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Knowledge Management Strategies in Support of Succession Planning

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Jared N. Kunath

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Knowledge Management Strategies in Support of Succession Planning

by

Jared N. Kunath

MS, American Public University, 2010

BS, Colorado Christian University, 2001

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

March 2022

Abstract

Leader succession is a persistent strategic concern for U.S. federal agencies. The resultant loss of institutional knowledge as members retire, are replaced or are promoted significantly impacts the organization's performance. Grounded in knowledge management theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies federal leaders use to emplace effective knowledge management programs to support succession planning. The six participants were middle and senior-level leaders of a U.S. federal agency located in Texas who had at least 5 years of experience managing their organization's knowledge systems during succession planning and succession events. Data were collected using semistructured interviews, published documents, and organizational artifacts. Yin's qualitative data analysis process was used to identify four themes: (a) structured knowledge systems, (b) organizational documentation, (c) knowledge transfer methods and member education, and (d) program evaluation. A key recommendation is for leaders to invest and promote resources that effectively support leadership turnover events. The implications for positive social change include the potential for leaders to implement process efficiencies that reduce the need to allocate persistent government resources, reducing communities' tax burden while sustaining the services provided.

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Dedication

Dedicated to the professional leaders whose principled work leads to the innovation and modernization of organizational processes and procedures.

Acknowledgments

To my family, who had to bear the full weight of the countless and frustrating hours I've spent on this journey. To my chair and mentor, Dr. Jill Murray, who was a constant and welcomed voice of reason and restraint and to her colleagues, Dr. Jonathan Schultz, SCM, and Dr. Cheryl Lentz, URR. To my classmates and colleagues who provided a steady stream of motivation and encouragement.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

An organization's leaders' ability to effectively manage institutional knowledge is foundational for supporting the gamut of business operations. Garcia and Sosa-Fey (2020) explained that although organizations routinely experience common challenges with implementing processes for managing the business's information, a robust knowledge management system is a critical mediator of the persistent success of an organization's routine activities. Bidian and Evans (2019) further applied the concept of knowledge management as a vital success strategy to an organization's persistent employee actions, including departure, promotion, transfer, or retirement. Sibbald et al. (2017) effectively explored the complementariness between knowledge management and succession planning strategies by identifying the common characteristics of information transfer, business application, and timeliness. Further study of the synergetic relationship between knowledge management and succession planning was necessary to develop effective business continuity and sustainability methods in the modern knowledge-intensive economy. In this study, I explored new opportunities for improving the effectiveness of knowledge management programs in support of succession planning.

Background of the Problem

Employee succession is a persistent concern for organizations as members continuously retire, are promoted, transfer to other offices or divisions, or leave the organization altogether (Bidian & Evans, 2019). The U.S. Department of Labor indicates that approximately 4% of the total workforce across all industries in the U.S. separated from the workplace year-over-year between 2020 and 2021, resulting in nearly 5.5

million fewer employees (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). The resultant loss of working knowledge as members leave the workplace is one of the primary barriers to success for an organization as it operates in the marketplace (Dasai et al., 2016). One of the primary concerns with succession events is that leaders must contend with the potential operational risk that results from the loss of implicit knowledge (Cho et al., 2020; Massingham, 2018). Leaders of modern organizations will often recognize the need to ensure that members manage institutional information to confirm availability and value; however, many leaders do not effectively use existing knowledge management systems to support succession events (Berns & Klarner, 2017).

Problem Statement

Large numbers of baby boomers are leaving employment, and organizational leaders are not prepared for the resultant loss of talent and knowledge (Hillman & Werner, 2017). Approximately 40% of leaders fail to emplace methods to mitigate potential leadership and knowledge gaps when developing a succession strategy (Berns & Klarner, 2017). The general business problem is that some leaders do not consider the value of knowledge management as a critical component for succession planning, resulting in ineffective postsuccession performance. The specific business problem is that some federal government leaders lack strategies for implementing an effective knowledge management program that supports succession planning.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this single case study was to explore strategies that federal leaders use to emplace effective knowledge management programs to support succession

planning. The population consisted of six senior- and mid-management levels of a federal government agency's field office in Texas. The implications for positive social change include influencing leaders to implement process efficiencies that might reduce the need to allocate persistent government resources, which may reduce communities' tax burden while sustaining the services provided.

Population and Sampling

Participants in this study were senior- and mid-level leaders who have experience implementing successful knowledge management programs that support succession planning. The participant group was approximately 20 people; however, only six were needed to meet data saturation requirements (Boddy, 2016). The target company has more than 3000 people, with approximately 25% of those occupying senior- and mid-level leadership positions. Positional leadership tenure is about 3 years; leaders generally move from one leadership position to another, extending leadership position tenure beyond a decade. Interviews of a total of six people who had met the selection criteria and a review of relevant documentation and organizational artifacts were appropriate to understand the phenomenon clearly.

Nature of the Study

This was a qualitative study. Qualitative researchers explore, describe, and interpret how and why phenomena have occurred or are occurring based on individual perspectives (Yin, 2018). I explored the perspectives of the agency's leaders to learn why and how they identified and implemented effective strategies for knowledge management strategies and how those strategies support effective succession planning; therefore, a

qualitative approach was determined to be appropriate. Quantitative researchers focus on correlational and/or causal relationships among variables in which numerical data are analyzed by testing hypotheses (Park & Park, 2016). Because I did not use numerical data to test hypotheses about variables' characteristics or relationships to address my study's purpose, a quantitative study would not have been appropriate. Yin (2018) defined the mixed methods approach as the use of elements from both qualitative and quantitative designs to study an existing business problem using contextual and logical analyses. A mixed methods approach would not have been appropriate because I did not need to use both the qualitative and quantitative methods to collect concurrent and contextual data to study the phenomenon because quantitative data were not appropriate in the study.

I used a qualitative single case study design for this study. In qualitative case study design, researchers contextualize data and reiteratively explore multiple sources to study a phenomenon (De Felice & Janesick, 2015; Yin, 2018). In the study, I explored several data types and sources to study the phenomena; therefore, a case-study design was most appropriate. A multiple case study would not have been appropriate as I limited the context of the study to a single organization. Researchers conduct ethnographic studies to understand individual actions within a specific context by immersing themselves into the social and cultural facets of one or more groups (Tickle, 2017). An ethnographic research design would not have been appropriate for this study as I did not intend to immerse myself into the cultural aspect of an organization to understand individual actions. A phenomenological researcher explores participants' perspectives, beliefs, and lived experiences to develop generalizations regarding the meanings of

participants' experiencing a phenomenon (Lewis, 2015; Yin, 2018). The phenomenological design would not have been appropriate for my research study as I did not study the personal meanings of participants' lived experiences.

Research Question

What strategies do organizational leaders use to emplace an effective knowledge management program that supports succession planning?

Interview Questions

1. What is the availability of organizational knowledge within your federal agency?
2. How applicable is the organizational knowledge within your federal agency for supporting succession planning?
3. How do you retain organizational knowledge?
4. How do you make knowledge accessible to employees?
5. What strategies do you use to emplace an effective knowledge management program to support succession planning?
6. How do your organization's knowledge management strategies align with your organization's succession planning strategy?
7. How do you assess the effectiveness of knowledge management as the program pertains to your organization's succession planning?
8. What additional information would you like to add about your organization's knowledge management strategies for improving succession planning?

Conceptual Framework

I used the knowledge management theory (KMT) as the conceptual framework for this study. As described by Dalkir (2005) in an exploration of theoretical concepts, the principles of KMT include intelligent enterprise activity and knowledge asset management and application. Practitioners of KMT hold that an organization's knowledge management strategy is a critical component of effective pre- and postsuccession planning and performance and allows leaders at all levels of an organization to recognize, empower, and inspire positive organizational change (Dasai et al., 2016). However, the most common measure of the effectiveness of KMT is organizational performance (Sadq et al., 2020).

Organizational leaders who implement KMT principles propose that the availability of organizational knowledge may ensure that business operations are conducted in support of stakeholders' performance expectations (Dalkir, 2017; Wahda, 2017). Villadsen's (2016) examination of KMT as a component of performance capacity supports the concept of sustained and improved organizational performance through effective knowledge transfer, adaptation, and application. Additionally, leaders who implement KMT concepts may develop an organizational structure that rewards transformational thought and cultural improvement by supporting changes in information that have become obsolete (Razak et al., 2013). KMT was a relevant conceptual framework for this study because the tenets align with an exploration of how federal leaders successfully use knowledge management techniques and principles to support succession planning and succession events.

Operational Definitions

The following operational definitions clarify the application of the terms throughout the study.

Human capital: Human capital is the qualitative valuation of knowledge and skills an individual or group of individuals apply toward completing a task to improve the performance related to that task (Dimov, 2017).

Intellectual capital: Intellectual capital is the qualitative valuation of a combination of an organization's human, cultural, and structural capital (M. Zhang et al., 2017).

Knowledge economy: Knowledge economy is a sociological approach to recognizing the value of knowledge-intensive activities as a competitive production tool in a global marketplace (Gupta, 2020).

Knowledge management: Knowledge management is an academic and business approach to capturing, codifying, and applying information that supports overall organizational performance as part of a company's training and development strategies (Barao et al., 2017).

Knowledge management system: A knowledge management system is a system of processes and organizational structures that facilitate the creation of knowledge-based ecosystems that promote the flow of information to and from users (Santoro et al., 2018).

Line of sight: Line of sight is a strategic planning concept that ensures organizational, group, and individual business activities align with an organization-level strategy (Ungureanu et al., 2019).

Succession planning: Succession planning is the strategic process of identifying and developing leaders within a company to assume elevated roles and responsibilities as they become available (Gray, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Identifying the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of a study provides the reader with an understanding of ethical and bias issues that may influence a study's reliability and validity (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018; Wolgemuth et al., 2017). Within the context of a research study, Corley (2015) classified assumptions as naturally occurring phenomena that preclude a supposition of truth when considered in the context within which the phenomena occurred. Koch et al. (2014) recognized the limitations of a qualitative study as influences that are mostly beyond the researcher's control, cannot be reasonably dismissed or mitigated, and may significantly impact the outcome of the study. Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) described delimitations as the research study's boundaries or scope as prescribed by the design, including the number of participants, data sources, and potentially time. Clearly distinguishing the assumptions and limitations of a study allows the researcher to apply appropriate mitigation techniques to limit their effect. Listing the delimitations of the study enables the reader to understand the boundaries of the research and may create future expanded research opportunities to further the phenomenon beyond the scope of this study.

Assumptions

Assumptions made during research projects imply there are facts the researcher believes are real and beyond the researcher's control, which may influence data

collection, analysis, and findings (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). In this case study, assumptions included the availability of up-to-date institutional information related to organizational strategies to support knowledge management and succession planning. I assumed individuals I selected for interviews and observation know the organization's processes related to knowledge management and succession planning. Other assumptions included workplace accessibility, objective voluntariness from participants, and data availability.

Limitations

Limitations related to this study could include individual bias related to the study topic, resulting in less than objective responses during interviews and observation. Observations were limited to selected individuals within an organization responsible for daily activities and performing duties that could interrupt information exchange. Next, although the organization operates globally, the location of the study's population limited input to experiences that may only occur at the U.S. government facility in Texas. Also, participant misinterpretation of existing processes to the extent that observable behavior contrasts with program documentation. Phenomena observed within the participants' strict hierarchical world view may not be duplicated or applicable at nongovernment organizations. Last, data were only specific to the government institution and may not easily translate into useable information for other industries.

Delimitations

This study's primary delimitation was an exclusive focus on studying successfully implemented strategies related to KMT. In this study, participants were limited to specific

positions in the organization that actively manage their knowledge management and succession plans. I collected data using semistructured interviews, observation, and document review, including institutional practices and procedures from existing documentation or processes the organization uses to implement its knowledge management and succession strategies. The desired population was limited to a U.S. federal government organization in Texas.

Significance of the Study

Succession planning continues to be a significant strategic concern for organizations as employee turnover occurs as a natural part of operations (Hillman & Werner, 2017). Organizational leaders who prepare for eventual losses of talent by creating plans to minimize employee loss can better manage how the organization performs at all levels. Managing the business' knowledge while planning for employee succession ultimately benefits the organization by providing strategic roadmaps for presuccession, transition events, and postsuccession operations (Villadsen, 2016). Leaders at the mid- and senior-levels of an organization who create and implement plans to support employee succession are well-poised to minimize the operational impact of member turnover (Dalkir, 2017). Additionally, emplaced knowledge management programs may directly support succession planning and might improve postsuccession organizational performance, including market competitiveness and positive social change.

Contribution to Business Practice

Organizations continuously face the task of ensuring that managers and leaders are equipped and prepared to make certain business activities continue unimpeded during a succession event (Schepker et al., 2018; Tickle, 2017). Therefore, leaders must develop and implement strategies that support leadership replacement and knowledge management needs as a critical component of succession (Barzinpour et al., 2015). The macro business practice benefits of emplacing an effective knowledge management strategy include (a) improvements to human capital through continuous training and development; (b) increased organizational agility through better access to knowledge, communication, and employee coordination; (c) identification and closure of knowledge gaps; and (d) promotion of innovation and experimentation (Yahyapour et al., 2015).

Implications for Social Change

Federal government leaders may support social change by highlighting the positive organizational and social implications of diversified knowledge-sharing programs in which broad practice communities may operate (Lee et al., 2015). The specific implications for positive change include improving members' understanding of how KMT may positively influence innovation and professional competencies, which members can then use to create solutions to communities' governance problems. The study's findings may catalyze leaders to implement process efficiencies that could reduce the need to allocate persistent government resources, which might lead to a reduction in communities' tax burden without reducing the services provided.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The literature review is an integral part of a research study. The researcher uses the review to compile, synthesize, and objectively analyze extant literature to support reasonable efforts in developing an intelligent plan for studying a phenomenon (Baker, 2016). To support my research efforts, I used the literature review to (a) discover existing literature related to knowledge management and succession planning, (b) identify gaps in the extant literature that the study may fill, and (c) contribute to the overall body of academic and professional literature.

A thorough literature review reveals strategic relationships between an organization's knowledge management strategy and supporting programs, operations performance, and the effectiveness of a company's succession planning efforts (Brajer-Marczak, 2016; Dayan et al., 2017; Sadeghi & Mostafavi Rad, 2018; Sibbald et al., 2016). This review was intended to compile and synthesize appropriate information related to knowledge management and succession planning. The significant concepts present in this review included KMT, succession management theory, and how knowledge management may support succession planning.

The review process included in-depth research of peer-reviewed articles from online sources, including Walden University Library, Google Scholar, Gale, JSTOR, Science Direct, EBSCOhost, CrossRef, and ProQuest. Keywords included *knowledge management, presuccession, and postsuccession planning, competency development, knowledge management systems, succession effectiveness, organizational strategy, knowledge transfer, organizational strategy, organizational culture,* and *organizational*

performance. I collected information from 217 journal and book sources, of which 207 are peer-reviewed and 180 were published between 2016 and 2021.

