STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE ROLE OF SENIOR-LEVEL LEADERS IN THE NEVADA CASINO INDUSTRY

A dissertation submitted
by

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to

FIELDING GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE ROLE OF SENIOR-LEVEL LEADERS IN THE NEVADA CASINO INDUSTRY

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James I. Schaap

Abstract

As a contribution to the literature, the rationale of this study was on understanding and differentiating competencies of implementing change among senior-level leaders who work in the Nevada casino industry.

A self-administered, closed-ended mail questionnaire was developed to elicit in-depth responses. The intention of this survey was to also produce statistics, that is, quantitative or numerical descriptions about some aspects of the study population and to connect variables in a systematic way that might establish their empirical relationships using correlation analysis or other statistical techniques.

The data collection portion of the study was conducted during the months of November 2004 – January 2005. In order to maximize the number of responses, during this 3-month period of time, a follow-up letter was sent to all prospective participants; later, follow-up phone calls were made to non-respondents and a second survey was hand-delivered to those in key geographical areas.

This study is a first-of-its-kind investigation of the relationship between effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation in the Nevada casino industry. This study's findings, for the most part, are in agreement with earlier research on the concept of strategy implementation, and it reaffirms the role that strategic consensus plays in the strategy implementation process. Also, it underscores the findings that frequent communication up and down the organization structure serves to enhance strategic consensus through the fostering of shared attitudes and values. Besides, it reaffirms the concept that when organizations tie rewards to the success of the strategy, they are rewarded with higher levels of organizational performance. Having said this, the researcher concludes that strategy implementation plans must be clearly developed, indicating particular tasks for individuals, with clear-cut time frames, and knowing who are the people responsible for the completion of the task.

While not all organizations can overcome the so-called silent killers of strategy implementation, this researcher believes some can. More important, this researcher believes that companies can overcome the trials and tribulations of strategy implementation if they follow the nine-step strategy-executing process and model developed by Thompson, Gamble, and Strickland (2006).

Key Words

Strategic management, strategy implementation, senior-level leaders, leadership behavior, correlation analysis, univariate analysis, bivariate analysis, multivariate analysis

Acknowledgements

The completion of a doctoral dissertation marks not only the end of an exhaustive research study, it also includes the process of developing thoughts, asking questions, and conveying the results of one's efforts to others. In addition, it marks the end of a long process of learning in one's life.

Before considering the many individuals who have directly contributed to the success and completion of my dissertation effort, I want to say my deepest appreciation is in order to a very special person in my life. The most important thanks go to Marilyn, my loving wife of 28 years. She has been my rock of Gibraltar all this time, and the woman behind my desires to complete my terminal degree. She, too, lived the dissertation process along with me. She has been that very special person who always put up with my so many late evenings and weekends – reading and/or writing papers. For that, I am more than grateful – *I love you Marilyn, forever!* I also want to thank my loving son, Joshua. Since he is now a senior at the University of Nevada, Reno, I feel he better understands what it takes to complete a doctoral degree. My caring son, like my adoring wife, also lived the dissertation process. He was there working on his school work, just like me, many a late evening. As such, he has always been my inspiration and motivation. He, too, has been very supportive and understanding of my wanting to complete my doctoral studies. For that, I am equally as grateful – I love you, too, son.

My thanks also go to Mike Reed, Ph.D., Dean of the College of Business Administration, University of Nevada, Reno, where I currently teach as an adjunct professor. It encouraged me as well as convinced me that pursuit of a doctoral degree is

essential to become an accepted professional in academia. He further pointed out the many reasons why I should obtain a terminal degree in my chosen field.

I would like to now express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to my faculty mentor and Chair of my dissertation committee, Miguel Guilarte, Ph.D. Without his guidance and support, I would not have been able to complete my work and accomplish my goal of obtaining a doctoral degree. When I started to drift off course in my research study, he would always steer me back to the appropriate path. Miguel, thank you for being there from the very beginning (September 11, 2001) to the very end! I am also grateful to my dissertation committee members – Milton Lopes, Ph.D., and Leonard Baca, Ed.D. – faculty readers. They, too, kept me in line and fully supported my research study endeavors. They further ensured that the end product met the requirements and added to the body of knowledge. I would also like to say a special thank-you to Arthur A. Thompson, Jr., Ph.D., external examiner, and author/co-author of many textbooks on the subject of strategic management and strategy implementation. And while Dr. Thompson has been behind the scenes, he has always inspired me to write about the topic of strategy implementation. I am also so very lucky and thankful to have such a great student reader and fellow student – Mike Hill, Ph.D., who has been there all along the way with me as a soul-mate in this program. In addition, he provided me with constant encouragement and comfort. Further, he always talked with me about my efforts and concerns, and was a great listener. As such, it was really good to know that Mike was there to talk things through. I only hope I helped him as much as he helped me. And finally, I am truly indebted to my entire dissertation committee. They all challenged me to deepen my understanding about two subjects that are dear to my heart – *leadership behavior and strategy implementation.* Without their feedback and openness, this research would not be possible.

It has also been my privilege to have a talented young man as a research assistant. Jessie Stewart dedicated a month of his time by providing the necessary support, hand-delivering countless questionnaires to casinos in the Las Vegas area, further ensuring a high respondent count. Of course, I am also very grateful to those participants who partook in my research study. Without their feedback, this study would not have been possible.

Just as important, I would also like to thank Jean Stoess. She has been my proofreader all these years, reading and editing thousands of pages of documents, and making all those necessary grammatical and APA style corrections. I could not have made it without her editorial help.

And finally, as a 60% service-connected disabled Vietnam combat Marine veteran, I also want to mention a special appreciation to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. Without their financial support, I would not have been able to complete this program.

In closing, and looking back at my 52 months of educational experience at Fielding Graduate University, I can honestly say that this has been, unequivocally, an interesting journey. More specifically, the human and organizational development program has truly allowed me to develop a greater state of self-awareness and self-reflection. It has also been a character-building experience. Fielding's doctoral curriculum provided me with positive support, real encouragement, honest as well as critical feedback, and, most importantly, a desire to see me succeed. For that too, I am grateful.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background Information

We are confronting a new frontier, a competitive landscape of rapid and unpredictable changes, technological improvements, and increasing globalization (Hitt, Ricart, & Nixon, 1998; Bettis & Hitt, 1995; Murtha, Lenway, & Bagozzi, 1998). This new frontier has both internal and external constraints that work together, as well as with the characteristics of the manager (e.g., ambition, tolerance of ambiguity, cognitive skills, political skills, and internal-external control orientation) to manipulate the pattern of behavior displayed by a senior executive (Yukl, 2002). As a result, many firms will experience strategic discontinuities (Hitt, Keats, & DeMarie, 1998). This new business frontier requires new forms of managerial thinking and organizational structures, new global mindsets, considerable strategic and structural flexibility, and innovative methods for implementing strategies. There is also a new scientific renaissance in the making that will bring about the rise of new industries, change how businesses compete, and transform how companies are managed (Pascale, Millemann, & Gioja, 2000).

Within this new frontier, it can be said that implementation is not static. Every manager knows that plans made in the past are unlikely to remain unchanged in the future (Bozeman & Straussman, 1980). It can be said that within this new frame of knowledge, strategy implementation is a key aspect of strategic management and planning. As a big-picture course of action, according to Thompson, Gamble, & Strickland (2006, p. 14), strategy implementation is Phase 4 of the Strategy-Making, Strategy-Executing Process:

Phase 1: Developing a strategic vision.

Phase 2: Setting objectives.

Phase 3: Crafting a strategy to achieve the objectives and vision.

Phase 4: Implementing and executing the strategy.

Phase 5: Monitoring developments, evaluating performance, and making corrective adjustments.

Good strategy implementation requires crafting strong fits between strategy and organizational capabilities, between strategy and the organization's culture, between strategy and the reward structure, and between strategy and internal operating systems. As such, implementation is situated as an operation-oriented management task geared at shaping the performance of key business activities in a strategy-supportive manner (Thompson et al., 2006).

Definitions

The relationship between a firm's strategy and organizational performance is complex (Williamson, 1999). Thus, it is appropriate to begin with a working definition of implementation, which serves as the rationale of my study.

Such a definition is complicated by the existence of the three or four streams of thought (Wernham, 1985). For management science/O.R. theorists, [strategy] implementation is a revised set of decision processes incorporating a "proposed" solution (Schultz & Slevin, 1979). Dunsire (1978), writing from a public policy perspective, saw implementation as producing a desired effect upon the world; while for strategic management theorists Grinyer and Spender (1979), it was a series of decisions and resultant actions which commit resources to achieving intended outcomes.

Thompson and Strickland (2003, p. 18) define implementation as:

> The managerial task of implementing and executing the chosen strategy entails assessing what it will take to develop the needed organizational capabilities and to reach the targeted objectives on schedule.

Essentially, the key to this definition is determining what must be done to put the strategy in place, carry it out skillfully, and produce first-rate results.

Wheelen and Hunger (2004, p. 192) added that strategy implementation is:

> the sum total of the activities and choices required for the execution of a strategic plan. It is the process by which strategies and policies are put into action through the development of programs, budgets, and procedures. Although implementation is usually considered after strategy has been formulated, implementation is a key part of strategic management. Strategy formulation and strategy implementation should thus be considered as two sides of the same coin.

Based on the definitions provided by Thompson and Strickland (2003) and Wheelen and Hunger (2004), *implementation* is operationally defined in my study as: those senior-level leadership behaviors and activities that will transform a possible working plan into a concrete reality (i.e., implementation of the strategy).

Leadership also needs to be defined. Bass (1980, pp. 19-20) suggests the following definition:

> Leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectation of the members.

The reader may ask, why is this definition important? The following explanation is essential because senior-level leaders are agents of change—persons who have the ability to affect other people more than other people's acts affect them. Research in the 1970s and 1980s often expressed this idea as the directing of attention of other members to goals and the paths to achieve them (Bass, 1980), a key component of strategy implementation.

Effective leadership, at the senior level, also positively affects implementation. According to Kotter (1999), implementation at this level is:

> The development of vision and strategies, the alignment of relevant people behind those strategies, and the empowerment of individuals to make the vision happen, despite obstacles. This stands in contrast with management, which involves keeping the current systems operating through planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling, and problem solving. Leadership works through people and culture. It's soft and hot. Management works through hierarchy and systems. It's harder and cooler (p. 10).

Considering the two definitions provided by Bass (1980) and Kotter (1999), *leadership* is operationally defined in my study to mean: those behaviors, attitudes, and dispositions of senior-level leaders that inspire and motivate employees to contribute their best effort to fulfill the company's goals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to analyze data from different businesses in one specific industry in order to increase the understanding of how senior-level leaders, from their point of view using the strategy-implementation process to realize their strategic ends—in other words, how they effectively and efficiently implemented their strategic plans. This is especially significant because the literature review on business strategy and strategy implementation reveals that there is a lack of information to support the notion that using an effective strategy-implementation process or model (Cândido, 2005) can assist the organization in achieving its strategic ends by successfully implementing a strategic plan.

Research Question

An astonishing number of strategies fail because senior-level leaders do not make a realistic assessment of whether the organization can execute the plan (Bossidy & Charan, 2002). Poor implementation has also been blamed for a number of strategic failures (Wheelen & Hunger, 2004). For example, studies show that half of all acquisitions fail to achieve what was expected of them, and one out of four international ventures does not succeed (Gadella, 1994).

Since a significant number of strategies fail, the rationale of my study, as previously stated, was on understanding and differentiating competencies of implementing change among senior-level leaders who work in the Nevada casino industry. To achieve this task, the following research question was used to help identify various human behavioral performance factors that positively or negatively affect the implementation of a strategic plan: *How do the behaviors of senior-level leaders, as perceived by themselves, contribute to the success or failure of strategy implementation?*

I believe the research question is vital and central to my study because the query explores the theoretical perspective that effective or ineffective senior-level leadership behaviors can affect, in a particular way, successful or unsuccessful strategy implementation. Also, the research question is key because gaming industry strategists, like most other strategy makers, historically have placed considerable emphasis on the concept of [strategic] fit – the need for a fit between strategy and structure, strategy and culture, and strategy and the life-cycle stage of the organization (Flood, Dromgoole, Carroll, & Gorman, 2000), but not on leadership behavior and strategy implementation. As well, it has become increasingly fashionable to pay lip-service to the importance of giving management attention to the issue of implementation (Piercy, 1994).

In my study, the answers to the research question could only be determined by those senior-level leaders who actually responded to the mailed questionnaire. Based on these responses, this research determined, through quantitative analysis, if there was a way to accurately measure effective or ineffective leadership behaviors as they relate to successful or unsuccessful strategy implementation.

In my study, senior-level leaders refers to chief executive officers and/or presidents, owners, other executives (e.g., CFOs, COO, controllers, directors, etc.), and other senior-level managers. It is hoped, however, that the answers to the research question will broaden knowledge in the field of human and organizational development.

To address my study's research question, a self-administered questionnaire was developed. A survey instrument, however, is a system for collecting information from or about people to describe, compare, or explain their knowledge, attitudes, and behavior

(Fink, 2003). Since this was a self-administered feedback form, all of the queries were restricted to multiple-choice answers to facilitate data-collection. Additionally, the questionnaire involved gathering information about the current status of some target variable within a particular organization, and then there was a report of the summary of the findings (Thomas, 2003).

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

My study was limited to a specific period of time. Additionally, my study was confined to the examination of answers from the questionnaire that was provided to senior-level leaders who work for casinos exclusively in the state of Nevada.

Because it was assumed that middle- or lower-level managers are not involved with the initial strategic planning process, these people were excluded from my study. They were also excluded from my study because these middle- or lower-level managers are not able to provide the information that this paper was looking to answer from the research question. However, many forms of strategic planning require input from all levels of the organization.

While middle-level or lower-level managers most likely are not involved with the initial strategic planning process, they would probably be involved, at some point, with the actual implementation of the strategy.

Despite the best precautions and careful planning, some individuals who filled out the questionnaire were not those to whom it was addressed. Another limitation was that some of the selected companies have specific policies and procedures that did not allow the selected participants to participate in surveys.

Another limitation, despite the accumulated expertise, time, and resources devoted to strategic planning, resulting strategies are rarely implemented successfully (Pfeffer & Sutton, 1999). Henn (1998) stressed that all too often strategic plans do not translate into strategic behavior. Mintzberg (1994, p. 34) stated that the problem amounts "to the grand fallacy: that analysis can produce synthesis." Why then do strategy implementation efforts continue to fail? Sadly enough, the cost of failed implementation efforts to the organization is enormous. Apart from wasting significant amounts of time and money, they result in lower employee morale, a diminished trust and faith in senior management, as well as end up in creating an even more inflexible organization (Heracleous, 2000).

Even though strategy implementation is a complex topic, I understand why strategies fail. But what constitutes strategy implementation success? Success can be measured across two broad dimensions: "(a) How well the company performs financially, strategically, and in the stock market, and (b) the CEO's own major individual responsibilities for improving company performance" (Burchman and Schneier, 1989, p. 26). Also, the criteria for successful implementation of a strategy require a very carefully designed measurement and reward system. Measure and reward managers on the appropriate management tasks, and they will act according (Stonich, 1982).

Research Objectives

My study had three specific research objectives. They were: (a) to identify, where possible, effective or ineffective leadership behaviors encountered by senior-level leaders who have tried to implement their strategic plan(s); (b) to determine what involvement senior-level leadership had with trying to achieve the financial and/or strategic performance targets set by the company; and (c) to determine what recommended senior-level leadership changes should possibly be needed to further assure that the financial and/or strategic performance targets set by the company are, in fact, met.

Research Contributions

The contributions of my study will benefit two different communities – the scholarly community and the business community. Through this research, the scholarly community will continue to develop a deeper understanding of the more recent assumptions of strategy implementation, and the potential for strategy implementation to effect organizational change and success. My study will also aid the business community by raising the senior-level leaders' awareness of what is and what is not effective in working toward the achievement of organizational change and success. Further to this point, my study will help strategists (CEOs) and senior executives (vice presidents), as well as managers, the strategy implementers, develop a deeper understanding of the pursuit of strategy, making it work, improving the competence with which it is executed, and showing measurable progress in achieving the targeted results (Thompson & Strickland, 2003).

Summary

The purpose of my study was to determine *"How do the behaviors of senior-level leaders, as perceived by themselves, contribute to the success or failure of strategy implementation?"*

The sample size, or the totality of people under consideration, consisted of 890 senior-level leaders who worked solely in the casino industry within the state of Nevada.

Since strategy implementation occurs over many months, and sometimes years, my study determined the effectiveness of implementing a strategy from a human-development perspective in a rapidly changing environment.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to present classic, definitive, and the most influential pieces of recent research to my study, as presented by experts in the field of strategy implementation, and where appropriate, the role of leadership behavior. The literature review also presents the state of theory and research relating to the decision-making use of strategy implementation as an essential step in the overall strategic management and planning process. Additionally, the objective is to situate my study in the existing research stream and review the present state of knowledge from current texts, published dissertations, and scholarly journals that specialize in the kind of research that is being proposed.

Focus for the Study

Again, why would the reader be interested in my study? One reason is because data analysis from today's new business frontier shows that the amount of significant change in organizations has grown tremendously over the past 2 decades. In addition, a fair amount of studies have already been performed in the discipline of implementation. Also, leading the implementation of change is one of the most important and difficult leadership responsibilities. For some theorists, it is the essence of leadership, and everything else is secondary (Yukl, 2002).

The findings in a survey of the presidents of 82 business units competing in global industries support the contingency notion that when there is a proper alignment among strategy, organizational capabilities, and administrative mechanisms, superior performance is realized (Roth, Schweiger, & Morrison, 1991).

Implementation requires discipline, commitment, creativity, leadership, and superior execution skills (Freedman, 2003). Freedman and Tregoe (2003, pp. 112-113), also cautioned that implementation pitfalls abound. Some of the deeper ones are: (a) Strategic inertia – not getting started; (b) a lack of stakeholder commitment to the vision – not having everyone on board; (c) strategic drift – not focusing on the destination; (d) strategic dilution – things are moving, but it's not clear who's driving; (e) strategic isolation – things may be happening, but no one bothers to communicate effectively; (f) failure to understand progress – not knowing where you are on the journey; and (g) initiative fatigue – things are happening, but nothing gets done.

To date, major change efforts have helped some organizations adapt significantly to shifting conditions, improved the competitive standing of others, and positioned a few for a far better future. Efforts to implement change in an organization are more likely to be successful if a leader, from a behavioral standpoint, recognizes and acknowledges the reasons for resistance to change (Yukl, 2002). But in too many situations, the improvements have been disappointing with wasted resources and burned-out, scared, or frustrated employees (Kotter, 1996).

Overview of Strategy Implementation

There seems to be widespread agreement in the literature regarding the nature of strategic planning, which includes strategy implementation. It includes presentations of various models showing the organizational characteristics suggested as significant factors for effective strategy implementation (Guffy, 1992). It is also portrayed as a dynamic process by which companies identify future opportunities (Reid, 1989). Additionally, the existence of a strategy is an essential condition or precondition for strategy implementation. Implementation is focused by nature and by definition. It cannot be directionless. It is a process defined by its purpose – in this case, the realization of a strategy. Thus, to implement a strategy, there must first be a strategy. The strategy may be a strategy and be more or less well-formed, more or less in the process of formation, or even emergent (Mintzberg, 1987). Unless it is suitably formed to represent a direction or goal, there is nothing to implement; and organizational members will be unable to work towards its realization. As a result, strategic intentions are inextricably linked with, and enable the existence of, strategy implementation (Kernochan, 1997). As well, organizations that focus their energy on harvesting the fluid relationship between strategy and implementation will create satisfied customers, employees, and greater profits (Beaudan, 2001).

The issue of management intentionality is also central to strategy implementation because strategy and the allocation of resources for strategy implementation are primarily the domain of upper management (Christensen, Andrews, & Bower, 1978).

The issues of trying to achieve the financial and/or strategic performance targets of a strategic plan in the company, as a preprogrammed world, people supposedly know how to distinguish the quality of an implementation from the quality of a decision. In further evaluating implementation, four possibilities are presented:

1. If both the decision and the execution are good, then evidently there is no problem – too good to be true.
2. If both [decision and implementation] are bad, then we can only be grateful that poor decisions are made ineffective by worse actions.
3. If the decision is good but the execution is bad, then the problem can only be one of control (ineptitude, laziness, or whatever) in connecting the premises to the conclusions.
4. If implementation is good but the decision is bad (because the result is suboptimal or even infeasible), then there is, in this preprogrammed world, nothing the implementer can do about it (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984, pp. 177-178).

Pressman's and Wildavsky's (1984) typology of evaluating implementation, while over 20 years old, still provides a useful perspective on the differences and complexity of ensuring successful strategy implementation. As such, implementation is still worth studying precisely because it is a struggle over the realization of ideas (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984).

Implementation is very much like product or service quality. The most expensive and inefficient way to send quality products out to customers is by inspecting them at the end of the product line and throwing out all the ones with too many visible faults. A much better way to assure quality is to design quality into product and process. That means working to the limits of people and machines until the limits can be changed reliably, by recalibrating and overhauling or replacing the machines, and by training the people and altering the conditions around them to assure quality.

We must take the same approach with implementation. Implementation must be designed into plans, which means working within the limits of our staff and the environment around us (Peters, 1993).

My study acknowledges that even after the strategies have been determined and the long-term objectives set, the strategic management process is far from complete. Strategic managers must now move, from a logic perspective, into a critical new phase of that process—translating strategic thought into organizational action. Drawing on two well-worn phrases, they move from "planning their work" to "working their plan" as they shift their focus from strategy formulation to strategy implementation. This shifting, thus, gives rise to three interrelated concerns: (a) Identifying measurable, mutually determined annual objectives; (b) developing specific functional strategies; and (c) communicating concise policies to guide decisions (Pearce & Robinson, 1982).

In further looking at the concept of strategy implementation, crafting a strategy, no matter how complex a task, is substantially easier than successfully implementing one. Strategy formulation is primarily an intellectual and creative act involving analysis and synthesis. Implementation, still, is a hands-on operations- and action-oriented activity that calls for executive leadership and key managerial skills. However, the pitfalls that can have an effect on successful implementation are insufficient training and not enough support during implementation (McAlary, 1999). As such, implementing a newly crafted strategy often entails a change in corporate direction and frequently requires a focus on effecting strategic change (de Kluyver & Pearce, 2003). Both of these are key leadership behavioral personas that can dramatically affect organizational performance.

The literature most applicable to my study is strategy implementation and leadership behavior, and is consistent with the above statements.

This review, therefore, starts with the notion of who are the principal authors in the field of strategy implementation. They are former CEOs from Fortune 100 companies, management consultants who work closely with professors of business and economics, and academicians. From my perspective, they are, besides Thompson and Stickland (2003), and Wheelen and Hunger (2004), who were mentioned in chapter 1: Stonich (1982), Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), Bossidy and Charan (2002), and Hrebiniak (2005). These principle authors have defined implementation in the following manner:

- Stonich (1982, p. xvii) – Implementation is deciding how to get your company from where it is today to where it should be tomorrow.
- Pressman and Wildavsky (1984, p. xxi) – Implementation means to carry out, accomplish, fulfill, produce, and complete.
- Bossidy and Charan (2002, p. 22) – Execution is a systematic process of rigorously discussing the hows and whats, questioning, tenaciously following through, and ensuring accountability. It includes making assumptions about the business environment, assessing the organization's capabilities, linking strategy to operations and the people who are going to implement the strategy, synchronizing those people and their various disciplines, and linking rewards

to outcomes. It also includes mechanisms for changing assumptions as the environment changes and upgrading the company's capabilities to meet the challenges of ambitious strategy.

