our employees do not experience mental burnout.” Employees with controlled schedules may not have the mental capability to work a flexible schedule (Lott, 2018). P3 mentioned that the older employees experienced difficulties with flexible working schedules at the beginning of remote work could find the right balance after a few months of modifications and became complacent with the flexible schedule routine. P3 explained,

> While we do not discriminate our older employees, some employees over 40 are experiencing challenges with flexible schedules. These employees have worked the traditional schedule and cannot acclimate to a flexible schedule. Part of our strategic programs are to improve employee performance with flexible schedules however, those employees that do not utilize the flexible schedule will be accommodated in other ways to ensure work-life balance.

P5 agreed with P3 that the more experienced employees did find challenges with a flexible schedule but could accommodate the change and continue with business as usual. P5 clarified,

> We have a few employees who are older, and these employees struggle with split shifts, coming in earlier, or leaving later. These employees appreciate being able

to take time off during the middle of the day for an appointment but struggle with transitioning back into working after returning from the appointment.

P2 suggested managers must work with all employees to build the relationship through positive communication, if transitioning to a flexible schedule offers a challenge, then employees will have opportunities to adjust easier to find the right balance with little to no stress. P2 stated, "Our flexible schedules are working because my staff and I have a relationship and obligation to keep everyone informed on any schedule changes to ensure the work is covered."

The findings of work-life balance with flexible work schedules mirror Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. Vroom suggested that employees are productive when the reward equals value. This is an example of valence in Vroom's expectancy theory. Instrumentality was displayed as a participant described an increase in performance because of flexible schedules. Flexible working schedules provide employees with a work-life balance that allows for a change in schedules. Uddin et al., (2020) confirmed that work-life balance with flexible schedules increased positive employee physical and mental health, increased productivity, and lowered employee absenteeism. Flexible work schedules are becoming popular; however, business leaders continue to struggle with employee work-life balance because of the daily work demands. The findings in the research of Singh and Sharma (2021) oppose that flexible schedules are an improvement however the changes in the daily work patterns continue to challenge work-life balance and employees' health. Some business leaders with organizations promoting 24x7x365 style of operation create conflicts with child-care, travel, and holiday or school schedules,

leading to employee stress. Bernardi et al., (2021) noted organized employees adapt well to unanticipated changes in schedules including working conditions, child-care, and other responsibilities related to flexible schedules. Flexible working schedules encourage employee engagement because these schedules provide the employee with the privilege of adjusting working hours to accommodate personal life (White & Maniam, 2020). Work-life balance with flexible work schedules empowers employees to formulate a personal working schedule, reduces stress, and increases the overall employee engagement.

Work-life balance with flexible work schedule is consistent with the existing literature on strategies to motivate remote employees. A flexible schedule allows employees to manager work and home without the hassle of stress. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs assist managers with understanding employees. Managers must understand what motivates employees to build strategies for a productive outcome. Managers with a motivational strategy will experience negative productivity and high turnover. Table 4 shows the work-life balance through flexible work schedule strategies and percentage that formed Theme 3.

Table 4

Strategies for Implementing Work-life Balance Through Flexible Work Schedules

Strategies	Percentage of use by participants
Commit to flexible schedules	100%
Build relationships	100%

Improved employee performance	75%

Theme 4: Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership was introduced by Burns (1978) as a type of leadership that focused on addressing employees' values, ethics, philosophies, and conventions. Transformational leaders can influence employees through empowerment, achieve higher productivity results, substantially affect employee job satisfaction (Saputro et al., 2020). Transformational leaders lead by example and encourage positive productivity through inspirational motivation. Transformation leaders are most effective in increasing employee inspiration and motivation (Wipulanusat et al., 2017). Transformational leadership has four main elements: inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation (Burns, 1978). Inspirational motivation offers employees with common purpose and ambitions for shared organizational success. Individualized consideration begins with leaders relinquishing control and supporting the employee through coaching and training. Idealized influence is characterized as leaders exhibiting role model behavior to gain trust, respect, and followers to emulate. Leaders stimulate followers to be creative through questioning and reframing situations displays is demonstrating intellectual stimulation.

P3 gave several examples of personal behavior during meetings for employees to use during their meetings and learn from future leaders. P3 suggested,

> As a strategic leader, I must provide a positive example to encourage employees to trust me. By gaining their trust, employees work harder because they know how much I appreciate the efforts and how much I support their achievements. I build relationships with each employee use meetings as a method to understand employee needs so that I can provide the right reward. As I build these relationships, I can influence my employees and encourage them to be productive, share ideas, and meet organizational objectives.