Knowledge Management and Succession Planning Background

As part of succession planning, knowledge management is a persistent strategic concern for organizations (Sibbald et al., 2016). Most leaders fail to recognize the importance of emplacing knowledge management programs in their organization and further fail to align those programs with the company's succession planning efforts (Chlebikova et al., 2015). Knowledge management is a valid method of ensuring members have access to institutional and tacit information and is directly associated with individual and organizational performance (Abdessadak et al., 2018).

An analysis of the extant literature supports the proposition that knowledge management is a critical strategic component of organizational health, including succession planning and performance (Groves, 2019). Succession planning is a well-known and understood component of corporate health and resiliency planning that organizations use to ensure leadership continuity (Bowles et al., 2016). Russell and Sabina (2014) suggested that failure to consider succession planning factors often causes organizations to develop incomplete or ineffective succession models that lead to persistent leadership gaps and an inability to emplace leaders who possess and can demonstrate appropriate competencies. This literature analysis includes leaders' failure to recognize the criticality of knowledge management as part of a robust and effective succession plan.

In reviewing the literature on the importance of knowledge management in supporting effective succession planning, I explored four main points of consideration, including (a) leaders must clearly define and understand knowledge management principles before developing strategies to support succession planning (Ives et al., 1997; Mahler & Wrightnour, 1973), (b) environmental factors help shape leadership's understanding of how knowledge management may support succession planning (McKee & Froelich, 2016; Romans & Tobaben, 2016; Tafti & Amiri, 2017), (c) identifying essential leadership skills as part of succession planning is vital to developing a knowledge management program (Buchanan, 2017; Denker et al., 2015; Vinkenburg et al., 2013), and (d) an effective succession event depends on the organization's ability to manage knowledge (Claver-Cortés et al., 2018; Csizmadia et al., 2016; Sibbald et al., 2016).

I conducted the following review to contribute to the existing body of research related to knowledge management and succession planning.

KMT

Dalkir (2017) asserted that an organization's leaders' ability to manage information effectively is vital to sustainability and competitiveness. Leaders who implement programs to capture and diffuse institutional information support a firm's success as it operates in a modern knowledge economy (Lambert et al., 2018). Although leaders understood the concepts of managing knowledge before they were collectively called knowledge management, it was not until Wiig (1997) theorized about capturing, codifying, and applying institutional knowledge that the strategic concept of knowledge

management was used by leaders to provide strategic competitive advantages to an organization. Dalkir (2005) formally introduced the theory and practice of knowledge management in 2005 as methods organizational leaders could consistently use to ensure managing institutional knowledge remains a component of the organization's overall operating strategy.

This study's conceptual framework relies on Dalkir's (2017) exploration and presentation of KMT as a critical factor of operating in a knowledge economy. The major components of KMT include leaderships' efforts to conduct business activities intelligently and knowledge asset management and application (Dalkir, 2005). Within the primary elements of KMT are several key systemic factors leaders perform to support the overarching theme, including (a) periodic review and modification of operating knowledge to ensure relevance and applicability (Firestone & McElroy, 2004; Wiig, 1997), (b) knowledge capture and codification (Dalkir, 2005; Jones, 2015), (c) knowledge dissemination (Dalkir, 2005; Souihi et al., 2013), and (d) knowledge application (Dalkir, 2017; Ode & Ayavoo, 2020).

A review of existing knowledge management system components, including the information contained therein, allows leaders to continually ensure the organization has relevant and timely information to operate (Firestone & McElroy, 2004). Dalkir (2017) argued that obsolete information prevents organizations from maximizing performance potential, and persistent awareness of how an organization manages knowledge is necessary to ensure leaders update and appropriately maintain data. Jones (2015) posited that an effective knowledge management system must include efficient collection,

codification, and accessibility methods to ensure information is available at the point of need. Barao et al. (2017) further expanded the concepts of capture and codification by expressing the importance of ensuring leaders focus on retaining relevant information apart from general operating knowledge. Focusing on information retainment would allow leaders to appropriately allocate resources to gathering information that adds to the organization's ability to remain competitive in a knowledge market (Ghiorghita & Grzegorczyk, 2017).

Souihi et al. (2013) described information availability as the concept of ensuring users have access to information when and where needed. Le Dû-Blayo (2017) explained that how members pass information between them is as equally important as the content. Leaders must manage information sharing processes, so the transference does not result in the information becoming unusable (Kang & Sauk Hau, 2014). Ode and Ayavoo (2020) stated that information application is likely an essential factor in a knowledge management system such that misapplication could reduce leaders' ability to manage business activities appropriately. Dalkir (2017) agreed with the application concept by identifying the effective use of information as the relevant result of all previous systemic factors. While each of the elements above provides valuable insight into the potential importance of managing institutional knowledge, there may be nuances related to organizational culture, technology, and goal-creation that might further influence the creation, implementation, and administration of a knowledge management system (Ahmady et al., 2016; Hemmati & Hosseini, 2016). I used the KMT to shape this study's

premise by supporting the concept of knowledge management as a component of an effective succession planning strategy.

Succession Management Theory

Effectively managing business activities begins with understanding how an organization can and should support the concept of employee replacement or succession (Gray, 2014). Mahler and Wrightnour's (1973) and Ives et al.'s (1997) theorization of succession strategy in leadership models provided the foundation of knowledge management by highlighting the criticality of ensuring organizational leaders implement programs to support a continuation of operations during a succession. The key components of succession management theory include (a) appropriate vetting and recruiting, (b) competency identification and codification, and (c) knowledge availability and applicability (Mahler & Wrightnour, 1973). For this study, an exploration of the knowledge management component of succession planning is appropriate.

Saratun (2016) argued that employee effectiveness is primarily dependent upon both the member's understanding of the role they fill and management's ability to support the employee's maturation into their work role. To support Saratun's concept, Ives et al. (1997) argued that an employee's success ultimately rests with management's ability to ensure the member has adequate access to institutional knowledge before, during, and after a succession event. Organizational leaders' ability to effectively couple succession planning with a robust knowledge management plan supports organizational success (Al-Hakim & Hassan, 2016; Durst & Wilhelm, 2012).

Knowledge management and succession are two distinct strategic planning programs that ensure a continuation and potential improvement of organizational performance throughout the company's lifecycle (Chouikha et al., 2018). Business leaders often implement knowledge management and succession as individual strategies to support distinct goals related to specific business operations. The review of the literature suggests business leaders recognize the importance of both strategies but often fail to identify or create overlap such that knowledge management and succession strategies are complementary (Sibbald et al., 2016, 2017). Although leaders of an organization recognize knowledge management strategies as critical components of performance, most organizational leaders do not understand or prioritize ensuring knowledge management strategies support succession events (Durst & Zieba, 2019).

In exploring the complementariness between knowledge management and succession planning, the extant literature supports identifying three potential areas of interactivity (Smith, 2020). Pretransition planning comprises routine activities designed to prepare an organization for a succession event and is considered a critical component of how an organization reacts to leadership changes (Sibbald et al., 2016). During the pretransition phase, strategic leaders develop strategies to capture and codify institutional and tacit knowledge and make it accessible and referenceable throughout the transition process. Dalkir (2005) defined institutional or explicit knowledge as business-related information leaders document and use to facilitate activities or operations. Dalkir further characterized institutional knowledge by how easily members can access, recognize, and apply toward business activities.

Tacit knowledge, or the subjective information individuals gain from performing organizational activities, is valuable but less likely to be readily available due to the difficulty with which information owners translate the information into useable knowledge (Sadeghi & Mostafavi Rad, 2018). Both tacit and explicit knowledge are critical components of complex systems and processes that comprise the concept of organizational learning, or the totality of methods, techniques, and procedures by which a business can routinely perform standard operations supporting organizational goals (Orozco, 2016). While pretransition knowledge management strategies support efforts to prepare an organization for a leadership change, the information available to leaders during the succession event itself is equally important.

A succession event is a transition of leadership responsibilities from one individual to another (Long et al., 2013). Succession is a recognized business practice that allows companies to continue operating while minimizing the disruptive effects of a change in strategic leadership due to a planned or unplanned loss of a leadership team member (Gray, 2014). Weston (2018) further explained that the transition event marks the beginning of a new leadership era in which leaders must transfer institutional knowledge and ensure alignment between outgoing and incoming leaders' knowledge about organizational activities to minimize disruption of business activities.

Knowledge Management Components for Effective Succession

Effectively managing business activities should begin with understanding how an organization can and should support leadership changes. As part of succession planning, the concept of knowledge management is found in Mahler and Wrightnour's (1973) and

Ives et al.'s (1997) theorizations on executive succession management. Both authors identified the criticality of the availability of organizational programs designed to ensure employees have access to the resources and opportunities to improve their contribution to organizational health during succession events.

An individual's work-related effectiveness is primarily dependent upon an understanding of the expectations for a particular role and management's ability to promote workspaces that allow for maximum productivity (Saratun, 2016). Ives et al. (1997) argued that access to institutional knowledge is key to identifying current work role requirements. Leaders typically base succession planning programs on current and future competency needs and may effect the cultural shift necessary to implement an effective knowledge management plan to support succession planning. As part of overall organizational health, performance management is a functional tool designed to maximize employee output and is dependent on leaders' ability to optimize access to and utilization of both explicit and implicit knowledge. Although an organization's knowledge management strategy operates as an essential component to support future planning, there are specific determinants of strategy implementation that leaders must consider: the company's human capital (Bhojaraju, 2019).

Human Capital

Human capital is a fundamental and critical component of successful business operations conducted at large, multinational companies, small-to-medium enterprises, and start-ups (Dimov, 2017). The primary focus of human capital is on how organizational culture supports a working environment that maximizes employee

potential. An organization's workforce underpins practical business activities when leaders train and stimulate members and promote a common understanding of the organization's purpose (Effelsberg et al., 2014). Leaders who espouse and demonstrate a persistent willingness to encourage innovation and transformation of process and culture support individual and group success (McCabe, 2016). Most organizations develop and emplace some degree of training as a critical piece to ensuring employees maximize performance. For example, workforce management principles describe how people are the essential component behind a company's near- and long-term performance (Jones, 2015).

Organizational leaders ensure employees meet or exceed performance expectations by providing an endogenous acceptance of tactical and strategic goals through formalized training programs or coaching initiatives (Muhammed et al., 2018). Managers develop training programs on the assumption that appropriate levels of current knowledge are collected, codified, and shared when the added knowledge will be most effective, especially in support of succession events. Human resource management theories suggest leaders base the necessary dyadic relationship between management and the workforce on many different performance-focused components, including structured and unstructured processes that focus on knowledge transference (Pronina, 2020). Mahler and Wrightnour (1973) and Effelsberg et al. (2014) suggested that any knowledge management strategy leaders create supporting succession planning must align with the organization's succession goals. McCabe (2016) and Jones (2015) expressed similar understandings of employee performance principles and how an organization's

knowledge management plan can support initial and continuous development. Neither study considered the importance of implementing a knowledge management strategy as a critical consideration of succession planning. While Mahler and Wrightnour's concept of competency-based succession planning allows leaders to apply knowledge management elements to succession events, their succession concept also provides processes that support an organization's knowledge management strategy.

Processes

Managing an organization's knowledge system begins with identifying and understanding the appropriate processes from which the system operates and how the knowledge system aligns with organizational goals. In considering how best to implement a management system that captures and makes accessible institutional knowledge at all levels of an organization, scholars have suggested a robust endogenous study be conducted (Pinto et al., 2018). Leaders should identify formal and informal systems currently in use within a company's operating areas that lack adequate organizational support, then identify and emplace appropriate applications that support the organization's strategic knowledge goals (Enakrire & Onyancha, 2020). Approaching the development and emplacement of a knowledge management system by highlighting how a company currently conducts development training can support an efficient analysis and recommendation process to maximize the use of company resources and human capital. While a reflective analysis may help leaders acknowledge development and systematic gaps in the company's knowledge management strategy, the literature review may also identify existing processes from which leaders can expand, retract, or redefine.

In a case study conducted by Cepeda-Carrion et al. (2017), the authors expressly suggested that identifying existing knowledge management processes is essential in identifying strategic alignment or misalignment. Clearly defining and assessing the effectiveness of a company's plan to support employees' absorptive capacity, knowledge transfer, and knowledge application can lead to knowledge management processes that support individual, group, and organizational involvement and performance (Rangus & Slavec, 2017). This systematic, endogenous analysis creates a capacity for improved operationality and allows business leaders the opportunity to identify potential areas for process innovation in support of enhanced worker output related to operational performance goals (Effelsberg et al., 2014; Shujahat et al., 2017). While knowing how and where to update a program is essential to sustaining knowledge sharing activities, the implementation of knowledge management systems must also be adaptable and able to flex with potential changes in future competency requirements.

Developing multilevel knowledge management systems from existing performance expectations requires an in-depth understanding of existing competency requirements for leadership positions throughout the organization. Leaders must recognize the potential for corporate diversification and develop resilient systems capable of supporting functional competencies and leadership competencies for current and future operations (Komarova, 2017). Capturing changes in competency requirements as an organization engages in expansion or diversification activities supports Mahler and Wrightnour's (1973) theory that organizational leaders must consider improving employees' understanding of their expanding/retracting role within the company and how

best to maximize the workforce's potential. Not only should leaders develop knowledge management strategies that are resilient enough to capture changes in competency requirements, but they must also support plans that allow employees the opportunity to acquire and emplace new skills.

The final component of a dynamic and resilient knowledge management process is assessing the system's effectiveness against performance expectations, both at the strategic and individual levels (Abdessadak et al., 2018). Martinez-Conesa et al. (2016) suggested that an organization's knowledge management system's overall effectiveness must include an evaluation protocol. This evaluative approach is conditionally practical, considering the assessment is not constrained exclusively by the impact of internal measurables but allows leaders to view exogenous influences simultaneously. The evaluation may result in a more robust understanding of how an organization's knowledge management processes support overall employee performance within the broader context of a company's succession strategy. While a company's knowledge management processes can allow leaders to generate and sustain a workforce development program that supports strategic goals, those processes are often reliant upon how leaders leverage technological systems and applications.

Knowledge management programs and processes are critical business programs that ensure that competency development and future planning activities align with strategic goals and potential organizational needs (Pour et al., 2019). Effelsberg et al. (2014) posited a special employee-to-system relationship built on the understanding of a direct correlation between an employee's development and the company's internal and

external performance. Likewise, Mahler and Wrightnour (1973) suggested the theory of employee competency development should be a persistent strategic consideration for business executives as a critical component of any transformational effort. While the Pour et al. (2019) discussion focused on the elements of an effective knowledge management program's process, they also recognized a persistent technological requirement for an effective knowledge management system.

Technology

A company's workforce is the most critical organizational resource and developing employees' technical savvy is a necessary core strategy of a company's longevity, flexibility, and resilience. Emplacing processes that ensure leaders can capture, codify, and apply knowledge supports operations-related expectations of initial and continued employee performance. Neither the people nor the knowledge management processes the company emplaces can reach maximum efficiency and potential without the availability and use of technology to ensure the knowledge is accessible.