- Hrebiniak (2005, p. 3) – Execution represents a disciplined process or a logical set of connected activities that enables an organization to take a strategy and make it work.

From my point of view, it appeared that all of these authors, over a period of 24 years, have basically defined implementation as behaviors and activities that will transform a possible working plan into a concrete reality (i.e., implementation/execution of the strategy). As the reader can tell, this definition represented my own perception on this complex topic.

Since these characterizations are all human behavioral tendencies, all of these meanings tie directly to my own question – *How do the behaviors of senior-level leaders contribute to the success or failure of strategy implementation?* It also appears from my perspective that all of these meanings represent basically the same school of thought presented, however, in a semantically different manner.

Overview of Leadership Behavior

This review now looks at some of the foremost authors in the field of leadership behavior. They are directors of nonprofit educational institutions, vice presidents of nonprofit organizations, and academicians. In addition to Bass (1980) and Kotter (1999), who were mentioned in chapter 1, principle authors in leadership behavior include Hughes et al. (2002), Yukl (2002), Manning and Curtis (2003), Pierce and Newstrom

(2003), DuBrin (2004), and Howell and Costley (2006). They have defined leadership in the following manner:

- Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy (2002, p.8) – The process of influencing an organized group toward accomplishing its goals.
- Yukl (2002, p. 7) – The process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish the shared objectives.
- Manning and Curtis (2003, p. 2) – Leadership is social influence. It means leaving a mark. It is initiating and guiding, and the result is change.
- Pierce and Newstrom (2003, p. 8) – Leadership is a sociological phenomenon (a process) involving the intentional exercise of influence wielded by one person over one or more other individuals, in an effort to guide activities toward the attainment of some mutual goal.
- Dubrin (2004, p. 3) – Ability to inspire confidence and support among the people who are needed to achieve organizational goals.
- Howell and Costley (2006, p. 4) – A process used by an individual to influence group members toward the achievement of group goals in which the group members view the influence as legitimate.

From my position as well, it appears that all of these authors have basically said the same thing about leadership – those behaviors, attitudes, and dispositions of senior-level leaders that inspire and motivate employees to contribute their best effort to fulfill the company's goals.

Since these theoretical descriptions are all potentially human behavioral tendencies, all of these meanings also tie directly to my own research question – *How do the behaviors of senior-level leaders contribute to the success or failure of strategy implementation?* In addition, it appears from my standpoint that all of these meanings represent basically the same school of thought, however, in a semantically different manner.

The Dynamics of Leadership as Part of the Strategy Implementation Literature

The style of strategic planning that became popular during the 1970s appears to be falling into unpopularity. From 1973 until sometime around the end of the 1980s, there was a period of intense academic debate about the understanding of the phenomenon of implementation. Yet, in 1997, it was asked whether implementation was "yesterday's issue" (Hill, 1997). The answer given to that rhetorical question was "no" (Hill & Hupe, 2002).

Many large corporations are cutting their formal planning staffs, chief executives are once again assuming primary responsibility for strategic leadership, and line managers are vying for a greater role in the strategic-planning process. Even so, emerging during a time of rapid economic growth, the 1970s style of strategic planning, with its internal direction, focus on past experience, and incremental strategy implementation, is no longer pertinent to a society in which markets and technologies are rapidly changing and firms are facing competition from a number of unexpected sources.

Organization commitment, also during the late 1970s, was viewed both as behavioral and attitudinal variables (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). It was projected that firms achieving superior performance in the 1980s and 1990s would be those that take a forward-, outward-looking approach to planning. These firms would value self-renewal and take advantage of change as an opportunity to do extremely well (Gluck, 1985). Nonetheless, in the mid- 1980s, the focus was on strategy. Execution took a back seat. In fact, execution was often an afterthought. In today's business environment, though, the focus is on execution—"getting things done"—and rightfully so (Frigo, 2003).

Change leaders implement plans in discrete steps—clarifying initial intentions, ensuring acquisition of new skills, and refining change efforts to guarantee results (Dalziel & Schoonover, 1988). These are key human behavioral leadership conditions. But, implementation is more than planning. It is a set of five leadership behavioral processes, as a process of change that supports the progression of successful implementations: (a) Clarify plans, (b) integrate new practices, (c) provide education, (d) foster ownership, and (e) give and get feedback (Dalziel & Schoonover, 1988, p. 108).

Organizations facing the need for considerable change, however, must decide on both a direction for change and a means to realize the strategy. More specifically, the CEO must be the mechanism and catalyst for strategic change. Four clusters of behavior are particularly important for the CEO to demonstrate in implementing strategic change: communication, strategic interaction, resource utilization, and leadership (Edwards, 2000).

Having reviewed numerous writings about implementation, I have concluded that implementation failure comes about as a result of possible ineffective leadership behavior. As validation of this statement, a study performed by Williams et al. (1982) identified nine central issues about implementation, specifically as it relates to leadership behavior:

1. Lack of leadership.
2. Lack of clarity.
3. Lack of stability.
4. Lack of field perspective.
5. Lack of support.
6. External focus.
7. Waste of staff resources.
8. Lack of staff involvement.
9. Poor communication (pp. 162-163).

The style or plan of an implementation is determined by the substance and timing of implementation activities. The different styles of implementation impose different costs due to the complexity of the coordination devices required to manage them. Multifaceted implementations require more complicated and costly procedures than do simpler sequenced or managerial implementations (Hrebiniak & Joyce, 1984). Beckhard and Harris (1977), as cited by Hrebiniak and Joyce (1984, p. 234), have argued that in any significant organizational change there are three states of the organization that must be accommodated. These are: (a) the organization as it existed prior to the change, (b) the organization as it will exist following the change, and (c) the transition state that exists as the firm moves from the old organization to the new organization. This transition state exists as the firm implements the strategy, and requires planning and organizing decisions for its management.

Guffy (1992) investigated, at least in part, the impact of a formal communication program on organization performance. The findings of Guffy's (1992) study also support the Mathieu and Zajac (1990) suggestion that effective leadership communication and organization commitment are correlated. The results from my study certainly support and extend the work of Guffy (1992) and that of Mathieu and Zajac (1990). As a result, I did not find any gaps in the research performed with these two previous reports.

In a more recent paper, Rapert, Velliquette, and Garreston (2000) stated that communication and shared understandings (i.e., consensus) play a principal role in the implementation process. In particular, when vertical communication is frequent, strategic consensus is enhanced and organization performance improves, as evidenced by higher levels of net operating income, gross revenues, and growth in net revenues. Here, too, the findings from this paper certainly support and extend the work of Rapert et al. (2000).

In one of the latest studies about effective leadership, in which 38 organizations were studied, Howell (2005) stated:

> Effective champions are distinguished by three behaviors: (a) conveying confidence and enthusiasm about the innovation, (b) enlisting the support and involvement of key stakeholders, and (c) persisting in the face of adversity (p. 108).

This quote may make one wonder what makes strategy implementation a difficult, more time-consuming leadership challenge than crafting a strategy? There are wide arrays of managerial activities that have to be attended to. There are demanding people-management skills. It takes perseverance to get a variety of initiatives launched and moving. There are a number of bedeviling issues that must be worked out. And, most essential, there must be a resistance to overcome change (Thompson & Strickland, 1995).

From an organizational change perspective, to evaluate whether one is implementing a strategy successfully that person must assess the quality of his or her work in planning and implementation. A pivotal skill is project management. Well-managed projects are driven by metrics that enable the implementer to determine if the breadth and depth of his or her actions are appropriate (are you, in fact, installing the strategy?), within budget, and on schedule (Brache & Feedman, 1999).

Zagotta and Robinson (2002) developed seven key leadership steps for turning strategy into an execution process that guarantees accountability and yet is adaptable to change:

1. Quantify the vision.
2. Communicate strategy through mantras.
3. Plan results, not activities.
4. Plan what you are not going to do.
5. Open strategy to the organization.
6. Automate status and progress management.
7. Create a virtuous circle of execution and strategy (pp. 30-32).

Although the growing need for change in organizations is widely acknowledged, it is alleged that up to 70% of change initiatives fail (Higgs & Rowland, 2005). But, why do change efforts not succeed? Leaders do not need to know all the answers. But they do need to ask the right questions (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). The change effort also fails because managers know more about strategy formulation than implementation. They are trained to plan, but not execute plans (Hrebiniak, 2005).

Much has been made of resistance to change by employees and, especially, the management team. Smith and Mourier (1999) suggest that the reasons are often more prosaic. A survey of their past clients uncovered the following reasons for stalled or cancelled projects:

1. The sponsor left the organization, and the replacement did not continue the effort.

2. The new way of doing business depended in part on the development of new software systems. Technical issues stymied software development, which, in turn, jeopardized the overall change effort.
3. Business priorities changed. Short-term cost-cutting overwhelmed longer-term strategies.
4. And the sponsor did not understand the basics of change management [a behavioral issue]. Implementation was delegated without any detailed plan, without clearly defined accountabilities, and with little or no follow-up (p. 38).

More previous studies of organizational change and resistance, nonetheless, take an organizational perspective as opposed to an individual perspective. For example, Bovey and Hede (2001) found, from a longitudinal study of 500 large organizations, that:

> employee resistance was the most frequently cited problem encountered by management when implementing change (Wadersee & Griffiths, 1997). More than half the organizations in the survey experienced difficulties with employee resistance. Successfully managing resistance is a major challenge for change initiators and is arguably of greater importance than any other aspect of the change process (O'Connor, 1993). In order to successfully lead an organization through major change it is important for management [from an executive and senior-level leadership behavior standpoint] to balance both human and organization needs (Spiker & Lesser, 1995; Ackerman, 1986) (p. 373).

Also, Bovey and Hede (2001) surveyed nine organizations implementing major change, providing data from 615 respondents. The analysis showed that irrational ideas are positively correlated with behavioral intentions to resist change. Irrational ideas and emotion together explain 44% of the variance in intentions to resist (Bovey & Hede, 2001).

According to Richard A. Cosier, Dean of Purdue University Krannert Graduate School of Management, but stated anonymously in *Industry Week* (2002, p. 15): "there are five behavioral factors that lead to failed leadership: (a) Greed, (b) Loss of focus, (c) Poor change management, (d) Failure to listen, and (e) Bad luck." Besides this, executives fail when they cannot see their own weaknesses. But overlooking strengths can be perilous, too (Kaplan, 2002).

While there are a number of different reasons why people resist major changes in organizations, Yukl (2002) developed some noteworthy leadership behavior guidelines for implementing change. They include such people-oriented actions as:

- Creating a sense of urgency about the need for change.
- Preparing people to adjust to change.
- Helping people deal with the pain of change.
- Providing opportunities for early successes.
- Keeping people informed about the progress of change.
- Demonstrating continued commitment to the change.
- Empowering people to implement the change (p. 289).

In a study at Becton Dickinson, Beer and Eisenstadt (2000) mentioned several ways that senior executives could overcome the silent killers of strategy implementation:

> They [senior executives] spoke in terms of a virtual company – adaptive, agile, connected with a spider web of information, and in-touch with the environment. They also said that they likened the company to a trauma unit: excellent people who are working, planning, innovating, and making fast decisions together (p. 34).

Beer and Eisenstadt (2000) listed the six most common barriers to effective leadership. From a strategy implementation change standpoint, however, these same authors pointed out the principles of effective leadership. These are ways that senior-level leaders can overcome the so-called silent killers of strategy implementation:

Principle 1:	Turn top-down or laissez-faire management style into engaged leadership.
Principle 2:	Turn unclear strategy and conflicting priorities into a clear and compelling business direction.
Principle 3:	Turn an ineffective senior management team into an effective one.
Principle 4:	Turn poor vertical communication into an open fact-based dialogue.

Principle 5: Turn poor coordination into teamwork through realigning roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities with strategy.
Principle 6: Turn inadequate down-the-line leadership skills into strong leadership with a general-management perspective (pp.39-41).

Beer and Eisenstadt (2000, p. 41) end by stating that: "The evidence from our research indicates that, when a top team follows the six principles for overcoming the silent killers, it has a good chance of developing an organization capable of strategy implementation."

Continuing on with this theme, to deal successfully with the challenge of leadership change, a leader should have integrity. The leader should also be sensitive to what is going on in the organization, and be able to communicate, listen, and foresee the effects of interventions on the business. Also, the leader should also have humility (Thornbury, 2003).

According to the literature about implementation, what really makes strategies work, at least from a senior-level leadership viewpoint? While the reader may perceive strategy implementation to be complex, sufficient allocation of resources together with thorough research of the marketplace will boost chances of success. CEOs must endeavor, from a human development perspective, to: (a) Identify the market factors that bear most upon a strategy, (b) Set up contingencies for known situations that are susceptible to unknown changes, and (c) Have various measures in place to cope with the real possibility of encountering unknown developments in the external environment (Anonymous, 2003, p. 4).

Strategy makers must consider three change-related questions: "(a) Who are the people who will carry out the strategic plan? (b) What must be done to align the company's operations in the new intended direction? (c) How is everyone going to work together to do what is needed?" (Wheelen & Hunger, 2004, p. 193).

Unless top management can answer these three fundamental questions, even the best-intended strategy, dealing with many different aspects of organizational change, is unlikely to provide the desired results. For example, a survey of 93 Fortune 500 United States firms revealed that over half of the corporations experienced the following 10 problems, listed in order of frequency, when they attempted to implement, from a leadership behavior perspective, a strategic change (Alexander, 1991):

1. Implementation took more time than originally planned.
2. Unanticipated major problems arose.
3. Activities were ineffectively coordinated.
4. Competing activities and crises took attention away from implementation.
5. The involved employees had insufficient capabilities to perform their jobs.
6. Lower-level employees were inadequately trained.
7. Uncontrollable external environmental factors created problems.
8. Departmental managers provided inadequate leadership and direction.
9. Key implementation tasks and activities were poorly defined.
10. The information system inadequately monitored activities (pp. 73-113).

Here, too, I was concerned about these real-world business problems. As such, I developed the following question that was in concert with these issues – *Among the following senior-level leadership factors and/or behaviors, please check all those that have negatively affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company.* The results of the query can be found in Table 49 of my study.

The most powerful organization-level impediments to change include power and conflict, differences in functional orientation, mechanistic structure, and organizational culture (Jones, 2004). These are, unfortunately, behavioral leadership qualities. As such, my study surmises that there is no standard model that defines precisely what an organization must do to become good at implementation. Nonetheless, there is plentiful proof to support that the number one success factor for effective leadership is relationships, a key human development trait. Sometimes the relationship is one-to-many. Sometimes it is one-to-one. But regardless of whether the number is one or one thousand, leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow (Bennis, Spreitzer, & Cummings, 2001). Therefore, organizations must become aware of the implementation paradox and begin to articulate how their strategies connect, from a leadership behavior perspective, to their business culture, leadership, and values.

In further reading the literature about implementation, I conclude that the key to successful implementation is to recognize that people do what they think, upon reflection and validation, rather than what they say – which is often prejudiced by their need to preserve their image and influence in the organization. To be efficient, a business strategy needs to be complemented by an equally well-thought-out implementation strategy, centered on the new rules executives will need to play by in order to foster change (Beaudan, 2001).

To take advantage of the opportunities and to effectively face the challenges which the future will present, managers need to enhance their competence for making effective leadership decisions. These pronouncements affect all issues in strategy formulation, and implementation, for organizations (Rausch, Halfhill, & Sherman, 2001). Additionally, to begin the change process, at least according to Eccles (1994), and supported by me, there are 14 key factors that call for the successful transformation of the organization. They are:

1. There has to be a champion who embodies and lives the new dream.
2. There has to be a clear and sustained purpose to which people can commit.
3. There has to be a defensible, unambiguous reason for the change.
4. Don't expect everybody to back the change.
5. Tell people as much as practicable, taking some risks by being candid.
6. Effective communication is vital and almost impossible to over-do.
7. The more senior you are, the more responsibility you must take.
8. Even enterprising employees need to be led.
9. Good teams and good leaders support each other.
10. Use structure to change culture.
11. Personal success is a great motivator.
12. Early successes create productive momentum.
13. Caring for people is both morally and organizationally commendable.
14. You cannot avoid all errors; but you can organize to anticipate some and to recover from others (pp. 132-137).

The study of leadership, on one hand, has become the target of various broadsides. Writing in a recent issue of *Harper's*, Benjamin DeMott, a professor of humanities at Amherst College, depicts the entire enterprise of leadership studies as a hullabaloo cooked up by academicians to swindle American taxpayers and the federal government (Heilbrunn, 1994). On the other hand, reading about the more positive side of leadership behavior, in relationship to the answers of the research question in my study, in a recent study performed by Robinson and Lipman-Blumen, (2003, p. 33) on leadership behavior of male and female managers, their findings suggest that: "gender should not be used as a major predictor of narrowly defined leadership behaviors."

Wheatley (2001) explored the relationships of strategic leadership compensation, governance, and composition on the innovation strategy to firm performance relationships. Wheatley's (2001) study found, using a three-step hierarchical regression, mixed support for bonus compensation on innovative strategy and performance. Bonus compensation or tying financial rewards to the successful implementation of a strategic plan has been an important topic over the years. In fact, many researchers, such as Hrebiniak (2005, p. 54), feel that: "it is critical that the organization rewards the right things, including previously defined strategic and short-term objectives." Michlitsch (2000, p. 31) suggested that: "Companies with high-performing employees put their money where their mouth is: They pay employees for performance."

There was a U.S. study some years ago that indicated that the number of companies that based their decisions on the business strategy was based on fundamental decisions, decisions of medium importance, and decisions of minor importance.

The figures indicate that 38% of fundamental decisions are made without reference to the strategy. Some 67% of decisions of medium importance and 95% of minor decisions are made without considering their impact on strategy. Essentially, from my perspective, this means that the strategy is only impacting a few of the decisions made in the company, and that the possibility that the company will achieve its strategic objectives is close to zero unless these are very modest objectives or the business is very, very lucky (Reading, 2002).

In a survey conducted in association with Robert Kaplan of the Harvard Business School and Business Intelligence (Rousseau & Rousseau, 1999), more than 40% of senior managers and more than 90% of all employees stated they did not believe they had a clear understanding of their company's strategy. Thus, successful strategy realization is determined by the coherence of decisions and actions of all employees at all levels of the organization, and not just by the people who originally defined the strategy.

It is possible that the reader may have heard this advice a hundred times—"effective implementation of an average strategy beats mediocre implementation of a great strategy every time." Yet, my study believes companies often fail to operationalize their strategies in ways that improve the likelihood that they will be implemented effectively. More recently, Corboy and O'Corrbui (1999), cited by Sterling (2003), found that nearly 70% of strategic plans and strategies are never successfully implemented. I, nevertheless, believe, based on my own findings that the failure rate is not nearly as high as that found in the study performed by Corboy and O'Corrbui (1999).

It is clear, from my study's perspective, and in concert with Michlitsch (2000), that high-performing dedicated employees who serve customers well, from a positive behavioral approach, are a valuable asset to the company.

Besides realizing that organizational change affects strategy implementation, it can be argued that strategies also fail because the market conditions of which they were intended to take advantage change before the strategy takes hold. For example, product life cycles are shorter. Disruptive technologies emerge with greater frequency. Financial markets can be fickle. And, many markets are experiencing rapid, discontinuous change. Downes (2001), as cited by Sterling (2003, p. 28), made this point convincingly based on his research into strategy execution mistakes: "Technology challenges the old rules and assumptions and creates daunting external obstacles to execution."

Organizations constantly evolve in response to social and technical changes. For example, contemporary organizations, which are shaped by globalization, developments in cyberspace, and other dynamics, often take either corporate form where management, ownership, technical experts and line workers are separated (Neher, 1997) or collaborative forms such as clusters and strategic alliances. These trends make it more difficult to conceptualize an organization as single and unified, a situation which is often accentuated by separation in distance, language, and culture of organizational members. Hence, communication and cooperation between diverse members within an organization have been recognized as crucial elements to maintain organizational stability and adaptation to change (Peng & Littlejohn, 2001).

Communicating strategically requires a special set of human behavioral skills. Leaders need to think like an analyst to assess the context, visualize like a craftsman to fashion strategy, perform like an elite commando to implement strategy, and agitate like a talk-show host to provoke dialogue. Few people possess all these skills. That may explain why highly effective leaders are a rare breed (Clampitt, Berk, & Williams, 2002).

Strategic planning focuses on the ability of an organization to adapt to its environment while attaining and/or changing its business goals (Hax & Majluf, 1996). This is achieved through learning that, in turn, prompts the related action required to ensure the ongoing sustenance (i.e., change) of competitive advantage (DeGuess, 1988).

Most successful change efforts, however, begin when some individuals or groups start to look hard at a company's competitive situation, market position, technological trends, and financial performance. They focus on the potential revenue drop when a patent expires, the 5-year trend in declining margins in a core business, or an emerging market that everyone seems to be ignoring. They then find ways to communicate this information broadly and dramatically, especially with respect to crises, potential crises, or great opportunities that are very timely. This first step is essential because just getting a transformation program started requires the aggressive cooperation of many individuals. Without motivation, people will not help, and the effort goes nowhere (Champy & Nohria, 1996). Also, communication is key to the effective management of change. It can be further said that an effective leadership behavior is one that requires friendly and informative and encouraging two-way communication (Howell & Costley, 2006). As well, an argument can be made that the rationale for strategic changes should be communicated to workers not only in newsletters and speeches, but also in training and development programs (Wheelen & Hunger, 2004).

And lastly, as pointed out by Lipton (2004), a study conducted by The Conference Board polled 700 global CEOs and found that, for the past 3 years:

> the number one marketplace and management issues were engaging employees in the vision. Perhaps what the study is saying, from the executive perspective, is that I believe in the need for vision but I cannot get my 'internal mechanism' in gear to make it happen. I can't connect my desire to create and implement it [my vision] with the internal energy necessary to get over all the barriers. I'm frustrated! (p. n/a)

Because I was also concerned about this specific issue, the following query was developed—*Has senior-level leadership communicated the vision and/or mission statement, if there is one, to all of its subordinates?* The results of this question can be found in Table 54 of my study.

As just stated by Lipton (2004), many forces inside an organization make it difficult for the organization to change in response to changing conditions in its environment (Kanter, 1989). In contrast, Michlitsch (2000) concluded that high-performing, committed employees who serve customers well are valuable to one's company. Michlitsch (2000) went on to state that one has to:

> Develop a clear, compelling mission and strategy, select and train the right people, and explain the mission and strategy to your people and give them the information they need to understand the performance requirements (p. 33).

Peters (2001) suggested, from a leadership behavior point of view, that:

> The task of the senior executive is not to impose an abstract order on an inherently disorderly process but to become adept at the sorts of intervention by when he/she can nudge it in the desired direction and control its course (p. 129).