P1 stated, "I maintain an open and honest forum with my team and build positive relationships. Success depends on me understanding what I can do to continue to motivate my employee and gain productivity." Employees who see their leaders as having high ethical values and morals convey a positive outlook (Amine et al., 2021). This type of strategy allows leaders the opportunity to encourage employees to trust leaders and build relationships. Leaders should possess skills to influence, engage, and motivate employees. P5 explained that without engaging remote employees, production would decline and could jeopardize customer expectations. P5 stated, “Part of my leadership strategies for motivating employees is to influence employees to follow me. If I am providing positive leadership examples, then they have a role model to mimic.”

P2 gave several examples of how leadership is vital to influence employees through good motivational speeches during town hall meetings. P2 stated, “As a transformational leader, I build trust in my employees so that I may encourage a bond as part of my motivational strategies. We use our town hall for employee recognition, contest winner announcements, and encouragement for all employees to participate in

future events." P4 and P5 echoed P2 by confirming the importance of the exemplary leadership influence and how displays of leadership are experienced in town hall meetings. P4 explained,

> Town halls are a great way to encourage employees because leadership can influence many employees at one time. This is not an easy task but with the right words, correct body language, and the help of the front-line leaders, these town halls can provide a positive message to the employee.

P5 stated,

> Town halls provide a method of communication through positive interaction. We use our town hall meetings to provide company transparency and employees ask questions, we listen and try to answer them immediately. This behavior sends the message to the employee that leaders are listening, responding, and willing to act.

P4 stated,

> In my line of work, we are always fighting fires so the day can be very intense, my job is to maintain a level head for my staff. If I show the team that no matter how bad the day becomes, it is important to remain calm and work towards solutions, the response is positive.

P5 explained,

> In the IT business, there are many long hours in a day and as a leader I must find ways to keep my team motivated. My job is to be a positive role model and encourage teams to work together even during those long hour days.

P1 provided an example of how negative leadership can discourage employee motivation and offered positive ways to counter the negative influences experienced in an organization. P1 stated,

> Early in my career as a leader, I made an error and became angry in front of my staff. I displayed such negativity that I lost several employees. A strong leader coached me for over a year and the results have benefited my career.

P3 suggested that leaders with the right skills will always influence the right employees and maintain positive employee motivation. P3 stated,

> Leaders must have empathy, the willingness to build a relationship, and coach employees. These are only a few skills that a leader must display to motivate employees. We have a strategic program for leaders designed to educate leaders on how to motivate, engage, and retain employees. Our empathy training is the newest part of the program for this year.

Managers can achieve higher employee performance with successful employee motivation strategies (Rudanci et al., 2021). Without the skills to motivate the employee, the employee becomes demotivated and feel isolated. Employee motivation through optimistic strategic design and implementation may yield high productive results for business profits.

Transformational leaders display empathy, inspiration, and charisma allowing the leader to build trust with the employees. Transformational leaders with inspirational behavior build confident employees and encourage empowerment when facing new or challenging obstacles (Christie et. al., 2019). P1 stated,

> We support many areas in our business and the solution to our outages are not always available. I encourage my staff to go beyond their knowledge and challenge each member to explore beyond their comfort zones to find solutions. The answers are not always available, but all my guys accept the challenge and look for new and creative solutions to our technology issues. One of my strategic goals for this quarter is to build relationships with my new team members. By having this relationship, I will have the power to influence the new members and when we experience an outage, the new employees will trust that I have empowered them to take the lead to resolve the issue.

P5 explained, "I want my team to trust that I will always support their efforts, but I have to earn that trust. I work hard to build solid relationships and encourage open communication between all of us." P3 stated, "My organization provided all leaders with empathy training 2 years ago and that training helped me understand how to listen to my employees so that I know how to support them with their work and career paths." P4 explained, "I have always had positive role models for leaders, and I chose to mimic their behavior. I believe this has made me successful in inspiring employees to succeed and keeping them motivated for positive performance." P2 described,

> My experience with leadership helped me transform into the positive motivator I am today. I support my staff; I look for creative ways to encourage new ideas and I am always available to listen when they need me. My mentors provided me the strategic methods to use to influence my employees, build relationships, and maintain productive employees.

Employee motivation not only increases performance but also encourages employee satisfaction (Mattar, 2020). The leader and employee create trust encouraging the employee to reveal motivational factors.

Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory served as the study's conceptual framework as possible methods for understanding successful motivational strategies. Managers can use Vroom's expectancy theory to increase employee efficiency. This findings regarding transformational leadership showed similarity to Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. Employee motivation is a consequence of value employees place on anticipated outcome of their work (Emmanuel et al., 2021). The participants described employee motivation through building trust. To maintain engaged employee managers of remote employees must build trust to know how to influence the employee with the right benefit (Hejase, 2020). Participants displayed instrumentality through employee actions because employees believed productivity equaled reward. Managers described motivated employees working towards their anticipated result.