According to Dneprovskaya (2018), technology is the knowledge management factor that allows leaders to implement innovative learning techniques to augment and facilitate information exchange efficiency and application. Leaders must also be aware of strategy creep and content minimization challenges as users become reliant upon technical exchange methods to develop required competencies. Conversely, companies who use modern technologies can otherwise enhance educational experiences and improve cultural creativity due to a company's preference for traditional information exchange methods (Dneprovskaya, 2018). While conventional and technological-based

learning systems have benefits and challenges, leaders must balance the requirement for knowledge management with technology to ensure effective and efficient knowledge transfer by emplacing methods that take advantage of systems that appeal to varied generational workforce needs.

Technology Trends and System Management. Leaders develop modern knowledge management systems for information exchanges using current performance trends based on an amalgamation of accepted academic and operational practices. The technological trends provide learning and application environments that appeal to generational needs because businesses tend to employ multigenerational members (Nyoman, 2017). Developing flexible learning environments allows leaders to ensure that reasonably tailored methods to acquire necessary competencies are available to employees based on preferred learning systems, providing efficient knowledge transfer. Nyoman (2017) cautioned that trends-based learning programs and accessibility are often subject to changes in the exchange application, system updates, new academic requirements, and a host of other variables. These learning programs must adapt to accommodate changes in programming, knowledge requirements, and transfer methods to remain a valuable component of a robust knowledge management system. While trends-based systems can ensure appropriate generational interest and success, leaders must ensure the technology employees use allows for adequate, consistent, and timely access to ensure knowledge transfer occurs when needed.

Accessibility is a crucial success factor when developing a knowledge management system; however, access to information should not lead members to imply

the information is applicable. Varying work roles require different competencies, and leaders should create knowledge management systems to allow workers access to information from which relevant, work-role-based information can be obtained (Hemmati & Hosseini, 2016). As Zhi-Qin et al. (2020) indicated, information technology systems are helpful tools to manage an organization's various knowledge programs.

Leaders must develop information systems to ensure members maximize performance by using programs that provide appropriate access and availability to relevant information. Knowledge management systems must also offer assessment information from which leaders can extrapolate learning effectiveness from overall postlearning performance (Dehghani & Ramsin, 2015). Using both assessment tools during the knowledge transfer phase and performance metrics during the knowledge application phase of a knowledge management system, leaders can determine overall information usability and recommend potential changes to either information accessibility or relevance (Liu & Lin, 2015). Knowledge management systems can act as a repository of performance-related macro data as a means for leaders to assess the environment or structure within which the knowledge system operates.

Information Technology Support Systems. A company's approach to gaining and emplacing appropriate technology is a foundational principle of an effective knowledge management system (Dneprovskaya, 2018). For all the benefits a robust IT infrastructure can provide, leaders must appropriately leverage IT systems to ensure efficient modeling, implementation, and improvement of a company's intellectual capital as members apply it to operating activities (Stanković & Micić, 2018). Without a keen

understanding of an IT system's potential influence on a company's knowledge management strategy, managers cannot emplace adequate plans to ensure appropriate access or support, and the knowledge structure may become limited and irrelevant (Zhi-Qin et al., 2020).

Culture

Organizational culture is often described as an amalgamation of the institutionalized and shared values and beliefs that drive strategy development and implementation and innovation (Taghizadeh et al., 2020). Culture further underlies the most basic operating activities and is generally an environmental mediator upon which leaders and employees can base operational decisions that impact organizational behavior (Arumi et al., 2019). Safdarian et al. (2018) suggested that corporate culture is a primary influencer of knowledge system development. As part of a company's value set, leaders can create programs designed to make effective use of intellectual capital, maximize employee and organizational performance, support transformational activities that lead to program and process innovation, and ensure organizational stability and resilience (Abdessadak et al., 2018; Ahmady et al., 2016; Imran et al., 2017; Urban & Joubert, 2017).

Compilation of and access to information is a persistent organizational performance theme of a knowledge management system. Static, nonrelevant, or out-of-date knowledge can be performance-limiting and debilitating, and leaders may opt to introduce unlearning techniques to eliminate irrelevant information (Zhao et al., 2013). The concept of ensuring members can gain and use appropriately relevant information is

typically defined in an organization's knowledge management strategy, as is its member's use of technology and tools to manage and apply that information (Abdessadak et al., 2018).

An organization's approach and commitment to modernizing and improving knowledge management processes or refining products or services can account for how the workforce can generate innovative and digitized ideas to support future knowledge operations (Khin & Ho, 2018). Ensuring organizational processes parallel, or better yet, outpace industry standards supports Mahler and Wrightnour's (1973) concept of the need for leadership to plan for future knowledge and competencies and directly supports the theory of transformational leadership as described by Effelsberg et al. (2014). While innovation typically invokes images of large-scale organizational changes, simple process improvements can significantly affect performance. Within the context of an organization's knowledge management strategy, cultural support for the stimulation, combination, and communication of tacit and explicit knowledge against current operating activities is the primary means of idea generation and process improvement (Sadeghi & Mostafavi Rad, 2018). A company cannot exclusively rely on internal innovation sources. It must consider technological trends that may effectively support how an organization maintains or exceeds expectations and trends related to learning tools and technology (Lambrou, 2016).

Knowledge Management and Presuccession Planning

Leadership succession in an organization is a routine business construct that allows for continuous processes and practices preceding, during, and after a leader

departs a position (Farah et al., 2020). Presuccession efforts, or those activities that occur before a leadership departure, support the organization's capability to identify specific position requirements that must be apparent in an applicant's skill set for the vacant position (Bugg, 2016). Identifying the necessary competencies for the future leader may ensure the organization can sustain, improve, or exceed performance expectations while maintaining alignment to values, ethics, and stakeholder expectations.

Creating a succession plan is more complicated than identifying potential replacements for outgoing leaders or managers. Organizations must approach the recruitment process smartly and carefully by understanding the potential impact the internal operating environment may have on the development process (Tafti & Amiri, 2017). Leadership must also recognize the need to identify the leadership skills they require to plan for future operations.

Vinkenburg et al. (2013) argued that competency-based succession planning is critical for organizations looking to ensure leaders select the best possible candidate for future leadership gaps. Likewise, Buchanan (2017) conducted a case study that suggests a direct and dependent relationship exists between identifying and developing specific competencies and how effective a new leader manages overall firm performance. By ensuring candidates have access to and engage in development programs designed to provide future leaders acquire and practice requisite skills, organizations can effectively create future leaders to replace outgoing personnel.

Denker et al. (2015) conducted a survey exercise designed to engage current leaders in discussing core competency needs at various organization levels. Vinkenburg

et al. (2013), Buchanan (2017), and Denker et al. (2015) processed the resultant data into a usable list from which they developed robust training programs that complemented the organization's succession plan. Komarova (2017) also recognized the value of competency-focused training programs and examined the need for leaders to actively engage in determining future competency needs and support emplacing programs to allow employees the opportunity to participate in development activities to meet or exceed the competencies list. While competency-based training is valuable in ensuring succession effectiveness, an organization must also ensure future leaders can access existing knowledge from outgoing members (Barzinpour et al., 2015).

Knowledge Management and Succession Event

A succession event can have a near- and long-term dramatic impact on how an organization performs (Groves, 2019). While presuccession planning may allow leaders to identify the necessary competencies for future leaders and positions, the succession event can either create an opportunity for success or cause the business to falter. Within the succession event itself, leaders can use the organization's existing knowledge management system to positively influence how incoming leaders access and gather institutional information to improve the chances of an effective succession event (Sibbald et al., 2017).

Knowledge Capital and Transference

Le Dû-Blayo (2017) described knowledge transfer as the process of passing information from one person to another using various forms of communication with the intent to ensure information continuity. In a discussion related to succession planning,

knowledge transfer specifically relates to how well an organization prepares, codifies, and makes available information such that incoming leaders can find the information useable and appropriate (Lombardi, 2019). The single most challenging component of capturing business knowledge is that the largest source of institutional information is often not documented and is the tacit knowledge of outgoing leaders (Akhavan et al., 2018). Leaders who recognize the value of the intellectual capital of members who leave may develop strategies to ensure tacit knowledge is captured and codified before departure.

As Urban and Joubert (2017) suggested, knowledge equity, or the value achieved by recognizing and applying an organization's collective knowledge, is a prime factor in supporting sustained business performance. Ives et al. (1997) agreed with the concept of a distinct correlation between an organization's knowledge and its ability to create successful business activities designed to support strategic goals. The literature regarding intellectual capital moves the knowledge/performance corollary further by suggesting that relational capital, structural capital, and human capital play distinct and supporting roles in an organization's efforts to develop a knowledge management system (Urban & Joubert, 2017).

Relational capital, or the value of the relationships between an organization's existing and potential internal and external stakeholders, allows business leaders to more clearly understand how organizations often rely on clientele, vendor, and other constituency input to refine or redefine existing programs (Still et al., 2015). Structural capital allows managers to quickly recognize or assess information applicability

deficiencies in existing structures and implement appropriate realignments to ensure a balance between all three intellectual capital components (Ghiorghita & Grzegorczyk, 2017). An out-of-balance capital structure often results in ineffective use of the aggregate knowledge potential of an organization.

Adapting institutional knowledge as a vital component of a knowledge management program often highlights intellectual capital's versatility. It supports Effelsberg et al. (2014) model of transformation theory as applied to existing knowledge systems. Mahler and Wrightnour's (1973) and Ives et al. (1997) concepts of personnel development also hinge on the effective use of organizational resources, including intellectual capital, to continuously improve existing programs to meet changing cultural or community expectations. While effective use of an organization's intellectual capital can generate process innovation and transformation, Garcia et al. (2019) argued a company's performance links to existing cultural paradigms related to knowledge architectures.

Knowledge Application.

Mahler and Wrightnour (1973) described how competency development is a critical component of leadership growth and how the practical application of relevant competencies can help conduct business. Applying the experience depends on an organization's willingness to create programs and processes designed to explicitly enhance and potentially enable member productivity (Shahidifar, 2016). Electronic applications, such as decision support systems and digitized documentation repositories, are valuable tools to ensure members across all levels of an organization have access to

institutional knowledge and data analysis tools to make informed decisions (Wang et al., 2019).

Leaders must implement programs that allow members to acquire and practice new knowledge concepts against strategic goals and expectations in isolated environments to foster innovation (Bojovic et al., 2018). Effective programs manage both training and applied environments by providing appropriate support systems that allow knowledge users to consider the potential impact of decisions against industry or trend data and endogenous performance metrics (Wang et al., 2019). While in-training and direct contact application of new knowledge is a crucial component of a knowledge system, the program's effectiveness is often dependent on the related information system (Centobelli et al., 2019).

Performance. Ramella (2017) described corporate culture as a holistic approach to ensure business activities are practical and maximize organizational resources to provide improved operational output and valuation. Within the context of knowledge management, culture uniquely describes the level of importance that leaders place on ensuring knowledge is captured, codified, and applied towards improving overall performance (Lam et al., 2021). As Imran et al. (2017) described in their case study of the Pakistani banking industry, a business' knowledge management and organizational learning capabilities play a primary and mediating role in performance outcome and should be a standardized strategy that permeates an organization's operating culture.

As a logical precursor to overall organizational performance, employee performance is likewise dependent upon a cultural recognition of the importance of

knowledge management with a motivational result identified as the primary performance booster as described by Alyoubi et al. (2018). Both case studies provide an in-depth analysis of the correlating relationship between knowledge management programs and business' internal and external achievements. Within the context of the overall effect of the availability, access, and application of relevant information, the concept of knowledge management is well-founded in the transformational leadership theory as described by Effelsberg et al. (2014), as well as the concepts of leadership development as part of organizational performance as posited by Ives et al. (1997). As well as an organization's performance, cultural support for process innovation can lead to the improved overall effectiveness of a knowledge management program.

Organizational and Leadership Structures. An organization's strategic performance is dependent on how leaders can effectively develop business processes based on existing and enabling components of the company's intellectual capital (Hamdan, 2018). Lee (2017) describes various tactile and conceptual structures, including leadership culture, IT support systems, decision support systems, and knowledge transfer applications available to leaders to manage and expand as the company works toward building knowledge management strategies to complement or fulfill leadership competency requirements. Approaching strategy development from a structural support perspective may allow leaders to identify existing processes that can address structural deficiencies that may be potential barriers to strategy implementation.

The success of knowledge management strategies relies on an organization's willingness to recognize and accept that knowledge is the driving factor behind how well

a company's workforce uses their individual and collective knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet or exceed performance expectations (Jennex et al., 2008). Caruso (2017) offered that tacit and shared knowledge accessibility is often dependent upon the value those leaders place on intellectual capital and how a company's leaders support strategies that support those programs. Organization leaders who value knowledge management experience may increase performance with innovation acting as mediators on individual job performance and business activities. Companies that do not significantly prioritize knowledge management strategies appear less likely to have improved market share or cultural improvement (Al-Hakim & Hassan, 2016; Forghani & Tavasoli, 2017; Muthuveloo et al., 2017; X. Zhang, 2017). A rudimentary analysis of several case studies shows how organizational culture is the lynchpin that determines the potential impact and usefulness of programs designed to influence the workplace and organizational performance.

Internal Influences. When considering how best to develop a succession plan, leaders must recognize the fluctuating nature of the business's environment. In their study of a Kenyan government organization, Kiptoo et al. (2016) identified several external factors that may affect an organization's succession planning efforts, including demographic shifts, community policy and value shifts, and market trends. As noted by anthropological studies focused on immigration integration trends, many communities find themselves enriched with cultural differences in knowledge and experiences that may require leaders to contemplate new succession models derived from the value that demographic shifts bring (Gabriel, 2017). Gross-Galacka (2018) explored employee

diversity's potential benefits in studying diversity management programs implemented at several businesses with three primary focus areas: employee aging, value changes, and the effects of diversity.

Employee Aging. Natural attrition cycles are a useful component of a company's employee culture. Turnover, resulting from members retiring, leads to positional growth or development opportunities for internal candidates (Gross-Galacka, 2018). Leaders must install programs that make appropriate and effective use of the applicant pool to ensure postsuccession performance is either maintained or improved. Likewise, changes in an organization's or community's values can often result in leaders considering alternative perspectives when developing or modifying succession plans. As discussed previously, leaders and employees partly build an organization's culture upon the value placed on strategic concepts such as intellectual capital, performance, innovation, stability, and resiliency (Abdessadak et al., 2018; Khin & Ho, 2018; Urban & Joubert, 2017). Within the context of value variations, Lukac and Frazier (2012) argued that each strategic concept is improved when leaders recognizing the company's value sets come from employee experiences, beliefs, and morals (Lukac & Frazier, 2012).