Implications of the Research Findings for the Study

While it is the successful implementation of a strategy that improves performance, there is no dominant theoretical framework that has surfaced in this subject (Williams et al., 1982). Additionally, there is very little research available on the process of implementation (Guffy, 1992) and leadership behavior. But why is this still a problem? Without successful implementation, a strategy is but an imagination (Hambrick & Cannella, 1989). That in itself helps build a strong case for my study. In fact, many authors (Clark, 1972; Hax & Majluf, 1996; Hedberg, 1981; Jonsson & Lundin, 1977; Miller, 1979; Quinn, 1980; Smircich & Stubbart, 1985) have called for more research addressing the troubles associated with implementing a strategy. Furthermore, Senge (1980, p. 210) said: "Personally, I have come to feel that our failure lies not in unpersuasiveness or lack of sufficiently compelling evidence. It may simply not be possible to convince human beings rationally to take a long-term view." Hax and Majluf (1996) suggested that an organization's ability to effectively engage in strategic planning and strategy implementation may be inextricably linked to that organization's ability to learn. Also, a lack of comprehensive implementation frameworks is mentioned by a number of scholars (Alexander, 1991; Noble, 1999). But there is considerable need for detailed and complete conceptual models related to strategy implementation (Noble, 1999). As previously stated by Williams et al., (1982, p. vii): "I am convinced that the really important work on implementation remains to be done." Seventeen years later, Noble (1999) stipulated that there still is a great need for comprehensive and complete theoretical models related to implementation. Today, I agree with Williams et al. (1982) and Noble (1999) in that much work still needs to be done in the discipline of implementation.

My study also considers that strategic planning, which should be the bastion of long-term thinking in most corporations, is very often reactionary and short-term in thinking. According to two of the most articulate critics of contemporary strategic planning, Gary Hamel of the London Business School and C. K. Prahalad of the University of Michigan—Strategic Intent, as cited by Senge (1980, p. 210): "Although strategic planning is billed as a way of becoming more future oriented, most managers, when pressed, will admit that their strategic plans reveal more about today's problems than tomorrow's opportunities."

Justification of the Study

My study also wanted to find what specific dissertation research has been done in this problem area before, as it relates, even tangentially, to my own work, and with what results. In 1974, Eddy fulfilled his dissertation requirements by writing *Strategic Planning and Strategy Implementation: A Study of Top Management in Selected Organization.* The purpose of this exploratory study was to determine whether a discernible pattern of executive activity exists at the top decision-making level relative to successful idea generation and implementation affecting the entire business organization. Eddy was also hoping, in the section on Idea Generation and Implementation: A Complex Process that some new understanding would have evolved at the top executive level. Even so, the discussions of the management literature highlighted the fact that while we have learned much about executives and the "worlds" in which they work, there remains an underscored concern that despite extensive research efforts, there still exists substantial gaps in our knowledge and understanding of what executives actually do (Eddy, 1974). Eddy's theory is certainly supported by me. In fact, in the first six hypotheses that I developed in my study, he too was trying to understand, at least from a human behavior perspective, what senior-level leaders essentially do.

In 1985, Jenster's dissertation titled *Divisional Monitoring of Critical Success Factors During Strategy Implementation* took an information-processing perspective on the strategy/structure linkage. Jenster (1985) argued that executives in organizations pursuing different strategies will have differing information needs. Conversely, different structures (including information systems) will have different information-generating capabilities. To be successful in strategy implementation, executives must seek to create a fit, a human behavioral tendency, between the information-generating capabilities of the organization and the information requirements pertaining to the specific strategy. Jenster, who was investigating the informational fit in terms of executive monitoring of critical success factors, concluded (1985) that:

> We believe that the design of planning and control efforts around the few factors critical to the organization's success facilitates the aligning of resources, people, and activities in line with good strategic management practice. This can be done by including identification and evaluation of critical success factor components in the design of the planning and control systems. Moreover, it is recommended that the budgeting procedures and contingency plans are closely linked to the developments in the identified critical success factors (p. 157).

Howdo Eddy's (1974) and Jenster's (1985) studies fit into the field of strategy implementation? Both of these researchers looked at strategy implementation from a human development point of view. In the same vein, my study looked at implementation from a human development approach by analyzing data from a self-administered questionnaire sent to different businesses in one industry.

Since this research was able to realize a statistically significant sample, my study confirms and further extends the scholarly knowledge already published about strategy implementation.

Conclusion

While this may be perceived by the reader as problematic, there is, from my study's perception, as already stated, a lack of empirical knowledge on a definitive or all-encompassing authoritative process of successful or unsuccessful strategy implementation and efficient or inefficient leadership behaviors, and more research is necessary into this area of strategic management and planning. The statement made by me is supported by Williams et al. (1982, p. vii) who stated that: "As the interest in implementation has grown, a gap has developed in the implementation literature."

Implementation is truly a highly complex occurrence; one that attempts to simplify it does so only at the expense of a loss of descriptive power, which is why we still lack an all-inclusive theory of implementation (Wernham, 1985). As a result, my study, from an evidence and logic standpoint, investigated the implementation process of strategic decisions, as it relates to effective or ineffective leadership behaviors, as perceived by senior-level leaders in casinos within the state of Nevada. One of the main aims of this project was to develop an effective leadership implementation framework. This leadership framework is drawn from Muczyk's and Reimann's (1987, p. 303) mid-range leadership theory, which encompasses three crucial leadership dimensions: "(a) Consideration (concern for people; good human relations), (b) Concern for production (goal emphasis; achievement orientation), and (c) Incentive for performance (performance-reward connection)."

In analyzing the work of many writers in the field of strategy implementation and leadership behavior, I conclude that these writings are highly generalized rather than clearly spelled out in a particular academic or theoretical milieu. In other words, most writers have not gone into specific details about their strategy implementation process. They have only presented general implementation approaches or models. Therefore, I further deduce that implementation is like a puzzle. The challenge, of course, is to fit the pieces of the puzzle together to maintain and hold up the organization's strategy. A strategy is set first, and people and organizational factors are shaped around it. As employees, structure, and systems adjust and adapt to the new strategy, performance improves and implementation is enhanced (Porth, 2003).

Having said this, my study would make the case that the nine-step strategy-executing process and model that has been developed by Thompson et al. (2006) is a process, from a common-sense perspective, that includes all of the key elements of human and organizational development – effective leadership behaviors. They are:

1. Staffing the organization with the needed skills and expertise, consciously building and strengthening strategy-supportive competencies and competitive capabilities, and organizing the work effort.
2. Creating a company culture and work climate conducive to successful strategy implementation and execution.
3. Developing budgets that steer ample resources into those activities critical to strategic success.
4. Ensuring that policies and operating procedures facilitate rather than impede effective execution.
5. Using the best-known practices to perform core business activities and pushing for continuous improvement. Organization units have to periodically reassess how things are being done and diligently pursue useful changes and improvements.
6. Installing information and operating systems that enable company personnel to better carry out their strategic roles day in and day out.
7. Motivating people to pursue the target objectives energetically and, if need be, modifying their duties and job behavior to better fit the requirements of successful strategy execution.
8. Tying rewards and incentives directly to the achievement of performance objectives and good strategy execution.
9. Exerting the internal leadership needed to drive implementation forward and keep improving on how the strategy is being executed. When stumbling blocks or weaknesses are encountered, management has to see that they are addressed and rectified on a timely basis (p. 31).

Even though many writers have written about different types of strategy implementation approaches and/or models, my study has adopted the nine-step strategy-executing process, where possible, that has been developed by Thompson et al. (2006).

This nine-step implementation covers the detailed leadership behavior attributes of strategy implementation. In addition, the nine-step method is in concert with many of the current articles that have been written about effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation. Further to this point, it is management's way of handling, from a control perspective, the strategy-implementation process. It can be considered successful if and when the company achieves the targeted strategic and financial performance (Thompson, Gamble, & Strickland, 2004). Thompson et al.'s (2006) approach to the nine components of the strategy execution process, a true framework or model for executing strategy, further helps address my study's problem and research question. Because, when strategies fail or fall short of their goals, it is often because of poor execution – things that were supposed to get done slip through the cracks (Thompson et al., 2004).

Regardless of the organization's size and whether implementation involves sweeping or minor changes, the most vital leadership behavior traits are a strong, confident sense of what to do and how to do it (Thompson et al., 2004). This paper, for that reason, validates this statement from the various responses made by the participants in my study.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

To answer the research question developed in my study, I first studied the writings of Balnaves and Caputi (2001, pp. 16-26), which consisted of the following key steps in starting the inquiry process: "(a) Knowing what to research, (b) Knowing whom to research, (c) Knowing how to research, and (d) Knowing when to research."

The "who" of research involves identifying the individuals who might be relevant to the study (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). My study presumes it is pertinent to look carefully at a specific and targeted group of prospective participants who could possibly provide the best responses.

Coming up with good or even great topics in social science research is challenging. Narrowing the topic—giving it a decent focus and decent definition—is difficult (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). Through this process, however, it gave me a bearing on what had to be done. It also assisted me on the conceptualization in research design.

When looking at knowing when to research, time is important in a research design. In this case, my study wants to make comparisons through the use of a simple investigation involving a single phenomenon at a particular point in time.

Research Hypotheses

As stated in the previous chapter, I have concluded that there are certain things that are problematic about this topic, and that the implementation failure comes about as a result of possible ineffective leadership behavior. On the other hand, implementation success takes place as a result of possible effective leadership behavior.

Following the outline of central issues regarding implementation by Williams et al. (1982), my study has developed a project hypothesis that is multifaceted. These statements are the expected outcomes that were tested. Based on the research question, my study has developed seven reasonable hunches about the exploratory query (see below).

1. Effective senior-level leadership behaviors will be directly related to successful strategy implementation.
2. The frequency of communication with subordinates regarding the strategic process will be directly related to how well people feel about working together in implementing the strategic plan.
3. Employees who understand and agree with the company's strategic plan will most likely have a higher commitment to the firm's success than employees who do not know or agree with it.
4. The greater that people work well together in trying to achieve the financial and/or strategic performance targets of a strategic plan in the company, the better the chance they will have in meeting the company's goals.
5. The more that senior-level leaders are willing to make positive changes, the greater the likelihood that the financial and/or strategic performance targets of a strategic plan in the company will succeed.

6. Those senior-level leaders who have been trained in or studied strategic planning and implementation are more likely to meet the performance targets set for the company.
7. Those senior-level leaders that have at least a 2-year college degree (i.e., associate degree or greater) are more likely to meet the performance targets set for the company.

Anchored in the seven hypotheses, my study hopes that the data will provide a positive relationship between effective senior-level leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation; a negative pattern between ineffective executive and senior-level leadership performance and unsuccessful strategy implementation; or a null hypothesis, that there is no correlation or significant differences between positive or negative senior-level leadership actions and successful or not-so-successful strategy implementation.

With regard to operationalizing these seven hypotheses, I studied how senior-level leadership behaviors and activities transform a possible working plan into a concrete reality (i.e., implementation of the strategy) as well as how these behaviors, attitudes, and dispositions contribute their best effort to fulfill the company's goals.

Also, in each of the seven hypotheses presented in my study, the various types of leadership behaviors statements are noted as independent variables while successful or unsuccessful strategy implementation statements are acknowledged as dependent variables.

Description of the Research Design

As stated previously, strategy implementation is a very complex process with poorly defined boundaries (Schellenberg, 1983). Implementation is still a highly multifaceted phenomenon (Wernham, 1985). And the execution of a strategy is not nearly as clear and understood as the formulation of that strategy. Much more is known about planning than doing, about strategy-making than making strategy work (Hrebiniak, 2005).

A self-administered, mail closed-ended questionnaire was developed. Self-administered surveys are best intended for (a) measuring variables with numerous values or response categories that are too much to read to participants in an interview or on the telephone, (b) investigating attitudes and opinions that are not usually observable, (c) describing characteristics of a large population, and (d) studying behaviors that may be more stigmatizing or hard for people to tell someone else face-to-face. Also, the anonymity of self-administered questionnaires permits respondents to be more honest (Nardi, 2003). More central to this issue, the self-administered, multiple-choice questionnaire approach was selected because some people, as experienced during the pilot study process of this dissertation proposal, were unwilling to talk with anyone, including me, either in person or on the phone. This reluctance to talk with strangers has increased in recent years, particularly in large urban areas (Bourque & Fielder, 2003). Also, mailed surveys have three advantages over other kinds of questionnaires: (a) They allow for wider geographic coverage, larger samples, and wider coverage within a sample population (Bourque & Fielder, 2003); (b) mailed surveys allow for time convenience by the respondents, elimination of interview bias, and a low cost, especially compared to phone or face-to-face methods (Fox, Robinson, & Boardley, 1998); and (c) once the surveys have been mailed, follow-up phone calls, using a dimension of intimacy, further increase the response to mailed surveys (Jolson, 1997). This is, as a result, the research methodology that guided my study. It included an informed consent form (i.e., cover letter) and the questionnaire, with a total of 35 questions that consisted of: (a) one preliminary question; (b) 22 questions about strategic planning and implementation; (c) four queries about leadership; and (d) eight background information questions (as shown in Appendix A – Informed Consent Form & Questionnaire).

There are many data-collection and measurement processes that are called surveys. Nonetheless, I believed that the intention of the survey was to produce statistics, that is, quantitative or numerical descriptions about some aspects of the study population, and to connect variables in a systematic way that may establish their empirical relationship to each other using regression analysis or other statistical techniques. The quantitative perspective derives from a positivist epistemology, which holds that there is an objective reality that can be expressed numerically (Glatthorn, 1998). And the main way of collecting information is by asking people questions; their answers constitute the data to be analyzed (Fowler, 2002).

Setting and Participants

The data collection portion of my study was conducted during the months of November 2004 – January 2005. Even though it took 3 months to collect the data, implementing follow-up phone calls to the prospective participants, hand-delivering surveys in key geographical areas for a second time, as well as sending a follow-up letter, mailed surveys usually take 2 months to complete (Fowler, 2002). The selected sample for my study, which was drawn from the total data base or population, included 890 senior-level leaders who work on a full-time basis in various casinos within the state of Nevada, as shown in Table 1 – Gender Population and Table 2 – Data Base Population by Titles and by Gender. The selected or purposive sample is a sampling that I hand-picked on the basis of specific characteristics (Black, 1999). The database of these names, which originally consisted of a total of 3,722 names (i.e., the population), from senior executives to front-line supervisors, was provided by William R. Eadington, Ph.D., Professor of Economics and Gaming Director of the Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming, University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada. The 890 prospective participants that received the survey consisted of senior-level leaders who work in 303 casinos located in 51 cities throughout the state of Nevada. These 890 potential participants were selected for my study because they represented a typical cross-section of senior-level leaders across the country. Of these, 120 respondents, 13.5% returned the completed questionnaires by mail to my home. This is considered an acceptable response rate given that the individuals in the sample are extremely busy senior-level leaders with high-level responsibilities.

Table 1

Gender Population

Gender	Population	% of the Population
1) Male	612	68.8
2) Female	188	21.1
3) Not Determined	90	10.1
4) Total	**890**	**100.0**

Table 2

Database Population by Titles and by Gender

Title	Population	% of the Population	Male	Female	Gender Not Determined
1) Chairman of the Board	9	1.0	9	0	0
2) Owner, Chief Executive Officer, and/or President	199	22.4	172	26	1
3) General Manager	165	18.5	128	33	4
4) Assistant General Manager	19	2.1	14	4	1
5) Senior or Executive Vice President	53	6.0	48	4	1
6) Vice President	125	14.0	95	30	0
7) Chief Financial Officer or Controller	78	8.8	41	20	17
8) Chief Operating Officer	4	0.4	4	0	0
9) Executive or Senior Director	12	1.3	8	2	2
10) Director	201	22.6	78	62	61
11) Senior-Level Manager	15	1.7	10	5	0
12) Other	10	1.1	5	2	3
13) Total Database Population – by Titles	**890**	**100.0**	**612**	**188**	**90**

Instrumentation and Measures

Surveys are the common thread for almost all data collection methods. Creating the right survey, though, requires both hard work and creativity (Prunk, 1994), and ensures that the information needed is indeed collected. Sets of questions are designed to generate the data necessary for achieving the objectives of the research project. As such, the survey is a formalized schedule for collecting information from respondents (Fisher, 2002).

In terms of the data collection instrumentation, a self-administered questionnaire was first developed. Since this was a self-administered feedback form, all of the questions were restricted to closed-ended answers. Additionally, the survey involved gathering information about the current status of some target variable within a particular collectivity.

Based on the feedback received from the respondents who answered the pilot-study questionnaire, my study is aware that asking 34 closed-ended questions was easier for the participants than asking both closed- and open-ended questions. In addition, I sensed that the participants would have taken less time to answer a closed-ended questionnaire than that of a mixture of closed- and open-ended queries. By including only a closed-ended questionnaire, I believed that there was a greater likelihood that the participants were more receptive to answering most if not all the questions in the survey. In fact, with a total number of 25,320 values, or "raw information," to enter into the statistical software program (i.e., 211 possible answers per survey x 120 respondents), which were completed by the 120 respondents, only 77 missing values were not completed by these same respondents. The missing data, or unanswered values, also means that the data is 99.7% clean. Clean data means that anyone who uses it will get the same results as I did when the analysis was run (Fink, 2003). In my study, nonetheless, there were only a few unanswered questions.

From my perspective, it is imperative that a survey instrument be both valid and reliable. There are three major kinds of validity: (a) construct, (b) internal, and (c) external. Construct validity is the extent to which the constructs are successfully operationalized and represent the phenomenon that I wanted to study (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). Further to this point, I concluded that the questions that were developed would aid in answering the phenomenon in my study. Internal validity is the extent to which the research design really allows one to draw conclusions about the relationship between variables (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). With the use of MicroCase's® statistical software program, I should be able to draw conclusions about the relationship between variables – characteristics that differ in value from one question to another question. Moreover, this was demonstrated in the pilot study where cross-tabulation and correlation analysis was used to draw specific conclusions about the association among certain questions. External validity is the extent to which the sample is genuinely representative of the population from which it had been drawn (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). Because I selected, on average, three senior-level leaders from every casino within the state of Nevada, my study has also met the criteria for external validity.

With regard to reliability, closed-ended questions were developed in conformance with Fowler's (2002, p. 78) suggestions: "Increasing the Reliability of Answers."

Procedures and Data Management

With regard to the procedures set out for my study, the following 12 key steps were adhered to:

1. I first obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Fielding Graduate University to conduct the research study.
2. Once I received approval from the IRB, I mailed the informed-consent form and the questionnaire to 890 participants. I also included a self-addressed stamp envelope with each questionnaire so that the participants could mail the survey back to me. Studies have established that the choice of mailing methods can significantly affect response rates. Hand- stamping the return envelope has response-rate advantages over no return envelopes, unstamped return envelopes, and postage-permit business-reply return envelopes (Wolfe & Treiman, 1979).
3. Once all the questionnaires were mailed to the data base population, I made phone contact with as many participants as possible. I also asked these participants if they had received the questionnaire and would be prepared to answer any questions about it. In addition, I encouraged the participants to return the survey in a timely manner.
4. Besides making phone contacts with the participants, and in an attempt to increase the response rate, I and my designee, who lives 500 miles to the south of me, but still lives in the state of Nevada, hand-delivered questionnaires to those participants who worked within a 60-mile radius of his home.

5. I, as well, sent each respondent a thank-you card.
6. During the data collection period, I created a master code book using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The master code book contains the actual names of those participants who have responded. In addition, I assigned a code number that was used with MicroCase's® statistical software program.
7. Besides creating a master code book in Microsoft Excel, I also developed a regular code book. This code book, using MicroCase's® statistical software, showed selected summary information on each variable that was inputted into the MicroCase® statistical software program.
8. Once the code book was established, I entered the respondents' data into MicroCase's® statistical software program.
9. In order to test the hypotheses, whether there is correlation or no significant differences between positive or negative leadership behavior and successful or not-so-successful strategy implementation, I analyzed the data using univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses. Univariate analysis is an examination of data concerning just one variable (i.e., studying demographical characteristics). Bivariate analysis, on the other hand, is analyzing the relationship between two variables. And multivariate analysis is simultaneous analysis of data for three or more variables.
10. Finally, the results of the findings are shown in chapter 4 (Results) of my study. The discussion of those results, however, is found in chapter 5 (Discussion).

11. For security purposes, all typed documents and/or electronic files have been copied to an appropriate medium (i.e., CD) and stored in a locked file cabinet in my office at home. Any other electronic documents were imported into MicroCase's® statistical software program for content and analysis, and stored in this software program.
12. The survey instruments will be stored in a locked file cabinet for 1 year after the conclusion of my study. At that time, the survey instruments will be shredded.

Statistical Analysis

There are many different types of tests used by researchers today, some of which are commercially available to purchase and others created by research projects. In the case of this project, I developed my own type of close-ended test.

Statistical analyses, which provided accurate and reliable testing of my study hypotheses, were used in this project. Furthermore, construct validity, making sure that the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Black, 1999), was used so that my study variables successfully represent the intended construct. Besides testing for the extent to which indicators of each construct fairly represent that construct, the constructs required testing to insure that they were different from other constructs utilized in my study.

A quantitative statistical package, called MicroCase® Analysis System 4.8, was specifically used for social statistics to analyze the data from the questionnaire. MicroCase® is a straightforward, no-nonsense piece of statistics software. The software has the capability to measure instruments that reflect strength of attitudes, perceptions, views, and options. MicroCase® performs data analysis using univariate (i.e., distribution for a single variable), bivariate (i.e., cross-tabulation, chi-square test, t-Test or ANOVA, regression, and correlation); and multivariate analyses (i.e., multivariate cross-tabulation, multiple regression and correlation) – and gets the job done efficiently and competently (Fox, 2003). In my study, I performed univariate, bivariate (i.e., correlation and the chi-square test), and multivariate analyses (i.e., multiple regression and correlation).

One of the intentions of my study was to look at the strength or weakness of a relationship, or the association, between two variables (i.e., independent and dependent). A variable is a characteristic that is measured. In my study, it consists of independent variables, which are used to explain or predict a response. It is also consists of dependent variables, which are the presumed or hypothesized effects of the independent variables.

Protection of Human Subjects

To protect the human subjects in my study, the following two procedures were followed:

1. I submitted the *Submission of Research Ethics Application* to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Fielding Graduate University for final review.
2. To further protect the subjects, the questionnaire was explained to each participant in my study; and the participant was asked to sign the Informed Consent Form, which specifies the risks involved.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings of collecting data from the 120 respondents who participated in my study. In my study, the participants represented the highest managerial leadership level in 93 different casino business organizations, or 31% of the casinos within the state of Nevada. These organizations, like most other for-profit businesses across the country, included small, medium, and large-size businesses whose employees varied in number from approximately 1-49 to 500+, and whose annual revenues extended from less than $10,000,000 to over $250,000,000.

While the minimum goal was to receive at least 100 responses from the 890 questionnaires sent to the senior-level leaders exclusively in the Nevada casino industry, I actually hoped to receive at least 178 responses from this same target group, or a 20% response rate. In fact, when a single mailing that incorporates no incentives is made to a sample of a general community, which was the case in my study, the surveyor can probably expect no better than a 20% response rate (Bourque & Fielder, 2003). I believed that it would have been difficult to receive that many responses because the questionnaire is considered a lengthy survey. Moreover, long questionnaires (i.e., four pages or more) can make it that much more difficult for the participants to complete (Black, 1999). Timing is also a key factor for mailed questionnaires. The surveys were mailed 3 weeks before the Thanksgiving holiday period. As such, the timing may have contributed to a lower-than-expected response rate. Nevertheless, I am satisfied with the

120 respondents who took part in my study for an acceptable response rate of 13.5%. My response rate compares favorably to another study that was performed on the barriers to successful implementation of a strategic plan. Fisher's (2002) study was also based on a self-administered questionnaire that was mailed to 676 top executives and received a total of 131 responses for a response rate of 19.4%.

This chapter also presents the outcomes of testing the hypotheses and research questions as proposed in chapter 3. Each hypothesis is presented with the appropriate statistical results and accompanying tables. Before analyzing the effects of my study, it is important to first understand some information about the pilot study and the overall demographical characteristics of the respondents.