According to Lees and Dhanpat (2021), managers are vital to employee motivation because managers can positively or negatively influence employees. Transformational leaders use influence to motivate through building a relationship and promoting trust. Quality relationships between leaders and employees increase trust leading to employee engagement and positive productivity (Dewayani et al., 2020). Transformational leaders can increase or decrease the motivation in the employee through specific skills which improve employee motivation.

Transformational leadership is consistent with the existing literature on strategies managers use to motivate remote employees. Laissez-faire leadership as linked in the literature was an option for review however, this leader does not offer guidance or extend engagement with decision-making. Authoritative leadership style is linked in the literature however, a dictator or commanding leader did not emerge in the data collection. The authoritative style did not align with a motivational leadership style. The democratic leadership style from the literature linked resembles closely to a motivational leader. This leadership style empowers employees, however, does not build relationships and influence through leading by example. The lack of example could deter an employee towards negated direction.

Employees must be able to trust the leader and a transformational leader is one that will influence, guide, and motivate. A successful manager can recognize and interpret the emotions of their employee through emotional intelligence (Gorgens_Ekermans & Roux, 2021). Managers use self-awareness, motivation, and empathy to influence employees. Emotional intelligence from the literature related to transformational leadership. Table 5 shows the transformational leadership strategies and percentages that formed Theme 4.

Table 5

Strategies for Implementing Transformational Leadership

Strategies	Percentage of use by participants
Power to influence	100%
Build relationships	100%

Leaders provided empathy	75%

Application to Professional Practice

The findings of this research are relevant to strategies used to motivate remote employees. I presented the results from this study as practical strategies that successful IT managers used to motive remote employees. This study may be beneficial to other business leaders who seek to develop strategies, retain employees, increase productivity, and reduce costs by discovering strategies some business leaders used to implement motivation strategies successfully. The development of leader strategies is successful when some business leaders learn from lessons (Hinduja et al., 2020). Managers can use the findings of this study to increase productivity by improving employee motivation.

The themes that emerged in this study from the WebEx video conference semistructured interviews and the reviewing of website documentation may assist business leaders gain an improved knowledge of how to build motivational strategies effectively. Theme 1, communication was momentous to all five leaders that effective communication was pivotal for motivational strategies. Theme 2, employee engagement, all participants recognized leadership commitment was as important as employee commitment and provided a positive example for the employees. Theme 3, work-life balance with flexible schedules, the participants agreed most employees appreciated flexible schedules. Theme 4, transformational leadership, was significant to all leaders. All five participants recognized the importance of having the skills a transformational leader possesses and using those skills to motivate employees however, communication

was mentioned over 63% during the interviews. The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on strategies for motivating remote employees.

During the research of strategies IT managers use to motivate remote employees, I found that communication with employees by leaders was the primary reason for continued success. Effective communication is an essential component to employee engagement. Managers must engage remote employees differently to maintain productivity and encourage positive employee performance (Dabija, 2020). Leaders of other IT organizations who desire motivated remote employees might benefit to follow the example set by the leaders in this study.

Implications for Social Change

Implications for social change stem from tangible improvements to individuals, community, organizational, and cultural levels. This study provided positive social change at the individual level by focusing on work-life balance with flexible work schedules. Flexible working schedules may result in improved employee motivation, employee retention, and overall employee performance.

Remote work would benefit the younger generation and anyone who allows work from home or a virtual location. At the societal level, the younger generation explores jobs more suited to their lifestyle, such as working remotely (Juchnowicz & Kinowska, 2021). This change in employment will attract the youth and affect the community by increasing jobs and more spending in the community. The benefits to the community would include less government assistance and an increase in local spending.

The organizational change opportunities continue to grow as technology advances. The cost associated with new technology may slow the advancement of new hardware or software; however, the benefits and return on investments may be another opportunity for continuing remote workers. Organizational expansion and top talent recruitment are no longer a limitation when remote working is an option.

Flexible working schedules, working remotely, a global workforce, and other variables are changing the working culture for many organizations. This shift has implications for individuals, families, and societies. No business is static, and all are susceptible to cultural changes, such as an increased focus on flexible schedules to promote work-life balance. These positive changes allow individuals to focus on their personal life and professional life where necessary and avoid burnout. This study may fill the knowledge gap of the strategy managers should implement to motivate remote employees. Managers can use the information from this study to understand and implement strategies to motivate remote employees.

Recommendations for Action

The intent of this qualitative multi-case study was to show strategies IT managers use to motivate remote employees. Experienced IT managers understand the strategies necessary to motivate remote employees through leadership, communication, work-life balance, flexible work, and employee engagement. Based on the study's findings, recommendations emerged for current and future business managers to consider employee improvement strategies to increase employee motivation.