Value Changes. Byars and Stanberry (2018) described organizational values as a compilation of morals-based characteristics shared throughout all levels of the company. Leaders can generalize business ideas and beliefs adopted by workers to achieve organizational goals into flexibility, competitiveness, differentiation, and value creation (Malbasic et al., 2018). Behavior-based values derive from personal value systems that promote a positive citizenship relationship between members of the organization and the

organization itself (Anggraeni, 2018). X. Zhang (2017) recognized that values are not static components of organizational culture and that changes in member or corporate values may affect how a business constructs a knowledge management system. As member diversification occurs, established values may change to reflect a transformation of employee and leader perspectives, experiences, and beliefs (Davis & Cates, 2018). Leaders must, however, exercise a modicum of practicality when developing methods of value variation implementation as specific changes may result in a debilitating misalignment between what members may want and what the organization's strategic values may accommodate (York et al., 2019). Mendez (2019) cautioned organizations to focus on the potential performance effects that value changes may have on the organization's competitiveness and market share.

Knowledge Management and Postsuccession Operations

When identifying the criticality of knowledge management strategies on an organization's succession planning efforts, it is essential to recognize few generalizable factors can be used and implemented in all organizations (Sibbald et al., 2017). Conceptually, the idea that there is a direct and corollary effect of an organization's knowledge management strategy on postsuccession performance is well-documented in the academic and professional literature (Barzinpour et al., 2015; Shelley, 2017). Yet, there persists a reluctance to develop succession models while considering the influences of an organization's internal and external environments, leadership competency requirements, and positive impacts of capturing organizational memory before a succession event (Adobor et al., 2019; Phillips, 2020; Tafti & Amiri, 2017).

Impact of the Environment

When leaders consider developing and implementing a helpful succession planning model, they must first understand the internal development and retention environment and how variables might influence the plan's success. Tafti and Amiri (2017) suggested that while talent management, including knowledge planning, should be a key component of succession planning, leaders often fail to recognize and evaluate the impact that factors beyond the company's control can have, often limiting the effectiveness of a plan's success. In addressing talent management, McKee and Froelich (2016) posited that leaders might be at risk of being unintentionally affected by cultural norms that lead them to manage talent differently and often in contradictory ways. If a succession plan does not account for the potential impact of influences such as manager bias, the perceived value of organizational governance, and employee interest or disinterest in professional development, post succession operations may be negatively impacted.

Conversely, Romans and Tobaben (2016) suggested that leadership techniques that create engagement cultures can minimize the unintentional adverse effects of a succession event by instituting a method to develop and maximize organizational talent to support cultural engagement and operations effectiveness. While Tafti and Amiri (2017) and Romans and Tobaben (2016) identified how the environment might impact a succession plan's effectiveness, McKee and Froelich (2016) offered mitigation strategies in that the authors directly addressed the cultural aspect of leadership development and succession. Not understanding how potential environmental factors may lead

organizations to emplace ineffective succession models, a failure to identify and codify key leadership competencies in successors may also negatively affect a succession model (Denker et al., 2015)

Organizational Memory

While leaders implement programs that ensure succession candidates have access to development programs that meet leader competency requirements, organizations should also consider the necessary value of capturing and retaining knowledge from outgoing personnel to ensure near-term continuity of business operations (Adobor et al., 2019; Phillips, 2020). To support this planning idea, both Csizmadia et al. (2016) and Sibbald et al. (2016) suggested organizations give themselves enough lead time to engage in the dyadic knowledge transfer necessary to ensure leadership change success. Developing a common and shared understanding of organizational operations, including daily activities, management responsibilities, and future planning, helps incoming leaders acquire a near-immediate awareness of current state expectations compared to future state expectations (Csizmadia et al., 2016).

Organizations must develop and emplace strategic management systems that support knowledge creation, knowledge codification, and knowledge transfer (Claver-Cortés et al., 2018). Wahda (2017) suggested a correlational relationship between an organization's valuation of a learning culture to overall firm performance to support knowledge management development activities. As Sibbald et al. (2016) mentioned, the company must also tailor its knowledge delivery to minimize the potential effects of preconceived notions about the people and things that support the organization. The

careful balance of filling vacant management positions while ensuring appropriate knowledge transference to incoming leaders is critically important for operations continuity (Barzinpour et al., 2015). While respondents to surveys indicate a preference for formal and informal transition processes, the outcome should provide the incoming leader with a tailored and appropriate level of understanding to effectively move the organization toward achieving targeted and expressed goals (Williams & Mullane, 2019).

Structural Prohibition or Inhibitors

One of the most prevalent challenges in creating an effective knowledge management structure is developing programs that encapsulate the difficulties and opportunities associated with intergenerational knowledge sharing (Bencsik & Machova, 2016). Depending on a company's personnel rolls, members can span several generations, experiences, and talents, which can pose a distinct dilemma for leaders when considering how best to create knowledge programs. For example, older generation users may not possess the appropriate technical savvy to access a knowledge system and, once accessed, may not effectively locate applicable information (Sprinkle & Urick, 2018). In contrast to the technical savvy of older workers, younger generations may view the knowledge interface as outdated and the information irrelevant (Varsha et al., 2018). While generational considerations are concerns for program development, changes in organizational priorities may also have the potential to affect a company's knowledge management system (Adriani et al., 2019).

In a volatile market, leaders often contend with variations in consumer trends, industry fluctuations, disruptive innovations, and diversification that may cause an

organization to rework existing knowledge programs and practices, which could cause a significant near-term degradation or disruption to knowledge transfer activities (Hackman et al., 2017). Organizational focus and strategy changes often result in knowledge becoming obsolete and unusable, limiting the effectiveness of programs and could result in a company's knowledge management system becoming disentangled from original designs and applicability (Dayan et al., 2017). While most leaders may agree an effective knowledge management program correlates to overall organizational performance, there remains a persistent industry misconception regarding how adaptable the program should support potential changes to knowledge needs, corporate strategies, and future planning (Dayan et al., 2017).

Overall, a company's information-sharing culture and structure significantly influence leaders' ability to capture, codify, and apply knowledge (Caruso, 2017). Mahler and Wrightnour (1973) expressed the need for leadership, especially executive leadership, to create an endogenous environment that recognizes the need for ongoing knowledge management and supports the development and emplacement of such systems to ensure continuous improvement to members and organizational performance. Lee (2017), Dneprovskaya (2018), Shahidifar (2016), and Bencsik and Machova (2016) reiterated the need for continual competency development by highlighting the inherent relationship between both tactile and conceptual programs, information technology structures, and knowledge applications while considering the potential challenges to ensuring the knowledge system remains relevant and current. While tactile and conceptual knowledge management structures support the emplacement of physical

systems that allow for member access and knowledge applicability, an organization's culture ultimately creates an environment that either supports or does not support the concept of knowledge management and the associated systems (Caruso, 2017).

Stability. An organization's knowledge management strategy supports two primary operational concepts: workforce development/performance and long-term stability. As leaders recognize and cope with variations in technology and operating trends, they must also understand the importance of maintaining institutional knowledge at a rate that ensures organizational continuity during operational disruptions or crisis events (Ahmady et al., 2016). Management professors Al-Faouri et al. (2017) suggested that an organization's preparedness for disruptions or interruptions depends on how leaders manage, store, and make knowledge accessible when needed.

Resiliency. Planning against the potential interruption of operations is a vital component of any organization's resiliency planning. Leaders often create continuity plans based on standard market modifiers such as competitive sustainment and risk mitigation while minimizing knowledge management's potential positive influence (Hockerts, 2015). Organizations whose corporate leaders promote efforts to emplace knowledge management elements within resiliency strategies fared better posttransition than those that did not (Sun et al., 2021). Conceptually, sustained organizational performance aligns with Ives et al., (1997) conclusion that strategic planning in all phases of corporate operations relies on leaders' recognition of the benefits of managing, accessing, and capitalizing upon the organization's holistic knowledge base.

Learning and knowledge management innovation primarily depend upon leadership's acceptance and support of an organizational culture that promotes persistent improvement in process, technology, and tools (Al-Faouri et al., 2017; Hockerts, 2015; Sun et al., 2021). Ives et al. (1997) suggested that although an in-depth understanding of knowledge management principles is critical to developing organizational strategies, the ability of members to innovate is essential to the program's success

Transition

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies that leaders use to support succession efforts in an organization. The literature review shows a gap between organizations' knowledge management strategies and succession planning efforts and the need to establish complementary strategies. Section 1 of this study introduced the relevant and timely business problem, the purpose of the study, the research question, and an exhaustive review of the extant literature regarding knowledge management strategies supporting effective succession planning. Section 2 of this study describes the appropriate research design and method, the role of the researcher, population and sampling details, and the data collection and storage methods. Section 3 includes the findings of the study and recommendations for future research.

Section 2: The Project

Knowledge management refers to the program or system an organization uses to ensure leaders capture, codify, and make institutional information available to appropriate users at the point of need (Dalkir, 2017). The development and emplacement of knowledge management strategies imply that government leaders know and understand the relevant importance of operational information and how members can promote organizational success. Throughout this study, I explored how federal government leaders and managers successfully implement knowledge management practices to support succession planning efforts. I used Section 2 of the study to discuss the purpose, the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, target population, and ethical considerations.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this single case study is to explore strategies that organizational leaders use to emplace effective knowledge management programs to support succession planning. The population consisted of the senior- and mid-management levels of a federal government agency in Texas. The implications for positive change may include influencing leaders to implement process efficiencies that might reduce the need to allocate persistent government resources, leading to a reduction in the community's tax burden without reducing the services provided.

Role of the Researcher

I acted as the primary data collection instrument in this qualitative research study. According to Yin (2018), the researcher performing the study is the primary data

collector. Additionally, as Raheim et al. (2016) explained, the researcher is the primary organizer and protector of the collected data. As a senior-level manager at a U.S. federal government agency, I have experience managing personnel and programs and am familiar with succession and knowledge management strategies. I have singularly developed knowledge management programs to support organizational needs and have ensured alignment with strategic knowledge management objectives. No personal or professional relationship existed with the participants. I selected contributors based on their position within a U.S. federal government agency in Texas and their experience in successfully implementing knowledge management strategies supporting succession planning. I received approval from the agency to perform the interviews.

My responsibility as the researcher was to protect participants' privacy and establish the study's legitimacy by safeguarding the results of the research and analysis (Nnamuchi, 2018). I adhered to the ethical principles and guidelines of *The Belmont Report* to protect human subject participants. *The Belmont Report* serves as the protocol for ensuring researchers maintain human subject privacy and confidentiality throughout a research study (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). I completed Walden University's required human subjects research training via an online course (see Appendix A). I also ensured that the Human Subjects Research office requirements of the associated U.S. federal government agency were met, presented the study proposal, and received approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting data.

Reijers et al. (2018) described ethics in research as considering the complexities of personal behaviors, technological advancements that minimize or exacerbate information availability, evolving cultural expectations, and professional relationship imbalances that may affect participants' involvement. To reduce bias and avoid viewing the data through a personal lens, I prevented developing personal relationships with the participants for the study's duration and used an interview protocol (see Appendix B) to ensure participant interaction consistency.

I used data triangulation techniques, including archival document review and member checking to improve the study's credibility and veracity by minimizing researcher influence (Abdallah et al., 2018). Member checking, or respondent validation, is a validation method by which a researcher transcribes a semistructured interview into a document that the participant can review for accuracy and completeness (Birt et al., 2016).

Participants

Inclusion requirements for participating in this study include mid-level or senior-level managers currently working at the U.S. federal government agency in Texas with at least 5 years implementing their organizations' knowledge management plans to support succession planning. According to my information, federal government employee turnover occurs approximately every 3 years, presenting a persistent need for effective knowledge management programs. Ensuring that institutional knowledge is maintained such that incoming employees have ready access to accurate and up-to-date operational information is crucial to organizational success (Wahda, 2017). I solicited participation

through the U.S. federal government agency's workforce development and human resources directorates. The number of participants involved was dependent upon the amount of information needed to reach data saturation and satisfactorily address the research question.

I established formal contact with the organization through a consent letter and then made initial contact with each qualified participant through a study invitation letter. According to Antes et al. (2019), establishing a relationship with participants builds validation and legitimacy, builds participant trust, and ultimately improves data collection. Building rapport with the qualified participants also allows conversations to occur naturally and helps the researcher use practical dialogical skills, including reflexivity, summarization, active listening, and empathic engagement (McCarthy & LaChenaye, 2017). I built rapport with the participants by sharing my interest in both obtaining a doctorate and the research topic. I engaged each participant through regular emails and phone calls.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

According to Yin (2018), researchers have three distinct methods available for use when studying a phenomenon: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The research method selected depends on the research question and the data collection methods the researcher chooses to use to study the phenomenon (Riddler, 2017; Yin, 2018). A researcher uses the qualitative research method to gain insight into specific phenomena using targeted data collection related to a social phenomenon that cannot be measured or

quantified (Almalki, 2016; Yin, 2018). A researcher uses qualitative methods to gain insight into studied phenomena through a naturalistic, albeit subjective exposure to the means, techniques, and environment in which the phenomenon occurs (Mohajan, 2018). A qualitative method is most appropriate for this research study because I gained an in-depth understanding of the social interactivity of both business phenomena, knowledge management, and succession planning (Mohajan, 2018).

Researchers use quantitative methods to test measurable causality between variables in theories or hypotheses (Park & Park, 2016). Researchers collect measurable data in quantitative studies through structured processes that ensure accuracy through reliability and validity testing (Apuke, 2017; Kohler et al., 2017). Within the context of this research study, I did not use statistical data to test measurable relationships; for that reason, a quantitative study was not appropriate.

A researcher combines elements of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in a mixed-method approach to create a holistic understanding of a study area (Schoonenboom, 2018). Mixed methods methodology is suitable when elements of both qualitative and quantitative methods may be present and may be viable resources for analyzing a phenomenon (Bazeley, 2016; Doyle et al., 2016). A mixed methods approach was not appropriate for this study because the quantitative components of mixed methods research did not align with the purpose of this study.

Research Design

The research design refers to the actual plan the researcher identifies as the most effective way to collect and analyze data related to the phenomenon under study

(Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Through the study's method and design, I learned the existing strategies leaders use to ensure knowledge management programs align with effective succession planning. I addressed how and why a federal organization may emplace those programs. I used a single case study design to explore strategies federal leaders use to implement knowledge management strategies to support succession planning. As Yin (2018) stated, although case studies are usually narrow in scope, they are an efficient and effective research design that a researcher can often use when studying how or why a phenomenon occurs. When exploring leadership's focus on strategic organizational concepts such as knowledge management and succession planning, a researcher may use a case study design to collect phenomena-related data in the context within which participants demonstrate the phenomenon. Other designs such as phenomenological and ethnographic were considered but are not appropriate for this study.

A case study is a way to explore multifaceted information related to a specific phenomenon in the setting within which the activity occurs (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) further described the value of a case study design to emphasize the empirical nature of the data and the impact of the context of the phenomenon's environment. Gaus (2017) suggested that a researcher can use single or multiple cases to explore a phenomenon. I used the single case study design to explore, seek a deeper understanding of, and establish meaning from U.S. federal government leaders' shared experiences regarding knowledge management as a component of succession planning.