Pilot Study

A pilot study is essentially a preliminary test of a questionnaire. It helps to discover tribulations as well as benefits associated with the design (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). In this case, the questionnaire was first pilot-tested among a smaller target group. The sample size, nevertheless, had the same current senior-level leadership titles. For the most part, many of the same procedures that were used in my study were also used in the pilot test. The pilot study, however, realized a higher response rate than that in my current study. A total of 4 participants responded to the pilot study out of a sample size of 12, for a response rate of 33.3%. This certainly compared more favorably to my study's response rate, which was 13.5%.

Based on the queries that were developed for the pilot study, the questions in my current study were modified slightly by substituting words and amending questions based on the input of the respondents. I than discussed these changes with the dissertation committee for validity.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents Comparing Population and Sample Size

Section IV—Background Information—of the questionnaire dealt with eight demographical questions. The information provided by respondents (refer to Tables 3 – 10) yield various univariate demographic characteristics of the 120 respondents.

Of the 890 questionnaires mailed, the gender mix of the 120 returned surveys was in line with those that were sent questionnaires. Of the surveys that were mailed to the 890 prospective respondents, 21.1% of the population were females (refer to Table 1). Of the 120 people that actually responded, 22.5% were also females (refer to Table 3), for a difference of only 1.4%.

Table 3

Question 28 – Gender

Gender	Frequency	% of the Total
Male	93	77.5
Female	27	22.5
Total Number of Responses	**120**	**100.0**

In terms of age distribution of the respondents, Table 4 illustrates a relatively mature senior-level leader workforce, with 76.7% of the leaders being 41 years of age or older. It can also be stated that the most frequently occurring score (i.e., 41), or mode, were those people in both the 41-50 and 51-60 age groups.

In further looking at gender and age distribution, it can be stated that 74.2% of males are 41 years of age or older, while 85.2% of females are 41 years of age or older.

With regard to the amount of education of these participants, 58.3% attained an associate's degree, or greater, while 41.7% did not attain a college degree (refer to Table 5).

Table 4

Question 29 – Age Distribution by Gender

Age	Frequency	% of the Total	Male	Female
21 – 30	4	3.3	4	0
31 – 40	24	20.0	20	4
41 – 50	41	34.2	29	12
51 – 60	41	34.2	30	11
61>	10	8.3	10	0
Total Number of Responses	**120**	**100.0**	**93**	**27**

Of the 58.3% of the respondents who earned a college degree, 58.1% are males, while 59.3% are females. Even though 58.3% of the respondents earned a college degree, 50.8% have not been trained in or studied strategic planning and implementation (refer to Tables 5 and 6). Of the 50.8% that have not been trained or studied strategic

Table 5

Question 30 – Education Distribution by Gender

Education	Frequency	% of the Total	Male	Female
12th Grade or Less	1	0.8	1	0
High School	10	8.3	7	3
Some College	39	32.5	31	8
Associate Degree	7	5.8	5	2
Bachelor Degree	45	37.5	34	11
Master Degree	16	13.3	14	2
Master Degree	16	13.3	14	2
Professional Degree	1	0.8	1	0
Doctoral Degree	1	0.8	0	0
Other	0	0.0	0	0
Total Number of Responses	**120**	**100.0**	**93**	**27**

planning and implementation, 48.4% are males, while 59.3% are females.

Table 6

Question 31 – Trained/Studied Strategic Planning and Implementation Distribution by Gender

Trained/Studied Strategic Planning and Implementation	Frequency	% of the Total	Male	Female
Yes	56	46.7	45	11
No	61	50.8	45	16
Not Sure	3	2.5	3	0
Total Number of Responses	**120**	**100.0**	**93**	**27**

With respect to work longevity in their current position, 40.8% of the respondents have been in their senior-level leadership position for 4 years or less, while 59.2% of the respondents have been in their current position for 5 years or longer (refer to Table 7).

Table 7

Question 32 – Employed in Current Position Distribution by Gender

Employed in Current Position	Frequency	% of the Total	Male	Female
0 – 4 Years	49	40.8	38	11
5 – 9 Years	33	27.5	25	8
10 – 14 Years	17	14.2	13	4
15 – 19 Years	8	6.7	7	1
20> Years	13	10.8	10	3
Total Number of Responses	**120**	**100.0**	**93**	**27**

On the surface, with 40.8% of the respondents being in their senior-level leadership for only 4 years or less, it can be said that these people possibly have not had the experience to successfully implement a strategic plan(s). Also, a study of 1,000 full-time workers by the online recruitment firm of www.headhunter.net found that 78% of the people would take a new position if the right opportunity came along, and 48% of those who are employed are looking for new jobs. The reality is that today's employees have no qualms about moving elsewhere if they are not happy in their present job (Pekala, 2001).

Of the 40.8% of the participants that have been in a senior-level leadership position for 4 years or less, 40.9% are males, while 40.7% are females. Since 40.8% of the respondents have been in a senior-level leadership position for years or less, the following possible scenarios can be observed about their work longevity in their current position: (a) Organizational realignment of their positions has been due to growth or decline or (b) survival of their positions has been in the face of adversity in the marketplace. Also, approximately half (i.e., 50.8%) of senior-level leaders work in small to medium-size establishments (i.e., 499 employees or less), while the other half (i.e., 49.2%) work in large organizations (i.e., 500 or more employees) – refer to Table 8.

Table 8

Question 33 – Number of Employees in the Company

Number of Employees in the Company	**Frequency**	**% of the Total**
1 – 49	14	11.7
50 – 99	14	11.7
100 – 249	23	19.2
250 – 499	10	8.3
500>	59	49.2
I Do Not Know	0	0.0
Total Number of Responses	**120**	**100.0**

Taking into account the current yearly revenue of the casinos by these same respondents, 55.0% of companies have revenues under $50,000,000, while 45.0% of the businesses have income of $50,000,000 or greater (refer to Table 9). Assuming that over half of the companies that responded to the questionnaire indicated that their revenues were under $50,000,000, small compared to the revenues of the other participating casinos, these data compare similarly to what the casino industry in Nevada has been like for almost the past 150 years. Most casinos were small and were located in rural towns (Cabot, 2005), as many still are today.

Table 9

Question 34 – Current Yearly Revenue

Current Yearly Revenue	Frequency	% of the Total
< $10,000,000	34	28.3
$10,000 – $49,999,999	32	26.7
$50,000,000 – $99,999,999	14	11.7
$100,000,000 – $249,999,999	14	11.7
$250,000,000>	22	18.3
I Do Not Know	4	3.3
Total Number of Responses	**120**	**100.0**

And in terms of the current titles of these senior-level leaders, there was not a clear-cut distribution between the original sample size and the number of people that responded to the questionnaire (refer to Table 2 and Table 10). The difference, depending on their current title, ranged from a low of 1% to a high of 7% (refer to Figure 1).

Even though the data provided by the respondents in Tables 3 – 10 as well as Figure 1 yielded interesting univariate characteristics, the demographic variables were not analyzed from a bivariate relationship perspective. My study elected not to further analyze the demographical information between these variables of interest and whether the instruments themselves might provide other interesting results because many of these same demographical variables in the Guffy (1992) study: "age, job tenure, and education were not related to strategic knowledge gained through the various media used," (p. 85) did not provide support for his hypothesis.

Table 10

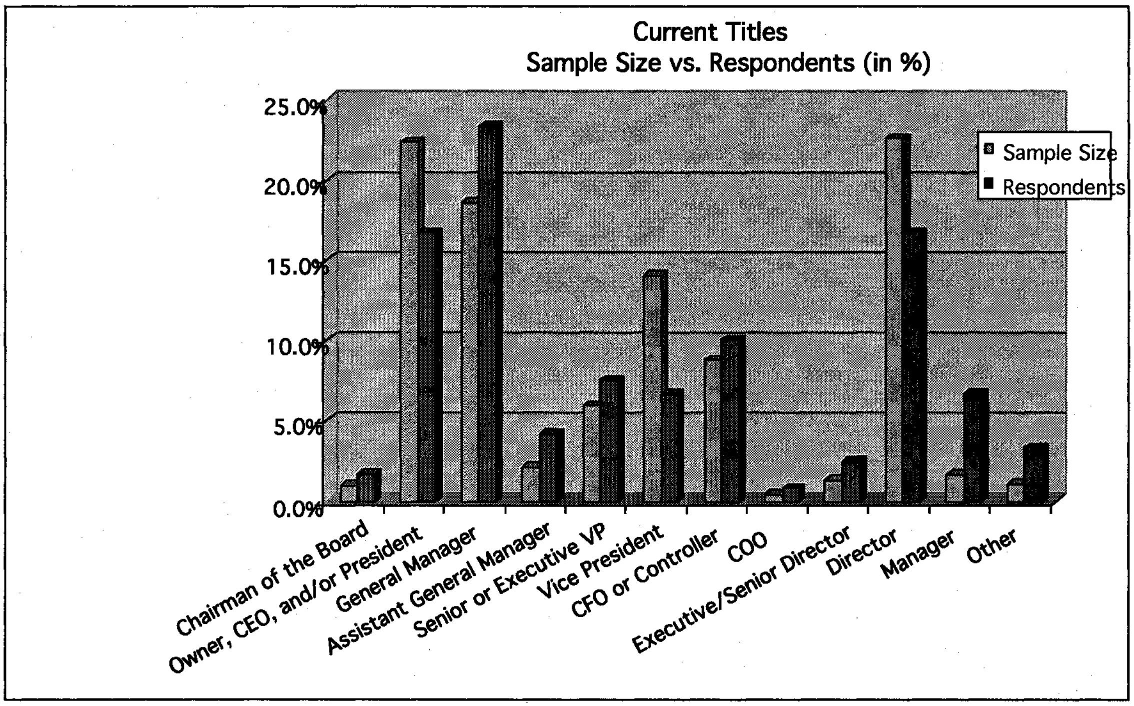
Question 35 – Current Title Distribution by Gender

Current Title	Frequency	% of the Total	Male	Female
Chairman of the Board	2	1.7	2	0
Owner, Chief Executive Officer, and/or President	20	16.7	17	3
General Manager	28	23.3	26	2
Assistant General Manager	5	4.2	5	0
Senior or Executive Vice President	9	7.5	8	1
Vice President	8	6.7	5	3
Chief Financial Officer or Controller	12	10.0	9	3
Chief Operating Officer	1	0.8	1	0
Executive or Senior Director	3	2.5	3	0
Director	20	16.7	11	9
Senior-Level Manager	8	6.7	3	5
Other	4	3.3	3	1
Total Number of Responses	**120**	**100.0**	**93**	**27**

Other Characteristics of the Respondents

Even though I analyzed eight demographical questions, I also wanted to determine if there might be some type of bivariate relationship when hiring a consultant or outside facilitator to that of the senior-level leaders incurring a successful strategy implementation within their organization. As shown in Table 11, even though none of the findings were found to be statistically significant, when looking at the response rates

Figure 1. **Current titles – sample size versus respondents.**



themselves, I could tell that when hiring a consultant, especially in the area of monitoring progress, 59% of the respondents that used a consultant for guidance as well as direction felt that the advisor was helpful in monitoring the progress during the actual implementation phase of a strategic plan. On the other hand, 41% of the participants that used a so-called strategy-implementation expert indicated that the advisor did not monitor the progress during the actual implementation phase of a strategic plan.

In a recent study, Thamhain (2004) mentioned that when the consultant sets up a system for enabling the people in the organization to monitor and assess its impact on organizational performance, there is a greater chance there will be support by the client.

Table 11

Questions 19 and 20 – Company Hiring a Consultant

No. of Responses = 120	Helpful	Not Helpful
Person was knowledgeable	17	3
Person challenged us	19	3
Person understood our business	17	4
Person monitored our progress	13	9
Other	8	7
Not applicable	46	94

Testing of the Seven Hypotheses

This section reports on the findings of the seven hypotheses stated in chapter 3. As noted, however, in chapter 1, I wanted to determine how senior-level leaders, from their point of view, use the strategy implementation process to realize their strategic ends—effectively and efficiently implementing their strategic plan. In performing this task, the goal was to determine whether there are significant direct or reverse cause-and-effect relationships (i.e., x may cause y or y causes x) between variables of interest and whether the instruments themselves might provide other interesting results. I also wanted to find out if there were non-causal relationships among the variables. Further to this point, in assuming the existence of causal relationships, variables are often expressed as being either independent or dependent variables. Still, causality is extremely difficult to establish in the multivariate world of human activity (Black, 1999). And a sufficient cause does not necessarily guarantee the consequence will come about (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001).

Pearson product-moment correlations (i.e., *r*) were also used because they are the most commonly used coefficient for sets of data pairs as social scientists endeavor to investigate possible correlations between designed measures of traits, abilities, and characteristics (Black, 1999).

In using the Microcase® statistical software, I was able to look at the strength and weakness of a relationship between two variables. In my study, it consists of dependent variables, which are the presumed or hypothesized effects of the independent variables. These variables are then typically measured by the coefficient of correlation, which range from -1.0 for a perfect negative correlation up to +1.0 for the perfect correlation (Berenson, Levine, & Krehbiel, 2004). Values close to zero, however, indicate the absence of a relation between two variables (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). In addition, 0.01 (i.e., **) and 0.05 (i.e.,*) levels of significance were used in the various tests performed. In this case, when the probability of finding a relationship in data if the two variables are not related in the population is less than 0.05 (i.e., no asterisk is shown), I rejected the null hypothesis that the two variables were unrelated (Fox, 2003) and further determined that the data were not statistically significant.

When analyzing correlation coefficients, there are no hard-and-fast rules for saying that a certain *r* indicates a strong relationship or a particular *r* indicates a moderate or even a weak relationship. I, nonetheless, used the following rough equivalents (as shown below) to assess correlation coefficients ratings (Fox, 2003, p. 238):

	Negative Relationship				No Relationship				Positive Relationship		
$r =$	-1.00	-.80	-.60	-.40	-.20	.00	.20	.40	.60	.80	1.00
	Perfect	Strong	Moderate		Weak	None	Weak	Moderate		Strong	Perfect

I was also able to look at the strength and weakness of a relationship between three variables, and come up with a multiple correlation. As later shown in Table 15, it consists of a dependent variable, which, again, is the presumed or hypothesized effect of the independent variables. These variables are also measured by the coefficient of correlation. A multiple correlation coefficient or multiple regression model, however, describes the strength of the relationship between a dependent variable and a set of two or more independent variables (Fox, 2003).

Hypothesis 1: Effective senior-level leadership behaviors will be directly related to successful strategy implementation.

Table 12

Testing of the First Hypothesis

Question No.	Strategic Planning Question
Question 5 - Dependent Variable	In terms of the company trying to accomplish its financial and/or strategic performance targets, was the achievement of those objectives successful?
	Leadership Behavior Questions
Question 2 - Independent Variable	To what extent have you personally been involved with strategy implementation?
Question 13 - Independent Variable	Do you feel your involvement in trying to achieve the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company has strengthened your own ability to be a more effective senior-level leader?
Question 14 - Independent Variable	What were the factors and/or behaviors that motivated you to put effort into achieving the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?
Question 15 - Independent Variable	What are the factors and/or behaviors that might discourage you from exerting effort in implementing a strategic plan in the future?
Question 24 - Independent Variable	Which of the following characterize your style of leadership?
Question 26 - Independent Variable	How would your subordinate(s) characterize the strengths in your leadership style?
Question 27 - Independent Variable	Which of the following senior-level leadership dynamics are characteristic in implementing the strategic plan in your company?
Question 33 - Independent Variable	How many employees (full- and part-time), including yourself, are employed in the company?
Question 34 - Independent Variable	Which of the following categories best describes the company's current yearly revenues?

In testing the first hypothesis, I analyzed, separately, the relationship between a relevant strategic planning question and nine leadership-behavior queries. The examined queries are shown in Table 12.

Mixed support for Hypothesis 1 is found in that there were both positive as well as negative correlations for each set of bivariate variables (refer to Tables 13 – 21). The findings of these relationships, independent of each other, statistically significant or not, are shown as correlations along with their appropriate *t*-value.

Referring to Table 13, this first correlation ($r = 0.25^{**}$, $t = 2.79$), which analyzed the relationship between a key strategic planning question and a leadership-behavior query, illustrates that there is a positive cause-and-effect relationship between a company's success at achieving its financial and/or strategic performance target and the extent that a senior-level leader has been involved with the company's strategy implementation plans. The finding is also statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 13

Correlation Results – Question 5 and Question 2

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Company accomplishing performance targets**
Involved with strategy implementation	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.25** (2.79)

In reference to Table 14, the next correlation (i.e., $r = 0.19^{*}$, $t = 2.14$), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, showed that there was a positive relationship between the company successfully achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets and a senior-level leader's personal involvement in trying to achieve those targets, and, in turn, strengthens the person's ability to be a more effective leader. This is significant because effective leadership in senior-level leader jobs also seems to require a tremendous energy level (i.e., maximum involvement) and a deep desire to use that energy for supplying leadership (Kotter, 1988). Further to this point, the chief executive office must be the catalyst for strategic alignment (Edwards, 2000), and that alignment and involvement is at the heart of the implementation process (Hardy, 1994).

Table 14

Correlation Results – Question 5 and Question 13

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Company accomplishing performance targets**
Your involvement to be a more effective senior-level leader	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.19* (2.14)

In further testing Hypothesis 1, as shown in Table 15, I noticed that both independent variables impacted the dependent variable in a positive manner. However, the *t*-values were not as statistically significant as if the independent variables were studied by themselves.

Table 15

Regression Correlation Results – Question 5 and Questions 2 & 13

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Company accomplishing performance targets**		
Involved with strategy implementation	*r* 0.25**	*t*-value (2.14)	std. error *(b)* 0.12
Your involvement to be a more effective senior-level leader	*r* 0.19*	*t*-value (1.23)	std. error *(b)* 0.11

Referring to Table 16, the next positive correlation (i.e., $r = 0.20^*$, $t = 2.24$) showed that there was a positive relationship between the company successfully achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets with the motivating factor for the senior-level leader being financially rewarded. This one finding is significant at the 0.05 level.

Continuing to test Hypothesis 1, and in reference to Table 17, this next negative correlation (i.e., $r = -0.15^*$, $t = -1.67$), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, shows a

Table 16

Correlation Results – Question 5 and Question 14a-h

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Company accomplishing performance targets**
Motivational factors to achieve performance targets	**Correlation & *t*-value**
Personal financial reward	0.20* (2.24)
Sheer enjoyment	0.11 (1.17)
Challenge of executing the plan	0.03 (0.33)
Ability to succeed	0.07 (0.81)
Ability to help grow the company	0.06 (0.62)
Align subordinates to accomplish objectives	-0.01 (-0.11)
It was what I was asked to do, so I did my job	-0.06 (-0.67)
Other	0.06 (0.69)
Note:	Besides "personal financial reward," none of the other findings were statistically significant.

negative relationship between the success of a company achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets and, as perceived by the senior-level leaders, that the implementation process takes significantly longer than originally planned. The outcome in this finding means that with regard to the success of a company achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets, senior-level leaders were discouraged by the fact that the implementation process took significantly longer than originally planned. This is

Table 17

Correlation Results – Question 5 and Question 15a-m

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Company accomplishing performance targets**
Factors that might discourage you from exerting effort in implementing a strategic plan	Correlation & *t*-value
Implementation took significantly longer than originally planned	-0.15* (-1.67)
Unanticipated major problems arose	-0.05 (-0.58)
Activities were ineffectively coordinated	-0.12 (-1.32)
Competing activities took attention away from the implementation process	-0.06 (-0.65)
Involved employees had insufficient capabilities to perform their jobs	0.03 (0.37)
Immediate superior provided inadequate leadership	-0.12 (-1.25)
Immediate subordinates provided inadequate leadership	-0.08 (-0.90)
Lower-level employees were inadequately trained	0.03 (0.36)
Uncontrollable external environmental factors	-0.12 (-1.25)
Key implementation tasks were poorly defined	0.06 (0.61)
Information system inadequately monitored activities	-0.02 (-0.26)
I would still try to implement the plan to the best of my ability	0.03 (0.32)
Other	-0.08 (-0.83)
Note:	Besides the fact that "Implementation took significantly longer than originally planned," none of the other findings were statistically significant.

significant because the dissemination of the information process must be well-timed and applicable. Also, for controls to work in a timely manner, up-to-date information must be correct, and timely. Old and stale information precludes an opportune, effective response to competitors' actions or customer complaints (Hrebiniak, 2005).

Referring to Table 18, this next correlation ($r = 0.31^{**}$, $t = 3.56$), which analyzed the relationship between a key strategic planning question and a leadership-behavior query, illustrates that there clearly exists a positive cause-and-effect relationship between companies having success in achieving their financial and/or strategic performance targets, and a senior-level leader's style of leadership being that they inspire others.

Table 18

Correlation Results – Question 5 and Question 24a-h

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Company accomplishing performance targets**
Style of Leadership	**Correlation & *t*-value**
I guide others	-0.14 (1.53)
I facilitate others	-0.17* (-1.85)
I am a change agent	0.02 (0.17)
I inspire others	0.31** (3.56)
I lift the aspiration of others	0.24** (2.63)
I raise the performance of others	0.10 (1.07)
I develop others to their fullest	0.07 (0.77)
Other	-0.04 (-0.38)
Note:	Besides "I facilitate others, I inspire others, and I life the aspiration of others," the other findings were not statistically significant.

From a human behavior tendency perspective, can the reader think of an effective leader who was not inspirational? As an influencing variable, it is enthusiasm and passion that provides the foundation for the team's incentive to do well. In fact, chief executive officers such as Herb Kelleher at Southwest Airlines and Fred Smith at Federal

Express have been quoted as saying: "Our people come first, even before our customers" (Michlitsch, 2000). Enthusiasm and drive also included determination and commitment. As such, effective leaders put their energy into raising performance above the generally accepted level (Roebuck, 1999). Indeed, senior-level leaders provide the inspiration and encouragement. Motivation must come from within—it is internal (Baggett, 2004), not built upon external factors such as money, position, or personal power (Roebuck, 1999).

With a finding of 0.31**, the results are certainly statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, the relationship between these two variables is also meaningful. Since $t = 3.56$, my study would reject the hypothesis that there is no relationship between the two variables.

In testing the next two variables in Hypothesis 1, as also seen in Table 18, this next positive correlation (i.e., $r = 0.24^{**}$, $t = 2.63$) shows that there is a positive relationship between a company having success in achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets and a senior-level leader's style of leadership being that they lift the aspirations of others. The finding is also statistically significant at the 0.01 level. In addition, the relationship between these two variables is meaningful.

As a leader, it is always good to empower others to do their best (Baggett, 2004). One can do that, as explained by Lao Tzu, a 6th-century B.C. philosopher and father of Taoism, cited by Hughes et al. (2002), by lifting the aspirations of others in the following way:

> A leader is best when people barely know that he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worst of all when they despise him. Fail to honor people, they fail to honor you. But of a good leader, who talks little, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will all say, "We did this ourselves." (p. 23)

In reference to Table 18 again, the analysis indicated a negative correlation (i.e., $r = -0.17^{*}$, $t = -1.85$), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, that the success of a company achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets is found by senior-level leaders who do not view themselves as being facilitators. However, as an effective leader, one needs to be a facilitator because employees want to be heard and understood (Baggett, 2004).

Continuing to test Hypothesis 1, and referring to Table 19, this correlation (i.e., $r = 0.21^{*}$, $t = 2.31$) showed a positive relationship that is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Further, it shows that there is a positive relationship between a company successfully achieving its financial and/or strategic targets and a senior-level leader taking subordinates' input, feedback, and comments into consideration when making a decision.