I recommend managers review the current business situation and determine if a remote work program would benefit the business and the employee. If this need and benefit meets expectations, I recommend implementing leadership programs before building the work from home model. These programs would comprise empathy training, communication skills, leadership training, and mentoring. These training would consist of online, in-classroom, and mentoring activities. Another recommendation is for leaders to understand how to develop flexible schedules and reward programs for multigenerational workforces. Leaders who increase their awareness and understand what motivates a multigenerational workforce are more productive (Lawson, 2017). I plan to disseminate the findings of this study to participants, local leaders, and business organizations. Furthermore, I will offer to conduct presentations to business leaders through the local Women in Technology organization.

Recommendations for Further Research

This qualitative multi-case study shows strategies IT managers use to motivate remote employees. The study's five participants were recruited from LinkedIn and have been an IT manager for at least 1 year, successfully managing remote employees.
A recommendation for future research is to use a larger sample size that includes more IT business leaders in other geographic locations to gain additional data on strategies used to motivate remote employees. Expanding the study could result in different data because of various industries and social interactions globally. Another recommendation for future research is researchers could include employee views on motivational strategies to have a broader scope of participation in the study. The third recommendation future researchers

could explore is millennials versus multigenerational workforces. The views from different generations and cultures may offer additional options for motivational strategies.

Reflections

I began this journey with few expectations but realized the rigor of this program not only pushed my mind beyond existence but forced me outside of my educational comfort zone. I am challenged but humbled at the experience and encourage everyone to consider this an opportunity to expand professionally and academically. I have improved my research skills, increased my interview skills, and enhanced my presentation skills.

I had to reset my expectations throughout this process because several challenges created different opportunities for multiple areas of my study. I enjoyed interviewing the different leaders and could feel the passion from some and the stress of others while the interviews were active. Each leader questioned why I was seeking a doctorate and my answer seemed simple, I want to change the way our business leaders think because I want the employee to be first.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study was to explore strategies IT managers use to motivate remote employees. Managers use strategies through leadership, communication, work-life balance with flexible work schedules, and employee engagement to motive employees based on the data collected from my study. Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory was the conceptual framework of this study. The findings

indicated that managers who implemented successful strategies retained employees, increased employee engagement leading to positive productivity.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Interview preparation. I will obtain permission from the authorized official of five Southeastern United States IT companies to review strategies to motivate remote employees. The semistructured interviews follow a standardized interview format including recordings for the accuracy of data collected from participants. I will schedule a meeting in a private conference room or a room at the public library. All interviews will last 45-60 minutes. I will collect data interviews from participants.

Opening the interview. The interview will begin by greeting the participant and explaining my role as researcher. I will ensure the readiness of the participant to start the interview process. I will inform the participant the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore strategies some investment banking leaders use to retain front-line employees. The implications for positive social change include a work environment that is conducive to employee retention that might result in improved economic and social conditions, greater self-efficacy among employees, and reduced local unemployment. Good day, thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. I will explain to you the process for today's discussion. My research study Strategies IT Managers Use to Motivate Remote Employees. This study may provide leaders with motivational strategies for remote employees. Do you have any questions? I will be asking you a set of questions and capturing your responses. Are you ready to begin?

Informed consent. I will begin by emailing the potential participants an Invitation to Participate with an informed consent form attached. I will await their reply consent by e-mail. The next step involves scheduling interviews with each participant who agreed to take part in the study. I will inform participant the interview recording for transcription purposes.

Conducting the interview. I will ask the participant open-ended question in the semistructured interview to collect data to explore perceptions and experiences of participants on the strategies organizational leaders use to retain employees. Interview questions are open-ended for all participants to establish a measure of dependability. During the interview process, I will follow up with probing questions to ensure clarification. Listed are questions for the interview process.

1. What are your experiences with remote work and job satisfaction within the organization?
2. What strategies have you used to motivate remote employees?
3. What methods do you use to measure remote employee job satisfaction?
4. How do you verify that current remote employee programs benefit remote employees?
5. What additional information would you like to share regarding motivating IT remote employees?

Follow up with probing questions. Once participants answer the primary questions, I will inform each one there may be follow-up probing questions for additional information and clarity. I will transcribe the data from the audio recording and notes and schedule time to validate participants' responses.

Theme verification. I will ask participants about major themes discussed in the interview. I will review transcribed interview recordings, notes, and documentation to determine patterns and themes regarding motivational strategies for remote employees. I will ensure collected data from the interview is understood.

Coding. I will include a coding system to ensure the protection of participant's identities. I will code participants' names within the study P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. The coding system used to build trust with participants.

Recording reflexive notes. In addition to recording the interview, I will take notes to document any reflexive thoughts you might have while the interview is proceeding. I will take notes to help me remain organized while retrieving and compiling data from interviews.

Ending the interview. I appreciate your time and information provided for the research study. I will contact you later to verify the accuracy of the transcript and to engage in member checking to obtain any additional information you might want to offer.