Researchers conduct ethnographic studies to understand individual actions within a specific context by immersing themselves in the community's social and cultural facets (Baskerville & Myers, 2015; Miller, 2014). Tickle (2017) suggested that ethnographic researchers strive to explore and understand a phenomenon by examining a group's highly complex practices by participating in those experiences. An ethnographic research design is not appropriate for this study as I do not intend to immerse myself in the cultural aspect of a community to understand individual actions.

A phenomenological researcher explores participants' perspectives, beliefs, and lived experiences to develop generalizations regarding the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). An exploration of the activity using the phenomenological design is often used to capture authentic interpretations of lived experiences related to the phenomenon (Frechette et al., 2020). The phenomenological researcher seeks to gather information on the participants' understanding and experiential perspective of the events (Larkin et al., 2019). The phenomenological design was not appropriate for my research study, as I did not explore participants' lived experiences.

I used open-ended questions during semistructured interviews with senior- and mid-management level government leaders who have successfully emplaced knowledge management strategies in their organizations. I interviewed six purposefully selected participants with at least 5 years of experience emplacing knowledge management programs that support succession planning. I continued to conduct interviews until the point of data saturation, or the point at which I did not gain any more information or

themes to support answering the research question (Guest et al., 2020). The single case-study design using methodological triangulation was most applicable.

Population and Sampling

Participants in this study were senior- and mid-level leaders who have experience implementing successful knowledge management programs that support succession planning. The participant group was approximately 20 people; however, the group could increase or decrease in size to meet data saturation requirements (Boddy, 2016). The target company has more than 3000 people, with approximately 25% of those occupying senior- and mid-level leadership positions. Positional leadership tenure is about 3 years; leaders generally move from one leadership position to another, extending leadership position tenure beyond a decade. A minimum of six people who have met the selection criteria is appropriate to understand the phenomenon clearly.

Luciani et al. (2019) described purposeful population sampling as the effort to identify specific individuals within a larger population group with knowledge and experience related to the study's purpose. For this study, I focused on a homogenous population of specific individuals who meet the selection criteria and are likely to provide the most relevant information regarding the effectiveness of knowledge management programs on an organization's succession planning efforts. From the purposeful population group, I used probabilistic sampling to select specific participants. Probabilistic sampling is described by Etikan and Bala (2017) as a random selection of individuals to ensure equal opportunity for all available participants. Nonprobabilistic sampling is not a random-selection tool that researchers use to hand-select specific

participants (Pilcher & Eade, 2017). The challenges of nonprobabilistic sampling are that the sample may not accurately reflect the entire population group's experiences and that researcher bias may occur when selecting participants (Pilcher & Eade, 2017). Probabilistic sampling was an effective method due to the many potential participants in the purposeful population group.

Ethical Research

I solicited participants based on specific qualifications. I provided participants information on the study's scope. I offered them the opportunity to provide information about their experiences in managing knowledge management systems as part of their organization's succession strategy. As part of the process, participants agreed to the research procedures by signing an informed consent form. Bhupathi and Ravi (2017) defined informed consent as the process by which an individual agrees to participate in a study after learning the study's procedures, benefits, and risks. Participants then validated their intent to engage in the research by signing an informed consent form. The informed consent form identifies the IRB approval number 10-12-21-0728636. I also signed the informed consent form to indicate a mutual understanding and agreement of the study's parameters, including measures to maintain confidentiality and participant privacy. Additional information on the form included a study summary, including purpose, objectives, participant qualifications, and selection method. I also included contact information so the participant can send questions or concerns regarding the research process.

The researcher's responsibility is to protect participants' privacy and establish the study's legitimacy by safeguarding the research results (Nnamuchi, 2018). *The Belmont Report* serves as the protocol that ensures the researcher maintains human subject privacy and confidentiality throughout a research study (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). I completed Walden University's required human subjects research training via an online course (see Appendix A). I also ensured I met the ethical requirements of the Human Subjects Research office for the associated federal government agency from which the target population was recruited. I received approval from Walden University's IRB before collecting data.

I informed participants that confidentiality is essential to maintain privacy, and the researcher is responsible for ensuring individuals' identities are kept safe (Kirilova & Karcher, 2017). A unique, alphanumeric identifier was assigned to randomly ordered participants to ensure participant privacy and integrity of the data (Saunders et al., 2015). Participants were not obligated or compensated for participating in the study. I informed participants they could withdraw from the study at any point until member checking was complete either by sending an email or through a phone conversation.

Research data storage is the researcher's responsibility and should be protected to ensure that no one other than the researcher will access private information (Surmiak, 2018). Electronic and printed interview data from this study are stored in a keyed entry lockbox, accessible only by me, for 5 years to ensure participant confidentiality. I will destroy the data after 5 years.

Data Collection Instruments

I acted as the data collection instrument for this single case qualitative study. As Costa et al. (2017) described, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research with a range of collection methods, including interviews, document review, and observation. I collected data through semistructured interviews and a review of physical documents to explore the participants' experiences related to the research question.

A semistructured interview is a data collection instrument that researchers use to elicit open-ended responses to pre-formed questions and topics such that conversation is generated and explored by the researcher (Brown & Danaher, 2019). I used semistructured interviews to gain insight into individual perspectives related to the research question and performed the interviews either face-to-face or via phone. Physical document review is a data collection instrument that researchers use to corroborate interview information, more clearly understand the information received via interviews, and provide an additional source of information related to the research (Natow, 2020). Both interviews and document review are data triangulation methods researchers perform to establish reliability and validity in a study (Owen, 2014).

Data Collection Technique

Researchers conducting qualitative studies can use various collection methods to gain information about the phenomenon (Thumburmung et al., 2016). For this study, I conducted semistructured interviews as the primary data collection technique and used data triangulation to corroborate and verify the information. Interviews were face-to-face

and used open-ended questions designed to elicit phenomenon-specific information from the participant. Semistructured interviews may allow the researcher and participant to provide additional context for each question that might provide greater insight into the phenomenon. The selection of participants who have experience implementing effective knowledge management programs that support succession planning was crucial to understanding successful plans leaders emplace within the U.S. federal government agency in Texas. I developed an interview protocol (see Appendix B) to guide my interviews with the participants and to provide information regarding the purpose of the study, rights as voluntary participants, and the right to ask for clarification on questions asked during the interview.

Semistructured interviews have both advantages and disadvantages. The benefits of conducting semistructured interviews include the potential to gather rich and applicable data from individuals who have direct knowledge of the studied phenomenon (Boddy, 2016). Additionally, I used face-to-face interviews to observe body language and other nonverbal cues that could provide additional context to the response (Annink, 2017). Questions were drafted beforehand to answer the research question and to help guide the conversation with the participant and allowed for two-way communication that may have provided context related to the answers. The use of open-ended questions allows the researcher to gather in-depth and illustrative information to understand the various dimensions of the problem under analysis (Queiros et al., 2017).

Disadvantages of conducting semistructured interviews include (a) limitations on time needed to conduct interviews by the participants' and interviewer's schedule, (b) the

data collected may not be helpful or applicable, (c) the participant may exercise their right not to answer, and (d) the researcher may not have adequate equipment available to document the conversation correctly. Time available to the researcher and the participant may limit the amount of information gathered from the interview. I planned to use one hour to conduct the interview and ensured that the participant understood the requirement. Additionally, the participant may have difficulty concurrently listening to and answering questions that might affect the response or elect not to answer a question (Patel et al., 2016). Last, the researcher must capture the data by having multiple recording devices and taking notes on the interview at the same time. Other disadvantages may include environmental influences such as external noise, temperature, and location-specific distractions that may cause discomfort or distress for both the participant and interviewer (Adeloye et al., 2020).

Cypress (2017) argued that qualitative research reliability depends on the researcher's attempts to establish the data's dependability, consistency, and repeatability throughout the study. Morse (2018) also suggested that reliability verification strategies, including member checking and dependability tests, are necessary to ensure the researcher establishes rigor. Once data collection was complete, I created transcripts of each interview, engaged in member checking, coded the interviews into strategic categories, then summarized my interpretations of the data. I sent the individual summaries to participants to confirm or correct the synopsis. Participants' confirmation of the interpretation lends to the study's dependability and further supports the overall reliability of the study's findings (Brear, 2019).

Data Organization Technique

When conducting the semistructured interviews, I ensured the separation of data by identifying each participant with a unique alphanumeric designator based on the sequence of interviews (i.e., P1, P2). Identifying each participant and the data collected from each using coded identifiers ensured confidentiality and helped when referencing the information during the review phase (Kirilova & Karcher, 2017; Tamminen & Poucher, 2018). I recorded the conversation on two separate devices to capture data in case one device failed. I used an interview log or research journal to document nonverbal cues, including body language and other pertinent observations regarding the participant's behavior. Interview notes were kept in a research journal that I could partition into subfolders and categories for ease of reference. Programs such as Microsoft Word and NVivo aided in compiling, categorizing, and storing data. Research data storage is the researcher's responsibility, and I protected data to ensure private information was not accessible by anyone other than myself (Surmiak, 2018). I will store electronic and printed interview data in a keyed entry lockbox or secure online storage for 5 years to ensure participant confidentiality. I will destroy the data after 5 years.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in a qualitative study refers to the processes and procedures used to analyze qualitative data during data collection. Researchers conduct investigations to determine the value of the data and develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon such that an in-depth explanation or findings can be generated (Houghton et al., 2015). However, Watkins (2017) indicated the large amount of data collected in a qualitative

study would need rigorous review and analysis to ensure the findings accurately describe the phenomenon. I used multiple data collection methods to corroborate the data and confirm the accuracy of the entirety of the activity related to the phenomenon.

Data triangulation is an analysis method that researchers use to view a phenomenon from multiple perspectives to create a deeper understanding of the studied activity (Abdallah et al., 2018). I used data triangulation to develop a comprehensive understanding of the data. Triangulation methods improve the study's overall reliability and validity by providing additional data sources from which rigorous analysis can be conducted (Hayashi et al., 2019). I performed data triangulation by using data gathered from semistructured interviews and institutional documentation to gain deeper insight into the organization's knowledge management strategy as a component of succession planning.

Data Organization

When interviewing participants, I created files for each data set and then combined all files into a single folder to easily retrieve information. From that data, coding occurred. Coding of qualitative data refers to organizing and categorizing data into similar groupings, which may help the researcher quickly identify data groups for further analysis (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). When reviewing coded data collected from the interviews and document review, I combined similar responses into larger groups from which I extrapolated themes. Identifying themes from participant responses may allow the researcher to develop more detailed insight into the phenomenon (Guest et al., 2020). Creating themes might also allow researchers to identify patterns in the data

from which a more efficient analysis can be conducted (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Using computer-based word processing software combined with the qualitative analysis software NVivo could help with storing, recalling, reviewing, and analyzing the large amount of data collected (Dalkin et al., 2020).

Conceptual Framework for Data Analysis

I used the KMT as the conceptual framework for this study. Practitioners of KMT hold that an organization's knowledge management strategy is a critical component of effective pre- and postsuccession planning and performance and allows leaders at all levels of an organization to recognize, empower, and inspire positive organizational change (Dasai et al., 2016). Using KMT as the framework of this study, I explored effective knowledge management strategies leaders use to support succession planning. When analyzing data collected from interviews and document review, I discovered thematic support for the notion that robust knowledge management strategies support effective succession plans

Reliability and Validity

In qualitative research studies, the terms *reliability* and *validity* refer to the study's consistency such that the researchers establish credibility and reviewers and users consider the study valuable and trustworthy (Cypress, 2017). Researchers engaging in qualitative research focus on establishing rigor by applying multiple reliability and validity tests throughout the study (Spiers et al., 2018). Reliability refers to the data's consistency across multiple sources and that the interpretations of the findings are accurate representations of the populations' input (Gaus, 2017). Researchers establish

validity, in part, by using data triangulation processual methods to mitigate bias and support the study's credibility (Hayashi et al., 2019)

Reliability

Researchers derive reliability in qualitative research from attempts to establish dependability, consistency, and repeatability of data obtained throughout the study (Cypress, 2017). Morse (2018) argued using reliability verification strategies is necessary to establish rigor. Spiers et al. (2018) also suggested that data collection methods contribute to reliability when a researcher identifies the study's relevant data collection instruments and analysis for reference and potential replication by future researchers.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research refers to how much the researcher trusts the data to consistently address the research question despite varying conditions (Hafeez-Baig et al., 2016). Establishing reliability in qualitative research is often done through member checking or respondent substantiation (Connelly, 2016). Researchers use member checking to validate data by allowing participants to review data collection results to ensure accuracy and resonance with their experiences (Birt et al., 2016).

Member Checking

Once data collection was complete, I created transcripts of each interview, engaged in member checking, coded the interviews into strategic categories, and summarized my data interpretations. I sent the individual summaries to participants to confirm or correct the synopsis. Participants' confirmation of the interpretation lends to the study's dependability and further supports the study's findings (Brear, 2019).

Validity

Cypress (2017) defined validity in qualitative research as the study's accuracy and truthfulness. Researchers attempt to reach rigor by identifying what is occurring, gaining an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon, and accurately explaining the phenomenon (Leininger, 1985). Qualitative researchers can use various validation methods to improve the accuracy of data collection, including triangulation. Researchers use data triangulation to collect data from different sources to establish validity. To ensure this study's validity, I will use data triangulation to analyze information from interviews and archival documents.

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described credibility as the accuracy of qualitative research findings as ascertained by the participants. To establish credibility, researchers use member checking to ensure participants can clarify or amend the summary of their interview and determine whether the researcher has accurately described the input. Participants may provide additional input to the summary to give an amplified understanding of the phenomenon, thereby improving the study's credibility (Birt et al., 2016). I will provide information related to the research methodology, data collection techniques, and the study's purpose to participants to support the study's credibility (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). To further establish credibility with this study, I will engage in member checking, clearly identify triangulation techniques, and describe the research methodology.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative studies refers to the concept of applying the findings of one study to alternate settings (Daniel, 2019). Although transferability is similar to generalizability in quantitative studies, researchers who engage in qualitative studies may apply lessons learned to other studies. Researchers establish transferability by providing context and evidence-based information to readers (Forero et al., 2018). Researchers offer detailed descriptions of the research methodology, including data collection techniques that accurately reflect participants' input and allow the reader to assess the research's integrity and allow for transferability (Smith, 2018). I will ensure transferability by providing information regarding the study's methodology and data collection techniques such that future researchers can quickly identify and verify the accuracy of the findings.

Confirmability

Korstjens and Moser (2018) described confirmability in qualitative research as the degree to which other researchers or readers can confirm the study's findings. Amankwaa (2016) further explained confirmability as the extent to which the study's participants affirm the results and that the researcher's motivation and bias did not influence their input. The researcher may establish confirmability by ensuring the study's findings and conclusions align with the stated purpose and methodologies presented such that reviewers can replicate the findings (Moon et al., 2016). I will achieve confirmability by conducting data auditing, member checking, clearly describing the study's data collection methods, aligning the study's findings with the study's purpose, and ensuring the research methodologies allow for replication.