As also seen in Table 19, this finding (i.e., $r = 0.16^{*}$, $t = 1.80$), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, shows that there is a positive relationship between the company successfully achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets and senior-level leaders providing their subordinates with clear expectations. In addition, companies whose employees understand and have clear expectations given to them from the senior-level leaders will be more successful in achieving their financial and/or strategic performance targets.

In reference to Table 20, the analysis found in this next correlation ($r = -0.25^{**}$, $t = -2.79$) shows that a negative relationship between a company having success in achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets and an ineffective senior management team. Even though the finding is considered small, the relationships

Table 19

Correlation Results – Question 5 and Question 26a-j

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Company accomplishing performance targets**
Strengths in your leadership style	**Correlation & *t*-value**
Freedom to succeed	-0.04 (-0.40)
Communicate well	0.12 (1.30)
Take their input into consideration	0.21* (2.31)
Sensitive to what is going on	0.03 (0.27)
Provide them with clear expectations	0.16* (1.80)
Encourage staff	0.09 (0.92)
Influence others	-0.01 (-0.11)
Hard working	-0.00 (-0.02)
Focused on success	0.14 (1.56)
Other	0.01 (0.12)
Note:	Besides "Take their input into consideration and Provide them with clear expectations," the other findings were not statistically significant.

between these two variables are meaningful and certainly significant at the 0.01 level.

It is possible that the respondents might have answered one of the questions in such a way because they believed, as a leadership dynamic that is characteristic in implementing the strategic plan, that their fellow senior-level leaders are ineffective in their leadership roles.

As also seen in Table 20, these next two findings ([Q5 vs. Q27b: r = -0.24**, t = -2.68] & [Q5 vs. Q27e: r -0.24*, t = -2.68]), the first one statistically significant at the 0.01 level and the second one statistically significant at the 0.05 level, clearly show a negative relationship between a company having success in achieving its financial and/or

Table 20

Correlation Results – Question 5 and Question 27a-g

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Company accomplishing performance targets**
Leadership dynamics in implementing the strategic plan	**Correlation & *t*-value**
Top-down or laissez-faire senior management style	0.03 (0.29)
Unclear strategy and conflicting priorities	-0.24** (-2.68)
Ineffective senior management team	-0.25** (-2.79)
Poor top-down vertical communication	-0.11 (-1.14)
Poor coordination into teamwork through realigning roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities with strategies	-0.24* (-2.68)
Inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development	-0.06 (-0.60)
Inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development	0.14 (1.56)
Note:	Besides "Unclear strategy and conflicting priorities, Ineffective senior management team, and Poor coordination . . . ," the other four findings were not statistically significant.

strategic performance targets and the senior-level leadership dynamic of having unclear strategy and conflicting priorities as well as poor coordination into teamwork through realigning roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities with strategies. Both relationships show that neither the senior-level leadership dynamics of having unclear strategy and conflicting priorities, nor poor coordination into teamwork through realigning roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities with strategies are, in fact, conflicting problems in relation to a company's success.

Setting clear and easy-to-understand responsibilities is one of the most important prerequisites for successful implementation. Senior-level leaders must know who is doing what, when, and why, as well as who is accountable for key steps in the implementation process. Without clear and easy-to-understand responsibilities and accountabilities, implementation programs will go nowhere. Besides, every action a leader takes should have a clear and understandable purpose (Baggett, 2004).

Referring to Table 21, this negative finding (i.e., $r = -0.19^{*}$, $t = -2.06$), while small but still statistically significant at the 0.05 level, still means that the success of a company's financial and/or strategic performance targets has a slight negative relationship to the number of people employed in that company—those with more employees are less likely to have a successful outcome. Perhaps this is due to the increased difficulty in communicating specific goals to a large number of employees (i.e., 500 people or more). Also, because the *t*-value is statistically significant, I am confident that one cannot reject the hypothesis that there is no relationship between these two variables.

Table 21

Correlation Results – Question 5 and Question 33

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Company accomplishing performance targets**
Workers employed in the company?	Correlation & *t*-value: -0.19* (-2.06)

In testing the last set of variables in Hypothesis 1, and in reference to Table 22, the negative correlation ($r = -0.27^{**}$, $t = -3.03$), which also analyzed the relationship between a key strategic-planning question and a leadership-behavior query, illustrates a negative cause-and-effect relationship between a company having success in achieving its financial and/or strategic-performance targets and the amount of yearly revenues the company makes. Further, this shows that perhaps the amount of annual revenues made by a company is a clear indication of how successful the company was in achieving its financial and/or strategic performance target. Moreover, this negative correlation, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, clearly shows that companies with more revenues are less likely to indicate achieving success in their performance targets.

Table 22

Correlation Results – Question 5 and Question 34

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Company accomplishing performance targets**
Company's current yearly revenue	Correlation & *t*-value: -0.27** (-3.03)

Hypothesis 2: The frequency of communication with subordinates regarding the strategic process will be directly related to how well people feel about working together in implementing the strategic plan.

In testing Hypothesis 2, my study analyzed, once again independently, the relationship between a strategic-management question and a general human-behavior query. The research also analyzed the relationship of a strategy-implementation question and a key leadership-behavior query. The examined questions are shown in Table 23.

Mixed support for this hypothesis is also found for two of the four correlations considered (refer to Tables 24 – 26). The findings of these relationships are shown as correlations along with their appropriate *t*-value.

Table 23

Testing of the Second Hypothesis

Question No.	Strategic Management Question
Question 9 – Dependent Variable	From your point of view, was the achievement of a strategic plan successful according to the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?
	Leadership Behavior Question
Question 16 – Independent Variable	How well do you feel people at all levels have worked together in implementing the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?
	Strategy Implementation Question
Question 18 – Dependent Variable	To what extent has there been conflict in the organizational culture based on resistance to the implementation of a strategic plan?
	Leadership Behavior Question
Question 12 – Independent Variable	Has senior-level leadership tied the compensation of immediate subordinates to the achievement of the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?

Referring to Table 24, the analysis found this finding (i.e., $r = 0.27^{**}$, $t = 3.02$), statistically significant at the 0.01 level, which analyzed the relationship between a key strategic-management question and a leadership-behavior query, showed that there is a positive relationship between the successful achievement of a company's strategic plan and how well people at all levels within the company worked together in implementing the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company. In fact, senior-level leaders and managers of all types must know who is doing what, when, and why, as well as who is accountable for key steps in the strategy-execution process. Without clear responsibility and accountability working together, implementation programs will go nowhere (Hrebiniak, 2005).

This particular correlation also shows that there is a positive cause-and-effect relationship between the successful achievement of a company's strategic plan and how

Table 24

Correlation Results – Question 9 and Question 16

Total Number of Responses = 115	**Company accomplishing performance targets**
Employees worked together in implementing performance targets	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.27** (3.02)

well people at all levels within the company worked together in implementing the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company. However, because this finding is significantly closer to 0.00 than 1.00, my study cannot state with total certainty that there truly is an effective relationship between these two key variables.

In further testing Hypothesis 2, and in reference to Table 25, this negative correlation (i.e., $r = -0.20^*$, $t = -2.22$), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, which analyzed the relationship between a strategy implementation question and a leadership behavior query, showed that there is a negative tendency between the extent of conflict there has been in the organizational culture based on resistance to the implementing of a strategic plan and senior-level leadership tying the compensation of immediate subordinates to the achievement of the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company. In other words, senior-level leadership tying the compensation of immediate subordinates to the achievement of the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company is not necessarily the reason for conflict within an organizational culture based on resistance to the implementing of a strategic plan. Moreover, senior-level leadership tying the compensation of immediate subordinates to the achievement of the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company might be potentially beneficial to the implementation process.

Table 25

Correlation Results – Question 18 and Question 12

Total Number of Responses = 118	**Conflict in organizational culture**
Tying the compensation of immediate subordinates to the achievement of the performance targets	Correlation & *t*-value: -0.20* (-2.22)

Managing culture is essential to strategy implementation. In fact, the cultures of many of the high-performing companies include having fun. These cultures also embody values, expectations, and required behaviors (Michlitsch, 2000). More imperative, a solid alignment of culture and strategy implementation fosters strategy execution success. On the other hand, a misalignment creates horrendous problems (Hrebiniak, 2005). Thus, the extent of conflict there is in the organizational culture is a key reason why there might be resistance to the implementation of a strategic plan.

Even though the next two correlations were found not to be significant because they show levels of significance less than 0.05, they are still provided for the reader's review (refer to Table 26). In looking at the dependent variable, an attempt to implement change in direction in the company, and both independent variables, communicating the vision/mission statement to all subordinates and communicating the business strategy to all subordinates, I wanted to determine if there was some type of a causal relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. In this case, there is a null hypothesis, which is the assumption that there is no significant difference between what I obtained and what would happen by chance alone (Black, 1999).

Table 26

Correlation Results – Question 8 and Questions 6 & 7

Total Number of Responses = 118	**Attempt to implement a change in direction in the company**
Communicating the vision/mission statement to all subordinates	Correlation & *t*-value: -0.05 (-0.57)
Communicating the business strategy to all subordinates	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.07 (0.79)
Note:	Both of these correlations were found statistically not significant.

Hypothesis 3: Employees who understand and agree with the company's strategic plan will most likely have a higher commitment to the firm's success than employees who do not know or agree with it.

In testing Hypothesis 3, my study analyzed, separately, the relationship between a basic strategic-management question and a leadership-behavior query. The examined questions are shown in Table 27.

Table 27

Testing of the Third Hypothesis

Question No.	**Strategic Management Question**
Question 21 – Dependent Variable	How well do the employees at all levels understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan?
	Leadership Behavior Question
Question 22 – Independent Variable	How committed are employees to the success of the company's strategic plan?

Even though two specific correlations were considered not significant, hence no conclusion was made about these findings, I still found a very strong support for this hypothesis (refer to Tables 28 – 29). The findings of these relationships are shown as correlations along with their appropriate *t*-value.

Referring to Table 29, the analysis found that this positive correlation ($r = 0.78^{**}$, $t = 13.33$), statistically significant at the 0.01 level, which analyzed the relationship between a key strategic-management question and a leadership-behavior query, proves that there is a positive cause-and-effect relationship between how well employees at all levels understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan and how committed employees are to the success of the company's strategic plan. The particular results of these influencing variables tell us with almost absolute certainty that the better an employee understands the objectives of the company's current strategic plan, the more committed that employee will be to the success of the company's strategic plan.

Table 28

Correlation Results – Question 21 and Question 22

Total Number of Responses = 118	**Employees understanding the objectives of the strategic plan**
Employees committed to the success of the strategic plan	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.78** (13.33)

Because the findings were the most significant in this hypothesis, I believe that the correlation results are a strong positive because when employees know that the objectives are clear and stress the right things (Hrebiniak, 2005), the greater the likelihood that the performance targets will be achieved. In addition, because the results are certainly noteworthy in Table 28 but indeed weak in Table 26, or without statistical significance because they show levels of significance less than 0.05, I deduced that just because senior-level leaders are communicating messages (i.e., attempting to implement a change in direction) to their subordinates, this does not always mean that those messages will be carried out. On the other hand, when subordinates clearly understand the objectives of a plan, there is a good chance that those same employees will be committed to the success of that plan.

In order to make more sense of the correlation results from these two tables, I will provide additional discussions about this interesting puzzle in the next chapter.

Even though the other two correlations were found not to be significant, it is provided for the reader's review (refer to Table 29). In looking at the dependent variable, implementing a change in direction in the company, and both independent variables, communicating the business strategy to all subordinates and the level that employees are committed to the success of the strategic plan, I wanted to determine if there was some type of a causal relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. In this case, too, I realized that there is a null hypothesis, and, therefore, that there is no significant difference between what I acquired and what would happen by probability alone.

Table 29

Correlation Results – Question 8 and Questions 7 & 22

Total Number of Responses = 118	**Implementing a change in direction in the company**
Communicating the business strategy to all subordinates	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.07 (0.79)
Employees committed to success of the strategic plan	Correlation & *t*-value: -0.04 (-0.38)
Note:	Both of these correlations were found statistically not significant.

Because the correlation outcomes are also very close to 0.00 and surely without statistical significance because they show levels of significance less than 0.05, the effects themselves have probably happened by chance. Having said this, I also noticed that there might be a contradiction, at least in part, between the results from Table 28 and Table 29. Since there is the possibility for inconsistency between some of the results of the dependent and independent variables, I will provide further discussions about this interesting problem in the next chapter.

Hypothesis 4: The greater that people work well together in trying to achieve the financial and/or strategic performance targets of a strategic plan in the company, the better the chance they will have in meeting the company's goals.

In testing Hypothesis 4, my study analyzed, separately, the relationship between a basic strategy-formulation question and two general human-behavior queries. The examined questions are shown in Table 30.

Table 30

Testing of the Fourth Hypothesis

Question No.	Strategy Formulation Question
Question 3 – Dependent Variable	To what extent have key stakeholders (board of directors, mid-level managers, principal advisors/suppliers, etc.) been involved in strategy formulation?
	Strategy Planning & Human Behavior Questions
Question 5 – Independent Variable	In terms of the company trying to accomplish its financial and/or strategic performance targets, was the achievement of those objectives successful?
Question 16 – Independent Variable	How well do you feel people at all levels worked together in implementing the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?

Even though one negative correlation was considered not significant and for that reason no inference was made about this finding, I still found weak support for this hypothesis (refer to Tables 31 – 34). The findings of these relationships are shown as correlations along with their appropriate *t*-value.

In reference to Table 31, of the two results that showed a positive correlation, this finding ($r = 0.19^*$, $t = 2.06$), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, which analyzed the relationship between a strategy-formulation question and a leadership-behavior query, confirms that there is some certainty that there is a positive relationship between the extent at which key stakeholders have been involved in strategy formulation and the company being successful in accomplishing its financial and/or strategic performance targets. This also means that the more key stakeholders are involved in the strategy formulation of their company, the better chance the company has of achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets.

Table 31

Correlation Results – Question 3 and Question 5

Total Number of Responses = 117	**Stakeholders being involved in strategy formulation**
Company accomplishing performance targets	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.19* (2.06)

Referring to Table 32, this positive finding ($r = 0.25^{**}$, $t = 2.78$), statistically significant at the 0.01 level, showed that there is some confidence that there is a positive cause-and-effect relationship between the extent at which key stakeholders have been involved in strategy formulation and how well people at all levels within the company have worked together in implementing the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company. This may further tell us, from a significance standpoint, that when key stakeholders are involved in the company's strategy formulation, their employees, and thus the entire company, tend to work better together in implementing the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company.

Execution, people working well together at all levels within the company, cannot be successful without consideration of interdependence across units and the requisite methods needed for coordination, knowledge transfer, and information sharing (Hrebiniak, 2005).

Table 32

Correlation Results – Question 3 and Question 16

Total Number of Responses = 117	**Stakeholders being involved in strategy formulation**
People working together in implementing the performance targets	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.25** (2.78)

In the previous two examples studied (refer to Tables 31 & 32), I performed basic correlation analysis. In doing so, I found that there exists a positive relationship between the dependent variable and the two, separate, independent variables. I wanted to take this view, however, one step further. My study also measured the combined effect of two sets of independent variables on a dependent variable. As shown in Table 33, I noticed that both independent variables also influenced the dependent variable in a positive manner. However, the *t*-values were not as statistically significant as if the independent variables were studied by themselves. Even so, the more stakeholders are involved in strategy formulation, the stronger the senior-level leader's chance to succeed at accomplishing the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the organization. At the same time, it enables people at all levels to work together in implementing the performance targets set for the company.

Table 33

Regression Correlation Results – Question 3 and Questions 5 & 16

Total Number of Responses = 117	**Stakeholders being involved in strategy formulation**		
Company accomplishing performance targets	*r* 0.19*	*t*-value (1.37)	std. error *(b)* 0.09
Your involvement to be a more effective senior-level leader	*r* 0.25**	*t*-value (2.30)	std. error *(b)* 0.11

Even though the other negative correlation was found not to be significant because it shows that the level of significance was less than 0.05, it is still provided for the reader's review (refer to Table 34). In looking at the dependent variable, stakeholders being involved in strategy formulation, and the independent variable, the extent to which there has been conflict in the organizational culture based on resistance to the implementation of a strategic plan, I wanted to determine if there was a causal relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. In this case as well, I realized that there is a null hypothesis, and thus there is no significant difference between what I acquired and what would happen by probability alone.

Because the results are also very close to 0.00 and without statistical significance, I concluded that the effects themselves have happened probably by chance or are almost certainly coincidental.

Table 34

Correlation Results – Question 3 and Question 18

Total Number of Responses = 117	**Stakeholders being involved in strategy formulation**
Conflict in organizational culture	Correlation & *t*-value: -0.09 (-0.93)
Note:	This correlation was found statistically not significant.

Hypothesis 5: The more senior-level leaders are willing to make positive changes, the greater the likelihood that the financial and/or strategic performance targets of a strategic plan in the company will succeed.

In testing Hypothesis 5, my study further analyzed, independently, the relationship between a strategy implementation question as well as a conflict in organizational culture query and four human-behavior questions. The examined queries are shown in Table 35.

In looking at the results from this hypothesis, many findings were not considered because they show that the levels of significance were less than 0.05, and the results themselves were not statistically significant; as a result, no inferences were made. Even though many correlations were not statistically significant, there is a mixed support for Hypothesis 5. The findings of these relationships are shown as correlations along with their appropriate *t*-value

In reference to Table 36, the analysis further found that this positive correlation (i.e., $r = 0.36^{**}$, $t = 4.11$), statistically significant at the 0.01 level, which analyzed the relationship between a strategy-implementation question and a leadership-behavior query, substantiates that it can be stated with a high degree of certainty that there is a positive cause-and-effect relationship between the extent at which a senior-level leader

Table 35

Testing of the Fifth Hypothesis

Question No.	Strategy Implementation Question
Question 2 – Dependent Variable	To what extent have you personally been involved with strategy implementation in your current job?
	Leadership Behavior Questions
Question 9 – Independent Variable	From your point of view, was the achievement of a strategic plan successful according to the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?
Question 10 – Independent Variable	Among the following senior-level leadership factors and/or behaviors, please check all those that have positively affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?
Question 11 – Independent Variable	Among the following senior-level leadership factors and/or behaviors, please check all those that have negatively affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?
	Conflict in Organizational Culture Question
Question 18 – Dependent Variable	To what extent has there been conflict in the organizational culture based on resistance to the implementation of a strategic plan?
	Leadership Behavior Question
Question 12 – Independent Variable	Has senior-level leadership tied the compensation of immediate subordinates to the achievement of the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?

has personally been involved with strategy implementation in his or her current job and the achievement of a strategic plan being a success according to the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company (i.e., as viewed by the senior-level leader). In other words, this means that it is very likely that companies who have senior-level leaders who are directly involved with the strategy-implementation process of their company will most likely be more successful than if they did not. A proven principle of effective leadership is to be people-serving, not self-serving.

Table 36

Correlation Results – Question 2 and Question 9

Total Number of Responses = 115	Involved with strategy implementation
Company accomplishing performance targets	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.36** (4.11)

Referring to Table 37, this correlation (i.e., $r = 0.23^{**}$, $t = 2.56$), statistically significant at the 0.01 level, showed a positive relationship. This finding further tells us that we can state with a reasonable degree of certainty that there is a positive relationship between the extent at which a senior-level leader has personally been involved with strategy implementation in his or her current job and the company instituted best practices and pushed for continuous improvement (being something that has positively affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company). Furthermore, this finding explains that a company that institutes its best practices and pushes for continuous improvement, combined with senior-level leaders who are involved with the strategy implementation in their current job, produces a better chance of successfully accomplishing its financial and/or strategic performance target. Moreover, the leader should focus on the pursuit of excellence, not perfection (Baggett, 2004).

Continuing to look at Table 37, this correlation (i.e., $r = 0.23^{**}$, $t = 2.56$), statistically significant at the 0.01 level, also showed a positive relationship. Besides, this finding tells us that it can be stated with a reasonable degree of certainty that there is a positive relationship between the extent at which a senior-level leader has personally been involved with strategy implementation in his or her current job and that the senior-

Table 37

Correlation Results – Question 2 and Question 10a-j

Total Number of Responses = 120	**Involved with strategy implementation**
Positive leadership factors that affected performance targets	Correlation & *t*-value
Built an organization with competencies, capabilities, and resource strengths to carry out the strategy	0.18* (2.00)
Developed budgets to steer resources into those activities that were critical to success	-0.03 (-0.36)
Established effective strategy-supportive policies and procedures	0.16 (1.48)
Instituted best practices	0.23** (2.56)
Installed information, communication, and operating systems that enabled company personnel to carry out their roles	0.02 (0.22)
Tied rewards to the achievement of performance objectives	0.09 (1.01)
Created a strategy-supportive work environment	0.08 (0.90)
Exerted the internal leadership to drive implementation	0.23** (2.54)
Removed executive road blocks to insure performance	0.23** (2.56)
Other	0.08 (0.83)
Note:	The correlations without the asterisks (i.e., * or **) were found statistically not significant.

level leader removed road blocks to insure executive/management performance. This also means that the company allowed senior-level leaders the freedom to do their tasks without interruption or other obstacles to get in the way of the process, which proved beneficial to the company.

As also seen in Table 37, this particular finding (i.e., $r = 0.23^{**}$, $t = 2.54$), once again, statistically significant at the 0.01 level, showed a positive relationship. It tells us that it can be stated with a reasonable degree of certainty that there is a positive relationship between the extent at which a senior-level leader has personally been involved with strategy implementation in his or her current job and (something the company did that positively affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company) the internal leadership needed to drive implementation forward and to improve on how the strategy was executed. This essentially means that the combination between senior-level leaders being involved in strategy implementation and the company finding the right internal leadership to make the implementation process move forward and progress proved to be beneficial to the company.

Again, in looking at Table 37, this correlation (i.e., $r = 0.18^{*}$, $t = 0.64$), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, showed that there exists, with some degree of certainty, a slight positive relationship between the extent at which a senior-level leader has personally been involved with strategy implementation in his or her current job and a positive factor that has affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company, in this case, built an organization with competencies, capabilities, and resource strengths to carry out the strategy successfully. Furthermore, this means that the combination of a senior-level leader being involved with strategy implementation in his or her current job and having an organization built so that it can operate independently within its own structure and strengths is a positive thing for a company.

Referring to Table 38, this correlation (i.e., $r = 0.15^*$, $t = 1.74$), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, showed that there exists, with some degree of certainty, a slight positive relationship between the extent at which a senior-level leader has personally been involved with strategy implementation in his or her current job, and uncontrollable external factors created problems such as competitor(s) lowering list prices (a senior-level leadership factor/behavior that has negatively affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company. This tells us that a senior-level leader who is involved in the company's strategy implementation process will be more able to make changes within that company's strategic plan to combat price list changes made by competitors.

As also seen in Table 38, this negative correlation (i.e., $r = -0.18^*$, $t = -1.90$), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, showed that there exists, with some degree of certainty, a slight negative relationship between the extent at which a senior-level leader has personally been involved with strategy implementation in his or her current job and poor coordination across functions, businesses, or barriers (a senior-level leadership factor/behavior that has negatively affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company). Furthermore, we can state that poor coordination across functions, businesses, or barriers is not a negative factor that is affecting the financial and/or strategic targets set for the company.