Data Saturation

Saunders et al. (2015) defined data saturation in qualitative research as the point in data collection when the researcher discontinues collection after receiving no new information or themes from data sources. Hennink and Kaiser (2020) also described saturation as the point at which the participants can accurately and repeatedly describe the studied phenomenon. Researchers who achieve data saturation also support the study's validity and reliability (Hennink & Kaiser, 2020). I will achieve data saturation when respondents and archived documents provide no new information and generate no new themes.

Transition and Summary

Section 1 of this study provided the foundation and background of the current business problem. Additionally, Section 2 included an in-depth review of the extant literature related to the study's topic as well as specific information on the proposed data collection and analysis methods, including appropriate ethical practices and university approval guidelines. The purpose of this single case study was to explore strategies that organizational leaders use to emplace effective knowledge management programs to support succession planning. After considering all possible research methods, a qualitative single case study was determined to be the most appropriate. The population consisted of the senior- and mid-management levels of a federal government agency in Texas. The implications for positive change may include influencing leaders to implement process efficiencies that might reduce the need to allocate persistent

government resources, leading to a reduction in the community's tax burden without reducing the services provided.

Section 3 contains the findings of this study. A detailed analysis of the data collected, including interview responses and notes, and reviewed documents associated with the study's topic is presented. Additionally, the section includes applications to professional practice in the strategic fields of knowledge management and succession planning as well as recommendations for future research. Section 3 includes a discussion related to the implications of this study on positive social change. The section will conclude with a reflection on the researcher's experience conducting a doctoral-level study and a summary of the entire study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this single case study was to explore strategies that organizational leaders use to emplace effective knowledge management programs to support succession planning. The population consisted of senior- and mid-management leaders of a federal government agency in Texas who had experience managing knowledge management programs and systems supporting succession planning efforts. The participants were GG14–GG15 civilian leaders, E7–E9 enlisted military leaders, and O4–O6 military officers. Although all participants work at a U.S. federal agency in Texas, all of the study volunteers had experience managing knowledge systems at various U.S. government locations worldwide, and all met the qualifications for participation in the study. The findings of this study indicated the leaders were aware of the strategic concepts of knowledge management and succession planning and had emplaced processes to leverage knowledge systems to support leadership turnover events.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question that the study's findings answered was this: What strategies do organizational leaders use to emplace an effective knowledge management program that supports succession planning?

Data collected in support of this study were retrieved through semistructured interviews with six mid- and senior-level leaders, related business documents, and digital artifacts. Interviews were conducted and completed over 4 weeks, and each lasted an average of 45 minutes. A review of the notes and transcripts across all six discussions showed consistent concepts and themes related to the study's topic such that I achieved

data saturation and no other interviews were necessary. Data saturation is the point in the data collection process when no additional concepts or themes are revealed, and the participants can accurately and repeatedly describe the studied phenomena (Hennink & Kaiser, 2020; Saunders et al., 2015).

Once the interviews were completed, participants were given a copy of the interview transcript and my written notes to review for accuracy. Each participant was allowed to clarify their responses and add additional information to ensure the completeness of their answers. I applied Yin's (2018) qualitative data analysis process to the interviews and available documents to validate the interpretation of the data. Once I completed the review and initial analysis, the participants reviewed again to ensure proper interpretation of the data in a process known as member checking (Birt et al., 2016). If the participant agreed the interpretation was correct, the individual provided digital confirmation via an email or verbal attestation via a 20–30 minute video call using the Zoom videoconferencing platform. Participants were requested to send relevant documents and artifacts related to their experiences via email or web links. Analysis of the documents and artifacts occurred after each interview.

Using Yin's (2018) qualitative data analysis process, each interview was analyzed using a line-by-line review to identify words or phrases from which codes or themes and subthemes were identified. Qualitative data coding refers to organizing and categorizing data into similar groupings, which may help the researcher quickly identify data groups for further analysis (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Likewise, Ram and Liu (2018) indicated that creating themes and subthemes helps the reader quickly identify easily

identifiable research groupings in qualitative research. When reviewing coded data collected from the interviews and document review, I combined similar responses into larger groups from which I extrapolated themes. Identifying themes from participant responses allowed me to develop more detailed insight into the phenomenon. Creating themes also allowed me to identify patterns in the data from which I could conduct a more efficient analysis. Computer-based word processing software, combined with the qualitative data analysis software NVivo (Version13), helped me store, recall, review, and analyze the large amount of data collected.

I performed data triangulation by using data gathered from semistructured interviews, institutional documentation, and organizational artifacts. The following overarching themes were created after careful comparison to the literature, alignment with Dalkir's (2015) KMT, by using methodological triangulation, and through thematic analysis: (a) structured knowledge systems, (b) organizational documentation, (c) knowledge transfer methods and employee education, and (d) program evaluation.

Theme 1: Structured Knowledge Systems

As described by all participants, knowledge systems included systemic components of an organizational program designed to ensure institutional information was available and accessible to users at the point of need. P4 and P5 both stressed the importance of creating structured knowledge systems that provide an efficient use throughout the information life-cycle. At the same time, P6's experiences led her to understand that structure was the critical component of any knowledge management system. P1, P2, P3, and P6 explained how a system's design should ultimately rely on the

intended use of the information such that a user can easily retrieve data without too much difficulty. Rahman et al. (2021) explained that system quality is a primary component of an effective knowledge management system. The structure is a primary mediator in ensuring the success of knowledge use. All participants provided context to their responses by describing the difficulties associated with using outdated or disorganized information repositories by highlighting the importance of information being available without spending too much time or energy searching for needed data. Related to how a structured system could support a succession event, all participants indicated that an incoming leader must have the appropriate clearances and system permissions to ensure ease of access.

All participants provided documentation associated with the research topic either through hard copy or web links. The documentation showed continuous support for the theme structured knowledge systems and quickly validated participant input. An analysis of the available information showed persistent concepts related to the structure of organizational knowledge repositories, including information categorization, information security and classification requirements, repository access and permission requirements, and a folder structure aligned with corporate standards. All participants indicated that the documentation aided their efforts to tailor their specific knowledge management strategies to the organization's and user's needs. All participants stated an intentional individual and organizational effort to ensure associated documentation was updated regularly and shared appropriately.

Subtheme 1: Availability and Accessibility

All participants identified the concepts of availability and accessibility as critical factors to ensuring that new leaders were prepared for postsuccession achievement and that the structure of the knowledge system was the primary mediator. P5 described accessibility as a measure of a system's performance that ensures users can get the information they need when they need it. P1, P4, P5, and P6 indicated that security protocols were a mitigating factor to system accessibility and that leaders should use appropriate controls to limit specific data to people who could make use of it. Conversely, P2 noted that security protocols should not be so stringent as to place unnecessary restrictions on the data when it does not need to be protected.

P2, P3, and P5 acknowledged that ease of use was a primary component of accessibility and explained how a user should have the ability to get to the information needed without much difficulty. P3 explained in great detail how a tailored user interface could influence the information output such that the data could be immediately relevant and useable. P3 also suggested the potential effectiveness of a system that users found intuitive and that allowed for adaptability based on search trends and standard information need; having data repositories shared between organizations and between individuals can promote information exchanges that support succession planning and events. P4's approach to ensuring information accessibility is to continuously review and update the knowledge system's structure, file management plan, and security requirements as appropriate, depending on the operating environment.

Information availability is a primary knowledge system element that ensures information exists, is transferable, and is valuable to a user regardless of the context of its potential application. P4's experience related to information availability has been sporadic, with several instances described as informal exchanges between professional colleagues. In contrast, other experiences showed that additional information had been well-kept in formal repositories. The existence of data does not assume a specific and intended use by a leader, as P2 noted; however, it just explains the concept that information is ready for use. Within the context of a structured knowledge system, all study participants shared their experiences with using repositories to store information, thus making it available for future use.

Subtheme 2: Shareability and Scalability

P3 and P6 identified shareability and scalability of data in an organization's knowledge systems as successful systemic processes to ensure information can move within an organization and be tailored such that it is appropriately detailed for the intended use. P5 described the concept of shareability as the methods and processes by which an organization allows information to be transferred between individuals and between organizations. Kang et al. (2019) discussed this concept as social-interaction-based dissemination of data; however, P5's description suggested that leaders' use of business-related social networks acted as a necessary extension of the structured knowledge system that allowed information to be shared. P5 and P6 cautioned about the need for the information to be correct and timely. Any success based on the concept of shareability must consider how accurate the information is when used. During a

leadership turnover event, shareability was identified as a necessary component of transferring knowledge to new leaders.

P3 and P5 described scalability as creating customized and categorized data groups that would limit the amount of data the user would need to review before parsing the useable facts. Allowing a user to identify the parameters of a knowledge transfer enables the person to gain relevant data when requested. P5 described this concept as a method the leader can use to keyword search, data group search, or date-range search depending on the user's information requirements. P4 also described the success of having tailored information available for use by existing and future leaders and highlighted the concept of process efficiency as a key component of a scalable knowledge system. The documentation provided by P4 and P5 showed robust methods, albeit not necessarily intentionally designed, for allowing information users to parse data for specific organizational needs and how those methods permitted the user to gain data relatively efficiently. P5 explained the need to require consistency when coordinating knowledge transfer activities with corporate stakeholders and cited efforts to provide information that required little to no rewrite when delivered. P3 indicated an interest in developing a user interface that would allow for quick data group searches to minimize the need to filter the system's output.

The concept of structured knowledge systems is a successful strategy described by all participants as a critical component of an effective knowledge management system. The availability, accessibility, scalability, and shareability of institutional information depend on an organization's ability to store information in a way that allows users to

manipulate data when and where needed. While the information systems are the foundation of an effective knowledge management system that leaders use during a succession event, the documentation that supports leadership turnover is equally essential.

Theme 2: Organizational Documentation

Institutional documentation, as part of a knowledge management program, was identified by all participants as a critical component of an organization's ability to ensure information is available to the user. P1 and P2 stressed the importance of documentation as a primary knowledge management system output that is designed to help leaders prepare a historical repository of daily goings-on such that it is relevant and applicable to current business activities. P2 especially identified the context of institutional documentation as necessary because it provided the user with supporting information on why the document was created and how the user should apply it to daily work. P3 went further and indicated that overly detailed documentation is necessary because it provides the user with the option to pare the data to what is needed while having the ability to recompile and consider the entire information set when confronted with a business problem.

All participants identified specific succession-related documents they have used during a leadership turnover event, including continuity guides, job transition binders, standard operating procedures, and operations checklists. All participants readily explained the need to update the institution's information dossiers regularly to make sure the information contained in the repositories is useful and valuable to the potential user;

however, everyone interviewed explained that the pace of work often left them with very little time to update or amend the documents. Unfortunately, leaders still use the outdated documents as tools during succession events, with the outgoing leader explaining that the data was not up-to-date and that the incoming leader would need to separate the useable data from the unusable.

P1, P3, and P4 very specifically described continuity guides or job transition books as critical tools during leadership turnover events. P3's poor experiences transitioning to new positions led him to create a detailed inventory of necessary organizational information based on lessons learned. P3's efforts were not a result of a requirement dictated by the organization's succession strategy but were a result of an informal recognition of an existing knowledge gap and that the information was necessary to ensure the success of an incoming leader. This casual, nonstructured approach to creating succession planning-related documentation was a persistent concept presented by all participants; however, P5 and P6 noted that any documentation must have a recognizable structure and be measurably efficient.

Standard operating procedures and operations checklists are primarily static knowledge documents that provide the user with methods to perform specific, repeatable activities that require a consistent performance or deliverable output. All participants explained that standard operating procedures and checklists are typical government tools that federal employees are familiar with and are generally not updated unless significant changes to business activities are made or new requirements are implemented. P1

explained that these two documents are a great and helpful method to ensure routine business activities continue to happen regardless of the state of a succession event.

A review of documents provided by the participants showed persistent conceptual and practical understandings of why succession-related documents were created and the purpose that the documents served during succession planning. All participants indicated a reliance on published and stored archives to ensure continuity of practice, processes, and procedures, supporting the more prominent theme of organizational documentation. The documentation provided was identified as part of a more significant effort by the participants to manage institutional information to maximize an incoming leader's potential success and ensure the organization's records accurately reflected the current state of business activities. P3 described the compendium of relevant documents as a knowledge inventory that leaders should develop with the specific purpose of helping the incoming leader learn about their role in the organization, before, during, and after the transition event. Reviewed documents showed significant efforts by the participants' organizations to capture institutional information; however, dates on the records indicated a persistent difficulty with ensuring the data was continually up-to-date.

All participants identified documentation as the most successful method of capturing institutional information and presenting it in a useable form. The ability and capability of creating current and archived data for future use are vitally important to ensuring continuity of business practices and a transfer of data from one individual or organization to another. And although documenting business practices is an effective method of guaranteeing repeatable and uninterrupted organizational motion, the

capability of transferring that information to the people who need it is an essential component of a succession plan.

Theme 3: Knowledge Transfer Methods and Employee Education

Transferring knowledge from one place, organization, person, or group to another is the lynchpin for any knowledge management program and can be impacted by organizational culture (Pivec & Potocan, 2021). Within the federal agency from which I recruited the target population, the culture of knowledge sharing is a robust expectation; however, P4 said the type, style, and content of the information being passed tends to vary between layers of an organization, and that often creates unintended confusion regarding the intent of the transfer. P5 and P6 specifically mentioned the structure of knowledge sharing efforts often limits the true impact of the exchange due to the persistent need to repackage the data at each exchange point so that the data becomes valuable to each user group. While all participants expressed concern with the value exchange that might be lost during a knowledge transfer activity, the participants were consistent in their responses related to the availability of communication devices and products that help support a succession event.

Subtheme 1: Digital Communication Methods

Every participant interviewed indicated a consistent reliance on established communication methods to ensure institutional information is passed to whomever needs it. The most prevalent communication device used by the participants was email, which all described as invaluable for quick, informal data exchanges. P1 and P5 cautioned that while using email is a very convenient method to send information, there is often a

penchant to "fire and forget," meaning leaders can send emails without spending any effort to ensure the intended user received the information and that the user was able to make sense of the data. P4 expanded on this concept by stating that sending an email is not an efficient communication method unless both the sender and receiver are aware of the intent of the exchange. P2's experiences led him to state that email is a great way to make sure a lot of people are confused unless the sender provides appropriate context such that all the recipients can make sense of the information.

Culturally speaking, using tech-based communication methods is a highly effective way to pass information between groups and individuals, thus facilitating quick and efficient coordination between knowledge exchange participants (Robles et al., 2019). They are ingrained in the daily activities of any modern business, and employees are comfortable using these methods to discuss goings-on related to the gamut of business operations. P5 mentioned the use of chat and video-teleconferencing applications as effective ways to ensure timely information is distributed and highlighted the practicality of creating chat groups comprised of appropriate information users who could make the best use of the data. For a succession event, allowing information owners to provide the incoming leader with on-the-spot data when relevant and most valuable is an excellent use of electronic communications methods. P1, P2, and P3 indicated that communication methods allow an incoming leader to be exposed to prioritized, relevant information for the new position before assuming duties, which may better prepare them for the new role. But, P2 and P6 both cautioned that these pre-succession efforts must be

tailored and contextualized for the specific leader and the particular position that the new leader will assume.

Other inter-institutional, web-based communication applications identified by P5, such as databases and knowledge portals, are practical means of knowledge transfer. They allow users to modify, amend, categorize, classify and share data within the application. The benefits of a single location for transference can include ease of access, simplified data sifting and sorting, category creation and expansion, and multi-user updates, noted P3. Although the relative ease of manipulation using this method can produce easily transferrable information, the single-point of storage/access can also introduce unintentional barriers to the security and accuracy of the data, according to P5. And while tech-centric knowledge transfer methods are part and parcel of a modern, digital business, the most effective way to ensure information is passed, received, and is valuable is through person-to-person communication.

Subtheme 2: Person-to-Person Communication Methods

All participants interviewed for this study identified person-to-person knowledge exchanges as a pivotal method of ensuring relevant and valuable information is transferred to an incoming leader. Rosellini (2019) explained the value of inter-person exchanges as a dyadic relationship that improves individual behavior and how that behavior change improves personal and organizational performance.

As indicated by the participants, knowledge transfer can be either formal or informal and should be a part of an organization's succession strategy. With the expansion and use of digital communication methods and practical person-to-person

training and mentoring efforts, an incoming leader can be empowered to achieve success. Although most participants indicated the informal process is often used during information exchanges, formal, structured devices are emplaced to ensure availability and access to information and methods to evaluate the effectiveness of the organization's knowledge management strategy.

Subtheme 3: Employee Education

All participants highlighted the effectiveness of a pseudo-mentor-mentee relationship during a leadership turnover event and explained how a robust interest in both leaders typically results in easy communication between the two. However, P4 noted that her experience with a succession timeline often leaves the organization with a gap in leadership positions. The challenge then becomes an effort to ensure the incoming leader can communicate with the old leader via electronic means. P5 indicated the global pandemic has essentially forced leaders to coordinate on relevant organizational items through technology. Although it's a digital connection, the value of the person-to-person exchange is evident.

Training is a tool that many of the participants' organizations use to ensure an incoming leader can absorb, demonstrate, and be evaluated on their ability to conduct current business activities. P4 and P6 both noted that on-the-job training is demonstrably the most effective method of knowledge transference because it allows for a gradual, structured succession plan and can limit the negative impact of a new leader making decisions without a guide or trainer to assist. P2 and P3 made sure to mention they make themselves available to new leaders as often as necessary to ensure the individual and

organization succeeds. This training method can occur long after the succession event has taken place and provides the new leader with an additional resource to leverage if needed.

All participants provided documentation they or their organizations have used to maximize the transfer of information between leaders. Mentoring guidelines, continuity and transition books, checklists, and operating procedures are effective compilations of individual and organizational knowledge that leaders can leverage. While most rely on digital repositories and electronic communication methods to coordinate/collaborate with other leaders, all participants indicated that face-to-face interaction is the most effective way to ensure that information is received and valuable.

Theme 4: Program Evaluation

Evaluating the effectiveness of a program or strategy is an essential method of ensuring business activities are meeting or are continuing to meet expectations. Periodic and aperiodic reviews of how business is conducted can help leaders identify potential program deficiencies and develop corrective actions to maximize the program's effectiveness. All participants in this study shared experiences about how they make sure their organization's informal and formal knowledge management strategies effectively support succession events.

Evaluation criteria for an effective knowledge management system are relatively straightforward. The success of a program essentially rests on the organization's ability or capability to pass relevant and valuable information to the person, people, or groups who need it. P4 indicated her organization requires the periodic exercising of programs to ensure compliance with established standards and member proficiency. P4 also revealed

she had implemented requirements for aperiodic tests that are beyond the scope of the formal evaluation program, but the intent remains the same. P1, P2, P3, and P5 offered that exercising business processes without an after-action plan to identify potential process improvements does not promote innovation and modernization of established programs.

Within the context of a research study related to effective knowledge management programs, all participants indicated that most evaluation systems are typically informal. The measurables are subjective criteria used to ensure new leaders are successful before, during, and after a succession event. For example, P1 has extensive experience with supporting leadership turnover due to his position within the organization. Based on his experience, P1 indicated he could determine whether a new leader is effective by observing how they conduct or orchestrate the organization's business. P6 showed a personal and professional interest in helping a new leader learn the skills associated with a new position through the mentoring process and followed up with a subjective evaluation of the training, which included having the new leader demonstrate specific skills during specific scenarios. P6 would then provide the new leader with immediate feedback on what they did well and areas of improvement. Likewise, P2 used his experience leading large groups of people to establish a set of performance criteria for the new leader that would allow P2 to gauge the effectiveness of the training by having the new leader demonstrate specific skills. All participants viewed the subjective evaluation measurables as ways to ensure new leaders were provided continuous assessments of their performance to positively influence the leader's output.

Formal evaluation methods, including structured exercises that test the incoming leader's capabilities, effectively ensure that standard expectations are met. For example, P1 and P4 indicated the government has evaluation and reporting requirements that have been established and communicated to leaders that are designed to make sure specific activities are continuously completed at a particular standard of output. New leaders are required to orchestrate business programs with the assistance of working aids, standard operating procedures, checklists, or other approved resources without failing the performance benchmark. This method tests the knowledge management system through a rigorous review of the information made available to the new leader and the structured systems used to ensure the standard application of the information.

Once a program evaluation is complete, all participants suggested an immediate review of what occurred to determine areas of proficiency and deficiency. From that evaluation, leaders can improve on the proficient areas and identify corrective actions for the identified deficiencies. P3 strongly indicated an organizational need to capture the results and recommendations of the evaluation and communicate the findings to the workforce to ensure maximum application of the results. P5 also expressed the need to ensure the messaging is communicated to all levels of an organization by maximizing digital and person-to-person communication methods.

The documentation provided by the participants indicates a robust and rigorous approach to ensuring their organization's knowledge systems are evaluated for effectiveness. All participants showed that periodic and aperiodic testing programs are

useful and improve business efficiency and output. Informal and formal feedback mechanisms included published reports and written evaluation notes to new leaders.

Comparison to Existing Literature

Knowledge management is a strategic organizational activity used by leaders to support an institution's efforts to capture, codify, make available, and apply information to existing business processes and programs (Al-Hakim & Hassan, 2016). The participants in this study acknowledged that managing data is a critical component of organizational performance and success; however, few participants had emplaced formal strategies for using the agency's knowledge management systems to support succession planning and succession events. Bhojaraju (2019) acknowledged that a corporation's ability to manage its knowledge could improve how an organization performs its daily activities and support potential improvements to business practices. Likewise, Ghiorghita and Grzegorczyk (2017) explained knowledge management as a strategic concept and activity that improves leaders' ability to smartly allocate organizational resources to ensure alignment with organizational priorities. In this sense, the participants interviewed for this study showed a propensity to understand the relevance and importance of emplacing an effective management system that allows for easy access and application for existing and new leaders. All participants described their experiences using institutional information effectively.

Structured knowledge systems, as described by Ananda et al. (2019), are the amalgamation of processes, procedures, repositories, and accessibility components that allow leaders to maintain or sustain institutional information. All participants described

their experiences using systemic methods and techniques to manage their organization's knowledge, and P4 and P5 acknowledged their success using a structured system to ensure leaders had access to relevant information. P1, P2, and P3 also described the need for any knowledge management system to be organized to make sure information was available when needed. This concept aligns with Varsha et al.'s (2018) exploration of the attributes that make a knowledge management system useable and effective, including deliberate use of appropriate technology and accessibility components to maximize information handling. Research also showed the direct relationship between an effective knowledge management system and how leaders may use structured processes to positively influence business performance during succession events (Hemmati & Hosseini, 2016; X. Zhang, 2017).

Hillman and Werner (2017) and Barao et al. (2017) explained that documenting business activities effectively ensures continuity of practice and allows leaders to ensure consistent methods are applied to relevant processes. P3 shared details of his success creating documents specifically for an incoming leader to use that explicitly describes goings-on within the organization, and P2 explained his successful use of contextualized documentation for helping new members become familiar with why certain activities are conducted. Both P3 and P2's methods of using documents as part of an effective knowledge management strategy that supports a succession event align with the available literature. P5's efforts to document business processes were primarily focused on improving the efficiency with which information is passed between users and aligns with Paradowski et al.'s (2018) exploration of knowledge transfer efficiencies based on

individual and organizational interactivity and interest. P6 described the totality of her structured methods of creating and disseminating corporate documentation as a successful strategy to ensure an incoming leader was exposed to operational activities using an orderly and systematic approach versus the experiential-based approach that P1 used. Both P6's and P1's methods of documenting business activities are supported in Yahyapour et al.'s (2015) and Williams and Mulane's (2019) research on effective knowledge capture techniques in modern organizations.

All participants described knowledge transfer during succession events as the critical component of a knowledge management system, with P4 acknowledging the type and method of information exchanges are often the mediating factors in transfer success. Barzinpour et al. (2015) explained that knowledge transfer during succession events is critically important in that an incoming leader must be able to understand and apply institutional knowledge at the point of need without much interruption. Le Dû-Blayo (2017) further highlighted the criticality of knowledge transfer and dissemination during a succession event by stating that the library of available knowledge must be accessible by the appropriate user when needed.

All participants indicated some success with formal transfer methods, including applying published continuity documents, checklists, standard operating procedures, and other relevant turnover documents. Additionally, all participants successfully used informal transfer methods such as mentoring devices, on-the-spot instruction, and ad hoc discussions to ensure incoming leaders were fully educated on the relevant business activities. Abdessadak et al. (2018) described the knowledge-sharing component of a

knowledge system as founded in an organization's culture. They explained how information exchange depends on an individual's interest in passing information and receiving information. All participants regularly and successfully engaged incoming leaders using a mixture of formal and informal knowledge exchange methods to educate the new leader on organizational activities.

Participants in this study measured the effectiveness of knowledge systems during leadership turnover events using formal and informal measurables that align with Alyoubi et al.'s (2018) explanation of the influence that leaders' use of knowledge management systems may have on individual and business performance during a succession event. P4 acknowledged reliance on established criteria when evaluating a new leader's ability to manage existing business processes. At the same time, P1 relied on his experience to determine the value of the effectiveness of a new leader.

Overall, there is alignment between the participants' experiences implementing effective knowledge management systems and the extant literature on the discipline. The participants provided ample evidence to suggest at least an informal adherence to established research outcomes related to manipulating institutional information to positively influence succession planning and succession events. The participants' experience confirms the literature on knowledge management programs and how leaders can use those programs to support succession planning.

Correlation to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Dalkir's (2017) KMT. The results of this study align with Dalkir's core tenets of intelligent enterprise activity and

knowledge asset management and application. Villadsen's (2016) examination of KMT as a component of performance capacity supports the themes identified in the study through an exploration of the participants' experiences sustaining and improving organizational performance through effective knowledge transfer, adaptation, and application. Additionally, the study volunteers who implemented processes aligned with Dalkir's KMT concepts developed an organizational structure that successfully applied knowledge systems to affect positive changes in how the selected U.S. federal agency plans for succession events.

Participants' use of formal and informal structured knowledge systems, documentation, information transfer methods, and program evaluation techniques align with Dalkir's (2017) KMT tenet of knowledge asset management and application. Urban and Joubert (2017) described knowledge asset management and application as leaders' efforts to gain consensus regarding the identification and practice of concepts that promote institutional awareness and valuation of intellectual capital. The application of this tenet of Dalkir's KMT is particularly apparent in how the participants provided a standard description of knowledge, knowledge management, and knowledge application using the techniques and methods mentioned above. Knowledge systems used with success, particularly by P3 and P5, indicate an awareness of the value of creating structured, efficient, and customizable systems and are useful in managing the large amount of data and information their organization creates. P5 specifically referenced the necessity of knowledge systems being designed to allow for the data to be categorized and, thus, easier to manipulate based on the individual's and organization's needs.

Exploring successful strategies the participants have experience using indicated the application of knowledge is an equally important component of an effective knowledge management system. Although the study volunteers indicated their agency has much work to do to recognize the importance of formal information applications in support of succession planning, all the participants described various methods of using institutional information to support a succession event. P4's use of checklists indicates an awareness of proven techniques and processes to perform routine business activities; P1 and P2's use of tacit information exchanges provide experiential information in addition to documented procedures to improve a new leader's understanding of the scope of the position and the related responsibilities; P3's creation and use of data repositories allow him the opportunity to customize products for delivery and application based on the new leader's needs; P5 and P6's methods to ensure information exchanges are efficient and structured ensures a systemic way of providing consistent and standardized deliverables. Overall, the result of all six participants' efforts to manage and apply their organization's compendium of knowledge feed into Dalkir's tenet of knowledge asset management and application.

Dalkir (2017) defined the KMT tenet of intelligent enterprise activity as using an organization's human and intellectual capital to measurably improve performance. Wiig's (1997) exploration of the concept of intelligent enterprise focused on four distinct areas that support Dalkir's KMT tenet, including (a) generating job-related deliverables reliably and competently, (b) securing and improving customer relationships and internal contexts, (c) conserving enterprise resources, and (d) renewing enterprise capabilities. All

the participants referenced their organization's output as a product of operational and business requirements. To that end, all six study volunteers were invested in implementing knowledge-based processes to ensure product accuracy and completeness. P5's experiences highlighted his success with reviewing processes that ensured the continued pursuit of reliably improving organizational output and efficiency by clearly identifying the product expectations and providing the correct deliverable the first time. However, contextualized and compartmentalized information were the key attributes for P2 and P3's success in delivering competent products to whoever needed the data.

Applications to Professional Practice

Implementing knowledge management strategies to support leadership turnover events is a complex business practice that requires focused attention on an organization's knowledge systems, institutional documentation and data repositories, knowledge transfer methods, and continuous evaluation. The purpose of this single case study was to explore strategies that federal leaders use to emplace effective knowledge management programs to support succession planning. All participants had at least 5 years of experience managing their organization's knowledge systems and effectively applied them to support a leadership turnover event. The findings suggest that U.S. federal government leaders recognize the complementariness between the strategic concepts of knowledge management and succession planning; however, very few formal programs are being used that creates a direct connection between the two. The conclusions drawn from exploring the successful knowledge management and succession strategies leaders have used will provide valuable insight into how effective the designs can be as stand-alone

and complementary programs. The perspectives and descriptions provided by the participants can be generalizable to any organization that recognizes the importance of implementing knowledge management strategies to support their succession planning efforts.