Table 38

Correlation Results – Question 2 vs. Question 11a-n

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Involved with strategic implementation**
Negative leadership factors that affected performance targets	Correlation & *t*-value
Implementation tasks were poorly defined	-0.14 (-1.48)
Implementation took more time than planned	0.04 (0.48)
Internal business problems arose that slowed things down	-0.01 (-0.02)
External factors created problems	0.15* (1.74)
Lower-level management are not committed to implementing a strategy	0.02 (0.31)
Inability of senior-level leadership to communicate the performance targets	-0.11 (-1.11)
Deficient senior-level leadership skills	-0.02 (-0.17)
Poor coordination across functions	-0.18* (-1.90)
Lack of adequate human resources	-0.11 (-1.30)
Lack of financial resources	0.13 (1.43)
Lack of knowledge within the management team	-0.10 (-1.07)
Lower-level employees were insufficiently trained	-0.04 (-0.40)
Inadequate way of monitoring the performance of the strategy	-.020* (-2.21)
Other	0.06 (0.60)
Note:	The correlations without the asterisk (i.e., *) were found statistically not significant.

In testing this last finding in Hypothesis 5, referring to Table 39, this particular negative correlation (i.e., r = -0.20*, t = -2.22), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, which analyzed the relationship between a conflict in organizational culture and leadership behavior, validates that there exists a negative tendency between the extent that there has been conflict in the organizational culture based on resistance to the implementation of a strategic plan and senior-level leadership tying the compensation of immediate subordinates to the achievement of the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company. Furthermore, this tells us that senior-level leadership tying the compensation of immediate subordinates to the achievement of the performance targets set for the company is not the reason for conflict in the organizational culture based on resistance to the implementation of a strategic plan. On the other hand, execution often suffers because senior-level leaders do not develop and use incentives that plausibly support implementation decisions and options (Hrebiniak, 2005).

Table 39

Correlation Results – Question 18 and Question 12

Total Number of Responses = 118	**Conflict in organizational culture**
Tying compensation to achievement of performance targets	Correlation & *t*-value: -0.20* (-2.22)

Hypothesis 6: Those senior-level leaders who have been trained in or studied strategic planning and implementation are more likely to meet the performance targets set for the company.

In testing Hypothesis 6, I analyzed, independently, the relationship between a question that deals with training on the topics of strategic planning and implementation, a general strategic-planning query, and a strategic-management query. The questions that were examined are shown in Table 40.

Table 40

Testing of the Sixth Hypothesis

Question No.	Training Question
Question 31 – Dependent Variable	Have you ever been trained in or formally studied strategic planning and implementation?
	Strategic Planning Question
Question 5 – Independent Variable	In terms of the company trying to accomplish its financial and/or strategic performance targets, was the achievement of those objectives successful?
	Strategic Management Question
Question 21 – Independent Variable	How well do the employees at all levels understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan?

In looking at the results from this hypothesis, one correlation was not considered because it showed a level of significance less than 0.05; even though I was truly hoping to see a meaningful result, no inference was made. Even though one finding was not statistically significant, there is weak support for the other positive correlation in Hypothesis 6. The findings of these relationships are shown as correlations along with their appropriate *t*-values.

Referring to Table 41, I found that one of the positive correlations (i.e., $r = 0.18*$, $t = 2.02$), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, which analyzed the relationship between a strategic planning and implementation training question and a general strategic-management query, substantiates that it can be stated with a certain degree of certainty that there is a positive tendency for the variables to change in tandem between the extent at which employees understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan and whether a senior-level leader has been trained in or formally studied strategic planning and implementation. This means that it is very likely that companies that employ senior-level leaders who have been trained in or studied strategic planning and implementation are also more likely to get involved with their subordinates

Table 41

Correlation Results – Question 31 and Questions 5 & 21

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Trained or formally studied strategic planning and implementation**
Employees understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.18* (2.02)
Company accomplishing performance targets	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.05 (0.51)
Note:	The correlation that states "Company accomplishing performance targets" was found statistically not significant.

to enable them to better understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan. In fact, senior-level leaders who report high levels of participation with their subordinates tend to effectively deal better with interpersonal conflict and have high levels of morale and cohesion (Hughes et al., 2002).

Hypothesis 7: Those senior-level leaders that have at least a two-year college degree (i.e., associate degree or greater) are more likely to meet the performance targets set for the company.

In testing Hypothesis 7, I analyzed, separately, the relationship between a relevant strategic-planning question and an educational query. The examined questions are shown in Table 42.

In looking at the specific correlation results from this hypothesis (i.e., $r = -0.02$, $t = -0.17$), unfortunately, the one finding studied was not considered, even though I was hoping to see a meaningful result. Because the correlation showed a level of significance

Table 42

Testing of the Seventh Hypothesis

Question No.	Strategic Planning Question
Question 5 – Dependent Variable	In terms of the company trying to accomplish its financial and/or strategic performance targets, was the achievement of those objectives successful?
	Educational Question
Question 30 – Independent Variable	What is the highest level of education you have completed?

less than 0.05, no inference was made to support Hypothesis 7 (refer to Table 43). The findings of this relationship, nonetheless, are shown as a correlation along with its appropriate *t*-value. The results are also presented as a table with the means of strategy implementation. The difference of the means across groups, however, is also not statistically significant. In addition, I ran a chi-square test, showing its result as well (refer to Table 44). In the case of the chi-square test, the statistic

Table 43

Correlation Results – Question 5 and Question 30

Total Number of Responses = 119	Trained or formally studied strategic planning and implementation
Highest level of education	Correlation & *t*-value: -0.02 (-0.17)
Note:	This correlation was found statistically not significant.

compares the actual frequencies in the bivariate table with the frequencies expected if there is no relationship between the variable (Fox, 2003). Once again, I realized that there is a null hypothesis, and so there is no significant difference between what I acquired and what would happen by probability alone. Further, in assessing this correlation outcome as well as the chi-square test, because the results are also very close to 0.00 and without statistical significance, I concluded that the effects themselves have happened probably by chance or are almost certainly

Table 44

ANOVA Means & Chi-Square Results – Question 5 and Question 30

Highest level of education	Total Number of Responses = 119	Mean	Chi-square results
			0.007
12th grade or less	1	3.000	
High school graduate or equivalent	10	1.700	
Some college but no degree	39	2.128	
Associate degree	7	2.429	
Bachelor's degree	44	1.955	
Master's degree	16	2.063	
Professional degree	1	1.000	
Doctoral degree	1	3.000	
Other	0	0.000	

coincidental. More important, I cannot determine if a senior-level leader who has at least a 2-year college degree is more likely to meet the performance targets set for the company than a senior-level leader who does not have a college degree.

Summary of the Results

In this chapter, I examined many variables associated with successful or unsuccessful strategy implementation to that of effective or ineffective leadership behavior. Of the seven hypotheses tested, the analysis shows that three received mixed support, one received very strong support, two received weak support, and one for which no inference was made. Table 45 presents a summary of the hypotheses results.

Table 45

Summary of Hypotheses Results

Hypothesis	**Results**
H1: Effective senior-level leadership behaviors will be directly related to successful strategy implementation.	Mixed support
H2: The frequency of communication with subordinates regarding the strategic process will be directly related to how well people feel about working together in implementing the strategic plan.	Mixed support
H3: Employees who understand and agree with the company's strategic plan will most likely have a higher commitment to the firm's success than employees who do not know or agree with it.	Strong support
H4: The greater that people work well together in trying to achieve the financial and/or strategic performance targets of a strategic plan in the company, the better the chance they will have in meeting the company's goals.	Weak support
H5: The more that senior-level leaders are willing to make positive changes, the greater the likelihood that the financial and/or strategic performance targets of a strategic plan in the company will succeed.	Mixed support
H6: Those senior-level leaders who have been trained in or studied strategic planning and implementation are more likely to meet the performance targets set for the company.	Weak support
H7: Those senior-level leaders that have at least a 2-year college degree (i.e., Associate Degree) are more likely to meet the performance targets set for the company.	No inference made

Overall, my study has generated at least one very significant finding; one that the results have a very strong support. That discovery, which came from Hypothesis 3 (i.e., employees who understand and agree with the company's strategic plan will most likely have a higher commitment to the firm's success than employees who do not know or agree with it) compares favorably to a previous quantitative research study performed by Guffy (1992), who investigated the role of organizational communication in the implementation of a business unit strategy. Guffy's (1992, p. 81) Hypothesis 3, similar to my study's Hypothesis 3, was also supported with a positive correlation (i.e., $r = 0.16$, $\alpha \leq 0.001$): "Employees who know the firm's S.B.U. strategy will have higher commitment to the organization than employees who do not know the firm's S.B.U. strategy."

The next chapter focuses on further discussions of the key findings, how they are situated in the literature, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter presents specific research findings related to the literature already presented, including overall conclusions based on the findings of the hypotheses tests as well as an analysis of research questions. This chapter ends with limitations of my study, implications of the research, and recommendations for additional research.

Summary

As acknowledged in chapter 1 of my study, businesses truly are being challenged by a new backdrop of implementation challenges, rapid and unpredictable changes, technological upgrades, and increasing globalization. As a result, implementation of a new strategy is the hardest part of moving a company in a new direction (Reading, 2002).

The concept of strategy implementation is an important management task geared at determining the performance of principal business activities. The key to successful strategy implementation is to ensure that everyone in the company is given ample opportunity to contribute to the strategy (Reading, 2002). More important, successful strategy execution entails vigilantly searching for ways to improve and then make corrective adjustments wherever it is useful to do so (Thompson et al., 2006).

Since my study dealt with the concepts of strategy implementation and leadership behavior, I operationally defined these two terms to mean (a) those senior-level leadership behaviors and activities that will transform a possible working plan into a concrete reality (i.e., implementation of the strategy); and (b) those behaviors, attitudes, and dispositions of senior-level leaders that inspire and motivate employees to contribute their best efforts to fulfill the company's goals.

Next, I developed a focus for my study. He analyzed data from many different businesses exclusively in the casino industry within the state of Nevada in order to increase the understanding of how senior-level leaders use the strategy implementation process to realize their strategic ends, effectively implementing their strategic plan. This is significant because the literature review on business strategy and strategy implementation reveals that there is a lack of information to support the notion that the use of an effective strategy-implementation process or model can assist management to realize an organization's strategic ends (Cândido, 2005).

One of the most effective aids to strategy implementation is to involve people early on in the development and discussions of strategic options. But a variety of obstacles—generally known but just as generally overlooked—can and will intervene to prevent the strategy from unfolding (Hardy, 1994). As well, a surprising number of strategies fail because leaders do not make a realistic evaluation of whether the organization can carry out the plan (Bossidy & Charan, 2002), primarily because of the lack of information available to enable management to prepare for an effective strategy-implementation process.

As noted in chapter 2 of my study, the strategy implementation process falls short because of the presence of one or more of the following six key human behavioral factors:

1. Top-down or laissez-faire style of senior management
2. Unclear strategy and conflicting priorities

3. An ineffective senior management team
4. Poor vertical communication
5. Poor coordination across functions, businesses or barriers
6. Inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development. (Beer & Eisenstadt (2000, p. 30)

With these behavioral factors in mind, I wanted to identify various human tendencies that positively or negatively affect the implementation of a strategic plan. I was keenly aware that only a few things accurately predict the success or failure of a strategy: "(a) the organization's technical ability to execute the strategy, and (b) the organization's will (or resolve) to implement it" (Press, 2001, p. 27). Knowing this, I developed the following research study question: *How do the behaviors of senior-level leaders, as perceived by themselves, contribute to the success or failure of strategy implementation?* The answers to the question were determined by those participants who responded to the mailed survey. In addition, I determined, through correlation analysis, if there was a way to accurately measure effective or ineffective leadership behaviors as they relate to successful or unsuccessful strategy implementation.

To carry out this assignment, I had three research objectives in mind: (a) to identify, where possible, effective or ineffective leadership behaviors encountered by senior-level leaders who have tried to implement their strategic plan(s); (b) to determine what involvement senior-level leadership had with trying to achieve the financial and/or strategic performance targets set by the company; and (c) to determine what senior-level leadership changes should possibly be needed to further assure that the financial and/or strategic performance targets set by the company are, in fact, met.

Discussion of the Findings

While there are numerous management styles, one characteristic underpins the behavior of all great leaders—an outstanding leader comes to know and value the specific idiosyncrasies and capabilities of his or her subordinates (Buckingham, 2005). Most of all, a first-rate implementation of a strategy is the best test of managerial excellence and the most reliable formula for turning companies into standout performers (Thompson, Strickland, & Gamble, 2005). Galagan (1997) stressed that tailoring every facet of the business to support the strategy, using qualitative analysis as well as financial analysis to measure results, and making strategy implementation is part of everyone's job. However, strategy implementation may not be a popular topic with many managers. Senior-level leaders often invest in week-long retreats, extensive marketing research, and expensive outside consulting services when trying to develop the strategic plans that will lead their companies to a successful future. Unfortunately, many of these plans do not come to fruition because of inadequate design or poor implementation of the strategic plan. Still, successful implementers get on with the implementation process. They are the achievers, the action takers; they are not necessarily impetuous, but they do not wait until they have recognized every potential unforeseen event before beginning to take action (Hardy, 1994).

Further supporting the above-mentioned statement (i.e., many plans do not come to fruition because of inadequate design or poor implementation of the strategic plan), I received some interesting feedback about the respondents' using outside consultants. In these cases, 19 participants had hired a consultant(s) within the last 5 years. The question was: If the company hired a consultant (or a facilitator) within the last 5 years, how was this person *not helpful* to the organization in implementing a strategic plan? Of those that responded, 47% pointed out that the consultant(s) did not monitor the company's progress during the actual implementation phase. I did not find these results surprising. Bates and Dillard (1993, p. 18) supported this posit by stating that: "The most difficult hurdle the consultant will encounter is that of carrying out the strategic plan after its development." In addition, 27% of the respondents indicated that the consultant(s) did not understand their client's business. Even so, the question still remains for me: How is hiring an outside consultant vital to the success of strategic planning and implementation? In trying to answer this issue, I ran a correlation analysis on a dependent variable and two independent variables.

As seen in Table 46, the negative finding (i.e., $r = -0.20^{*}$, $t = -2.34$), at the 0.05 level of significance, which analyzed the relationship between a strategic planning question and a leadership behavior query, showed that there is a negative tendency between a company having success in achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets and a consultant who does not monitor the progress during the actual implementation phase of the company's strategic plan. In other words, just because a consultant does not monitor the progress of the company's implementation phase of the strategic plan is not necessarily the reason for an organization to fail to accomplish the performance targets set for the company.

In assessing the data from the other positive correlation, it was found not to be significant because it showed a level of significance less than 0.05. Nevertheless, the

Table 46

Correlation Results – Question 5 and Question 20c, d

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Company accomplishing its performance targets**
Consultant did not understand the business	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.01 (0.18)
Consultant did not monitor the progress during the implementation phase	Correlation & *t*-value: -0.20* (-2.23)
Note:	The correlation that states "Consultant did not understand the business" was found statistically not significant.

data are provided for the reader's review (refer to Table 46). In looking at the same dependent variable as mentioned above, and another independent variable, the extent to which the consultant did not understand the business, I wanted to determine if there was a casual relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. In this case, I realized that there is a null hypothesis; and, thus, there is no significant difference between what results I acquired and what would happen by probability alone.

Because the findings are also very close to 0.00 and without statistical significance, I concluded that the effects themselves have happened probably by chance or are almost certainly coincidental.

In today's milieu, we have leaders committed to change who are implementing plans in discrete steps –clarifying initial intentions, ensuring acquisition of new skills, and refining change efforts to guarantee results (Dalziel & Schoonover, 1988). But, given the track record of many companies over the past 2 decades, some organizations are simply not capable of changing much, and we (i.e., as senior-level leaders) must learn to accept that fact (Kotter, 1996). To either support or deny this thinking, I reviewed all the responses to Question 10 of his survey. As shown in Table 47, my study extends the work of Kotter (1996) and tangentially confirms mixed support

Table 47

Responses to Question 10a-j

Total number of responses = 120	**Responses**
Among the following senior-level leadership factors and/or behaviors, please check (√) all those that have positively affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?	
Built an organization with competencies, capabilities, and resource strengths to carry out the strategy successfully	69 or 57.5%
Developed budgets to steer resources into those activities that were critical to success	78 or 65.0%
Established effective strategy-supportive policies and procedures	65 or 54.2%
Instituted best practices and pushed for continuous improvement	73 or 60.8%
Installed information, communication, and operating systems that enabled company personnel to carry out their roles successfully	71 or 59.2%
Tied reward and incentives to the achievement of performance objectives and good strategy execution	52 or 43.3%
Created a strategy-supportive work environment	44 or 36.7%
Exerted the internal leadership needed to drive implementation forward and to improve on how the strategy was executed	75 or 62.5%
Removed executive road blocks to insure executive/management performance	40 or 33.3%
Other	5 or 4.2%

for Hypothesis 1 in that these replies sustain the notion that effective leadership behavioral processes support the development of successful implementations. Of the 10 possible answers, six showed results that exceeded the 50% threshold level. Sixty-five percent of the respondents indicated that they developed budgets to steer resources into those activities that were critical to successful implementation; 60.8% instituted best practices and pushed for continuous improvement; 59.2% installed information, communication, and operating systems that enabled company personnel to carry out their roles successfully; and 57.5% of the respondents built an organization with competencies, capabilities, and resource strengths to carry out the strategy successfully.

There are aspects of the implementation process that make strategy implementation a difficult, more time-consuming leadership challenge than simply crafting a strategy. In addition, there are wide arrays of managerial activities that have to be attended to by the organization's leaders. Also, it takes perseverance to get a variety of initiatives launched and to oversee their movement in the right direction.

As I looked at many different implementation models within the framework of his hypotheses, I concluded that there is no standard form and/or procedure that defines precisely what an organization must do to become good at strategy implementation. Nonetheless, there is plenty of proof, through previous studies as well as my study, that the number one success factor for effective leadership is healthy relationships. Sometimes the relationship is one-to-many. Sometimes it's one-to-one. But regardless of whether the number is one or one thousand, leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow (Bennis, Spreitzer, & Cummings, 2001).

According to Beaudan (2001), the key to successful implementation is also knowing that people do what they think, upon reflection and validation, rather than what they say, which is often prejudiced by their need to preserve their image and influence in the organization. To be efficient, a business strategy needs to be complemented by an equally well-thought-out implementation strategy centered on the new rules executives will need to play by in order to foster change (Beaudan, 2001).

Based on my own findings (refer to Table 48), my study supports Beaudan's notion and, to a certain degree, Hypothesis 1. It also extends Beaudan's work on strategy implementation. Over 79% of the respondents who answered Question 3 stated that they always (i.e., 34.7%) or often (i.e., 44.9%) are involved with strategy formulation, part of a well-thought-out implementation strategy. For that reason, implementation must be considered during the formulation process, not later, when it may be too late (Hardy, 1994). A tendency, however, to treat strategy formulation and implementation as two separate phases is at the root of many failed strategies (Quinn, Mintzberg, & James, 1988).

Table 48

Responses to Question 3

Total number of responses = 118	**Responses**
To what extent have key stakeholders been involved in strategy formulation?	
Always	41 or 34.7%
Often	53 or 44.9%
Sometimes	23 or 19.5%
Never	1 or 0.8%

Strategy implementation and change is best carried out by means of high-performing people who are focused on giving target customers what they actually want. Key performance factors explored in chapter 2 included a clear mission and strategy, selection and training, corporate culture, communication/information, and rewards (Michlitsch, 2000).

My study, as previously stated, argues that there are disparities in this literature. First and foremost, the examples given by the writers are divergent, at times conflicting, and are not clearly spelled out in a particular academic or theoretical setting. In other words, most writers have not gone into specific details about their strategy-implementation process. They have only presented strategy-implementation overview approaches or models. I, still, made every attempt, by utilizing a survey instrument, to better understand the challenges of successfully/unsuccessfully implementing a strategy.

When the 14 results of my work (refer to Table 49) were compared to that of a study performed by Beer & Eisenstadt (2000), I noticed that only six common leadership obstacles associated with the ability to effectively implement a strategy were shared by both studies. They were:

1. Top-down or laissez-faire style of senior management
2. Unclear strategy and conflicting priorities
3. An ineffective senior management team
4. Poor vertical communication
5. Poor coordination across functions, businesses or barriers
6. Inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development (p. 30)

I found, in reviewing the results from Questions 6 and 10e respectively (refer to Appendix A – Questionnaire), and related to Hypothesis 2 of which there was also mixed support, that 57% of respondents have communicated the vision and/or mission statement, if there was one, to all of their subordinates; and that 59% of the respondents stated that they installed information, communication, and operating systems that enabled company personnel to carry out their roles successfully. Knowing this, I concluded that when senior-level leaders communicate the vision and/or mission statement to their subordinates, and if they also install information, communication, and operating systems accordingly, there is better than a 50% chance that their personnel will be able to carry out their roles successfully.

Table 49

Responses to Question 11a-n

Total number of responses = 120	**Responses**
Among the following senior-level leadership factors and/or behaviors, please check (√) all those that have negatively affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company.	
Implementation took more time than originally planned	57 or 47.5%
Unanticipated internal business problems arose that slowed things down or put them on hold	46 or 38.3%
Uncontrollable external factors created problems such as a competitor(s) lowering its list prices	46 or 38.3%
Lower-level management and/or front-line employees are not committed to implementing a strategy – unwillingness to change	44 or 36.7%
Lower-level employees were insufficiently trained	34 or 28.3%
Lack of adequate human resources – not enough people to make the needed changes	28 or 23.3%
Inability of senior-level leadership to effectively communicate the financial and/or strategic performance targets to subordinates	25 or 20.8%
Lack of financial resources – not enough money to accomplish what was proposed	23 or 19.2%
Inadequate way of monitoring or evaluating the performance of the strategy	23 or 19.2%
Deficient senior-level leadership skills	22 or 18.3%
Lack of knowledge within the management team to achieve the strategy and/or business plan	19 or 15.8%
Key implementation tasks and activities were poorly defined	17 or 14.2%
Poor coordination across functions, businesses, and barriers	17 or 14.2%
Other	7 or 5.9%

After comparing Hypothesis 2 of my study to Guffy's (1992) work, I wanted to investigate, at least in part, the impact of a formal communication program on organization performance. In this case, a positive correlation (i.e., $r = 0.16^{**}$, $\alpha < 0.001$) was found between knowledge and organization commitment. The findings of Guffy's (1992) work also support the suggestion by Mathieu and Zajac (1990) that effective leadership communication and organization commitment are correlated.

In further looking at Guffy's (1992) work, I also concluded, based on the results of my findings (i.e., Question 21 vs. Question 22 [refer to Table 28]), that this particular correlation ($r = 0.78^{**}$, $t = 13.33$), statistically significant at the 0.01 level, showed that there is a positive relationship between how well employees at all levels understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan and how committed they are to the success of the company's strategic plan. In fact, the results of these variables tell us with almost absolute certainty that the better an employee understands the objectives of the company's current strategic plan, the more committed that employee will be to the success of the company's strategic plan. I, as stated before, deduced that the findings are a strong positive because when employees know that the objectives are clear and stress the right things (Hrebiniak, 2005), the greater the likelihood that the performance targets will be achieved.

Rapert et al. (2000) stated that communication and shared understandings (i.e., consensus) play a key role in the implementation process. In particular, when vertical communication is frequent, strategic consensus is enhanced and organization performance improves, as evidenced by higher levels of net operating income, gross revenues, and growth in net revenues. In comparing the above-mentioned comments to my study (i.e., Hypothesis 2), especially Question 9 (refer to Appendix A – Questionnaire), which deals with implementing a strategic plan successfully according to the performance targets set for the company, and Question 16 (refer to Appendix A – Questionnaire), which deals with how well people worked together in implementing the performance targets set for the company, the results showed that there was a positive relationship between these two variables. Also, in comparing the above-mentioned comments to my study (i.e., Hypothesis 4, for which there was weak support), especially Question 3 (refer to Appendix A - Questionnaire), which deals with the extent key stakeholders have been involved in strategy formulation, and Question 16 again, which deals with how well people worked together in implementing the performance targets set for the company, the results, once again showed that there was a positive relationship between these two variables. Therefore, I presumed, as already stated by other researchers, that effective communication up and down the organizational structure plays an important role in the strategy implementation process.

In a survey conducted in association with Robert Kaplan of the Harvard Business School and Business Intelligence (Rousseau & Rousseau, 1999), more than 40% of senior managers and more than 90% of all employees stated they did not believe they had a clear understanding of their company's strategy. The results from my study suggest that successful strategy realization is determined by the coherence of decisions and actions of all employees at all levels of the organization and not just by the people who originally defined the strategy.

Once more, my study shows that over 38% of the senior-level leaders did not communicate the company's direction and business strategy to all of its subordinates (refer to Table 50). As such, I concluded, relative to Hypothesis 3, for which there was very strong support, that it is possible that at least 38% of the senior-level leaders' subordinates might not know and/or understand their organization's strategy. To a certain degree, the work of my study extends the work provided by Rousseau and Rousseau (1999).

Since five of the seven hypotheses, or 71.4%, in my study received mixed or weak results (i.e., mixed support: Hypotheses 1, 2, and 5; weak support: Hypotheses 4 and 6), my study supports Beer's and Eisenstadt's (2000) notion that there are at least six key leadership barriers, if not more, that could prevent a senior-level leader from effectively implementing a strategy. And because Hypothesis 3 of my study received very strong support (i.e., employees who understand and agree with the company's strategic plan are more likely to have a higher commitment to the firm's success than employees who do not know or agree with it), I concluded that when employees do not understand and agree with the company's strategic plan, there will be a much higher likelihood that the implementation process of that plan will fail.

In general, firms make decisions about the most favorable strategy to implement, given that they face an inescapable environmental condition—their competitors (Dickinson & Ramaseshan, 2004). Taking this concept into account and from the literature provided in this research project, Schellenberg in her dissertation (1983) extended the notion of strategy implementation to include matching managerial

Table 50

Responses to Question 7

Total number of responses = 119	**Responses**
In the past 24 months, has senior-level leadership communicated the company's direction and business strategy to all of its subordinates?	
Yes	63 or 53.8%
No	46 or 38.7%
Not sure	7 or 5.9%
Not Applicable	2 or 1.7%

performance criteria to the strategy. "The reward system, as an integrating mechanism, directs, or should direct, the activities of individuals, groups, and subunits toward the accomplishment of organizational goals" (Schellenberg, 1983, p. 86). While the relationship between organization goals and strategies as the means to accomplish those goals and reward systems intuitively seems logical, very little conceptual or empirical research has examined the strategy/reward system linkage (Schellenberg, 1983).

Barnard (1938), 67 years ago, stressed the importance of incentive systems in providing the impetus necessary to secure the assistance of the individuals in the organization: "Organizations can exist only when consistent with the satisfaction of these (individual) motives . . . The individual is always the basic strategic factor in the organization" (p. 139).

Schellenberg (1983) felt that tying rewards and incentives to the achievement of performance objectives and good strategy execution could be key factors that positively affect the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for a company. Unfortunately, only 52 senior-level leaders, or 43.3% out of the 120 respondents, checked this answer as a leadership behavior that has positively affected the performance targets set for the company. The remaining 68 participants, or 56.7%, did not check this answer (refer to Appendix A – Question 10f).

Reward systems must be planned to ensure organizational performance. Senior-level leaders cannot rely on just the voluntary and spontaneous selection of behavior (Galbraith, 1977). Lawler (1977) raised the interesting point that there is no single best reward system. Hardy (1994, p. 164) stated that: "The criteria for receiving rewards can and should be tailored to the specific strategic thrust of the business." The best incentive scheme depends on the organization's strategy and objectives, and must be in harmony with the organization's structure. Still and all, there is no one best way to reward, and reward systems are differentially effective in eliciting various types of behaviors. The reward systems and performance criteria have to be matched to the organizational purposes (Galbraith, 1977). In addition, Andrews (1980) persuasively made a case that individual behavior in the organization is the outcome of the processes of measurement, evaluation, motivation, and control; these processes must be directed toward the kind of leadership behavior required by the organization strategy. Lacking the ability to propose adequate financial inducements to key subordinates, I deduced that, at least in part, the organization would be unable to effect a successful strategy implementation. This statement is supported by Thompson et al. (2006, p. 31), in that step 8 out of the 9-step strategy executing process model clearly lists: "Tying rewards and incentives directly to the achievement of performance objectives and good strategy execution."

In looking back at the literature again, Jenster (1985) believed that there were a number of key implications associated with management practice. These implications ranged from general management insights to the design of corporate planning and control systems. Jenster assumed that the achievement of excellent organizational performance is directly dependent on the strategy implementation and, thus, the quality of the strategic control which management conducts. Jenster also considered, based on the results of his work, that effective leadership behavior is directly related to successful strategy implementation. When evaluating the responses that were provided by the respondents in my study's questionnaire, the univariate results did not look that encouraging. They are shown near the beginning of this chapter (refer to Table 47).

A later study by Alexander (1991,) revealed that over half of the organizations experienced the following 10 problems, listed in order of frequency, when they attempted to implement, from a leadership-behavior perspective, a strategic change:

1. Implementation took more time than originally planned.
2. Unanticipated major problems arose.
3. Activities were ineffectively coordinated.
4. Competing activities and crises took attention away from implementation.
5. The involved employees had insufficient capabilities to perform their jobs.
6. Lower-level employees were inadequately trained.
7. Uncontrollable external environmental factors created problems.
8. Departmental managers provided inadequate leadership and direction.
9. Key implementation tasks and activities were poorly defined.
10. The information system inadequately monitored activities (pp. 73-113).

When comparing the answers that were provided by the respondents in my study's questionnaire to that of Alexander's (1991) work, the 14 univariate results showed, even tangentially, some interesting similarities (refer to Table 49, also ranked in order of frequency). In fact, both studies indicated that it took more time than originally planned and that unanticipated internal business problems complicated the process of achieving the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company. Both studies also showed, from an order-of-frequency standpoint, that lower-level employees were insufficiently trained and that there was an inadequate way of monitoring or evaluating the performance of the strategy. Be that as it may, I considered, at least in part, that my study extends the work of Alexander (1991).

Even though Rousseau's and Rousseau's (1999) work was mentioned earlier in this chapter in that same survey conducted in association with Robert Kaplan of the Harvard Business School and Business Intelligence (Rousseau & Rousseau, 1999), more than 40% of senior managers and more than 90% of all employees stated they did not believe they had a clear understanding of their company's strategy. Thus, successful strategy realization is determined by the coherence of decisions and actions of all employees at all levels of the organization, not just by the people who originally defined the strategy.

When comparing Kaplan's survey to my study, especially Hypothesis 3, I purposely looked at the univariate results of Question 21: How well do the employees, at all levels, understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan? (refer to Appendix A – Questionnaire). In evaluating the data from my study, only 11% of the senior-level managers felt that employees, at all levels, do not understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan. Then again, since 66% of the senior-level managers felt that employees, at all levels, somewhat understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan, this could also be interpreted to mean that the remaining 34% of the employees, again at all levels, do not necessarily understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan. If that is the case, when adding up the results from my study (i.e., Question 21d [11%] + 21b [34%]), it is possible that 45% of the employees, at all levels, truly do not understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan. While 45% is half that which Kaplan reported in his survey, the significance of these results from my study indicates that almost 50% of the employees, at all levels, still do not understand the objectives of the company's strategic plan. From my perspective, my study is concerned with the results. Since almost 50% of the employees, at all levels, do not understand the objectives of the company's strategic plan, the probability of having a successful execution is almost equally as improbable. Table 51 provides the following outcomes.

In looking back at the literature again, Wheatley (2001) wanted to explore the relationships of strategic leadership compensation, governance, and composition on the innovation strategy to that of performance relationship. In analyzing Hypothesis 3 of Wheatley's study (i.e., bonus), the assumption was found to show, using a 3-step hierarchical regression, mixed support for bonus compensation on innovative strategy and performance. In comparing Wheatley's (2001) work to that of my study, I looked at Hypothesis 5, for which there was mixed support (i.e., Question 2 vs. Question 10f – refer to Table 37). This particular finding (i.e., $r = 0.09$, $t = 1.01$), because it showed a level of significance less than 0.05, was not statistically significant; lets the reader know that no inference was made to support the theory.

Table 51

Responses to Question 21

How well do the employees at all levels understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan?	Number of responses that answered either a, b, c, d, or e, out of 120 respondents	Number of responses that answered yes out of 120 respondents (shown as a percent)
They fully understand	16	13.3%
They somewhat understand	66	55.0%
They neither understand nor not understand	21	17.5%
They do not understand	11	9.2%
I do not know if the employees understand or do not understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan	6	5.0%

I also realized that whenever there is support for a null hypothesis, this likely would have happened by probability alone. Further to this point, because the results of this finding are also quite close to 0.00 and without statistical significance, I concluded that the effects themselves have happened probably by chance or are almost certainly coincidental.

From a univariate results perspective, 52 out of the 120 respondents in my study, or 43.3%, indicated that tying rewards and incentives to the achievement of performance objectives and good strategy execution was an aspect that positively affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company. I, accordingly, concluded that tying rewards to the successful implementation of a strategy is a good senior-level leadership motivational tool. This statement is supported by the following finding (refer to Table 52). This positive correlation (i.e., $r = 0.21^{**}$, $t = 2.37$), statistically significant at the 0.01 level, shows that there is a positive tendency for the variables to change in tandem between a company having success in achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets and the organization's tying rewards/incentives to the achievement of performance objectives and good strategy execution.

Table 52

Correlation Results – Question 5 and Question 10f

Total Number of Responses = 119	Company accomplishing performance targets
Tying rewards and incentives to the achievement of performance objectives and good strategy execution	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.21** (2.37)

Bovey and Hede (2001, p. 373) found that: "employee resistance was the most frequently cited problem encountered by management when implementing change" (Wadersee & Griffiths, 1997). In comparing the results of Bovey's and Hede's (2001) work to my study, and Hypothesis 5, I further analyzed the responses from Question 11e (refer to Appendix A – Questionnaire). I found, according to the 120 responses provided by the senior-level participants, that 37% of the lower-level management and/or front-line employees are not committed to implementing a strategy (i.e., unwillingness to change). From my perspective, when over ⅓rd of the respondents state that front-line employees are reluctant to change, the probability of achieving the performance targets set for the company is also doubtful.

In a doctoral dissertation, Fisher (2002) intended, using a mailed survey instrument to 676 top executives at the Fortune 500 companies and to S&P 500 companies, to identify factors that affected the successful implementation of an ERP system. The study also provided recommendations, based on a response rate of 19.4%, to help organizations overcome barriers to successful ERP implementation, and that is "the more training the employee received on the ERP system, the more successful the implementation was" (Fisher, 2002, p. 72). In contrasting Fisher's (2002) findings to that of my study, I looked at the univariate results of Question 23 (refer to Appendix A – Questionnaire). In my study, 78 out of the 120 respondents, or 65% of the senior-level managers, felt that subordinates should be trained so they better understand how to implement the performance targets set by the company. As a result of these findings, I believe that the more training subordinates receive on how to implement the performance targets set by the company, the more likely they will successfully implement the plan.

I was wondering if, as noted in Table 6, since over half of the survey respondents have not been trained in or studied strategic planning and implementation, there may be a peripheral relationship between not being trained in the area of strategic management and not effectively executing a strategic plan. Since 50.8% of the participants have not been trained in or studied strategic planning and implementation, I wanted to accept as true, in relation to Hypothesis 6, for which there was weak support, that the lack of training or knowledge of strategic planning and implementation can possibly contribute to the failure of a strategic plan. While half of the respondents have not been trained in or formally studied strategic planning and implementation, I could not be sure that the lack of training or knowledge of strategic planning and implementation could, in fact, contribute to the failure of a strategic plan. Even though the univariate results indicated a possible shortcoming, this was still only conjecture on my part. As such, I decided to further analyze the data. The examined questions are shown in Table 40. In looking at the results from Hypothesis 6, unfortunately the correlation outcomes themselves were not statistically significant; consequently, no real inference was made (refer to Table 41). Further to this point, it must be recognized that there is some difficulty in comparing business with education simply because for many years they have been regarded as two discrete and separate domains that dealt with completely different things (Tsiakkiros & Pashiardis, 2002). On the other hand, as stated by Rausch et al. (2001, p. 254): "The brief discussion of the Thompson and Strickland (1995) model has shown that education and staff development can make significant contributions to the accomplishment of a strategy, and especially of a dynamic one that anticipates and quickly adjusts to changing situations."

Because there is some scholarly debate as to whether senior-level leaders who have been trained in or studied strategic planning and implementation are more or less likely to meet the performance targets set for the company, I wanted to investigate this matter one step further. I wanted to see if there was any relationship between the training/studied strategic planning and implementation question, and any other query associated with possibly implementing a strategic plan. Having completed further analysis, I found that there is a positive correlation (i.e., $r = 0.20^*$, $t = 2.21$) between being trained in or having formally studied strategic planning and implementation and a senior-level leader communicating the company's direction and business strategy to all of its subordinates (refer to Table 53). What might this mean? I concluded, at least in a tangential way, that being trained in or having formally studied strategic planning and implementation can help a senior-level leader better communicate the company direction and business strategy to all of its subordinates.

Table 53

Correlation Results – Question 31 and Question 7

Total Number of Responses = 119	**Trained in or formally studied strategic planning and implementation**
Senior-level leadership communicating the company's direction and business strategy to all of its subordinates	Correlation & *t*-value: 0.20* (2.21)

In a recent study performed by Lipton: "the number one marketplace and management issues were engaging employees in the vision" (Lipton, 2004, p. n/a). I was concerned about this particular management issue. As such, my study found, for the most part, that over 57% of senior level leaders communicated the vision and/or mission statement, if there is one, to all of its subordinates (refer to Table 54).

Now, if the reader were to refer back to chapter 4, Table 13, this particular correlation ($r = 0.25^{**}$, $t = 2.79$), statistically significant at the 0.01 level, which analyzed the relationship between a key strategic planning question and a leadership behavior query, illustrates that there is a positive cause-and-effect relationship between a company's success at achieving its financial and/or strategic performance target and the extent that a senior-level leader has been involved with the company's strategy

Table 54

Univariate Results – Question 6

Category	Frequency	% of the Total
Yes	68	57.1
No	37	31.1
Not sure	8	6.7
Not applicable	6	5.0

implementation plans. The association also exists because I concluded it is in the best interest of an organization for its senior-level leaders to be actively involved with all steps of the strategic management process. To support my view, Beer and Eisenstadt (2000) suggested that top-down or laissez-faire management style needs to be turned into engaged leadership. Hughes et al. (2002) also suggested that leadership needs to involve an interaction between the leader, the followers, and the situation. By accomplishing these human behavioral processes, the organization has a better chance toward accomplishing its goal of successful strategy implementation.

Again, if the reader were to refer to chapter 4, Table 16, this positive correlation (i.e., $r = 0.20$*, $t = 2.24$), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, showed that there was a positive relationship between the company successfully achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets with the motivating factor for the senior-level leader being financially rewarded.

Incentives, a significant aspect in making the strategy work, must reinforce strategic and short-term objectives. Individual and group rewards are a significant aspect of strategy execution because they control performance with respect to desired strategic and short-term outcomes. This notion is supported by Michlitsch (2000, p. 32):

"Companies with high-performing employees put their money where their mouth is. They pay employees for performance." Moreover, it truly is critical that the organization rewards the "right things," including previously defined strategic and short-term objectives (Hrebiniak, 2005). Likewise, tying rewards and incentives to a successful strategy implementation is a core concept. A properly designed reward structure is management's most powerful tool for mobilizing organizational commitment to successful strategy execution (Thompson et al., 2005).

Once more, if the reader refers to chapter 4, testing of Hypothesis 1, Table 17, these 13 correlations, while all but one was not statistically significant, still showed mostly negative relationships between the success of a company achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets and, as perceived by the senior-level leaders, that the implementation process takes significantly longer than originally planned. The outcome, at least in the one statically significant correlation, basically means that with regard to the success of a company achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets, senior-level leaders were discouraged by the fact that the implementation process took significantly longer than originally planned. This is significant because the dissemination of the information process must be well-timed and applicable. Therefore, I conclude, in comparing my study to that of Alexander's (1991) work, that for controls to work in an opportune manner, up-to-date information must be valid, correct, and timely.

Continuing to test Hypothesis 1, still referring to chapter 4, Table 19, this particular correlation (i.e., $r = 0.21^{*}$, $t = 2.31$), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, also shows a positive relationship. More specifically, it shows that there is a positive tendency for the variables to change in tandem between a company successfully achieving its financial and/or strategic targets, and a senior-level leader taking subordinates' input, feedback, and comments into consideration when making a decision. This was confirmed by Clampitt et al. (2002), who essentially stated that if senior-level leaders want their strategic plan to be implemented, they must gather the support of other members throughout the organization. This involves seeking their input and assessing their degree of support. Additionally, and from an effective leadership perspective, teams that work together can achieve greatness; apart, they are doomed to mediocrity (Baggett, 2004). Also, making strategy work necessitates feedback about organizational performance and then using that information to fine-tune strategy, objectives, and the strategy implementation process itself. In fact, feedback is absolutely essential to organizational change (Hrebiniak, 2005).

And finally, if the reader were to refer back to chapter 4, Table 37, this particular correlation (i.e., $r = 0.23^{**}$, $t = 2.54$), statistically significant at the 0.01 level, showed a positive relationship. It tells us that we can state with a reasonable degree of certainty that there is a positive relationship between the extent at which a senior-level leader has personally been involved with strategy implementation in his or her current job and the internal leadership needed to drive implementation forward and to improve on how the strategy was executed.

This statement is supported in a study about the obstacles to successful strategy implementation. Wernham (1985) stated that a key factor influencing strategy implementation success is that top management must be eagerly involved in its entire process.

Limitations of the Study

The reader of my study must consider the limitations due to external validity, prediction versus causality of variables' relationships, and variables not investigated. In addition, another constraint of my study is that the answers provided by the participants are only the perceptions of the senior-level leaders as to what factors might have contributed to the success or failure of strategy implementation. As well, the data provided in my study do not measure certain behaviors to the outcomes themselves. Knowledge of these limitations will allow understanding of the research in the proper context.

The external validity of my study is limited because it was only conducted in the casino industry within the state of Nevada. Also, as an average, only 1.3 senior-level leaders per casino (i.e., 120 respondents/93 casinos) responded from each solicited organization. Nonetheless, the casino industry is widespread within the United States with casino operations in the majority of states across the country. In addition, while the sample size was not limiting within the pre-determined population size, the value of predicting results in this same industry is limited since data are not available from other states that allow gaming in order to analyze the effects among the target group (i.e., senior-level leaders). The sample group, based on gender, age, education, trained in/studied strategic planning and implementation, employed in current position, number of employees, current yearly revenue, and current title, may also be limited when considering predictability among a larger target group.

With regard to reliability of scales, while the scales developed had acceptable internal consistency coefficients, at least the 0.05 and 0.01 confidence levels, confirmation with other employee groups would certainly enhance the use of scales to determine variables in future research.

On the subject of determination of causality, there has been an assumption up to now that I have been dealing with identifiable causal relationships. But according to Black (1999), causal links are not that easy to identify and prove. As well, identifying meaningful potential variables that fit in sensible causal chains in the social sciences can be a difficult task (Black, 1999). Thus, additional research investigating the impact of effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation would provide data about the possibility of causal relationships.

As a final limitation of my study, while I looked at both internal and external obstacles faced with a successful strategy implementation, I did not consider how the parent company—if, in fact, the respondents were subsidiaries of parent companies—might have an effect on the ability of the subsidiary organization to successfully implement its strategy. Corporate officials at the parent company can certainly impede or slow down implementation, even after approving the strategy in principle. The parent's own grand strategy may change, or the parent may simply lose patience with or confidence in the new strategy. In addition, the parent company is usually under its own set of pressures and wants to put its resources where they will do the most good (Hardy, 1994).

Conclusions

According to a study performed by Hardy (1994):

> A close understanding of strategy implementation successes reveals that the strategists set out with broad game plans in mind but were flexible, open-minded, and always on the lookout for the problems the new strategy would be creating and for ways of solving those problems. These strategists were opportunists in the most positive sense of the word. They had broad guidance systems, but were spontaneous and responsive as truly successful strategists must be (p. 170).

On the basis of the above quote, the following conclusions are drawn. First, the sample of the 120 respondents, considering that the target group was senior-level leaders in the Nevada casino industry, provides an adequate sample size for the various relationships tested. It is noted, nonetheless, that 100% of the responses were used as part of data collection as well as data analysis. The various tests performed, using Microcase's® statistical software, determined that correlations between certain variables were significant. Conclusions in this research were based on confidence levels at 0.05 (*) and 0.01 (**) to insure adequate conclusion validity.

Strategic decisions, in most cases, are formulated by senior-level executives of the firm and then administratively imposed on lower-level employees with little consideration of the resulting functional-level perceptions (Nutt, 1987). If, however, lower-level employees are not aware of the same information, or if information must pass through several (management) layers in the organization, a lower level of consensus and consistency of information may not result. In the end, this lack of shared knowledge creates stumbling blocks to successful strategy implementation (Dess, 1987; Noble, 1999).

Strategy implementation is the amplification and understanding of a new strategy within an organization (Mintzberg, 1994). Such an explanation involves the development of new structures, processes, and other organizational alignments (Galbraith & Kazanjian, 1986). In the case of change, elaboration also includes changes in the organizational paradigm (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985; Johnson, 1988) so that it conforms to and supports the new strategic perspective (Mintzberg, 1994). The implementation process also involves scaling down the new strategy from a high-level (i.e., senior-level leaders), theoretical, and widespread vision into more specific implementation content, or action plans (Mintzberg, 1994). Such decay also involves choices about implementation content or solutions and implementation process (Kernochan, 1997).

Execution is the great unaddressed issue in the business world today. Its absence is the single biggest obstruction to success and cause of most of the disappointment that are mistakenly attributed to other causes (Bossidy & Charan, 2002). Therefore, to sum up, my study provides an initial and first-of-its-kind investigation in the Nevada casino industry of the relationship between effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation. My study also reaffirms the role that strategic consensus plays in the strategy implementation process. In addition, my study's findings, for the most part, are in agreement with earlier research on the concept of strategy implementation. More important, frequent communication up and down the organization structure serves to enhance strategic consensus through the fostering of shared attitudes and values. Also, in firms where rewards are tied to the success of the strategy, organizations are rewarded with higher levels of organizational performance. Having said this, I concluded that execution plans still must be clearly developed, indicating tasks, time frames, and the people responsible for task completion (Hrebiniak, 2005). And the major difference between competitive success and failure lays more in matters of strategy implementation than strategy formulation (Hardy, 1994).