Creating a robust succession strategy that relies, in part, on knowledge management programs and practices can improve individual and organizational performance during presuccession planning, the transition event, and postsuccession operations (Imran et al., 2017; Zulqurnain & Aqsa, 2019). Leaders who create and manage institutional information in ways that can directly support succession planning and succession events will likely improve the effectiveness of the incoming leader as they gain control of the organization's programs and processes. The ability and capability of large agencies to recognize the connectedness between managing information and how to use that information to support leadership turnover events is a vital component of organizational performance and continuity.

Creating knowledge programs that allow managers to manipulate the information system's accessibility, availability, scalability, and shareability will enable leaders to develop unique programs and processes for a succession event. The designs will allow a new leader to leverage appropriate and relevant information for specific circumstances related to their new position. Every participant in this study had experience using existing knowledge systems to improve the potential success of a new leader and was able to identify systemic deficiencies that were then improved to ensure future successes. By appropriately manipulating institutional knowledge, business leaders will enhance how a

new leader gains and demonstrates the skills necessary to continue business operations after a succession event occurs.

Business leaders should be purposeful in creating documentation that effectively captures institutional information. The documentation, and the repositories it is stored in, should be structured such that leaders can quickly reference appropriate material when needed. The participants' experiences noted the necessity of robust and contextualized information that is easy to reference, easy to understand, and easy to apply; however, business leaders must ensure the documentation is kept up-to-date and applicable given changes to the organization's operations.

Knowledge transfer methods that leaders use to pass information to incoming leaders must be an appropriate mixture of both formal and informal processes. Training and education programs must be relevant and appropriate for the level of the incoming leader and must be delivered by an expert in the field of study. On-the-job training or hands-on training must be appropriately detailed such that the new leader can practice new skills in an environment that allows for a controlled and predictable outcome. Informal mentoring, side-saddling, or ad hoc knowledge exchanges should augment formal programs and provide additional context to specific situations or scenarios when the new leader lacks the experience to determine the appropriate course of action.

Business leaders should routinely evaluate the effectiveness of the knowledge management programs they have implemented to support succession events. Periodic and aperiodic reviews should be followed by formal and informal feedback mechanisms that allow leaders to identify program successes and failures and implement appropriate

changes to continue or improve the processes. The sooner an organization's leaders can identify program deficiencies, the earlier they can identify and implement corrective action.

Implications for Social Change

U.S. federal agencies are funded by tax dollars and are charged with ensuring appropriate stewardship of the public's trust. Federal government leaders may support social change by highlighting the positive organizational and social implications of diversified knowledge-sharing programs within which broad communities of practice may operate (Lee et al., 2015). The specific implications for positive change include improving members' understanding of how KMT may positively influence innovation and professional competencies, which members can then use to create solutions to communities' governance problems. The study's findings may catalyze leaders to implement process efficiencies that could reduce the need to allocate persistent government resources, which might reduce communities' tax burden without reducing the services provided.

Recommendations for Action

This qualitative, single case study explored leaders' experiences managing their organization's knowledge management systems while supporting succession planning and succession events. All participants were mid- or senior-level leaders working at a U.S. federal government facility in San Antonio, Texas, who had at least 5 years of experience related to the study's topic. As a component of an effective succession strategy, knowledge management supports organizational performance through the

effective practice of information transfer, application, and adaptation (Villadsen, 2016). The conclusions of this study stemming from an analysis of the data should be of interest to (a) mid- and senior-level leaders of government organizations, (b) mid- and senior-level leaders of private industry organizations, and (c) student researchers and individuals interested in exploring additional information related to the discipline.

Recommendations for action based on the study's findings include the following:

- Federal government leaders should invest an appropriate amount of monetary, human, and intellectual capital in creating structured knowledge systems that include the primary elements of accessibility, availability, shareability, and scalability for use during routine operations and succession planning and succession events. Leaders can accomplish this by identifying system requirements and allocating organizational resources as appropriate to meet the needs of existing and future leaders.
- Organizational leaders should create purposeful documentation that focuses on providing existing and incoming leaders with the necessary information to perform existing business activities. Leaders should review these documents for relevance and accuracy at established intervals or when business activities or requirements change. Setting standards for inclusion in the cataloging process would eliminate wasted effort while focusing on relevant details needed for an effective succession event.
- Leaders should promote the need for knowledge transfer methods that allow for a combination of formal and informal training and education programs that

promote efficient, timely, and relevant information exchanges between outgoing and incoming leaders. Identifying minimum formal training standards while encouraging tacit knowledge transfers could improve the efficiency with which incoming leaders' skills are developed and practiced.

- Organizational leaders should periodically and sporadically evaluate the effectiveness of the company's knowledge management systems and how leaders use those to support succession planning and succession events. Creating program performance criteria and measuring business output against those will identify areas of deficiency which can then be addressed and corrected.

Recommendations for Further Research

While the findings and recommendations included in this study may be sufficient for government and private leaders to develop appropriate changes or updates to their organizations' knowledge management programs, there were limitations identified that could lead others to expand the results.

Limitations related to this study included individual bias related to the study topic, resulting in less than objective responses during interviews and observation. While it was necessary to explore the perspectives of managers who had experience using knowledge systems to support succession planning and succession events, further study could be conducted using users of the system versus managers. This new perspective could provide insight into the effectiveness of a knowledge system from the people the system was created to benefit.

Although the focus of the study was an organization that operates globally, the location of the study's population limited their input to experiences they gained at the U.S. government facility in Texas. Recruiting participants from the global population would expand the perspectives to operating environments that may be affected by local business activities, cultural expectations, and need. Increasing the target population to include participants from the global employee roster could improve the richness of data gathered and could offer additional detailed insight into the study's topic.

The data collected during the study was specific to the government institution. Expanding the participant pool to include private sector leaders and managers could broaden the scope of the research and improve the value of the data collected. The larger population may result in findings and recommendations that are more easily generalizable for use in other public and private industries.

During the interviews, two participants shared personal experiences with their intent to develop an ontological approach to reviewing existing knowledge management processes. A metaphysical exploration of the relationship between knowledge management and succession planning was beyond the scope of this study; however, future researchers may explore why leaders create knowledge systems and how to improve the way they leverage the system to increase the value of the organization's succession planning efforts. Identifying the meaning and cause behind creating a knowledge system could provide future leaders with an additional perspective that could improve the relationship between knowledge systems and succession planning.

Reflections

The desire to improve existing processes is a professional principle of mine. I spend countless hours looking for ways to innovate and modernize government programs to maximize public funds and improve the public's trust in the institution. This study was a culmination of a personal desire to complete a doctorate while also improving how government leaders plan and execute succession events. I immediately recognized the potential bias involved in exploring the perspectives of individuals who work in the same government agency as I do; however, I limited the effects of prejudice in my review, analysis, and recommendations through mitigation efforts.

Succession planning is a constant concern for businesses, and leaders often consider the prospect of leadership succession too late to effectively develop a plan to ensure business continuity (Carlson & DelGrosso, 2021). Leaders should recognize the importance of creating and implementing a strategy that supports future leadership needs as the business grows and is sustained through multiple generations. Federal organizations require leadership turnover so frequently that leaders should create business processes to maximize the potential success of an incoming leader. Reflecting on the results of this study, leaders know they should prepare for their replacement, but they spend minimal formal effort to make sure they capture institutional knowledge and make it available during a transition period. Given the public's persistent perception regarding U.S. government inefficiency, the need to recognize the complementariness between knowledge management and succession planning and then create useable programs and processes to maximize the value of the relationship is critically important.

The participants in this study were mid- or senior-level leaders who had experience using formal and informal knowledge systems to support leadership turnover events. Reviewing the conversations I had with each of them, their organizations recognize the importance of preparing for a new leader. Still, there are very few formal requirements to do so. If the U.S. government understands that leadership turnover is frequent, leaders should understand the importance of ensuring the organization is adequately prepared to support succession events.

Conclusion

This study explored leaders' experience managing their organization's knowledge systems during succession planning and succession events. six mid- and senior-level leaders provided their perspectives and contributed to the findings of this study by agreeing to be interviewed and by providing relevant documentation and organizational artifacts. A careful analysis was conducted, and methodological triangulation of the data was performed from which four themes were discovered, including the need to create and manage (a) structured knowledge systems, (b) organizational documentation, (c) knowledge transfer methods, and employee education, and (d) program evaluation. All four themes were supported by responses to semistructured interviews and in-depth thematic analysis using Yin's (2018) qualitative data analysis method.

Leaders of modern organizations will often recognize the need to ensure members are effectively managing institutional information to ensure availability and value; however, many leaders do not effectively use existing knowledge management systems to support succession events (Berns & Klarner, 2017). Bidian and Evans (2019) further

applied the concept of knowledge management as a vital success strategy to an organization's persistent employee actions, including departure, promotion, transfer, or retirement. Sibbald et al. (2017) explored the complementariness between knowledge management and succession planning strategies by identifying the common characteristics of information transfer, business application, and timeliness. This study of the synergetic relationship between knowledge management and succession planning was necessary to identify effective methods of supporting business continuity and sustainability in the modern knowledge-intensive economy. This study intended to improve leaders' understanding of the importance of creating and effectively managing an organization's knowledge systems such that users can leverage the systems to support succession planning efforts and succession events.

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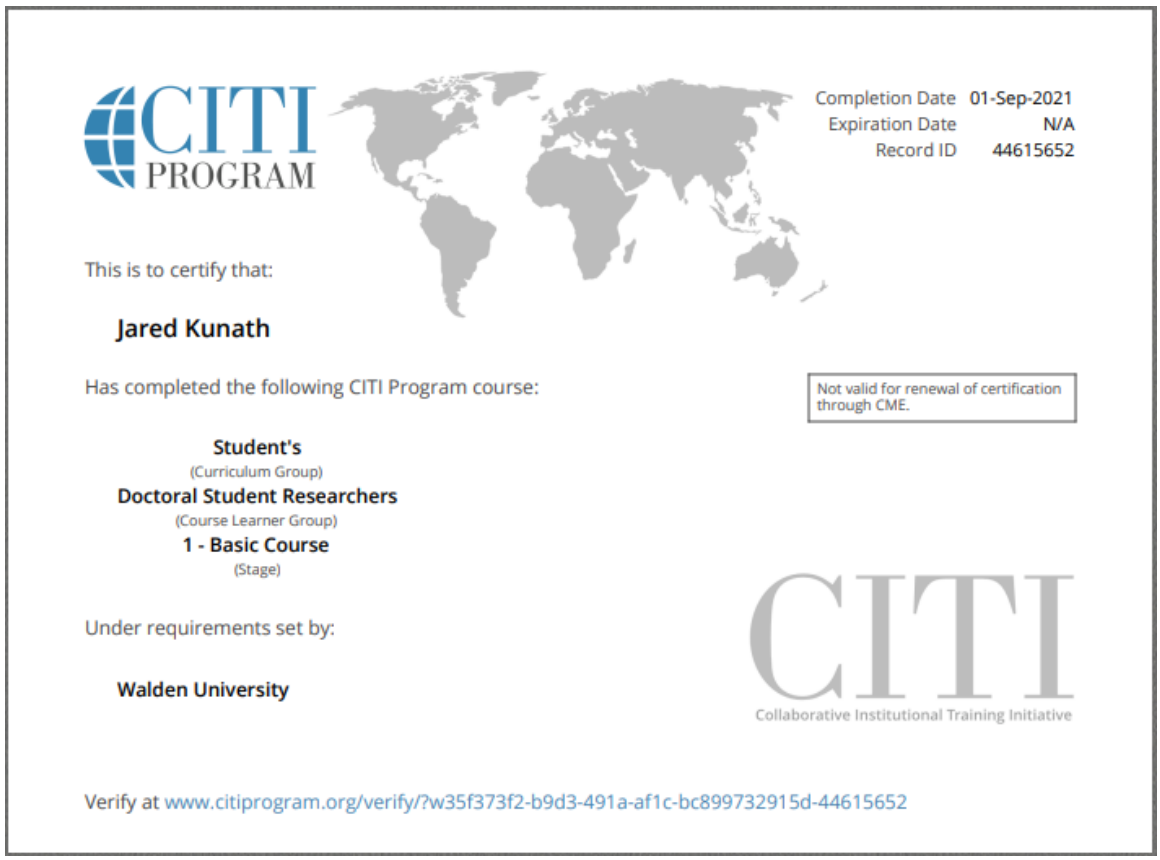
Appendix A: CITI Web Training



CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 01-Sep-2021
Expiration Date N/A
Record ID 44615652

This is to certify that:

Jared Kunath

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Student's
(Curriculum Group)
Doctoral Student Researchers
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Walden University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w35f373f2-b9d3-491a-af1c-bc899732915d-44615652

Appendix B: Semistructured Interview Protocol

Date_____

Virtual Meeting Platform_____

Participant ID_____

Orientation

- Opening greeting and introduction; create welcoming and comfortable interview environment by engaging in small talk to set the participant at ease.
- Provide a quick reminder the participant's identification and information will remain confidential and the interview answers will remain anonymous.
- Remind the participant of the scope of their involvement including that participation is voluntary, he/she has the right to withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to respond to any question, and that no compensation will be provided.
- Introduce the participant to their study identifier P1, P2, P3, etc. based on the order in which the participant is interviewed.
- Inform and gain consent to record the interview using the virtual meeting record option and secondary audio recording device. Note the date, time and location along with the participant ID on the interview protocol worksheet.

General Reminders to Participants

- The interviewer will take handwritten notes during the interview as a way to keep track of potential exploration of a response.

- Participants will be given a copy of the notes, the interview transcripts, and the researcher's interpretation of the interview answers. Participants will then provide additional context or clarification if needed.

Length of Interviews

- Each interview will last approximately 60 minutes.
- As mentioned in the consent form, I will require access to business documents that support the participant's efforts to manage his/her organization's knowledge management system.

Research Question

- I will restate the main research question: What strategies do organizational leaders use to emplace an effective knowledge management program that supports succession planning?

Interview Questions

When asking interview questions, I will take notes on whether the participant expressed confusion and may restate the question in a different way to facilitate the discussion.

1. What is the availability of organizational knowledge within your federal agency?
2. How applicable is the organizational knowledge within your federal agency for supporting succession planning?
3. How do you retain organizational knowledge?
4. How do you make knowledge accessible to employees?

5. What strategies do you use to emplace an effective knowledge management program to support succession planning?
6. How do your organization's knowledge management strategies align with your organization's succession planning strategy?
7. How do you assess the effectiveness of knowledge management as the program pertains to your organization's succession planning?
8. What additional information would you like to add about your organization's K.M. strategies for improving succession planning?

Closing

- Thank the participant for their time during the interview and for providing relevant documentation.
- Provide contact information and offer to meet at any point if the participant wishes to provide additional information.

Post-Interview

- Send a thank-you note.
- Send interview transcript and notes for review and participant input.
- Member checking.
- Data storage in accordance with IRB and Walden University requirements.