Implications of the Research Findings

Companies have long acknowledged the need to develop a sound strategy and then reorganize the structure, systems, leadership behavior, human resource policies, culture, values, and management procedures of the company in order to ensure successful strategy implementation. It can also be said that a first-rate implementation of a strategy is the best test of managerial excellence—and the most reliable formula for turning companies into standout performers (Thompson et al., 2005). Hrebiniak (2005), likewise, concluded that it all begins with strategy and that execution cannot occur until one has something to execute. Therefore, effective leadership must take on a different approach—it must be execution-biased. It must drive the organization to successful execution. And, it also must motivate ownership of and commitment to the execution process (Hrebiniak, 2005).

Still, can all organizations overcome what Beer and Eisenstadt refer to as the so-called silent killers of strategy implementation? "Our research suggests not" (Beer and Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 39). Maybe not all organizations can overcome the silent killers of strategy implementation. But I believe some can. Companies can overcome the silent killers of strategy implementation if they follow the 9-step strategy-executing process and model developed by Thompson et al. (2006). It is not only a great course of action that includes the key essentials of human and organizational strategic development and effective leadership behaviors—creating successful strategy implementation—the 9-step strategy executing process should be a tool that every senior-level leader should use as part of the overall strategic management process. More important, this strategy implementation model, developed by Thompson et al. (2006), extends the literature in this field of study. The 9 steps, as stated before, are:

1. Staffing the organization with the needed skills and expertise, consciously building and strengthening strategy-supportive competencies and competitive capabilities, and organizing the work effort.
2. Creating a company culture and work climate conducive to successful strategy implementation and execution.
3. Developing budgets that steer ample resources into those activities critical to strategic success.
4. Ensuring that policies and operating procedures facilitate rather than impede effective execution.
5. Using the best-known practices to perform core business activities and pushing for continuous improvement. Organization units have to periodically reassess how things are being done and diligently pursue useful changes and improvements.
6. Installing information and operating systems that enable company personnel to better carry out their strategic roles day in and day out.
7. Motivating people to pursue the target objectives energetically and, if need be, modifying their duties and job behavior to better fit the requirements of successful strategy execution.
8. Tying rewards and incentives directly to the achievement of performance objectives and good strategy execution.
9. Exerting the internal leadership needed to drive implementation forward and keep improving on how the strategy is being executed. When stumbling blocks or weaknesses are encountered, management has to see that they are addressed and rectified on a timely basis (p. 31).

The results of my study, from my point of view, clearly complement the work of Thompson et al. (2004). This work, as mentioned before, is a great course of action that includes the key essentials of human and organizational strategic development and effective leadership behaviors—creating successful strategy implementation.

I further concluded that the patterns of human behavior used in Hardy's (1994, p. 158) study for effective strategy implementation is also a great course of action that includes the key essentials of human and organizational strategic development. More notable, this 5-step strategy implementation model also extends the literature in this field of study:

1. Obtain broad-based inputs and participation at the [strategy] formulation stage.
2. Carefully and deliberately assess the obstacles to [strategy] implementation.
3. Make early, first-cut moves across the full array of implementation levers – resource commitments, subunit policies and programs, structure, people, and rewards.
4. Sell, sell, sell the strategy to everyone who matters – upward, downward, across, and outward.
5. Steadily fine-tune, adjust, and respond as events and trends arise (p. 158).

I asked early on in this paper: *How do the behaviors of senior-level leaders, as perceived by themselves, contribute to the success or failure of strategy implementation?* The success of an organization is vested in the formation of sustainable relationships with the primary purpose of (effective) leadership to influence the feelings and emotions of those associated with the organization, in other words, to create the emotional heart of the organization (Weymes, 2003). Leaders, though, have a tendency not to create relationships with their staff in order to sustain a successful organization.

On the one hand, when evaluating the responses that were provided by the respondents in my study's questionnaire, the univariate findings did not look that encouraging. They are shown, once again, near the beginning of this chapter in Table 47.

On the other hand, the findings of my study suggest that there are some positive relationships between the extent that senior-level leaders have been personally involved with strategy implementation and leadership behavioral factors that have positively affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company. My findings further extend the research work in the field of study and clearly support the notion that managing the implementation and execution of a strategy is an operations-oriented, make-things-happen activity aimed at shaping the performance of core business activities in a strategy-supportive manner (Thompson et al., 2006). The findings also suggest that there is almost a perfect positive relationship on how well the employees understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan and how well these same employees are committed to the success of the company's strategic plan. I also concluded that management practitioners can make use of the findings to select techniques which will enhance the understanding of effective leadership behavior. Those techniques include: (a) self-confidence and self-awareness, (b) integrity, (c) enthusiasm, (d) empathy, and (e) social skills (Roebuck, 1999).

Recommendations for Future Research

On the basis of this summary and the conclusions presented in my study, the following suggestions for future research are offered. First, to my knowledge, there have been no other studies done relating effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation in the Nevada casino industry. In the process, I have drawn new boundaries of theoretical as well as practical knowledge, even though there have been many previous studies performed in the field of strategy implementation, which might be crossed in future research. Second, the primary focus of this exploratory research was investigative. As stated before, very little empirical research has been done in the strategy field to investigate the gap between effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation. In fact, the field of strategic management is relatively young and eclectic, and strategy implementation, as mentioned before, is a very complex process (Schellenberg, 1983). For that reason, a conclusion to be drawn from the findings of this exploration, and the role of leadership behavior and strategy implementation is the need for additional research. Further quantitative research, by expanding the sample size, might possibly confirm the work that has been performed in my study. Larger samples, however, should be carefully examined. In addition, response rates, using a quantitative methods approach, reaching 20% would also be more beneficial. Such research, even so, will require close control over an adequate time period to insure that responses are returned in a timely manner. Then again, the research should be kept narrow (e.g., selecting only senior-level leaders), as just mentioned, between the notions of effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation. Once the casino industry sample size has been expanded, future studies might look to broaden the sample with additional industries and a more balanced design to enhance the overall focus of my study. In the meantime, my study moves research another step closer to better understanding the essential workings of strategy implementation. It also sheds some light on the effective human behavior that facilitates successful implementation.

With mixed results in the current research, the relationship between effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation requires, in my opinion, additional investigation. For future research in the field of leadership behavior and strategy implementation, the variables that were suggested in this report are certainly candidates for additional research. While not all the tables included a specific link between the variables, further research might contribute additional knowledge about these two relationships. Also, further studies which focus on specific variables (i.e., effective or ineffective leadership behavior, and successful or unsuccessful strategy implementation) while controlling for others will expand the theoretical basis needed in the strategy implementation field.

In the meantime, I feel that two final quotes are appropriate. They were written by Lao Tzu, a brilliant Chinese general, in the middle of the first millennium B.C. He wrote a series of essays comprising the first known treatise on war and how to fight it. Tzu's (2003, pp.14-16) influence, translated by Ralph Sawyer, as an exceptional military thinker and strategist continues undiminished to this day throughout the entire world.

> After estimating the advantages in accord with what you have heard, put it into effect with strategic power [i.e., effective leadership behavior] supplemented by field tactics that respond to external factors. As for strategic power, it is controlling the tactical imbalance of power in accord with the gains to be realized [i.e., successful strategy implementation].
>
> Although you are capable, display incapability. When committed to employing your forces, feign inactivity. When your objective is nearby, make it appear distant; when distant, create the illusion of being nearby. Display profits to entice them. Create disorder in their forces and take them. If they are

substantial, prepare for them. If they are angry, perturb them. Be deferential to foster their arrogance. If they are rested, force them to exert themselves. If they are united, cause them to be separated. Attack where they are unprepared. Go forth where they will not expect it. These are the way military strategists are victorious. They cannot be spoken of in advance (pp.14-16).

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Appendix A

Survey Instrument

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

-Research Question-

How do the behaviors of senior-level leaders, as perceived by themselves, contribute to the success or failure of strategy implementation?

November 2004

Dear Senior-Level Executive:

I am asking you to participate in a research study involving executives and/or senior-level managers of casinos only. Even though I live in Reno, Nevada, I am a full-time fourth-year doctoral candidate in the Human and Organizational Development (HOD) Program at Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, California.

Your name was given to me by William R. Eadington, Ph.D., Professor of Economics and Gaming Director of the Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming, University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada. Dr. Eadington will not know, however, if you choose to participate in this research study or not.

As a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) candidate, this research is aimed at contributing significant new knowledge and practice to the field of human and organization development. In doing so, I have developed a questionnaire (see attached), and the data received from you will be used as primary data for my dissertation research. The information that you provide could also be used as research for a published journal article.

My dissertation chair and faculty supervisor for my study is Miguel Guilarte, Ph.D. Dr. Guilarte can be reached at the Fielding Graduate Institute, 2112 Santa Barbara Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93105, (Tel) 805-687-1099. His e-mail address is:.

You have been selected for my study because you meet the inclusion criteria of men or women who hold the title of executive or senior-level manager of a casino. You have also been selected for my study because your business is located in the state of Nevada. Additionally, you have been selected because you are 21 years of age or older. Finally, you have been selected because you have, hopefully, attempted, at least in the past, to implement a strategic plan in your organization.

My study involves you filling out a questionnaire that will take approximately 30 minutes or less. Additionally, this is a study, according to John Creswell (1994, p. 2), that is:

> an inquiry into a human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory holds true.

Upon completion of questionnaire, you are requested to mail the survey back to me. Please include your name, company name, and phone number on the questionnaire. Upon receiving the survey, I will assign an appropriate code so your responses cannot be attributed to you.

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Only I will see the written materials and responses to questions posed in the survey. In the event you would like to make some comments, a pseudonym will be used for any quotes that you provide which might be included in the final research report. However, before any direct quotes are used, I will seek your permission. In addition, I will keep the name of your company confidential through use of code numbers as identifying information created for each company. As such, your company will remain unidentified. Finally, if you so desire, a written copy of the summary of the final results will be furnished to you.

All research materials will be kept in a secure file cabinet at my house, and will be destroyed five years after the completion of my study. The results of my study will be published, as mentioned before, in my dissertation and possibly in subsequent journals or books. The Institutional Review Board of Fielding Graduate Institute retains access to all signed Informed Consent Forms.

It is possible that you may develop greater personal self-awareness of your own sense of power and identity as a result of your participation in my study. Additionally, the information you provide may prove useful to the career development of younger men and women attempting to move up the corporate ladder.

Please note that the risks to you completing this survey are considered minimal; there is only a very small chance, nonetheless, that you may experience some emotional discomfort during or after the time you fill out the survey. In addition, you may withdraw from my study at any time during the course of filling out the questionnaire. Should you decide to withdraw from the survey, you should simply not submit the data to me.

There is no financial remuneration for participating in my study.

If you have any questions about any aspect of my study or your involvement, please tell me before signing this form. Feel free to contact me on my cell phone or e-mail me at jjschaap@nvbell.net.

As mentioned, you may request a copy of the summary of the final results of my study by indicating your interest on the attached form.

Lastly, two copies of the informed consent have been provided. Please sign both, indicating you read, understood, and agree to participate in this research. **Return one to me** at the address below and keep one for your files.

____

Name of Participant (please print)

____

Signature of Participant

____

Date

Thank you,

James I. Schaap

James (Jamy) I. Schaap
2765 Lakeridge Shores West
Reno, Nevada 89509
(tel) 775-827-5709, (cell) 775-544-6562
(e-mail) jjschaap@nvbell.net

DISSERTATION CHAIR & FACULTY ADVISOR
Miguel Guilarte, Ph.D.
Fielding Graduate Institute
2112 Santa Barbara Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93105
(Tel) 805-687-1099
mguilarte@fielding.edu

SUMMARY REQUEST (Please return this section to the researcher.)

☐ No, do not send me, the participant, a summary report

☐ Yes, please send a summary of the results to:

____
NAME OF PARTICIPANT (please print)

____
Street Address

____
City, State, Zip Code

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: ________________________________ **Code No:** ________

Company: ______________________________

Phone Number: _________________________

SECTION 1: PRELIMINARY QUESTION

1. If you have ***not*** been involved, in any way, with trying to achieve the financial and/or strategic performance targets of a strategic plan in the company, please *stop now* and return this questionnaire to me.

   Acknowledge by providing your initials _______. Thank you.

SECTION II: STRATEGIC PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION QUESTIONS (2 – 23)

2. To what extent have you personally been involved with strategy implementation in your current job?
   a. Always
   b. Often
   c. Sometimes
   d. Never

3. To what extent have key stakeholders (e.g., board of directors, mid-level managers, principal advisors/suppliers, etc.) been involved in strategy formulation?
   a. Always
   b. Often
   c. Sometimes
   d. Never

4. How often do you meet to discuss the company's direction, strategy, and future business plans?
   a. We meet yearly
   b. We meet every six months
   c. We meet quarterly
   d. We meet monthly
   e. Other ____

5. In terms of the company trying to accomplish its financial and/or strategic performance targets, was the achievement of those objectives successful?
   a. It was highly successful
   b. It was quite successful
   c. It was somewhat successful
   d. It was not successful at all

6. Has senior-level leadership communicated the vision and/or mission statement, if there is one, to <u>all</u> of its subordinates?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not sure
   d. Not applicable – I do not know if the company has a vision and/or mission statement

7. In the past 24 months, has senior-level leadership communicated the company's direction and business strategy to <u>all</u> of its subordinates?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not sure
   d. Not applicable – We have not had a session in the past 24 months to discuss our company's direction, strategy, and future business plans

8. How long ago was there an attempt to implement a change in direction or a different/new strategic or business plan in the company?
   a. Within the past year
   b. 1–2 years ago
   c. 3–4 years ago
   d. 5 years ago or more

9. From your point of view, was the achievement of a strategic plan successful according to the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?
   a. It was highly successful
   b. It was somewhat successful
   c. It was somewhat unsuccessful
   d. It was not successful at all

10. Among the following senior-level leadership factors and/or behaviors, please check (√) all those that have *positively* affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?

a. ___ Built an organization with competencies, capabilities, and resource strengths to carry out the strategy successfully
b. ___ Developed budgets to steer resources into those activities that were critical to success
c. ___ Established effective strategy-supportive policies and procedures
d. ___ Instituted best practices and pushed for continuous improvement
e. ___ Installed information, communication, and operating systems that enabled company personnel to carry out their roles successfully
f. ___ Tied reward and incentives to the achievement of performance objectives and good strategy execution
g. ___ Created a strategy-supportive work environment
h. ___ Exerted the internal leadership needed to drive implementation forward and to improve on how the strategy was executed
i. ___ Removed executive road blocks to insure executive/management performance
j. ___ Other ______________________________

11. Among the following senior-level leadership factors and/or behaviors, please check (√) all those that have *negatively* affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company.

a. ___ Key implementation tasks and activities were poorly defined
b. ___ Implementation took more time than originally planned
c. ___ Unanticipated internal business problems arose that slowed things down or put them on hold
d. ___ Uncontrollable external factors created problems such as a competitor(s) lowering its list prices
e. ___ Lower-level management and/or front-line employees are not committed to implementing a strategy – unwillingness to change
f. ___ Inability of senior-level leadership to effectively communicate the financial and/or strategic performance targets to subordinates
g. ___ Deficient senior-level leadership skills
h. ___ Poor coordination across functions, businesses or barriers
i. ___ Lack of adequate human resources – not enough people to make the needed changes
j. ___ Lack of financial resources – not enough money to accomplish what was proposed
k. ___ Lack of knowledge within the management team to achieve the strategy and/or business plan
l. ___ Lower-level employees were insufficiently trained.
m. ___ Inadequate way of monitoring or evaluating the performance of the strategy
n. ___ Other ______________________________

12. Has senior-level leadership tied the compensation of immediate subordinates to the achievement of the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not sure

13. Do you feel your involvement in trying to achieve the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company have strengthened your own ability to be a more effective senior-level leader?
    a. Yes
    b. Possibly
    c. No
    d. Not sure

14. What were the factors and/or behaviors that *motivated* you to put effort into achieving the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company? Please check (√) all that apply.
    a. ___ Personal financial reward
    b. ___ Sheer enjoyment
    c. ___ Challenge of actually executing the plan
    d. ___ The ability to succeed in a major leadership and management process
    e. ___ The ability to help grow the company
    f. ___ Aligning my subordinates and putting resources in place to accomplish our objective(s)
    g. ___ It was what I was asked to do, so I just did my job
    h. ___ Other ____

15. What are the factors and/or behaviors that might *discourage* you from exerting effort in implementing a strategic plan in the future? Please check (√) all that apply.
    a. ___ Implementation took significantly longer than originally planned
    b. ___ Unanticipated major problems arose
    c. ___ Activities were ineffectively coordinated
    d. ___ Competing activities and crises took attention away from the implementation process
    e. ___ The involved employees had insufficient capabilities to perform their jobs
    f. ___ My immediate superior provided inadequate leadership and direction
    g. ___ My immediate subordinate(s) provided inadequate leadership and direction to his/her staff
    h. ___ Lower-level employees were inadequately trained
    i. ___ Uncontrollable external environmental factors created problems
    j. ___ Key implementation tasks and activities were poorly defined
    k. ___ The information system inadequately monitored activities
    l. ___ Regardless of those things that might discourage me from implementing the strategic plan, I would still try to implement it to the best of my ability
    m. ___ Other ____

16. How well do you feel people at all levels have worked together in implementing the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?
    a. People worked very well with each other
    b. People worked somewhat well with each other
    c. People did not cooperate at all with each other because they could not execute the financial and/or strategic targets set for the company
    d. Not sure

17. What are your suggestions for internally improving the strategic planning process? Please check (√) all that apply.
    a. ___ Hire a consultant who has helped companies before
    b. ___ Involve all the highest levels of management
    c. ___ Get buy-in from all levels of management
    d. ___ Change the structure of the organization in ways that influence the way the company can implement change
    e. ___ Provide open forums to discuss the progress and make adjustments as needed
    f. ___ Develop management processes that include more thorough planning, programming, budgeting, and reward systems
    g. ___ Other ______________________________

18. To what extent has there been conflict in the organizational culture based on resistance to the implementation of a strategic plan?
    a. There has been a significant amount of conflict
    b. There has been a normal amount of conflict
    c. There has been little conflict
    d. There has not been any conflict

19. If the company hired a consultant (or a facilitator) within the last five years, how was this person *helpful* to the organization in implementing a strategic plan? Please check (√) all that apply.
    a. ___ The person was knowledgeable in leading us through the strategic planning process
    b. ___ The person challenged us to develop financial and/or strategic performance targets
    c. ___ The person understood our business
    d. ___ The person monitored our progress during the actual implementation phase
    e. ___ Other ______________________________
    f. ___ Not applicable

20. If the company hired a consultant (or a facilitator) within the last five years, how was this person *not helpful* to the organization in implementing a strategic plan? Please check (√) all that apply.
    a. ___ The person did not have the skill set to lead us through the strategic planning process
    b. ___ The person never challenged us to develop any financial and/or strategic performance targets
    c. ___ The person did not understand our business
    d. ___ The person did not monitor our progress during the actual implementation phase
    e. ___ Other ______________________________
    f. ___ Not applicable

21. How well do the employees at all levels understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan?
    a. They fully understand
    b. They somewhat understand
    c. They neither understand nor not understand
    d. They do not understand
    e. I do not know if the employees understand or do not understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan

22. How committed are employees to the success of the company's strategic plan?
    a. Very committed
    b. Somewhat committed
    c. Neither committed nor not committed
    d. Not committed at all
    e. I do not know if the employees are committed to the company's strategic plan

23. What changes would be needed to make the task of achieving the financial and/or strategic performance targets more successful? Please check (√) all that apply.
    a. ___ Personally get more involved – do what is required to make it happen
    b. ___ Increase my own level of communication with others
    c. ___ Make personnel changes
    d. ___ Implement the strategy in phases
    e. ___ Train subordinate(s) so that the person(s) better understands how to implement the performance targets set by the company
    f. ___ Other ______________________________

SECTION III: LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS (24 – 27)

24. Which of the following characterize your style of leadership? Please check (√) all that apply.
    - a. ___ I guide others
    - b. ___ I facilitate others
    - c. ___ I am a change agent
    - d. ___ I inspire others
    - e. ___ I lift the aspirations of others
    - f. ___ I raise the performance of others to higher levels
    - g. ___ I develop others to their fullest
    - h. ___ Other ______________________________

25. How would your subordinate(s) characterize the *weaknesses* in your leadership style? Please check (√) all that apply.
    - a. ___ I micro-manage
    - b. ___ I do not give them enough time to complete their work
    - c. ___ I do not communicate as well as I could
    - d. ___ I do not take their input/feedback/comments into consideration when making a decision(s)
    - e. ___ I am not sensitive to what is going on in the organization
    - f. ___ I do not provide them with clear expectations
    - g. ___ I do not encourage or motivate them to succeed
    - h. ___ I have a hard time seeing my own weaknesses
    - i. ___ Other ______________________________

26. How would your subordinate(s) characterize the *strengths* in your leadership style? Please check (√) all that apply.
    - a. ___ I give them the freedom to succeed
    - b. ___ I communicate well with people
    - c. ___ I take their input/feedback/comments into consideration when making a decision
    - d. ___ I am sensitive to what is going on in the organization
    - e. ___ I provide them with clear expectations
    - f. ___ I encourage and motivate my staff to succeed
    - g. ___ I am good at influencing others
    - h. ___ I am hard working
    - i. ___ I am focused on the success and reputation or the organization, not my own
    - j. ___ Other ______________________________

27. Which of the following senior-level leadership dynamics are characteristic in implementing the strategic plan in your company? Please check (√) all that apply.
    a. ___ Top-down or laissez-faire senior management style
    b. ___ Unclear strategy and conflicting priorities
    c. ___ Ineffective senior management team
    d. ___ Poor top-down vertical communication
    e. ___ Poor coordination into teamwork through realigning roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities with strategies
    f. ___ Inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development
    g. ___ Other ______________________________

SECTION IV: BACKGROUND INFORMATION QUESTIONS (28 – 35)

28. Your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female

29. Your age on your last birthday?
    a. 21-30
    b. 31-40
    c. 41-50
    d. 51-60
    e. 61 or older

30. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
    a. 12th grade or less
    b. High school graduate or equivalent
    c. Some college but no degree
    d. Associate degree (academic or occupational)
    e. Bachelor's degree
    f. Master's degree
    g. Professional degree (such as JD, MD, DDS, DVM)
    h. Doctoral degree (such as Ph.D., Ed.D., Dr. P.H.)
    i. Other ______________________________

31. Have you ever been trained or formally studied strategic planning and implementation?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not sure

32. How long have you been employed in your current position with the company?
    a. 0 – 4 years
    b. 5 – 9 years
    c. 10 – 14 years
    d. 15 – 19 years
    e. 20 years or more

33. How many employees (full and part-time), including yourself, are employed in the company?
    a. 1–49
    b. 50–99
    c. 100–249
    d. 250–499
    e. 500 or more
    f. I do not know

34. Which of the following categories best describes the company's current yearly revenues?
    a. Less than $10,000,000
    b. $10,000,000 to $49,999,999
    c. $50,000,000 to $99,999,999
    d. $100,000,000 to $249,999,999
    e. $250,000,000 or more
    f. I do not know

35. Your current title
    a. Chairman of the Board
    b. CEO and/or President
    c. General Manager
    d. Assistant General Manager
    e. Senior or Executive Vice President
    f. Vice President
    g. CFO or Controller
    h. COO
    i. Executive Director
    j. Director
    k. Senior-level Manager
    l. Other ______________________________

36. Any comments ____

____

____

____

Just as a friendly reminder, did you answer <u>every</u> question and/or circle/check the appropriate answer(s)?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return it in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided.