ABSTRACT

LAMM, DEBORAH LANE.  A Case Study of Strategic Decision Processes in an Economic Development Initiative.  (Under the direction of Dr. George Vaughan.)

This dissertation is designed to document and to describe the strategic, non-routine decision processes used by leaders as they establish collaborative initiatives in economic development. This case study explores the following question: What are the strategic decision processes as well as actions and beliefs that community college leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders use in developing and maintaining economic development initiatives?

Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s research (1976) of unstructured, strategic decision processes serves as the framework for this study of an economic development initiative involving a Southeastern North Carolina community college, a Tier 2 county, and a French steel wire manufacturing plant. Interviews and document reviews serve as the data collection methods.

Following interviews with college, county, and industry leaders concerning the joint economic development initiative, three main themes emerge: identification of a problem or opportunity, selection of the solution, and lessons learned. Two obstacles surface in the initiative as well: the need for a well system and the disruption of power outages.

Upon review of the data with emerging themes and obstacles, decision making within the economic development initiative appears to have followed the basic elements of Mintzberg’s et al.’s study (1976) of strategic decision processes.
Both the county and industry identify opportunities for growth, and consequently, the necessity for decision making. Both groups seek alternatives, allocate resources as they devise their plans, and then make their final selection. Once the company decides to locate in North Carolina, the county and college’s decisions about training and services have to be implemented. Daily decisions continue to be part of the collaborative venture as leaders move forward in helping the company build its plant, while maintaining the desired production level.

This study extends decision-making theory into the realm of economic development. Thus from this study, county, college, and industry leaders will gain a better understanding of the dynamics of decision making as they apply decision processes to their collaborative economic development efforts in the future. Additional research is necessary for initiatives where barriers and political influences play a major role in decision making and affect the outcome of decisions.
A CASE STUDY OF STRATEGIC DECISION PROCESSES
IN AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

by
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DEBORAH LANE LAMM, daughter of Peggy and Graham Lane, was born in Wilson, North Carolina, on March 20, 1957. After attending schools in Wilson County through the tenth grade, Deborah spent her eleventh- and twelfth-grade years at St. Mary’s School in Raleigh, graduating from high school in 1975. Deborah then entered the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, obtaining her Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Psychology in 1979. Upon graduation from college, she married Carnell Lamm, and they moved to Kinston, North Carolina. Deborah began working as a tutor coordinator and English instructor at Lenoir Community College in Kinston, beginning December 1979. She held numerous positions at Lenoir during her 21-year tenure. She was Dean of Arts and Sciences when she left Lenoir in December 2000, to assume her current position as Vice President of Curriculum Instruction at Southeastern Community College in Whiteville, North Carolina.

Deborah obtained her masters in English education from East Carolina University in 1982. She began working on her doctorate in higher education administration at North Carolina State University in August 1999. Her anticipated graduation date is May 2003.

Deborah and her husband have one daughter, Laura Ashley Lamm.
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REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Researchers and practitioners have devoted much time over the years to examining routine decision making (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Theoret, 1976). As a result of this focus, management models have been developed to influence lower and middle levels of decision makers as these decision makers have made routine operating decisions. These models have focused upon a rational process, including five basic steps (Hoy & Miskel, 1978; Krepel, 1987):

1. Recognize and define the problem.
2. Analyze the problem.
3. Establish guidelines for resolution.
4. Develop a plan of action.
5. Initiate the plan of action.

This process is thought to be both logical and linear, with the assumption that if individuals make rational decisions, then very little interference, if any, will be a part of the process (Miller, Hickson, & Wilson, 1996). Accordingly, if leaders make rational decisions, then other individuals within the organization will make rational decisions as well.

This traditional process is useful for two main reasons: objective information is valued, and a logical structure for decision making is in place (Krepel, 1987). The traditional process, however, tends to treat all decisions alike. Most leaders, though, recognize that all decisions cannot be approached uniformly or rationally. That is, minor decisions made by lower-level administrators are
typically routine and rational, while major decisions made by senior-level administrators are not likely to be routine or rational--other factors come into play (Hoy & Miskel, 1978; Krepel, 1987).

Simon (1945) was one of the first researchers to describe the limitations of rational decision making. Simon believed that decision makers do not have the benefit of a perfect, rational situation. In many cases, the issue or problem is unclear, alternative information is inaccessible, and evaluation criteria are uncertain. Often, time is limited, and exploring potential solutions is not feasible. Thus, the result of these limitations is that the outcome is probably going to be a satisficing choice rather than an optimal choice, meaning “one which both satisfies and suffices in the circumstances, for the time being” (Miller, Hickson, & Wilson, 1996, p. 295).

Simon (1945) realizes that decision makers function with rational boundaries, displaying reasonable behavior but not absolute, rational behavior. Human weaknesses, coupled with demands both inside and outside the organization, limit the degree of rational behavior that can be displayed.

Nevertheless, Simon, along with Hoy and Miskel (1978) and Krepel (1987), notes that familiar, routine decisions are made in a straightforward manner. These programmed or operational decisions are often made by lower-level decision makers and closely parallel the rational decision-making model. Yet, on the other hand, the non-programmed or unusual decisions are considered challenging to decision makers. These decisions have not been encountered before and usually are considered significant. Repercussions from or consequences of these decisions shape future actions; therefore, senior-level administrators typically authorize or
sanction these decisions. Because the decisions are significant, it is likely that the problems are complex, information may be difficult to find, and solutions may be hard to develop. Thus, decisions along the programmed and non-programmed continuum represent an early step in distinguishing the characteristics of decisions and decision processes (Miller, Hickson, & Wilson, 1996).

Community college leaders, in particular presidents, are involved in non-routine decision-making roles on almost a daily basis. Ernstthal (2002) recommends that senior administrators utilize a process for decision making. These leaders should ask themselves a series of questions once a need for a decision has arisen: Who should help make this decision? Who should be consulted? Can the decision be delegated? Can the decision be delegated to a committee or to the board? Accordingly, providing structure to making a decision through a set of pre-determined questions can help administrators find the best method for making that decision.

According to Zeiss (1986), community college leaders must use a strategic decision process that includes (a) “a clear focus of institutional mission, (b) a clear understanding of whom the college serves, and (c) precise knowledge of what makes its services unique” (p. 2). Community colleges should see themselves as part of the community rather than a separate entity, understanding with whom they must work and collaborate and for what purpose. In fact, the demands of senior administrative positions require that college officials collaborate with individuals both inside and outside the college as they make important decisions (Zeiss, 1986).
One of the greatest decision-making challenges of community college leaders is in the area of economic development. Community college leaders are involved in decision making as they address the economic development challenges of counties and guide county leaders in bringing about change. Because community colleges lead the effort in providing skilled workers, community college leaders must be involved in all initiatives that have an impact on the workforce and on the community (Forde, 2002).

The decision-making results of the economic development initiatives are evident as the county and community college collaborate on measures to gauge effectiveness and to trace successes (Forde, 2002). Collaboration builds relationships, which often lead to additional partnerships in the future.

Forde (2002) believes community colleges are at the center of the economic development universe because community colleges are transitioning people from varying educational levels to college completion and to fulfilling careers. Being at the center means that the college and county leaders must be at the core of this universe and be committed to sharing the same vision and resources. Alliances, then, are critical until the core group is firmly established, the vision is clear, and the resources have been distributed.

According to Kopecek (1991), strong leadership and community partnerships must be present for economic growth to occur. Likewise, the workplace has always looked to community colleges for the training and re-training of its employees, and subsequently, an improved economy; however, the role of community colleges has expanded to include economic development activities, ranging from small business
assistance to economic development partnerships. These activities provide both financial and educational support to ensure economic growth. In addition, participating in economic development activities requires community college leadership to make decisions about what is best for the college and community. By virtue of their mission and their central relationship to the community, community colleges have the responsibility of determining how they can serve the community and how they can position themselves as vital assets (Zeiss, 1986).

All of the activities involved in building economic growth and development are interrelated and involve non-routine decision making. Planned educational programs and county business initiatives encourage growth and maintenance of economic development where community college leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders all play a vital role in making strategic decisions about the community (Kopecek, 1991).

Non-programmed or strategic decisions are challenging to decision makers because the decisions are considered important and consequential. As a result, there is significant need to explore the understandings and actions of community college leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders in the development of theory and action strategies related to complex decision making.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to document and to describe the strategic, non-routine decision processes used by community college leaders and business leaders as they establish collaborative initiatives in economic development.
This research study explores the following question: What are the strategic decision processes as well as actions and beliefs that community college leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders use in developing and maintaining economic development initiatives?

The case study is used to document and to describe decision-making processes captured through an in-depth investigation of an economic development initiative in North Carolina. The decision-making collaborative efforts of community college leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders surface following extensive interviews and document reviews.

**Conceptual Framework**

The framework for this study is based on Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s research (1976) of unstructured, strategic decision processes. The research study reported that the organizations under review developed 25 decision processes, all of which were considered strategic or important decision processes. Strategic decision processes were characterized as unusual, complex, or open ended because the organization had little understanding of the situation from the outset or of the path to the situation’s solution. However, through a recursive process, involving a series of difficult steps and many dynamic factors, the organizations made their final choices. (See Appendix A for a Glossary of Terms.)

Through Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s study (1976), basic elements of the strategic decision process are identified. Three distinct phases comprise the strategic decision process: identification, development, and selection. Figure 1 shows the relationship of the phases.
The identification phase is divided into two routines: the decision recognition and the diagnosis. In the decision recognition routine, the opportunities, problems, and crises surface and create the need for a decision. In the diagnosis routine, the action is examined, the decision process is initiated, and the resources are moved into position. In addition, the decision makers review existing information, find new information, and explain the issues as they try to understand the action. Figure 2 outlines the two routines within the identification phase.
The second phase of the strategic decision process is development. This phase is the center of the decision-making process, leading to the creation of a solution for a problem, opportunity, or crisis. The development phase has two basic routines of its own: search, used to find ready-made solutions; and design, used to find custom-made solutions or to revise ready-made ones. The search routine is composed of four kinds of search behaviors: memory, where the organization’s people are questioned and documents are searched; passive, where decision makers wait for alternatives to surface; trap search, where decision makers alert others that alternatives are needed; and active search, where the decision makers seek alternatives. In addition, the design routine is composed of two types of decisions: those with custom-made solutions and those with modified solutions. The custom-made solutions occur when designers start with an image of a solution.
They gradually move through a “decision tree, with the decisions at each node more narrow and focused than the last” (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret, 1976, p. 258). Not being successful at a node can lead designers to go back to an earlier one. The solution develops slowly, the designer not really knowing what the finished solution will look like until the end. On the other hand, the modified solutions occur when designers use ready-made alternatives identified in the search routine and modify them for application. Figure 3 identifies the components within the search and design routines.

![Conceptual Framework](chart_of_development_phase.png)

Figure 3: Chart of Development Phase
(Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret, 1976)

The final phase of the strategic decision process is the selection phase. Three routines comprise the selection phase: screen, evaluation and choice, and authorization. Figure 4 distinguishes between the three routines within the selection phase. The screen routine is used when the search brings more ready-made alternatives than can be evaluated by the decision maker. The decision maker,
then, tries to eliminate which alternatives are infeasible instead of which would be appropriate. The reduced number of alternatives may be stored until the decision maker can review them more carefully. Next, the evaluation-choice routine utilizes three modes: judgment, where one individual chooses, based on procedures he or she may not be able to explain; bargaining, where a group with conflicting goals makes the decision; and analysis, where a factual evaluation is conducted but the decision maker chooses, based on judgment or bargaining. Finally, the authorization routine is used when an authority figure obligates the organization to a particular course of action. Authorization is typically sought for a final solution, but sometimes it is sought during the development of the decision process.

Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s model (1976) of the strategic decision process, which outlines three phases, is used as the framework for this study. As a
result, the unstructured, strategic decisions used by community college leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders are explored as their decisions relate to the elements of decision making and to the factors that affect those decisions.

**Context of Study**

This research project is a case study of non-routine decision-making processes within an economic development initiative in North Carolina. I begin the study with a detailed description of the county, community college, and local industry where the initiative occurs, highlighting demographics of the area and the dynamics of the local economic development structure. Next, I summarize the details of an economic development partnership between the community college senior administrators, county leaders, and industry leaders. Finally, I study an economic development initiative, collecting data by conducting interviews and reviewing public documents, such as official memos, minutes, and records of transactions. I explore the initiative under review, following four main steps: (a) identify the events or situations, (b) provide the context, (c) discuss the issues, and (d) review the knowledge gained (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, themes and issues surface as I draw substantive conclusions, leading to an understanding of the dynamics of the decision-making process.

**Genre of Study**

Qualitative research is an inquiry process, which includes an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Creswell, 1998). The subject is studied in its natural setting, with individuals bringing meaning to the phenomena. Merriam (1988) describes several forms of inquiry that provide
meaning to social phenomena. One form of inquiry or methodology within qualitative research is the case study, that is, a holistic, in-depth investigation (Tellis, 1997). In particular, a case study is a detailed exploration of a particular event or of one setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1994; Yin, 1989).

I use the case study for six main reasons. First, the nature of the research question calls for qualitative research. Beginning the research question with what suggests a description will ensue. What are the strategic decision processes, actions, and beliefs that are used in developing and maintaining economic development initiatives? suggests that a description of the processes, actions, and beliefs surrounding decision making will be the focus of the study. Second, the topic needs to be explored because there are no studies of decision-making processes within economic development initiatives, especially involving leaders from the community college, the county, and industry. Third, a detailed perspective of the topic is necessary for better understanding. Because the topic has not been discussed, a global perspective will not be sufficient in addressing the issue. An in-depth study will help provide meaning to the phenomena of decision making. Fourth, a case study allows an event to be explored in its natural setting, thus ensuring that the findings concerning the process of decision making will be discovered within their context. Fifth, the qualitative approach permits the use of a literary style of writing, with the case study calling for a narrative of the event or of the economic development initiative being studied. Sixth, the researcher’s role as a learner who serves as a storyteller rather than an expert is emphasized (Creswell, 1998). Thus, I describe the economic development initiative, telling the story of its
inception and development, maintaining my status as a participant in the review process.

**Significance of the Study**

The process of decision making has been studied for many years though its popularity has varied in intensity. This process appeals to both practitioners and theorists for three main reasons. First, modern organizations are concerned with decision making because with good decisions come smooth-running operations and goal achievement. Second, decision makers spend much of their day making operational as well as strategic decisions. Third, decisions can be associated with power in organizations. Decision making, which includes significant, consequential decisions that determine the direction of the organization, is of vital importance to the organization and its stakeholders. Who is involved in the decisions, who can exert influence, who sets the decision-making agenda--all are questions which lead to understanding the politics within organizations. Thus, the study of decision processes is critical to understanding how and why organizations function as they do and provide the means to monitor individuals as they do (Miller, Hickson, & Wilson, 1996).

Likewise, community college leaders are concerned about decision making because making the right choices can ensure an effectively, efficiently run college. The growing complexity of the community colleges' organizational structure has contributed to elaborate systems for decision making, with many leaders depending on reports and memos prepared by other individuals in order to make decisions (Alfred, 1984). In addition, community college leaders spend much of their day
making both kinds of decisions--routine as well as non-routine. Understanding the
decision process can help community college leaders approach non-routine
decisions in a systematic manner. Finally, community college leaders are also
concerned about economic development because those decisions affect the entire
community; the urgency to attract industry, and subsequently to improve the area's
economy, is routinely a goal of all county, industry, and college leaders (McCabe,
1984).

This case study will be significant for research because the results will
provide an extension of decision-making theory and a means of refining theoretical
propositions. Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s research (1976) on the strategic
decision processes will provide the lens through which the non-routine decision-
making processes within an economic development initiative in North Carolina will
be viewed. The Mintzberg research team studied the decision processes of 50
organizations and established steps/phases within decision making; this case study
will extend that theory to include decision processes used by community college
leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders in joint economic development
ventures. Community college and business leaders will gain a better understanding
of the dynamics of collaborations and decision making following this research
project.

Limitations of the Study

The conceptual framework provides the boundaries for the study, allowing for
a clear focus, while limiting the scope of the research. Thus, framing the study
places limitations on the research, as the framework outlines the context in which
the research is based (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Specifically, Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s research (1976) of unstructured, strategic decision processes frames this study by focusing on decision-making processes as the processes relate to economic development initiatives. Even though Mintzberg et al.’s research findings are not recent, the processes described in their work could be broadly applicable to areas other than the economic development link that this study provides. In particular, the phases identified in Mintzberg et al.’s theory are indicative of steps involved in decision making that are necessary for deciding important issues and that have remained significant over time. However, two areas of limitations should be noted: population and sample size. First, the population selected is a single economic development initiative involving a community college, an industry, and a county, with decision-making processes confined to the experiences of the people involved. Second, the sample size consists of seven individuals involved in the initiative: the president of the college, the vice president and dean of continuing education, the plant manager, the chair of the Committee of 100, the chair of the Economic Development Commission, and the economic development director. Other people involved in the initiative are also interviewed: a North Carolina senator, the international developer for the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the regional economic developer for the North Carolina Department of Commerce, and the North Carolina Natural Gas marketing director. These three are interviewed in order to fill in gaps in the information obtained and to tell a more complete story of the initiative. Consequently, a limited number of people are interviewed, but the interviews provide a comprehensive look
at one initiative, and a case study of this one initiative permits a detailed examination of the events.

This case study of an economic development initiative involves a limited number of participants, yet with the opportunity for rich storytelling from each one. The decision-making processes that are reviewed, however, can be applied to other initiatives or events where logical, rational decisions must be made. Thus, limitations in this case study exist, but they do not de-value the experiences shared by the participants or the knowledge gained by the readers.

Summary

Strategic or non-routine decisions are generally significant as well as complex decisions, with solutions difficult to develop (Simon, 1945; Hoy & Miskel 1978; Krepel, 1987). Community college leaders, in particular, are involved in non-routine decision-making roles daily. One of the greatest decision-making challenges of community college leaders is in the area of economic development. These leaders should address the challenges of the county as they guide county leaders in bringing about change and partner with the county in economic development initiatives (Forde, 2002).

The purpose of this case study is to document and to describe strategic, non-routine decision processes used by community college leaders and business leaders as they establish collaborative initiatives in economic development. This research study explores the following question: What are the strategic decision processes as well as actions and beliefs that community college leaders, county leaders, and
industry leaders use in developing and maintaining economic development initiatives?

In addition, the framework for this study is based on Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret's research (1976) of unstructured, strategic decision processes. The conceptual framework provides the boundaries for the study; however in doing so, it limits the scope of the research, as the framework outlines the context in which the research is based.

Chapter 2 examines the literature related to decision making, and specifically, to the conceptual framework. Accordingly, the review of literature provides a foundation for understanding the interpretation of the data and the implications of the findings.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Decisions involve people whose judgment on an issue is required. Some researchers refer to decisions as products, others as processes, and others as selections. Specifically, some refer to decisions as processes leading up to the selection; others refer to them as processes leading up to a selection and including the selection itself; while others refer to them as the process, selection, and post-selection (Lundberg, 1964).

“Decisions weave individual choices into a web of relationships that constitutes a basis for action,” according to Gore and Dyson (1964, p. 1). Often, decision making is a means by which a collective response is prepared for a problematic situation. As a result, decisions are the outcome of collaborative efforts by individuals, though the conditions under which collaborative outcomes occur vary from situation to situation. Consequently, the decision-making strategies that are used as a part of the collaborative outcome depend upon the situation as well (Gore & Dyson, 1964).

Decision making can be viewed as a means of initiating changes in the structure of the organization. Within organizational structure reside values, communication patterns, and divisions of labor. Thus, if change occurs, then it most likely occurs by altering the organizational structure. Accordingly, decision making incorporates patterns or strategies designed to bring about change. The patterns or strategies are selected based on the functions they serve (Gore & Dyson, 1964).
Two basic kinds of decisions exist within an organization, according to Simon (1945): (1) programmed or routine decisions and (2) non-programmed or non-routine decisions. Routine decisions serve two main functions: they allow individuals to predict which experiences will occur based on a reliable model, and they identify where individuals are in their thought processes when change is being considered. Typically, routine decisions produce gratification and assurance—assurance that those things in the future will be as rewarding as those things in the past. In contrast, non-routine decisions produce uncertainty, bordering on the uncomfortable. Moreover, routine decisions often produce a maximum return on their investment while non-routine decisions produce a minimal return on their investment. In addition, routine decision participants are typically cooperative, and non-routine decision participants typically demonstrate conflict. Thus, because the non-routine decisions are more complex and traumatic, they are made less frequently than the routine (Gore & Dyson, 1964).

Actually, the non-routine decisions complement the routine, with the non-routine taking on many forms. The difference between the two kinds of decisions stems from the presence of rational problem-solving strategies as a part of the non-routine decisions (Gore & Dyson, 1964).

The starting point, historically, for the development of decision-making processes is the rational model of decision making. From an idealistic perspective, decision making includes selecting alternatives and evaluating the consequence of those alternatives. From an empirical perspective, decision making includes
synthesizing the efforts and motives of individuals within the organizations (Gore & Dyson, 1964).

When making decisions, managers within organizations must anticipate some degree of risk and be willing to exercise judgment (DuBrin & Ireland, 1993). Accordingly, managers confront many different kinds of decisions because managerial responsibilities vary. Typically, there are five categories of managerial decisions, though decisions may have features of the different decision types: (a) personal, individual decisions which managers make, versus organizational, decisions which managers make on behalf of the organization; (b) strategic, decisions which concern the direction the organization plans to take, with input from many different levels, versus integrative, operational decisions which are made by top and middle management, with the primary responsibility resting with the middle management, versus operational, decisions which are concerned with an organization's daily operations; (c) structured, decisions which are limited in latitude because of prior decisions or organizational policy, versus unstructured, decisions which are free from limitations imposed by earlier decisions; (d) intuitive, decisions which are based on feelings and experiences, versus rational, decisions which are based on objectivity and logic; and (e) problem solving, decisions which are made to solve current or future problems, versus opportunistic, decisions which are positive actions designed to capitalize on increased growth and profits.

Decisions, however, are fundamental to the practice of management, permeating every function and involving unlimited possible subjects (Terry, 1972). Managers, in turn, make decisions to solve organizational problems. They spend a
significant part of their day making decisions, communicating those decisions to others, and monitoring the decisions’ implementation (DuBrin & Ireland, 1993).

The decision-making process, according to DuBrin & Ireland (1993), is a sequence of steps used to choose a particular course of action. The process can be used for all kinds of decisions. Simon (1965), Mintzberg, et al. (1976), Dutton, Fahey, and Narayanan (1983), and others believe that an organization’s initial actions are important because they shape what is accomplished throughout the decision process. Managers or administrators, in particular, benefit from using the process consistently because other employees learn how problems are identified, studied, and solved (DuBrin & Ireland, 1993).

The decision-making process functions within the organization to facilitate the flow of activities. The four classes of activities that permit decision processes include the following:

1. fulfilling externally held program expectations;
2. fulfilling sanctioned social and emotional needs of participants (within the agency);
3. maintaining access to resources;
4. resolving internal and boundary layer conflicts that threaten the continuance of any of these three. (Gore & Dyson, 1964, p. 5)

For decision-making processes to be effective, the organization must have enough creative energy to bring about changes and to eliminate the strain within the organizational system. Most likely, the decision-making process moves back and
forth between problems or strains, with problems rarely staying permanently resolved (Gore & Dyson, 1964).

Literature on decision processes, according to Lundberg (1964), falls into three categories: the intuitive approach, the normative approach, and the research approach. The intuitive approach is a classification of literature, which includes practitioners who have become well-known for their decision-making abilities and who, because of their personal insights, have written about their observations. These unsystematic observations, however, are not considered scientific in nature. The normative approach is a classification, which includes writers who have created or tested a deductive, rational model founded on statistical or mathematical premises. Typically, these writers are from the disciplines of economics and psychology, and they build models, which reflect human behaviors. The research approach is a classification, which includes writers who report on inductive work. This research is generally the starting point for many scientific investigations, which involve the decision process.

Thus, the research on decision processes varies in its form and focus, but practically all research shares beliefs about the act of decision making. Two of those beliefs include the following: all decisions have something in common, and decision-making behavior involves a series of activities (Lundberg, 1964).

Literature, which focuses on strategic management, in particular, is concerned with formulating strategies for decision making based on models. One group of models is founded on the tenets of rational decision making and is sometimes called synoptic. In contrast, another group is called incremental; these
models are presented as alternatives and are considered more accurate portrayals of how organizations make strategic decisions (Fredrickson, 1983). Hunt (1962) explains the difference between synoptic and incremental in his discussion of human thought processes. He states that the decision makers who utilize the synoptic process use a systematic method for solving problems. Those who utilize the incremental process, on the other hand, use an analytic method for solving problems, breaking them down into smaller problems that are solved sequentially. Much debate surrounds the value of using one process over another; however, some organizations effectively use both processes. Nutt (1977) advocates that certain stages of strategic decision making call for the synoptic process while others call for the incremental. Mintzberg (1973) argues that factors such as size and environment help determine which approach is used. He further concludes that processes are often combined, though the decision to combine depends on the nature of the decision. Finally, Mintzberg (1979) contends that “no decision is inherently strategic; decisions are strategic only in context” (p. 60).

Many scholars contend that the quality of decisions is affected by the strategic decision processes used by decision makers as well as by the organizational performance level--good or bad. Managers make decisions differently, depending upon whether the issue is a problem or an opportunity (Fredrickson, 1985). Fredrickson’s (1985) research suggests that there are situations where motive and performance level can affect strategic decision making and where the search for information, the cost of resources, and the concerns for consistency are actions that most likely will be influenced by situations. Strategic
decisions obligate organizations to actions that will have critical effects on their performance long term (Fredrickson, 1985).

Some researchers contend that the effectiveness and survival of organizations are linked by how they respond to their external environments and that the movements the organizations make are determined by the behaviors of people in the organizations, in particular, high level decision makers (Dutton & Jackson, 1987).

Identifying strategic issues helps decision makers establish order in the environment: an organizational environment consists of events, trends, and developments. Decision makers must select some issues while ignoring others, interpreting and attaching meanings to those selected. The internal environment of an organization, such as ideology and structure, affects the meanings that evolve. Thus, meaning attached to environmental events varies among organizations, and as a result, organizations respond differently to similar events (Dutton & Jackson, 1987).

Dutton and Jackson (1987) contend that “meanings attached to strategic issues are imposed by categories that decision makers employ to describe an issue” (p. 77). A strategic issue is an important environmental event, trend, or development for which a resolution will be requested. Two of the most common labels, assigned to cognitive categories, are opportunity and threat. Opportunities suggest positive situations where gain is probable and control is likely; threats suggest negative situations where loss is probable and control is little. When these labels are applied, decision makers begin the process of categorizing thoughts and motivations, and
these thoughts and motivations, in turn, affect organizational actions. In particular, information processing occurs after categorization, and the interpretation and processing translate into decisions that resolve issues (Dutton & Jackson, 1987).

This categorization theory, according to Dutton and Jackson (1987), “provides a framework for understanding why organizations in the same industry may respond differently to the ‘same’ environmental events and trends” (p. 85). Categorizing and labeling an issue as a threat or opportunity affects the reactions and performance of the organizations. Furthermore, this theory model represents an extension of work that links knowledge acquisition and strategy.

Other researchers contend that an organization’s effective decision making may involve leaders working with others in shared decision making. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) propose a situational theory of leadership that can help managers in a leadership role be more effective in their interactions with others. Situational leadership involves an interconnectedness of the following three elements: the degree of direction the leader provides, the degree of emotional support the leader provides, and the maturity level of the followers in completing a task. Thus, in this model the emphasis is on the behavior of the leader in relation to the followers.

In another example of shared decision making, the Vroom-Yetton normative decision model (1973) suggests that leaders may utilize teams in the decision-making process in order to make quality decisions and to guarantee group commitment in carrying out the decisions. Vroom and Yetton claim that the effectiveness of a decision relies on decision quality and decision acceptance by the group, depending upon the situation. Situations, which affect the decision procedure,
include the amount of information the leader and group members possess; the likelihood the group members will accept an absolute decision; the likelihood the group members will cooperate, if they participate; the amount of disagreement among the group members; and the degree to which the decision is unstructured and requires problem solving. Groups with different organizational structures approach decision making differently, and consequently, have varying results. However, the model provides various decision procedures to simplify its application and to assist managers in selecting the appropriate decision procedure for the situation (Yukl, 1998).

**Theorems**

Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s research (1976) on the strategic decision process, that is, a theory used to explain the phases of decision making and used as the conceptual framework for this study, outlines three phases, three supportive routines, and five dynamic factors. These researchers collected evidence over five years, using students enrolled in a master’s-degree-level course in management policy. Fifty teams of four to five students each studied one organization over a three- to six-month period. The student teams conducted structured interviews either after the decision was determined or near the end of the decision process.

The 25 strategic or important decision processes that were conducted by the organizations were characterized in three ways: (a) by the agent or action that inspired them, (b) by their solution, and (c) by the process used to arrive at the decision. First, decisions were identified by the action that inspired them, ranging
from an opportunity decision, a voluntary decision initiated to improve a situation; to a crisis decision, a serious situation requiring immediate action; to a problem decision, a decision that falls in between opportunity and crisis and is elicited by pressures not as great as the crisis. Thus, during the development of a decision, the decision process can move along a continuum from opportunity to crisis, with shifts possibly due to a delay or to managerial action. Second, decisions were categorized by four possible solutions. Fully-developed solutions may be chosen at the beginning of the process. Ready-made solutions, which are fully developed, may be identified during the process. Custom-made solutions may be designed for the decision, and ready-made and custom-made features are combined, with the ready-made solution modified.

**Routines.** The basic elements of the decision process, as documented in the conceptual framework in Chapter 1, include the three phases--identification, development, and selection. According to Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret (1976), the strategic decision process uses three routines to support the three phases of identification; Figure 5 outlines the routines, which support the three phases. The first routine, decision control, is used to guide the decision process. Decision planning and switching are two opportunities that fall within decision control. In planning, the decision makers develop informal decision plans, typically flexible and modifiable as the decision process continues; and in switching, the decision makers move on to the next step, choose the appropriate routine, such as diagnosis or search, decide on resources, and monitor their decision plan.
The second routine, communication, is used to provide information needed to foster decision making. Three routines that fall within communication are exploration, investigation, and dissemination. Exploration involves looking for information, investigation involves focusing the search for information, and dissemination involves dispersing information about the progress of the decision and its outcome.

The third and final routine, political activity, is used by individuals who attempt “to satisfy their personal and institutional needs by the decisions made in an organization” (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret, 1976, p. 262). These individuals are convinced they will feel the effects of the outcome.

*Dynamic Factors.* The process of strategic decision making is dynamic, subjected to interferences and to deadends, according to Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret (1976). Figure 6 highlights the six groups of dynamic factors. These dynamic factors delay the process, halt the process, and restart the process.
also cause it to speed up or to slow down. These factors consist of six groups: interrupts, the result of environmental forces, like legal action and governmental legislation; scheduling delays, the decision makers’ factoring in delays to allow them to complete multiple tasks; feedback delays, the decision makers’ waiting for a reaction to a previous action; time delays and speedups, the decision makers’ speeding up or delaying the process to await a more appropriate time, to coordinate two or more actions, or to create a certain effect; comprehension cycles, the decision makers’ cycling within a routine or between two routines in order to understand a complex issue; and failure recycles, the decision makers’ blocking the decision process of a solution that is unacceptable and delaying the process until one is found.

Dynamic Factors

- Interrupts
- Scheduling Delays
- Feedback Delays
- Time Delays and Speedups
- Comprehension Cycles
- Failure Recycles

Figure 6: Chart of Six Groups of Dynamic Factors (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret, 1976)

Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s model (1976) of decision processes emphasizes the unstructured, strategic decisions, that is, the important but unusual
decisions. Other theoretical frameworks have been used to explain the phases of decision making as well. John Dewey (1933) introduced five phases of reflective thought:

1. suggestions, in which the mind leaps forward to a possible solution;
2. an intellectualization of the difficulty or perplexity that has been felt (directly experienced) into a problem to be solved, a question for which the answer must be sought;
3. the use of one suggestion after another as a leading idea, or hypothesis, to initiate and guide observation and other operations in collection of factual material;
4. the mental elaboration of the idea or supposition as an idea or supposition (reasoning, in the sense in which reason is a part, not the whole, of inference);
5. testing the hypothesis by overt or imaginative action. (p. 107)

Using Dewey’s work as a springboard, other frameworks surfaced. One of the most noted is Herbert Simon’s intelligence-design-choice model (1965). The first phase of the process is called intelligence, where the decision maker looks for opportunities that call for a decision. The second phase is called design, where the decision maker invents, develops, and analyzes possible action plans, and the third phase is called choice, where the decision maker chooses a certain course of action. The phases, however, are more complex than their sequence implies. Decisions are made within each phase, and each phase has its own decision-making process with problems and intelligence activities.
Eberhard Witte (1972) looked at the issue of phases also. He researched the phase theorem, which says that “decision processes comprise a certain sequence of different phases with different intellectual content, or in other words, decisions consist of a sequence of different activities (operations)” (Witte, 1972, p. 166). However, he was interested in finding out if distinct phases exist and if they follow a simple sequence. He concluded that decision processes associated with the acquisition of data processing equipment do involve phases but that the sequence of phases is not supported in the study. Witte (1972) found that the phase theorem was not supported entirely, but the following propositions were supported:

(1) a complex, innovative decision is a multi-operational, multi-temporal process; (2) a complex decision-making process does not only have one final decision, but consists of a plurality of subdecisions; the maximum number of these choices occurs at the end of the total process; (3) the theorem’s claim of information-gathering, alternative-developing, and alternative-evaluating operations can be found in decision-making processes in large numbers; however, they do not culminate in distinct phases in time, but rather are distributed over the total duration of the process. (p. 177)

Brim, Glass, Lavin, and Goodman (1962) also proposed a phase theorem by looking at how people make decisions. They focused on the relationship between decision making, personality, and social structure—from a sociological perspective. The actual decisions they examined were parents’ decisions about their children, gathering information from 200 men and women.
The phase theorem includes six steps: (a) identify the problem, (b) gather the needed information, (c) develop the possible solutions, (d) evaluate the solutions, (e) select the performance strategy, and (f) perform the action. Two of the phases serve as the center of their research: the evaluation phase and the strategy selection phase (Brim, Glass, Lavin, and Goodman, 1962).

In addition, ten characteristics of the two phases include “desirability direction and extremity, probability direction and extremity, time direction and extremity,…number of outcomes considered,…the number of actions selected, the degree to which the preferential ranking corresponds to the utility ordering of the alternatives, and the use of contingent and sequential courses of action” (Brim, Glass, Lavin, & Goodman, 1962, p. 27).

After conducting several studies, Brim et al. (1962) found that personality relates to decision processes, regardless of the situation; that situations are related to decision processes, regardless of personality; and that the interaction of personality with problems affects decision making. Furthermore, Brim, Glass, Lavin, and Goodman’s phase theorem is centered around important decisions, which have no quick solution and which require much intellectual effort to find the solution.

Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s framework (1976) supports Witte’s basic findings; that is, there appears to be logic in having distinct phases of the strategic decision process but not in advocating a sequential relationship. These theorists’ work resembles Simon’s as well. Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret define the phases using identification, development, and selection, while Simon uses
intelligence, design, and choice. Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret further describe the phases using three supportive routines as well as six dynamic factors.

In addition, Brim, Glass, Lavin, and Goodman’s phase theorem appears to be an earlier version of Simon’s work. These researchers propose six phases in the decision process while Simon proposes only three, though each of them has subphases that include the content of Brim, Glass, Lavin, and Goodman’s phases. Each theorem calls for decision making to occur between and within each phase. All researchers--Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret; Witte; Simon; and Brim, Glass, Lavin, and Goodman--focus on strategic or important decision making.

Studies

Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s model (1976) of decision processes was influenced by earlier studies that provided groundwork for the research. The studies that follow are reflected in the model’s three main phases of strategic decision processes, that is, identification, development, and selection.
Identification Phase. In a study of decision making, Pounds (1969) focused on the process of identifying problems for managers. He interviewed 50 executives in a large Southern corporation. In his research, the problem or the need for a decision was identified as the difference between the actual experience or situation and an established standard or desired situation. Executives viewed the differences by comparing their perceptions to a model or standard with the same variables. “The problem of understanding problem finding is therefore eventually reduced to the problem of understanding the models which managers use to define differences” (Pounds, 1969, p. 5).

Pounds (1969) used four managerial models for problem finding to provide the theoretical structure for his study: historical, planning, other people’s, and extra-organizational. Historical methods involve month-to-month or year-to-year comparisons; planning methods involve projections of operating variables; other people’s models involve other people sharing expectations based on their own standards for performance; and extra-organizational models involve managers linking performance to standards provided by external agencies, such as trade journal reports of current practices.

In the study of the Southern corporation, the managers’ observed behaviors could be traced back to one of the four models. Pounds concluded that defining the problem could not precede constructing the model. Thus, models provided a way to evaluate managerial behavior and to define managers’ problems.

Bonge (1972) also looked at decision-making processes from the perspective of recognizing problems in the organization, but he linked the problems to failures to
meet a value or standard. The inability to meet a standard or to obtain a goal is a state of disequilibrium, a state that must be recognized by the manager before decision making can start. According to Bonge, managers need a procedure for identifying and analyzing a problem in order to focus on the causes, apply resources to the situation, and implement solutions.

The first step in problem recognition is the process of determining the state of disequilibrium. The process is monitored, and the outcome is compared with a set of standards. If the process is closely aligned with the standards, then no disequilibrium is acknowledged; if the process is not aligned with the standards, then action is required (Bonge, 1972).

Finding the problem involves three major components: deciding what to monitor, applying standards to the data, and deciding how nearly the process data must correlate with the standards. The monitoring component focuses on information about the process and provides input for the problem recognition aspect. Managers must recognize and monitor variables, which are important to their goals and to the goals of the organization. Thus, the variables fall into two classes: those necessary for survival and those necessary for implementing the organization’s strategies. In addition, managers must recognize variables that are critical for their own personal workplace concerns; that is, a personal manager may be concerned with employer turnover or absenteeism. Regardless of which variables are considered important, decision making focuses on these areas. Generally, making conscious decisions mandates a standard of comparison (Bonge, 1972).
Models are available for managers to use for standards of comparison in the second component of the problem recognition process. According to Bonge (1972), Pounds (1969) concluded from his study of problem identification for managers that standards were grounded on trends, people’s expectations, other organizations’ standards, and theoretical models. Ethical standards may even play a role in establishing modes of operation. Individuals or organizations may impose these standards, though they are generally implicit. Regardless of the standard selected, however, the performance under review must be subject to the same constraints as the comparative model (Bonge, 1972).

The last component in the process of recognizing problems, according to Bonge (1972), is determining the differences between the actual performance and the previously identified standards. Managers must decide how much deviation will be permitted before corrective action is necessary.

Once the problem has been recognized, managers enter the diagnostic phase. They must decide which differences are symptoms of and which are basic causes of the disequilibrium. The decision often depends on the context in which the symptoms and causes occur. Managers, in diagnosing the problem, must recognize and state the problem, including gathering the facts, evaluating the facts, preparing the hypothesis, and choosing between different hypotheses (Bonge, 1972).

The final step in this process, contends Bonge (1972), is the actual diagnosis. From the diagnosis, the problem statement is formed, and problem-solving activities and policy formation begin.
Bonge’s analysis of decision making is similar to Drucker’s five phases of decision making. Drucker (1954) outlines the phases as “defining the problem; analyzing the problem; developing alternate solutions; deciding upon the best solution; converting the decision into effective action” (p. 353).

In order to define the problem, according to Drucker (1954), managers must find the critical factor, an element which must be altered before anything else in the situation can be altered, and then identify the conditions of its solution, thinking through the objectives and rules of conduct. Next, to analyze the problem, managers must classify the problem so the decision maker and possible consultants can be identified. Once the problem has been analyzed, alternative solutions are developed.

Drucker (1954) contends that strategic decisions should not be handled like traditional problem solving. He believes it is more efficient for managers to look for the right question than it is to look for the right answer. However, finding the right answer to the right question is not sufficient--managers must make the course of action selected as effective as possible. Decision making affects people, Drucker believes, and those who are affected look to the decisions as a means of helping them achieve their objectives and reach a higher level of overall performance.

*Development Phase.* Snyder and Paige (1958) studied foreign policy decision making as an action process. Their research was centered on what was regarded as former President Harry S. Truman’s most significant decision--the commitment of the United States military to stop the North Korean forces from invading South Korea. The core of the study covered decision-making events from
June 24, 1950, when US government officials were told of the attack, to June 30, 1950, when government officials committed US military power.

Snyder and Paige (1958) assumed that organizational decision processes include a sequence of activities regulated by individuals whose behavior is controlled by structural factors, such as roles, rules, and communications; by information held by individuals or supplied by the structure; and by motivational factors, such as values, attitudes, and perceptions. Thus, organizational roles determine who makes decisions and whose values, attitudes, and perceptions are critical. In addition, values, attitudes, and perceptions determine how information is selected and interpreted. Finally, the organizational structure determines how information is communicated.

Truman and his advisors who made the decisions confirmed a model from within Snyder and Paige’s conceptual framework:

Given identified, authoritative decision makers, an organizational system, and a communication network (internal and external), decision-making consists in the combining of values + attitudes + information + perception + situation into the choice of a course of action. Another formulation is: a decision results from the interrelating of values and situation with attitudes, perception, and information serving a two-way mediating function. In this process values are clarified; the question of what values are threatened by an event or events is raised and answered. Value relevancy is established by a “reading” of the situation and by calculation of the consequences for
particular values of a certain state of affairs….Values have to be operationalized in terms of the situation confronting the actor, which means that objective properties of the situation (information) and the relevancies surrounding it (perception) must be determined. (p. 374)

Two points should be noted: (a) decisiveness is critical if a decision entails a value component, which overrides the cost; and (b) the calculation of outcomes must include a factual judgment. Thus, military intervention with the objective of restoring the status quo in Korea was appropriate because basic values were threatened. The consequence of losing South Korea outweighed the risks and costs of intervention.

Snyder and Paige (1958) concluded from their analysis that the Korean decision involved a sequence of activities. From June 24 – June 30, a series of events occurred, though the Korean decision was a set of decisions that were made at different points in time.

Cyert and March (1963), like Snyder and Paige, focused on developing a solution within decision making. Cyert and March, however, analyzed the business firm and the manner in which it made decisions. From observations of the firm’s decision-making procedures, the researchers formed the basis for a decision-making theory.

Cyert and March’s analytical framework (1963) had two organizational components: (a) a set of variable categories and (b) a set of relational concepts. Decision making can be analyzed by variables that affect the following: organizational goals, organizational expectations, and organizational choices. Variables influence goals, such as (a) the dimensions or what things are considered
important and (b) the aspiration level or the firm’s past goals, past performances, and other firms’ past performances. Variables also influence the outcome of making inferences from information provided and the choices in identifying alternatives based on the specified goals. In addition, four concepts are used in the decision-making framework: (a) a semblance of conflict resolution, where alternate organizational goals and assumptions concerning conflict resolution are proposed; (b) risk avoidance, where risk and uncertainty in decision making are avoided; (c) problem-directed search, where the search for a decision is stimulated by a problem and is focused on finding a solution; and (d) organizational learning, where organizations display adaptive learning behavior over time in regard to goals, to the attention paid to certain parts of the environment, and to search rules, which may change based on the organization’s experiences with alternative solutions. These four concepts are fundamental to understanding the decision-making process in an organization. The step-by-step process begins with each organization making decisions based on prior results. Goals and procedures are adjusted based on the feedback, and the search aspect is used to solve problems when necessary.

Snyder and Paige and Cyert and March emphasize the development aspect of the decision-making process in their research. Snyder and Paige, though examining foreign policy, focus on selecting alternatives based on a series of events. Cyert and March, on the other hand, advocate making decisions based on prior results, that is, adjusting goals because of feedback received. Both research groups concentrate on activities that lead to developing a solution. Also, both search for
ready-made solutions or design their own, as indicated by Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s model of strategic decision processes.

**Selection Phase.** Cyert, Simon, and Trow (1956) asserted that selecting one course of action over another is at the center of executive activity. Thus, this selection process or decision-making process was demonstrated with rational choice theory utilizing three steps: (a) Individuals are presented with alternative or various courses of action; (b) each course of action has a set of consequences; and (c) individuals rank the sets of consequences and then choose the course of action with the preferred consequences.

Cyert, Simon, and Trow (1956) proposed adding four elements to the process when the process involves human beings making decisions in the real world: (a) The alternative courses of action must be sought; (b) the search for consequences is an important step; (c) individuals are concerned with identifying satisfactory alternatives, which will meet a goal and satisfy several conditions; and (d) individuals must search for the important problems because they are not always identified.

Cyert, Simon, and Trow’s revised theory (1956) addressed non-programmed decisions or unique decisions in determining the feasibility of using electronic data-processing equipment in a corporation, which manufactures and sells its products. After an extensive study, Cyert, Simon, and Trow found that certain routines or steps appear repeatedly, representing basic activities within the decision-making process. The processes fall into two areas: processes relating to the organization’s communication requirements and processes related to the solution of the problem.

Decision making requires many kinds of communication activities--both oral and
written. However, the transmitting information function is critical because it requires that the information source select or filter information that is shared, thus influencing the decisions of others. Just as important as the communication process is the problem-solving process. To search for an alternative course of action is what constitutes a large portion of the non-programmed decision making. The search continues until a satisfactory solution has been selected--though the possibilities have not been exhausted. The study, then, questions the kinds of consequences that are studied carefully and the conditions under which the selection of the solution exists prior to or following the discovery of the consequences, though the researchers pose but do not answer how choices are made when consequences cannot be compared.

Summary

Research on decision making generally identifies four to six steps that are a part of the process (Lundberg, 1964). The set of steps might include the following:

1. Recognize, define, and limit the problem.
2. Analyze and evaluate the problem.
3. Establish criteria or standards by which the solution will be evaluated or judged as acceptable and adequate to the need.
4. Collect data.
5. Formulate and select the preferred solution or solutions. Test them in advance.
6. Put into effect the preferred solution. (p. 23)
Regardless of the nature of the research subjects, a series of steps are followed with basically the same content, though the terms used to describe the steps may differ.

Broadly speaking, just as general steps are utilized in the process of decision making, so are three classes of behavior within a decision cycle: recognizing the problem, processing the information, and making a selection. The three behaviors imply interacting with others, though some behaviors may require more interaction than others. In addition, each behavior could be considered a decision role, with individuals working in situations that require their involvement (Lundberg, 1964).

Decision making with its steps, behaviors, and roles is a critical administrative activity that is important to organizational progress. Consequently, the choices that individuals, and particularly leaders, make in the workplace often determine their credibility and their success.
Overview

A case study is described as the investigation of a bounded system (Creswell, 1998). The system is bound by time and place, and the case is the event or activity being studied. The context places the case in its setting, requiring multiple sources of information to be collected.

Moreover, the case study method emphasizes a holistic, in-depth description of a single phenomenon (Tellis, 1997). As Merriam (1988) explains, the case study is particularistic, concentrating on a particular situation, event, or phenomena; descriptive, providing a rich description of the event or phenomenon under study; and heuristic, bringing new meaning to or expanding the reader’s experience in understanding the phenomenon. What is learned from a case study, according to Stake (1981), is a knowledge that is concrete, vivid, sensory, and interpretive.

I conducted an interpretive case study, with Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s theoretical framework (1976) on decision-making processes as the conceptual framework for this study, and I used the following research question: What are the strategic or important decision processes as well as actions and beliefs that community college leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders use in developing and maintaining economic development initiatives? I focused on an economic development initiative that has not been studied in depth; therefore, by conducting a case study, I watched the unexplored details of the case surface (Creswell, 1998). I selected this case based on purposeful sampling (LeCompte and
Preissle, 1993); that is, an exceptional example of the event was selected based on two established criteria to be explained in the following section on sample selection. I collected multiple sources of data and conducted interpretational analysis. In addition, I wrote the results of the study using both description and interpretation, coupled with an analytic reporting style.

Conducting a case study of an exemplary initiative will provide evidence for the reader that community colleges, along with county groups such as the Committee of 100 and the Economic Development Commission, represent organizations, which sustain activities that support and attract businesses (Hirshberg, 1991).

Sample Selection

This study used reputational case selection and criterion-based selection to identify its population (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). In reputational case selection, the researcher selects a study population based on the recommendations of experts. In criterion-based selection, the researcher identifies a set of criteria that the study participants must possess, and that set of criteria is used to choose the population. Accordingly, in the first level of sample selection, I chose the population of this study based on the recommendation of the former Vice President of the Economic and Workforce Development Division of the North Carolina Community College System. The expert had worked with institutions through the North Carolina Community College system office by virtue of his position as vice president. He had supervised programs from across the state in Focused Industrial Training, New and Expanding Industry, Human Resources Development, Small Business Centers, and Workforce
Continuing Education. In addition, he had acquired an intimate knowledge of economic development initiatives that involve community colleges and made a recommendation of a college based on his knowledge and experience. This expert, then, identified a North Carolina community college based on the two criteria that I established: (a) a student enrollment of 5000 or less, and (b) a demonstrated exemplary program in economic development within the last six years. Identifying a community college with a student enrollment of 5000 or less suggests that the college is located in a small city or large rural area. Governments and agencies within small cities typically work closely with community colleges to attract and to maintain industries because of the need to expand the county’s economic base. In contrast, community colleges with student enrollments over 5000 are usually located in heavily populated counties where collaborative community college and county relationships do not necessarily draw potential industrial clients—the metropolitan areas with excellent transportation modes, skilled employee bases, and competitive incentive packages serve as main attractions for industries instead. As a result, the opportunities to find a suitable case study appeared more appealing in counties where the collaborative efforts between the community college and county would be essential to securing industry.

In the second level of the selection process, I selected leaders based on their involvement within a joint economic development venture between the community college and the county. I interviewed those individuals from the educational and economic development organizations who were identified by the community college president as the most actively involved in the decision-making processes of the
economic development venture: the college president, the vice president of Continuing Education, and the dean of Continuing Education; the county’s chair of the Committee of 100, the director of Economic Development, and the chair of the Economic Development Commission; and a plant manager. To ensure confidentiality with data interpretation in Chapter 4, I referred to the college employees as College Leader I, College Leader II, and College Leader III. In addition, I referred to the county leaders as County Leader I, County Leader II, and County Leader III, while I referred to the plant manager as Manager I. In addition, I interviewed three other individuals: a North Carolina senator, the international developer for the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the regional developer for the North Carolina Department of Commerce, and the North Carolina Natural Gas marketing director. The seven primary interviewees identified these four individuals as having knowledge that was necessary to fully understand the initiative. I addressed these individuals as Senator, International Developer, Regional Developer, and Marketing Director in Chapter 4.

Data Collection

Overview. Data collection efforts involve gathering multiple sources of information (Creswell, 1998). By using a combination of interviews and a review of documents, a researcher can use the different data sources to verify and to compare with other findings. Through data collection, a detailed description of the case surfaces, along with themes and interpretations.

Identification of the Case and Participants. I conducted an intensive case study of an economic development initiative that materialized in the Southeastern
area of North Carolina. The initiative involved a partnership between a community college with an enrollment of 5000 students or less, county economic development organizations, and an industry. I gained access to the interview participants through the community college president. I contacted the president, explained the research study, requested the names of and contact information for leaders involved in the economic development initiative, and requested his support in completing this project. Next, as a follow-up, I telephoned the president and scheduled an appointment to meet with him. In the first interview, I discussed the research proposal and my willingness to study an economic development initiative. In addition, we discussed his perceptions of the county’s economy and the county’s success in attracting and maintaining industry. The general discussion of the economy and local industry helped me establish rapport with the president and provided the groundwork for the structured interview. At the conclusion of the first interview, I secured the names of and contact information for the vice president of Continuing Education, the dean of Continuing Education, the director of Economic Development, the chair of the Economic Development Commission, the chair of the Committee of 100, and the plant manager. Following my initial interview with the president, I contacted the potential interviewees, explained the research project and solicited their support. I then confirmed in a letter to each one the research purpose and interview date and time. (See Appendix B for Sample Interview Letter.)

Sources of Information. Interviews and the review of documents were the data collection methods used in this study (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Creswell, 1998). I conducted in-depth interviewing as I conversed with seven individuals
associated with the initiative; following recommendations from these seven primary interviewees, I interviewed four others who provided supplemental information concerning the initiative. In addition, I prepared an interview guide, using Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s theoretical framework to set the boundaries for the questioning. The guide includes open-ended questions designed for the community college leaders, county leaders, and plant manager. The questions elicit each interviewee’s perceptions of the decision processes used in a collaborative economic development initiative, the political influences surrounding the decisions, and the obstacles that surfaced during the preparation for and implementation of the initiative. (See Appendix C for the interview guide.) Prior to the start of the interviews, I asked each participant to sign a consent form.

Each audio-taped interview lasted 60 minutes. I conducted four interviews in the office of the interviewee, and I conducted three interviews in my office at the request of the interviewee. The sessions began with my giving the interviewee an overview of the research project and my timeline for its completion. I then asked the individual to reflect on the beginnings of an economic development partnership and to describe its development over time, exploring political influences, obstacles, and personal feelings as he or she told the story. I listened for rich descriptions and key terms as well as topic avoidance and deliberate distortion (McCracken, 1988). No interviewees, however, appeared to avoid a topic or to deliberately distort their responses to a question by providing an unusual reply. Thus, I concluded the interview by asking for another opportunity to discuss the initiative with the interviewee; I conducted follow-up interviews with the economic development
director and the dean of continuing education to clarify or to expand points of discussion from the first interview.

In addition, based on the recommendations of the seven primary interviewees, I interviewed a North Carolina senator, the international developer for the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the regional developer for the North Carolina Department of Commerce, and the North Carolina Natural Gas marketing director. These interviews provided specific details concerning parts of the initiative, of which only people in their positions would have knowledge. Their personal accounts of the single events were necessary to fully understand the entire initiative.

The second source of data collection was the review of documents. The community college provided documents, that is, minutes from meetings, letters, memos, and reports (Tellis, 1997). I used these documents to corroborate data gathered from the interview and to provide historical and contextual dimensions to the interview (Glesne, 1999). Also at the conclusion of each interview, I asked the interviewee for any documents that might validate his or her testimony or might provide additional information. As a result, the economic development director submitted a timetable he had constructed for the project, and the dean provided a notebook of correspondence that she had maintained.

As a means of triangulation, the member check was used (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Following the interviews, I mailed the interviewees a copy of the interview transcripts in an envelope marked “confidential” and asked them to verify the data. The transcript review ensured accuracy of the transcripts. (See Appendix D for sample follow-up letter.)
**Steps of the Process to Contact, Collect, and Triangulate the Data Collection**

*Efforts.* The steps that were used in the areas of sample selection and data collection could be recreated in the future to ensure reliability, thus permitting other researchers to replicate this study. The steps could be summarized as follows: first, using criterion-based selection, identify the set of criteria that study participants must possess. Second, follow the reputational case selection, that is, select a study population of one community college based on the recommendations of an expert. Third, interview seven individuals for 60 minutes: college president, continuing education vice president, continuing education dean, economic development director, economic development commission chair, Committee of 100 chair, plant manager, and others upon recommendation. Conduct follow-up interviews as necessary. Fourth, mail the interviewees a copy of the interview transcript and ask them to verify the data. Fifth, triangulate data obtained from the interviews and the member checks.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis brings order and interpretation to the collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Through data analysis, relationships are established among categories of data, and a focus is provided for the study. The analysis is divided into six areas: “(a) organizing the data; (b) generating categories, themes, and patterns; (c) coding the data; (d) testing the emergent understanding; (e) searching for alternative explanations; and (f) writing the report” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 152).
When I began the process of inductive data analysis, I studied the data collected through interviews and document reviews and edited my notes where necessary, looking for similarities and differences. Next, I made reflective comments in the margins of the notes and documents, recording my perceptions of the interviewees’ attitudes, impressions, and beliefs (Creswell, 1998; Huberman & Miles, 1994). To ensure a clear, detailed description of the case, I chronicled the events of the economic development initiative, having gathered multiple sets of data for each step in the sequence. Then, a professional transcriptionist transcribed the interviews into a word processing program. As I reflected on the decision-making theory within my conceptual framework, I looked for patterns expressed by the interviewees. With categorical aggregation, the patterns generated categories into which portions of the text were placed.

Once the categories were generated, I then applied a coding scheme, abbreviating the category names and using them as codes. To ensure validity, a colleague reviewed the codes I selected and verified their appropriateness. Coding was conducted after the interviews.

Next, I evaluated the data, noting how significant the data were in relation to the research question and how important the data were in developing understandings about the decision-making process used by community college presidents, county leaders, and industry leaders in economic development initiatives. As I continued to review the data, I critically reviewed the patterns established and searched for other explanations for the data and for any connections among them. I developed naturalistic generalizations from the data,
that is, generalizations that individuals can learn from the case for themselves or for application to other cases (Creswell, 1998).

In the last stage of data analysis, I wrote the report. Through this interpretive act, I provided meaning to the raw data collected during the interviews and from the documentation. I did not apply decision-making theory to the data; however, I drew comparisons after the data was coded, thus permitting a more open interpretation to the data collected.

An audit trail ensures reliability within the data analysis. The following steps could recreate the process for any researcher who wishes to replicate the study: (a) transcribe the interviews; (b) generate categories, themes, and patterns, using categorical aggregation for data gathered through interviews and documentation; (c) code the data, utilizing abbreviations of the category names, after all of the interviews; (d) review the data for significance, developing naturalistic generalizations; (e) search for alternative explanations of the data; and (f) provide meaning to the raw data collected during the interviews and from the documentation.

**Presentation of Findings**

According to Janesick (1994), “the purpose of conducting a qualitative study is to produce findings” (p. 215). As I presented my research findings, I concentrated on the substance of the findings, hoping to enable the reader to understand the meaning of the experience being studied. I looked for relationships between and among the categories, leading to a more complete narrative. Denzin (1989) recommends the following steps: (a) find in the personal experience the phrases and statements that address the research question; (b) determine the meanings of these
phrases and statements; (c) seek the interviewees’ interpretation of the findings; (d) examine the meanings for recurring features of the issue being studied; and (e) provide a tentative statement of the issue in regard to the recurring features, as stated above.

In summary, I described the experience in detail and revealed the findings by synthesis, as I told the story of an economic development initiative and added meaning to the experience.

**Actions for Quality and Trustworthiness**

A case study requires extensive verification (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995). Two criteria used to judge qualitative data and data analysis are **validity** and **reliability** (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Validity is concerned with the accuracy and value of the interpretations, while reliability is concerned with the extent to which a researcher’s findings can be replicated (Merriam, 1988). Validity can be confirmed if the study proves **useful**, that is, the study is enlightening or liberating; **contextually complete**, that is, the study is comprehensive; and **authentic**, that is, the interviewee’s remarks are reported credibly and authentically (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). On the other hand, reliability can be confirmed if the researcher uses triangulation and member checking. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple data-collection methods, sources, or theories to ensure validity, while member checking refers to the interviewees’ corroborating the data collected by the researcher (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As I conducted a case study of a collaborative economic development venture, I achieved validity by exploring the case **comprehensively**, that is,
interviewing participants from each party involved in the initiative; credibly, that is, representing the participants’ remarks accurately; and usefully, that is, telling the story so readers will find the case study informative.

I achieved reliability through triangulation and member checking. To triangulate, I used interviews and documentation as multiple data collection methods, and I interviewed seven people as multiple sources, all associated with the economic development initiative but from different entities. I interviewed four other people as well to ensure a more fully developed story with rich details. In addition, I used member checks, asking each participant to review his or her interview transcript for accuracy. Both triangulation and member checking validated that other researchers could replicate the study and that the results would be consistent and dependable (Merriam, 1988).

Achieving reliability and validity served not only as a means of verification for researchers and practitioners but also as a guard against any biases that I might have brought to the case study--biases formed from 24 years in the community college system. Implementing triangulation and member checks as well as conducting a comprehensive study verifies that the findings are trustworthy.

Bias Statement

When I looked at researcher bias in this study, I considered my longevity in the community college system. As a 24-year veteran of the system, I have worked under four presidents at two community colleges. Each president had differing relationships with the community at large and, particularly, the economic development community. Each president utilized varying degrees of collaboration
as he or she approached decision making within both the college and community. Two presidents were considered effective leaders by members of the college community and business community because of their link to economic development: the presidents had excellent interpersonal communication skills in working with business leaders, they were instrumental in forging relationships with prospective industrial clients, and they were considered excellent salespeople as they explained education and training programs that the college could provide. As I reflect on the presidents’ perceived effectiveness as economic development leaders, I am entering this study with prior experiences coloring my approach to presidential leadership in reference to economic development. However, my knowledge of the presidents’ decision-making skills is meshed with their obvious leadership skills. I do not have knowledge of the decision processes used in collaborative ventures between the community college and the county, nor do I have knowledge of the decision-making skills of any of the other partners. These experiences, as well as decision-making processes theory, helped shape my research questions concerning the decision processes used in collaborative economic development initiatives.

**Summary**

I conducted an interpretive case study of an economic development initiative in Southeastern North Carolina, using Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s theoretical framework on decision-making processes as the conceptual framework for the study and using the following research question: What are the strategic or important decision processes as well as actions and beliefs that community college leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders use in developing and maintaining
economic development initiatives? Using criterion-based selection and reputational case selection, I chose a community college, which had engaged in a joint economic development venture with the county and industry. I interviewed seven leaders associated with the entire project from its inception and four others who had knowledge of particular components of the project. An interpretation of the data collected from the interviews is presented in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Data analysis means making sense of the collected data. In the process of analysis, according to Merriam (1988), data are combined, reduced and interpreted, with the goal of drawing reasonable conclusions and generalizations. The degree of interpretation depends upon the purpose of the study and the end result. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) recommend beginning the analysis by reviewing the research proposal. The questions from the proposal help shape the study and thus must be addressed in the final report. Most importantly, reviewing the research proposal may help the researcher identify the intended audience, important for determining the level of analysis and the format for the report.

Merriam (1988) suggests that once the data have been organized, the researcher should “hold a conversation with the data, asking questions of it, making comments, and so on,” jotting down notes and observations in the margins of the case record (p. 131). These notes begin the process of organizing the data into a system of classification. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest looking for regularities in the data, as categories are identified and themes emerge. The final product of the data analysis is the case study.

This research study explores the following question: What are the strategic decision processes as well as actions and beliefs that community college leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders use in developing and maintaining economic development initiatives? Accordingly, the case study is used to document and to describe decision-making processes captured through an in-depth investigation of
an economic development initiative in North Carolina. The decision-making collaborative efforts of community college leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders surface following extensive interviews and document reviews.

**The Economic Development Initiative**

The initiative under study is a joint effort between a Southeastern North Carolina community college, a Tier 2 county, and a French steel wire manufacturing plant.

**Snapshot of the College.** The community college, located in Southeastern North Carolina, was founded in 1964 as part of the North Carolina Community College System. It is a public, comprehensive community college providing accessible educational, cultural, and social opportunities for area adults. The college offers 59 degree, diploma, and certificate programs and has a curriculum enrollment of over 2700 students with an average age of 29. In addition, more than 6,300 students are served annually through continuing education courses in basic skills and in workforce development training. Workforce development includes customized occupational programs through New and Expanding Industry and highly specialized courses through Focused Industrial Training. Continuing education also supports economic development by providing other services to business and industry (*Biennial Report, 2002*).

**Snapshot of the County.** The county is the third largest county in land area in North Carolina, and it contains ten incorporated towns. Despite the size of the county and the number of towns, little growth in population has occurred: the 2000 census reports a population of 54,749, only a 10.4% increase since 1990. The
population continues to age with 13.8% of the population over the age of 65. Breaking down the population by race, 63.4% of the population is White; 30.9%, African-American; 3.1%, Native-American, and 2.3%, Hispanic (North Carolina Department of Commerce, 2002).

The economy has changed over the years. Agriculture employs only 2% of the workforce though it is still significant in county earnings. Tobacco and timber are important industries as well. Wood-related industries have been prevalent in the county for nearly 100 years, manufacturing products such as lumber, plywood, furniture, cabinets, and others. Though this wood-related industry has been faced with global competition, International Paper is the county’s largest industry and employer. Textile and apparel industries, opening in the 1940s and 1950s, began closing in the 1990s, also due to global competition. Since 1995, the county has lost over 2500 textile jobs. Currently, the percentage of the workforce in manufacturing is 20.4%, a drop from 27% in 1990. Manufacturing provides the highest average wages of any industry sector in the county (North Carolina Department of Commerce, 2002).

The county is classified by the Department of Commerce as a Tier 2 county (on a scale of 1-5), indicating that it is an economically distressed county. The tier is determined by the county’s standing in unemployment, per capita income, and population growth (North Carolina Department of Commerce, 2002).

- Per capita income is $19,815 (73 out of 100 North Carolina counties)
- Poverty rate is 20.5% (double the state rate of 12.6%)
- Average weekly wage in all business sectors is $476 (state average is $609)
Unemployment rate between 6% and 10.6% since 1990. (workforce gained only 500 more people since 1990, despite 10.4% growth in population)

Other educational statistics include the following (North Carolina Department of Commerce, 2002):

- 59.4% of adults have at least a high school education (state average is 70%)
- 9% of adults have a college education (state average is 17.4%)

Overall, the county has a low-skilled workforce because plant closures have left people with few marketable skills. In addition, the high illiteracy rate has affected educational and training efforts (North Carolina Department of Commerce, 2002).

Snapshot of the Industry. The company described in this project is a French steel wire manufacturing company with five plants in France and one in Slovakia. Headquartered in Paris, the company manufactures over 140,000 tons of steel wire per year. The main products are soft and carbon specialty wires of which the company is now one of the world’s largest manufacturers. The wire is used in the automotive, construction, packaging, mechanical and electrical engineering, aircraft, shipping, and nuclear industries. Its largest customers are staple manufacturers, such as Arrow, Swingline, and Bostich (Conflandey, 2000).

Scope of the Project. Bringing the wire industry to the county meant a $15 million investment. North Carolina competed with Virginia, South Carolina, West Virginia, and Ohio to secure the project. The company was looking for access to an interstate highway, access to an international port for importing steel, and access to a railroad. The company needed a 125,000 square foot facility, with natural gas and
water lines designed for heavy usage. The company projected having 52 jobs, ranging from $10-$14 an hour in wages.

Chronology of the Project. I interviewed five leaders who established the chronology of events: community college president, vice president, and dean; economic development director; and plant manager. Each leader outlined all or part of the sequence of events to substantiate the following:

1996  Company contacted the North Carolina Department of Commerce’s Business and Industry Division to obtain information on conducting business in the state. Company provided an overview of its project and a list of requirements needed to locate its new plant.

Project was assigned to the Economic Developer (ED) within the Business and Industry Division. ED assembled package of relevant information and submitted it to the company.

Early 1997  Company announced it would visit all states to look at potential locations. Based on the list of requirements, the developer contacted appropriate county economic development organizations in Southeastern North Carolina and asked them to submit preliminary proposals and information for the project. ED assembled these proposals and sent them to the company.

May 1997  Company sent two teams of four people to the United States to visit proposed sites for the plant. North Carolina team met with local economic development officials concerning proposed sites for the
building, incentives, infrastructure, labor availability, employee training, government assistance, and other issues.

**Sum. 1997** Team returned to the United States after narrowing its site search to North Carolina and Virginia. Team visited several proposed areas again, comparing the estimated costs for operating the company in each location, using detailed spreadsheets. These spreadsheets highlighted costs for water, sewer, natural gas, freight, labor, insurance, benefits, construction, land, taxes, fees, and air travel. Company looked for a good fit with the county.

**Fall 1997** Company narrowed sites to two--one in North Carolina and one in Virginia. Counties were ranked almost equally in terms of costs and amenities. Company visited both locations again with a larger team. Local ED coordinated all aspects of the project for the county, including negotiation of incentives.

**Wtr. 1998** President and vice president and other company officials visited both locations before making a decision.

**April 1998** North Carolina Department of Commerce went on an industry-recruiting mission to Europe and met with the president of the company. The president informed the delegation that North Carolina had been chosen as the site for its first United States plant.

**May 1998** Company officials, local officials, Governor Hunt, and others held a groundbreaking ceremony in Southeastern North Carolina.
The document review, a second source of data collection, verified the above chronology of events outlined during the interviews. The documents, in particular, helped provide the context surrounding the information gathered during the interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Memos requesting reimbursement for training and engineering services as well as an approved training profile supported the reported activities of the college and the company from 1996-1998. While the documents did not create an orderly account of the events, they did reinforce isolated comments of the interviewees, which increased an understanding of the project’s scheme.

Review of Data

I interviewed seven community college, county, and industry leaders concerning the economic development initiative: the community college president, vice president, and dean, addressed in the data interpretation section as College Leader I, College Leader II, and College Leader III; the plant manager, addressed as Manager I; and the economic development director, the Economic Development Commission chair, and the Committee of 100 chair, addressed as County Leader I, County Leader II, and County Leader III. I recorded the sixty-minute interviews, which were later transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. As I read each transcript, I reflected on the meeting and then recorded in the right-hand margin my perceptions of the interviewee’s attitudes and beliefs. After reading the transcript a second time, I assigned patterns to the interviewee’s remarks, having considered the research questions and conceptual framework. I identified patterns,
such as the following: niche identified, request reviewed, resources allocated, solution identified, knowledge gained, barriers identified. Next, the patterns generated seven categories into which I placed portions of the text. Lastly, I abbreviated the category names and used them as codes.

The following seven categories were abbreviated and used as codes:

- **ID** = Identification of opportunity or problem
- **LL** = Lessons Learned
- **DS** = Development of Solution
- **OB** = Obstacles
- **SO** = Selection of Outcome
- **PO** = Politics
- **DM** = Decisionmakers

Following the initial interviews with the seven leaders, I conducted follow-up interviews with the economic development director and the dean of Continuing Education to confirm details of the project. In addition, I interviewed four other individuals who provided specific details concerning the initiative that only they would know by virtue of their positions in the workplace: a North Carolina senator, the international developer for the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the regional developer for the North Carolina Department of Commerce, and the North Carolina Natural Gas marketing director. These subsequent interviews reinforced and augmented themes identified in the seven initial interviews with the community college, county, and industry leaders.
Themes from the Data

The patterns determined by the interviewees’ remarks generated seven categories. Of these seven categories, three main themes emerged: identification of the problem or opportunity, selection of the solution, and lessons learned. Simon (1965) in his intelligence-design-choice model looks for opportunities to call for a decision, to develop action plans, and to choose a course of action. Brim et al.’s plan (1972) contains more steps, but it includes the following as important components: (a) identify the problem, (b) develop the solutions, and (c) perform the action.

All interviewees in this study confirmed the first major theme that emerged: identification of a problem or opportunity. The county wanted an industry in the industrial park; it had to convince the state and the industry that it could handle the demands. College Leader I confirmed that the niche and need were present.

College Leader I: We wanted to have an industrial park adjacent to the college, via a poor man’s RTP kind of idea….Maybe our market niche could be small, international firms--small, meaning less than 100 employees--that wanted to locate in North Carolina but didn’t want to locate in the Charlotte/Raleigh/Greensboro’s of the world….The other thing we wanted to do was to create in the Department of Commerce’s mind that we had somebody here that likes to work with international companies. All you are trying to do is to get a little separation between yourself and the other 57 community colleges.
In addition, County Leader I confirmed that the county had to get established with the state department in order to make its case known to those who could lure industry to the county. The state department could help the county establish its need with potential clients.

County Leader I: What we did in terms of marketing was to work with the North Carolina Department of Commerce on a very regular basis, networking with them, explaining the assets that we had in the county for economic development and unique things that would really help us stand out, in terms of recruiting industry to the county.

The International Developer contended that the success of counties in attracting industry could be attributed to their having a good economic development organization. He emphasized that the same qualities and benefits needed to attract domestic clients were also needed to attract international clients. The counties, however, must be adept at selling their programs with all of the amenities, that is, customized training, competitive utility rates, as well as others.

International Developer: You have to have an active program that has taken steps to put programs in place and put products in place that would be of interest to a potential investor….Every county, regardless of how rural it is, has success in attracting foreign companies if they have the product in place, the product being a well-served, all-utilities-served business park and shell buildings.

Just as the county leaders were trying to identify an opportunity for growth and development and to sell the county’s qualities to the state department, the
industry was looking for an opportunity to expand as well. The plant manager stressed that the company was looking for a location in the South, close to the ocean, and in a rural environment with a good mechanical base for employees. In addition, the plant manager was looking for a location (a) where the company could import machinery, goods, and raw materials and then export to Mexico and (b) where the competition was minimal for employees; that is, the company would not be competing with larger companies for employees.

Clearly, the county and industry recognized opportunities that required decisional activities. In their study of strategic decision making, Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret (1976) found that identification of the decision process involves recognizing the opportunity or problem and eliciting decisions. In addition, once the decision process has begun, resources are allocated.

The college was committed to allocating resources necessary to convince the company to build in the county. According to the International Developer, the company was “impressed with the fact that the community college…had a campus adjacent to the industrial park…. “ This physical location underscored the importance of training and development to potential clients.

International Developer: European companies…are noted for their dual education programs and apprenticeship and that kind of thing. They do not have a comparable program like we have with customized industrial training. They have extensive apprenticeship programs…but they are not used to having a program like they had [proposed] for them [with] the community college.
Consequently, College Leader III outlined customized training for the company as well as other services that would entice the company to look favorably at the county. (See Appendix E for Training Proposal.)

College Leader III: We outlined customized training opportunities that would be afforded to a new industry coming into the area. We also tried to explain and express to them that we had a “can do” attitude...where we go the extra mile....So, they knew from the start that the college was committed....When looking at other services that we could provide, we told them that we could give them office space, clerical assistance, training space, space in which to set up their first line if their building was not ready so that they could begin manufacturing in a building here on the college campus.

College Leader I also confirmed that following the identification of the opportunity resources had to be allocated to entice the company to select the county--mobilizing resources demonstrated to the company officials that the college was making a serious commitment.

College Leader I: We promised that we would send employees to France to be trained....[I] made a decision that the college would pay for it....I remember we spent somewhere around $30,000 of our own funds on this. But we had made the commitment, and we were going to follow through with it in order to keep the customer happy. We were building a package of benefits that most people at another community college wouldn’t have thought to do. We were trying to make ourselves just a little bit different and a little bit better in perception as well as in fact.
The county leaders as well committed to allocating resources as they prepared the incentives package. The basic package was offered initially, but it was modified as the project strengthened in appeal to the company. According to County Leader I, the incentives list included “tax incentives from the county, industrial site, grant funding from the state, training by the community college system, infrastructure--primarily water and sewer lines to the building, and a grant from a regional economic development organization.”

County leaders faced two challenges as they tried to make resources available to the potential client. Because they were committed to this economic development opportunity, the county leaders sought assistance in order to overcome these challenges and to provide natural gas lines and competitive water rates to the company. One of the major requirements of the company and one of the challenges to the county was to have natural gas available to the plant. In order to accommodate this need, county leaders, led by a North Carolina senator, met with executives from the natural gas company to discuss running gas lines through the industrial park. The marketing director explained the gas company’s perspective on partnering with the county.

Marketing Director: [The natural gas company] explained that its course of business is to evaluate opportunities, such as this one, on an economic basis. We take into account the load that is available. When I say available, it means what can be converted into revenues presently. We compare those against the cost necessary to expand the infrastructure to this facility. With this particular situation, there wasn’t a load. It was an economic development
opportunity. There were no customers. [The international company] probably hadn’t even made contact at that point and time--although, that is exactly the kind of customer that the Senator and others had in mind. I think that their model was sound. The problem was that the public utilities were not set up for speculative investment. We agreed to partner and share the expenses associated with the project. That is exactly what we did. [The] county and Senator were able to secure funding to pay part of the project, and the gas company invested in part of the project. In fact,…part of the line is still owned by the county.

The Senator concurred that the state “passed legislation, which gave incentives to the gas companies to expand in undeveloped rural areas.” In addition, the county received its own separate funding to run the natural gas line into the industrial park and to expand the gas line from the industrial park to another industrial park in one of the county’s neighboring towns. Thus, the natural gas company agreed to partner with the county in paying for the natural gas lines in the industrial park. One factor that may have influenced the gas line decision was that the Senator was named chair of the Commerce Committee for the Senate about the time the county leaders met with the gas company officials. According to the Senator, “all of the utilities legislation, such as natural gas and electricity, came through the committee that I chaired….I think we had an easier time getting [the gas line] because I happened to be at a good place at the right time.”

Another major requirement for the company and a challenge for the county was the need for large quantities of water at competitive rates. According to County
Leader I, the water rates in the county were higher than comparable rates in the other North Carolina counties, which the international company was considering. Because the company would be using up to 50,000 gallons of water a day, the high cost of water could be an obstacle. County Leader I and County Leader III requested that the City Council approve charging the company water rates as if the company were inside the city limits. Though not unanimous, the City Council voted to provide the inside-the-city-limits’ rate to the company.

County Leader I: [The company] was going to be a substantial user of water; therefore, the cost of water was important in terms of us being competitive. By cutting the cost in half, which we were able to do, it made us more competitive in getting the project.

The challenge of providing natural gas lines and competitive water rates proved to be manageable as the county partnered with both private and public agencies. Once the economic development opportunity was identified and deemed important, the county moved aggressively to eliminate any possibility of the company selecting another site due to insufficient allocation of resources and to limited support.

Thus, the identification of the problem or opportunity, the first major theme of the study, proved to be a significant beginning or starting point for all leaders involved. The college and the county identified an economically prosperous opportunity while the company identified desirable locations for its plant. Leaders engaged in decision-making processes as they moved toward a solution.
Selection of an outcome or solution, then, was the second major theme, which surfaced in this study. The president, vice president, and board chairman of the company decided to locate the plant in North Carolina after reviewing the incentives package and observing the strong partnership between the college and county. They examined alternative solutions, comparing twenty-four counties in five states. The North Carolina county, however, developed its own customized solution to the company’s problem. In order to customize a solution, the College Leader II contended that the county had to gather as much information about the company as possible. The county had to strive to make an international company feel comfortable in its new surroundings. Thus, the college brought in translators to the meetings and served coffee out of china cups rather than Styrofoam. County Leader I stressed that entertaining the company officials was part of the customization--making them feel welcome and comfortable.

Mintzberg et al.’s decision processes theory (1976) considers the development of the solution as being the center of the decision-making process. The development phase leads to the creation of a solution through ready-made or custom-made solutions. Thus, the county and college presented a custom-made solution designed especially for the company, after gathering as much information as possible about the company to aid in preparing the county and college’s plan.

The company’s decision to locate in Southeastern North Carolina was announced in Paris when the North Carolina Department of Commerce took a recruiting trip to Europe, and both parties met to discuss the company’s first plant in the United States. The company’s announcement initiated additional decision
making on the part of the college and county. The college plan or custom-made solution was immediately put into place as the college began serving the needs of its new client and preparing its new building to accommodate company employees and production lines until the company’s building could be completed. County Leader I recalled all parties working cooperatively:

County Leader I: [The college] had to run a special water line into that room so that [the company] could run their equipment in the right way. They provided office space and the college set up a telephone and computer for their use. Our office was there working on a number of other things to help them to get their site ready, get a building built, infrastructure, and all those types of things.

College Leader II remembered the financial assistance from the state:

College Leader II: The North Carolina Community College System, through the new and expanding industry program, came into play. They actually provided the funds to wire and put a special water line in for the company, which allowed us to do the training.

College Leader III stated that the college actually modified its new building to allow the company to move into it and manufacture the first product line. The company continued to operate out of the college facility until its own building could be completed.

College Leader III: The building that they located in here on the college campus is set aside for business and industry. They basically moved in when we moved into the building. We modified the building to accommodate their
needs. When they came to us, they used 800 gallons of water an hour. We could not accommodate that demand here with our present water lines; therefore, we contacted [a neighboring town only a few miles from the college], and they were able to help us accommodate the water needs of the company and the treatment needs of their water. We installed new lines in the manufacturing bay that we have here in our building. We also installed additional electrical outlets. They needed higher voltage than what we had in our building to run the machines. We established a unique partnership when they came into the building. Realizing that they were moving into the industrial part, we did not have a loading bay or loading dock in the building. So when they received their first shipment of wire, we then called on Coca Cola. They helped to ensure that the wire could be unloaded at their plant, and then they drove it down here to the college campus with a forklift, spool by spool. That shows that everyone was interested in making sure that the company received the services and the needs that it had.

The plant manager also attested to how well the outcome benefited his company. The college worked closely with the plant manager to provide assistance with screening and hiring employees.

Manager I: The college assisted us in the hiring and screen process because we are not very familiar with the way it is to be done in the U.S. So we determined the type of persons we were looking for, and we brought out own tests because we have some battery of tests that we use for selecting
our people, and the community college provided us with the facility and staff to implement this test.

As part of the college plan, the college assisted the company in various ways. According to Manager I, “they provided me with an office space because I could not work without an office. They also provided any assistance in looking for contractors and supervisors.”

Furthermore, the college’s plan for providing services enabled the company to begin production at the college facility. The college also provided a well-equipped training center for the company to use. The company’s first machines were installed in the center and the first employees were trained there as well.

Manager I: The training center was completed a few weeks before we moved here. So it was ready for us. One of the most important things was that they provided us at the training center a huge room where we could install the first machines. A few days after we received the machine, we hired the first ten employees. These employees spent the first one and a half months in that building being trained on the machine. We had some American and some French instructors who came over here to do the training. At that time we were still building the building, and when it was almost completed we moved everybody without any interruption of production. We were ready to start when we moved here because everybody had had six months of training at the training center. The college paid for all the utilities for the machine—sewer and electrical connection.
We couldn’t have been in any better condition. We had very good inside lighting and access to a meeting room. The conditions were really ideal.

Thus, when the company selected the county, the project entered the final phase of the strategic decision process called the selection phase, one of three phases—identification, development and selection—in Mintzberg et al.’s theory (1976) of decision making. The company’s screening and evaluation methods, found within the selection phase, brought the North Carolina county’s economic development plan to the forefront. Company officials looked at all of the alternatives, determined the one to be most feasible and desirable, and obligated the company to the course of action where the officials, through collaborative decision making, selected North Carolina as its site.

Lessons learned, the third major theme that surfaced during this study, followed the three main phases in Mintzberg et al.’s theory (1976) of strategic decision-making processes. A decision maker looking back over the decision process evaluates what has occurred and discovers what knowledge has been gained (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All seven leaders who were interviewed believed they had learned from the experience and would possibly handle certain situations differently.

College Leader I learned how important it was to alert the Department of Commerce to the strengths of the college and the county so it would refer potential industrial clients to the county. College Leader I said, “‘It is not who you know, it is who knows you,’ that is important.” What “we wanted to do was to create in the Department of Commerce’s mind that we had somebody here that likes to work with
international companies.” Thus, “if you don’t have anything, create something. All you are trying to do is to get a little separation between yourself and the other 57 community colleges.”

County Leader I contended that the little things a county does to lure industry often make a big difference. “You don’t get the big things unless you do the little things.” The college, in particular, went beyond the normal expectations in working with industry. County Leader I claimed “what they were doing, to me, kind of went beyond just training. It set kind of a standard for our economic development program and the types of services that we could offer industry.” College Leader III, in agreement with County Leader I, said she learned how important it was to go beyond traditional expectations. She described her relationship with the plant manager.

College Leader III: Not only was I helping him to get his plant off the ground and have that satisfaction but also helped his family in getting settled here in Columbus County and even helped them build a house. The children look at me probably as their aunt or a relative here in the United States.

County Leader II believed that “one success breeds other successes.”

County Leader II: This was just a great success, which probably involved more people, more agencies, etc., than any other project we had undertaken in the past….You also have to not worry about who gets credit. All of us enjoy success, and one of the best things we can do for anyone else is to help them to be successful.
Just as important as the college and county going beyond standard expectations was their ability to understand and to appreciate people from other cultures.

County Leader I: I learned that business is kind of a universal language. I also learned that there are some unique things that you have to do in working with companies from other nations. They have their customs and cultural ways of doing things. It pays to learn a little bit about that culture when you start working with them.

College Leader II agreed that leaders have to be “diplomats” and that they must be willing to serve the needs of industry long after the industry has started its operation in the community. The motto should always be “under promise and over deliver.

County Leader III stated, “I have never seen anyone successful that can’t get along with other people.” He explains the following:

County Leader III: We have to realize it isn’t going to be “share and share alike.” It is a business world. There has never been a good community built without a profit. I think the one thing I learned is that somebody is going to win a little more than somebody else. But we do what is best for this county....The average John Q. Public does not realize the hours that goes into the background of this work [attracting and securing industrial clients]. Of course, you have to keep your power to drive and protect it. It is a never-ending task of staying prepared in doing the basic fundamental things to make it happen.
County Leader III further emphasized that county leaders involved in recruiting industry are often volunteers. Volunteers are significant in any community effort as they balance the power between the professionals and themselves.

County Leader III: The thing about volunteer work that is so important is that you go to your church; your preacher can’t run the church. You got to have somebody that is a volunteer to come with him and help him. You go to the hospital; the company can’t run the hospital. The company has a board of citizens that comes to help it. Same with here, you have to have a volunteer effort to go with the professional so when you add it up two and two is not four, two and two can become six, or two and two becomes eight. We can build that trust and working relationship with each other. The image that we have as volunteers is so important. This effort and any effort in developing industrial work will never work unless you have volunteers involved. When the industry sees a balance of power between the volunteer and between the professional, I don’t care if it is church, the chamber, the Red Cross, or any other, it will just not work unless you have that balance.

Just as it is necessary to have volunteers and the correct balance between the professionals and volunteers, it is also necessary to have all of the people with a vested interest working on the project. County Leader I learned from this initiative that all the right people should be involved in a project from the beginning--in a confidential manner--so they will not feel uninformed when it is time to make a decision.
County Leader I: There would have been probably a couple other leaders in the county that I would have involved more early on in the process to get their help. One of those was an elected body organization. I think they felt a little blindsided when we came to them asking them for some assistance.

All of the leaders who were interviewed benefited from the experience of working with international company officials, with other community and college leaders, and with local business employees. The leaders learned to work collaboratively to display a unified team. As County Leader III so aptly stated, “If you ever saw a turtle on the top of a fence post, you better believe that he didn’t get there by himself.” To these leaders, success meant working as a team, modifying the things that did not go well, and turning the weaknesses into strengths.

**Obstacles from the Data**

According to the leaders, working as a team produced an economic development initiative where all participants and entities involved—the community college, the county, and the industry—benefited from the project. However, despite the perceived success of the project, two obstacles surfaced that had to be overcome. Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret (1976) contend in their research that there is not a steady progression from one aspect of decision making to another. Thus, decision making is subjected to interferences, deadends, and other factors. These factors actually influence the decision process because they can delay the process, stop the process, or restart the process.

One obstacle within this economic development initiative was the need for a well system on the industrial site. According to the economic development director,
the “water would not be a domestic water, but it would be an industrial processed water for cooling purposes, for cooling the machinery….Then [the company] could discharge it out into the creek, which runs through the park.” County leaders approached the North Carolina Department of Commerce Finance Center for a community development block grant to build a well system. “The county was awarded $300,000-$350,000 to build the well system, with the county providing a 25% local match,” explained the economic development director. Once the well system was constructed, the industry was able to secure a reduced rate of cooling water from the city, comparable to the reduced water rate it already had secured for drinking and domestic water. The obstacle was thus eliminated because the county and state partnered to build the well system, and the city agreed to an inside-the-city-limits water rate.

Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret (1976) contend that interrupts can cause changes in pace, resulting in an organization going back to the development phase to modify or to find another solution. For the industry in this economic development initiative, working through the logistics of finding and building a well system served as an interrupt or as a factor, which delayed the project from moving forward. The leaders involved in the well system obstacle cycled back to the development phase to find a solution, as they obtained funding for the system and secured a reduced water rate for the industry.

A second obstacle within the economic development initiative was the power outages that the industry experienced at the plant. When the industry began experiencing blips in the power system, production decreased.
County Leader I: That little power blip, which could be like a quarter of a second or a half of a second, can shut a whole piece of machinery down, and it takes 15-30 minutes to get it going again. So they are not doing any production during that period of time.

County leaders and the utility company discussed available options. The utility company agreed to build a substation in the industrial park, investing financially in the project. According to County Leader I, the investment positively affected the future growth of the park.

County Leader I: From [the utility company’s] perspective, they view [this] project as a revenue generator. They saw the potential I think of this [project] being a power generator, thus a revenue generator for the company. So, they saw it as an investment to help the Committee of 100 buy that property so that the plant could locate there. In addition, [the utility company] had just built that regional service center out at the park, and I think [the industry] saw being located next to [the center] as an advantage and that they would have good power quality.

Thus, the utility company clearly made an investment in the county by donating $50,000 in grant funding to the Committee of 100 in order to help buy the land for this industrial project. The utility company also invested over a million dollars in the substation, knowing that the substation would generate revenues for the company and, with its presence in the industrial park, stimulate interest from other potential industrial clients.
The power outages experienced by the industry also demonstrate the dynamic factor as defined by Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s theory (1976) of decision processes. The power outages, like interrupts, caused changes in the pace, resulting in the community college, county, and industry leaders searching for a solution. Because the utility company needed to build a substation, timing delays also existed. Timing delays are delays in decision making that Mintzberg et al.’s theory identifies as a dynamic factor. Thus, county and industry decisions were delayed while negotiations for a substation were underway and while plant officials waited for conditions to improve in productivity on the plant floor.

Both interrupts and timing delays were factors involved in the construction of the well system and the substation. The community college, county, and industry leaders considered the interrupts and timing delays as temporary obstacles that were quickly resolved once those involved in the initiatives partnered to develop a solution.

*Communication within Decision Making*

A continuous stream of communication is reflected in the three themes and two obstacles that occur within the decision processes of the economic development initiative. Communication is a component within the identification, development, and selection phases of Mintzberg et al.’s theory (1976). Communication is, thus, a routine, which supports those central phases. Exploration, investigation, and dissemination fall within the communication routine and refer to those individuals looking for information, focusing on the search for information, and disseminating
information about the decision and its outcome. Generally, communication is used to provide information needed to foster decision making. Likewise, Witte (1972) concurred with Mintzberg that communication activities dominate every phase of unstructured decision making.

Communication, as it relates to confidentiality and the dissemination of information, is particularly important in working with potential industrial clients. County leaders in this economic development initiative maintained a high level of confidentiality from the initial discussions to the final negotiations. According to County Leader I, the county leaders were aware that the identity of the French wire manufacturing company had to be concealed.

County Leader I: When we work with a project, industry has to be kept confidential in the beginning because the company does not want anyone to know what they are doing, especially their competition. They like the element of surprise. So, we had to go in from day one prepared to keep this project totally confidential, except to the folks that had to be directly involved.

Leaders and committee members were brought into the project as necessary though discretion was always maintained.

County Leader I: From the beginning, we could not share it with anybody in [the] county or elsewhere. So, we met with the company. I would report to my board, and others would report to their boards. Certainly, like the …Committee of 100 board… [the members] received information about the company, but they were not told the name of the company. We could not
make this public until the company made their decision, and they were ready to announce that they were locating their first U.S. plant in...North Carolina.

The Regional Developer reiterated the remarks of County Leader I, concerning the importance of confidentiality. He identified five main reasons why a company would not want its plans for relocation or expansion to be broadcast. First, the company might be relocating the plant, and it would not want the county leaders from its current location to know of its possible move. The relocation might disrupt the local labor market. Second, the company might be expanding its operations, and county leaders might apply pressure for the expansion to take place at the existing site. Third, the company might have union concerns; that is, the company might be considering a move to a non-union area, and the union within the existing plant might try to halt the company’s relocation efforts. Fourth, the company would not want its competitors to know of its intentions because the competitors might approach the company’s suppliers and customers to conduct potential business transactions. Fifth, the company would not want its customers to be aware of a possible relocation or expansion because the customers might seek products and services from other neighboring companies. Though there are many reasons that a company would not want its identity revealed too early in the decision-making process, the company considers those reasons critical if talks are going to continue into the final stage of site selection. Some industrial clients, according to the regional economic development director, have backed out of agreements on the verge of closure because their identities were leaked to the local newspapers.
Therefore, successful economic development initiatives require leaders who are discreet in their actions and confidential in their sources.

Manager I stressed the importance of confidentiality from the perspective of his company. The French company, with its headquarters in Paris, employed workers in the same family for generations. Employees were apprehensive about the expansion of the company in the United States because of the uncertainties that surrounded the decision, that is, future job security and product integrity.

Manager I: This has been a little bit of a sensitive project because this company is 100 years old. I would say when you have been working for a company for many years, and most of the time your father or your grandfather has been working there, you have to be very careful….I think it has been handled very well because of the good communication.

Because of the long-standing relationship between the employees and the company, the plant manager and other company executives communicated with the employees cautiously. The executives explained through news articles and memos that this new plant would be beneficial for the company. At that time, twenty-five percent of the company’s customers in the United States received the company’s shipments in three to four weeks; having a plant in the United States, however, would reduce the delivery time to one or two days. In addition, the company could buy and sell in dollars, without a change in currency affecting profits. As a result, the company was expecting its volume of business to increase with an expansion in the United States.
The company kept its plans to locate in the United States confidential until the final decision had been made by the plant manager and company executives. Once the decision was announced, the company presented the influential facts to its employees in an effort to convince them that the company was making the right decision.

Communication was handled carefully from the county’s perspective and from the company’s perspective. Leaders involved in the initiative were brought into the decision process as their contributions to the initiative dictated. Key county leaders who participated in most all decision processes were knowledgeable about the company and its needs. Others less involved in the decisions were only aware of an un-named company’s interest in the county. The company’s decisions were shared with employees and French citizens only after the final site selection had been identified in the United States. Then, communication proved paramount in getting the French employees to accept the decision.

Each aspect of this economic development initiative contained elements of communication. From the exploration of decisions, to the investigation of decisions, to the dissemination of decisions--communication was the means by which the decisions were shared with others. Witte (1972) believed that communication followed a U-shaped curve, with most communication occurring at the beginning and ending of the decision processes. In addition, Mintzberg et al. (1976) found that the more committed the decision makers were to the decision the greater the tendency to communicate the information to ensure its acceptance. Accordingly, the economic development initiative required leaders to demonstrate communication as it was
used to attract the company to the county, to develop the initiatives package, to eliminate potential obstacles to the company’s success, and to disseminate the information concerning the company’s decision. The county, community college, and company leaders were so sure that the perfect site had been selected that all leaders shared the decision with their employees and the public with certainty and optimism.

Summary

This case study is used to document and to describe decision-making processes captured through an in-depth investigation of an economic development initiative, involving a Southeastern North Carolina community college, a Tier 2 county, and a French steel wire manufacturing plant. To gather data for the study, I interviewed seven community college, county, and industry leaders as well as four individuals knowledgeable about specific aspects of the initiative. The interviews coupled with the document reviews verified the initiative’s chronology of events. Three themes emerged from the interpretation of the data: identification of the problem or opportunity, selection of the solution, and lessons learned. Two obstacles surfaced: the need for a well system and the existence of power outages. Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s research (1976) in strategic decision processes was the lens through which the non-routine decision-making processes within an economic development initiative were viewed; that is, the themes and obstacles were studied with the Mintzberg et al.’s research as the framework for
understanding and for interpreting the data. Chapter 5 summarizes the case study and discusses implications for further research based on the interpretation of the data.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview

Strategic or non-routine decisions are generally considered significant and challenging to decision makers. Consequences of these decisions shape future actions; therefore, senior-level administrators or designated leaders typically authorize or sanction these decisions. Because the decisions are significant, the problems are likely to be complex, and the solution may be difficult to develop (Simon, 1945; Hoy & Miskel, 1978; Krepel, 1987).

Non-routine decision making occurs on almost a daily basis; therefore, college and county leaders should utilize a process for decision making. One of the greatest decision-making challenges for community college leaders is in economic development. Because community colleges lead efforts in providing skilled workers, community college leaders must be involved in all initiatives that have an impact on the workforce and on the community (Forde, 2002).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to document and to describe the strategic, non-routine decision processes used by community college leaders and business leaders as they establish collaborative initiatives in economic development.

This research study explores the following question: What are the strategic decision processes as well as actions and beliefs that community college leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders use in developing and maintaining economic development initiatives?
The case study is used to document and to describe decision-making processes captured through an in-depth investigation of an economic development initiative in North Carolina. The decision-making collaborative efforts of community college leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders surface following extensive interviews and document reviews.

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study is based on Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s research (1976) of unstructured, strategic decision processes. The strategic decision processes are characterized as unusual, complex, or open ended because the organization has little understanding of the situation from the outset or of the path to the situation’s solution.

Through Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s study (1976), basic elements of the strategic decision process are identified. Three distinct phases comprise the strategic decision process: identification, development, and selection. The identification phase is divided into two routines: the decision recognition and the diagnosis. In the decision recognition routine, the opportunities, problems, and crises surface and create the need for a decision. In the diagnosis routine, the action is examined, the decision process is initiated, and the resources are moved into position. In addition, the decision makers review existing information, find new information, and explain the issues as they try to understand the action. The second phase of the strategic decision process is development. This phase is the center of the decision-making process, leading to the creation of a solution for a problem, opportunity, or crisis. The development phase has two basic routines of its own:
search, used to find ready-made solutions; and design, used to find custom-made solutions or to revise ready-made ones. The final phase of the strategic decision process is the selection phase, where decision alternatives are evaluated and a course of action is identified. Thus, Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s model (1976) of the strategic decision process provides the lens through which this case study is viewed.

Literature Review

The decision-making process, according to DuBrin & Ireland (1993), is a sequence of steps used to choose a particular course of action. Simon (1945) contends that two basic kinds of decisions exist within an organization: (1) programmed or routine decisions and (2) non-programmed or non-routine decisions. Typically, routine decisions produce gratification and assurance—assurance that those things in the future will be as rewarding as those things in the past. In contrast, non-routine decisions produce uncertainty, bordering on the uncomfortable. Moreover, routine decisions often produce a maximum return on their investment while non-routine decisions produce a minimal return on their investment. Thus, because the non-routine decisions are more complex and traumatic, they are made less frequently than the routine (Gore & Dyson, 1964). Actually, the non-routine decisions complement the routine, with the non-routine taking on many forms. The difference between the two kinds of decisions stems from the presence of rational problem-solving strategies as a part of the non-routine decisions (Gore & Dyson, 1964).
Many scholars contend that the quality of decisions is affected by the strategic decision processes used by decision makers as well as by the organizational performance level--good or bad. Managers make decisions differently, depending upon whether the issue is a problem or an opportunity (Fredrickson, 1985). Fredrickson’s research (1985) suggests that there are situations where motive and performance level can affect strategic decision making and where the search for information, the cost of resources, and the concerns for consistency are actions that most likely will be influenced by situations. Strategic decisions obligate organizations to actions that will have critical effects on their performance long term (Fredrickson, 1985).

Some researchers contend that the effectiveness and survival of organizations are linked by how they respond to their external environments and that the movements the organizations make are determined by the behaviors of people in the organizations, in particular, high-level decision makers (Dutton & Jackson, 1987).

Other researchers contend that an organization’s effective decision making may involve leaders working with others in shared decision making. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) propose a situational theory of leadership that can help managers in a leadership role be more effective in their interactions with others. Situational leadership involves an interconnectedness of the following three elements: the degree of direction the leader provides, the degree of emotional support the leader provides, and the maturity level of the followers in completing a task. Thus, in this model the emphasis is on the behavior of the leader in relation to the followers. In
another example of shared decision making, the Vroom-Yetton normative decision model (1973) suggests that leaders may utilize teams in the decision-making process in order to make quality decisions and to guarantee group commitment in carrying out the decisions.

Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s research (1976) on the strategic decision process, that is, a theory used to explain the phases of decision making and used as the conceptual framework for this study, outlines three phases--identification, development, and selection; three supportive routines--decision control, communication, and political activity; and six dynamic factors--interrupts, scheduling delays, feedback delays, time delays and speedups, comprehension cycles, and failure recycles. Accordingly, Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s model (1976) of decision processes emphasizes the important but unusual decisions. Other theoretical frameworks have been used to explain the phases of decision making as well. John Dewey (1933) introduced five phases of reflective thought while Herbert Simon (1965) introduced the intelligence-design-choice model. Eberhard Witte (1972) researched the phase theorem to find out if distinct phases exist and if they follow a simple sequence. Furthermore, Brim, Glass, Lavin, and Goodman (1962) also researched the phase theorem by looking at how people make decisions; their focus was on the relationship between decision making, personality, and social structure.

Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s framework (1976) supports Witte’s basic findings; that is, there appears to be logic in having distinct phases of the strategic decision process but not in advocating a sequential relationship. These
theorists’ work resembles Simon’s as well. Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret define the phases using identification, development, and selection, while Simon uses intelligence, design, and choice. In addition, Brim, Glass, Lavin, and Goodman’s phase theorem appears to be an earlier version of Simon’s work. These researchers propose six phases in the decision process while Simon proposes only three, though each of them has subphases that include the content of Brim, Glass, Lavin, and Goodman’s phases. Each theorem calls for decision making to occur between and within each phase. All researchers--Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret; Witte; Simon; and Brim, Glass, Lavin, and Goodman--focus on strategic or important decision making.

Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s model (1976) of decision processes was influenced by earlier studies that provided groundwork for the research. In a study of decision making, which influenced the identification phase of Mintzberg et al.’s theory, Pounds (1969) focused on the process of identifying problems for managers. He used four managerial models for problem finding to provide the theoretical structure for his study: historical, planning, other people’s, and extra-organizational. Pounds concluded that defining the problem could not precede constructing the model. Thus, models provided a way to evaluate managerial behavior and to define managers’ problems.

Bonge (1972), whose work also influenced the identification phase of Mintzberg’s et al. theory, looked at decision-making processes from the perspective of recognizing problems in the organization, but he linked the problems to failures to meet a value or standard.
Snyder and Paige (1958), whose work influenced the development phase of Mintzberg et al.’s theory, studied foreign policy decision making as an action process. Their research was centered on what was regarded as former President Harry S. Truman’s most significant decision—the commitment of the United States military to stop the North Korean forces from invading South Korea.

Cyert and March (1963), like Snyder and Paige, influenced Mintzberg et al.’s development phase as they focused on developing a solution within decision making. Cyert and March, however, analyzed the business firm and the manner in which it made decisions.

Snyder and Paige and Cyert and March emphasize the development aspect of the decision-making process in their research. Snyder and Paige, though examining foreign policy, focus on selecting alternatives based on a series of events. Cyert and March, on the other hand, advocate making decisions based on prior results, that is, adjusting goals because of feedback received. Both research groups concentrate on activities that lead to developing a solution. Also, both search for ready-made solutions or design their own, as indicated by Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s model of strategic decision processes.

Cyert, Simon, and Trow’s revised theory (1956) influenced Mintzberg et al.’s selection phase as their theory addressed non-programmed decisions or unique decisions in determining the feasibility of using electronic data-processing equipment in a corporation, which manufactures and sells its products. After an extensive study, Cyert, Simon, and Trow found that certain routines or steps appear repeatedly, representing basic activities within the decision-making process.
In summary, based on the literature concerning decision processes, most processes have some common components: (a) recognize the problem or decision opportunity, (b) analyze and evaluate it, (c) collect data, (d) identify a solution, and (e) activate the solution. In addition, research indicates that decision makers generally identify the opportunity for a decision, process the relevant information, and make a selection.

Research Design and Methodology

I conducted an interpretive case study using the criterion-based selection and reputational case selection to identify the population. I chose the population of this study based on the recommendation of the former Vice President of the Economic and Workforce Development Division of the North Carolina Community College System. He identified a Southeastern North Carolina community college with a student enrollment of 5000 or less and a demonstrated exemplary program in economic development within the last six years. Next, I selected leaders based on their involvement within a joint economic development venture between the community college and the county. I interviewed those individuals from the educational and economic development organizations who were identified by the community college president as the most actively involved in the decision-making processes of the economic development venture: the college president, the vice president of Continuing Education, and the dean of Continuing Education; the county’s chair of the Committee of 100, the director of Economic Development, and the chair of the Economic Development Commission; and a plant manager. In addition, I interviewed four other individuals: a North Carolina senator, the
international developer for the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the regional developer for the North Carolina Department of Commerce, and the North Carolina Natural Gas marketing director.

Interviews and the document reviews were the data collection methods used in this study. I conducted in-depth interviewing with seven individuals associated with the initiative and follow-up interviews with two of those seven. In addition, I conducted investigative interviewing with four individuals, seeking specific details concerning parts of the initiative that only people in their positions would know. The second source of data collection was the review of documents. I reviewed minutes from meetings, letters, memos, and reports. I used these documents to corroborate data gathered from the interview and to provide historical and contextual dimensions to the interview.

When I began the process of inductive data analysis, I first studied the data collected through interviews and document reviews and edited my notes where necessary. Second, I made reflective comments in the margins of the notes and documents, recording my perceptions of the interviewees' attitudes, impressions, and beliefs. Third, I chronicled the events of the economic development initiative. Fourth, I looked for patterns expressed by the interviewees, and the patterns generated categories into which portions of the text were placed. Fifth, once the categories were generated, I then applied a coding scheme abbreviating the category names and using them as codes. Sixth, I evaluated the data and developed naturalistic generalizations from the data. Lastly, I wrote the report.
Interpretation of the Data

The initiative under study was a joint effort between a Southeastern North Carolina community college, a Tier 2 county, and a French steel wire manufacturing plant. The community college, located in Southeastern North Carolina, was founded in 1964 as part of the North Carolina Community College System. The county in which the college is located is the third largest county in land area in North Carolina. The county is classified by the Department of Commerce as a Tier 2 county, indicating that it is an economically distressed county. Furthermore, the company described in this project has five plants in France and one in Slovakia, with its headquarters in Paris. The main products are soft and carbon specialty wires of which the company is now one of the world’s largest manufacturers.

I interviewed seven individuals associated with the economic development initiative and four individuals who provided specific details concerning the initiative that only they would know by virtue of their positions in the workplace. I assigned patterns to the interviewees’ remarks and then generated categories into which portions of the text were placed. The patterns determined by the interviewees’ remarks generated seven categories. Of these seven categories, three main themes emerged: identification of the problem or opportunity, selection of the solution, and lessons learned. In addition, the need for a well system and the existence of power outages surfaced as obstacles, with the obstacles embedded in the story told through the themes. Consequently, the main themes from the economic development initiative chronicled a story of community college leaders,
county leaders, and industry leaders, who through a partnership in decision making, developed a cooperative relationship and a prosperous business venture.

Concluding Remarks

Decisions trigger action. The effects of decisions may be immediate or may be delayed, appearing long after the decision process has been completed (Gore, 1964). According to Gore (1964), “decisions are instruments of collective thinking through which an organization molds its responses so that they accommodate both situational imperatives and internal aspirations” (p. 133). Those leaders who participated in the economic development initiative witnessed their decision making at work throughout the entire venture. Company leaders decided to locate their plant in a Southeastern North Carolina county, and that decision caused an immediate response from the local community college. The community college began quickly to customize its training and services, and the county began to deliver the incentives it had promised and, together with the college and the company, to overcome obstacles that surfaced. Collective thinking was present as each leader attested. In making decisions, the leaders always considered the situation as well as the goals of those involved, just as Gore (1964) recommended. The teamwork that the leaders displayed was manifested through collective thinking.

Accordingly, decision making is viewed by Gore (1964) as a “pattern of interactions between individuals” where collective activity is developed and maintained (p. 130). Thus with decision making, leaders form appropriate collective responses. However, the decision making process does not emerge at once, but instead piece by piece. As a decision moves to the surface, it moves through
several people who leave their traces upon it. Likewise, decision making permits individuals who have a common stake in a project to prepare a response. In other words, through decision making, activities are structured so individuals may collaborate on the benefits to be shared by all participants (Gore, 1964).

Strategic decision making, however, is important in all types of organizations and business ventures. First, strategic decisions are those that are concerned with the survival of the organization or group and are usually involved with the organization or group’s resources. Second, strategic decisions represent new activities or opportunities for the organization or group, and they do not lend themselves to routine decision making. Third, strategic decisions may have repercussions for other decisions that are made. Thus, because strategic decisions are considered significant, they may influence other decisions, ranging from significant to insignificant (Stahl & Grigsby, 1992).

This research study, therefore, reveals the following four findings:

**Finding One.** Strategic decision making was present in the economic development initiative involving the community college, the Southeastern county, and the French steel wire manufacturing plant. As a result, making the appropriate decisions was paramount to the survival of the initiative and to the distribution of resources, as these decisions were not considered routine. The community college was marketing state-of-the-art technology and training, and at this time, requests to design customized training were not surfacing regularly in the county’s business sector. The county as well was marketing the community and its ability to provide needed resources at all levels for the industry. Just as important, the industry was
marketing itself as a profitable company, which could make sizeable contributions to the county’s economy. Thus, the actions of each of the economic development partners affected each other, and their actions influenced other decisions as well.

**Finding Two.** Community college leaders, county leaders, and industry leaders were convinced that collaborative, strategic decision making could lead to a prosperous business venture for all participants involved. Every group could benefit from the partnership as well as the citizens or employees that the groups represented. County Leader III stressed that it was important for everyone to feel good about the community and what the area could offer.

County Leader III: I recall the first impression I had was that the state folks were very positive toward this project because I can remember the executive from the State Department made the statement at one of our meetings that if you look into the automobile business, since I am in the automotive business, he said “Look at the automobile business and look at the standard that is right here, then Mercedes, would be up here. If you look at [this company], in the nature of their business, they would rank up here.” I remember that he raised his hand up to the Mercedes level when he made that statement so far as the integrity and so far as the quality of the people that we were dealing with. That had a strong influence on me and other folks present, too, that this was a gem of an outfit and people that we could trust and have confidence in, and people we felt good about joining our community….This was something that we wanted to work with and to go after and convince them that [this] county was the place to be.
County leaders as well as college leaders were convinced that this international company would be an appropriate match for Southeastern North Carolina. To attract this company became a goal for local leaders. Working diligently and cooperatively, they moved forward aggressively as a team, believing that it was everyone’s responsibility to promote economic development.

County Leader III: The thing that all of us has to respond to is that it is everybody’s job. There isn’t one person in the county that shouldn’t be interested in trying to attract a good, solid industry and employer into this county. I don’t care if it is somebody serving a cup of coffee, somebody pumping gas from a service station, or what have you; the reflection that we have as every individual in this county is important. We need to leave an impression on people that this is the place to come; this is where we would like to have you, and you are welcome in this county as a quality employer or quality employee.

The county and college moving forward as a team implies that in the final selection phase of Mintzberg et al.’s theory (1976) of strategic decision processes, the three routines—screen, evaluation and choice, and authorization—have occurred. Thus, the team evaluated the alternatives in working with industry; the team bargained over issues like water and utilities until a consensus could be reached; and the team’s leaders, the economic development director and the community college president, obligated the community to a particular course of action, that is, providing incentives and training for the company.
Finding Three. Decision making within the economic development initiative followed the basic elements of Mintzberg’s et al.’s study (1976) of strategic decision processes. The three phases of identification, development, and selection surfaced in the initiative as both the county and industry identified opportunities for growth, and consequently, the necessity for decision making. Both groups sought alternatives, allocated resources as they devised their plans, and then made their final selection. Once the company decided to locate in North Carolina, the county and college’s decisions about training and services had to be implemented. Daily decisions continued to be part of the collaborative venture as leaders moved forward in helping the company build its plant, while maintaining the desired production level.

Finding Four. The final piece to this study was the evaluation component where decision makers reviewed what had been learned from the experience. Mintzberg et al.’s theory (1976) of strategic decision processes does not address evaluation; however, some researchers believe that assessing the decision is a valuable element that can be used in understanding the decision-making process. Stahl and Grigsby (1992), for example, identify three steps in strategic decision making, one of which includes evaluation: strategy formulation, decisions which involve an organization’s mission, objectives, strategies, and policies; strategy implementation, decisions which initiate new strategies or reinforce old ones; and evaluation and control, decisions which include activities to keep the process on track and to provide feedback to the decision makers.

Accordingly, all leaders that were interviewed gained knowledge both professionally and personally from the economic development initiative. As they
reflected on the decision-making processes that were utilized in this project and on what they learned, some focused on what they learned about the treatment of others, some on the commitment of others, and some on their communication with others. The leaders’ personal assessments of the project will be used in making decisions in the next economic development effort.

Implications for Research

This study extended decision-making theory into the realm of economic development. Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s research (1976) on the strategic decision processes provided the lens through which non-routine decision-making processes within an economic development initiative in North Carolina could be viewed. Thus from this study, county, college, and industry leaders will gain a better understanding of the dynamics of decision making as these leaders apply decision processes to their collaborative economic development efforts in the future. Leaders will be able to study Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s model of decision processes, review the phases or steps in the process, and apply those phases to their own initiatives where strategic or significant decision processes are involved. However, because Mintzberg et al.’s model is broad based and, therefore, applicable to many different decision-making situations, leaders will be able to use the model in areas other than economic development.

Additional research, nevertheless, may be necessary for initiatives where barriers and political influences play a major role in decision making and affect the outcome of decisions. This study does not dwell on barriers or obstacles because the barriers, which existed in the economic development initiative, were quickly
resolved. Furthermore, political influences did play a limited role in this study; however, the influences were not only positive but also necessary for devising a solution where all participants in the economic development initiative benefited. Future research could address barriers that prevented initiatives from being successful or that became too costly to make the initiative a sound investment. Also, future research could address political influences that inhibited the decision-making processes and, possibly, the development of the initiative.

Decision-making processes are becoming more and more critical as leaders face increasingly complex decisions on a regular basis. Thus, leaders should be able to confront situations, which display changes in fundamentals, details, resources, public opinion, and others. Leaders, as a result, should be prepared to meet those changes as those changes require decisions (American Management Institute, 1959).

Often decision making is only a part of the process; the most complex component may be carrying out the decision. Thus, the future for decision makers of all types may involve risk and goal adaptation not only in making decisions but also in carrying them out (Rowe, 1974). Therefore, with the future calling for increased decision making, leaders should strive to better understand decision processes as a means of making more effective decisions.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Glossary of Terms

1. **decision** – a commitment to a course of action

   (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Theoret, 1976)

2. **decision process** – a set of actions and factors that begins with identifying a cause for action and ends with the commitment to a course of action.

   (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Theoret, 1976)

3. **strategic decision** – important, significant, non-programmed, non-routine, unusual course of action.

   (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Theoret, 1976; Simon, 1945)

4. **routine decision** – operational, programmed, familiar course of action.

   (Simon, 1945; Hoy & Miskel, 1978; Krepel, 1987)

5. **unstructured decision processes** – those which are considered non-routine and which have no predetermined and explicit set of ordered responses.

   (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Theoret, 1976; Simon, 1945)

6. **structured decision processes** – those which are considered routine and which do have a predetermined and explicit set of ordered responses.

   (DuBrin & Ireland, 1993)
Dear ______________:

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed concerning the economic development initiative between ____________ Community College, ________________ County, and ________________.

As I mentioned in a prior phone conversation, I am completing my work toward my doctor of education degree in higher education administration. Part of the exam includes conducting a study that will document and describe the strategic, non-routine decision processes used by community college senior administrators, county leaders, and industry leaders in an economic development initiative. The study will explore the following question: What are the strategic decision processes as well as actions and beliefs that community college presidents and deans, county leaders, and industry leaders use in identifying, developing, and maintaining economic development initiatives?

I have enclosed the interview questions so you may review them prior to the sixty-minute, audiotaped interview, scheduled for Monday, October 14, 2002, at 9 a.m. in your office. In addition, I have included an Informed Consent Form; please return the signed form to me on October 14.

Thank you for taking time to assist me with this study. I look forward to discussing this economic development initiative with you.

Sincerely,

Deborah L. Lamm
APPENDIX C

Interview Questions
for Community College Leaders,
Community Leaders, and Industry Leaders

Chronology of Events

1. Consider a recent economic development initiative.
   
   *(for college and community leaders only)* Why was this particular industry identified as a potential community partner? Which leader(s) made the decision to actively pursue the relationship?
   
   *(for industry leaders only)* Why was this county identified as a potential site for industrial development? Which leader(s) made the decision to actively pursue the relationship?
   
2. Trace the development of this relationship (just described in #1) from the county’s first contact with the industry to the industry’s agreement to partner with the county and college.
   
3. How did the college and county arrive at a solution to provide training or a service for industry? Who were the key decision makers? Who authorized the training or service? What resources were identified and why were they selected? Did the college and county establish alternatives to this solution? If so, what were they, and why were they selected?
   
4. How were citizens and employees of the college and industry notified about the joint project? Why were people notified in this manner?

Beliefs and Feelings Surrounding the Events

5. Describe any political influences that may have surfaced in this project.
   
6. Describe any obstacles that surfaced during the preparation for and implementation of this project.
   
7. Why would you consider this industrial project and partnership to be significant?
   
8. How valuable was this collaborative relationship for you as a leader? For the county? What did you as a decision maker find out about yourself in this economic development venture?
9. What did you learn from this relationship with other leaders?

10. What would you do differently, if anything, the next time you serve in a comparable decision-making capacity?
Dear _________:

Thank you for participating in the interview concerning the economic development initiative between __________Community College, ________County, and ________.

I have attached a copy of the transcript, which documents the interview. Please review the transcript for accuracy. If you would like to modify the document, please make your corrections on the transcript and return it to me at __________Community College, P.O. Box 151, ____________, North Carolina, by Monday, November 4, 2002.

Thank you again for sharing your time, perceptions, and experiences with me.

Sincerely,

Deborah L. Lamm
The following represents a synopsis of the type of activities and training Community College can provide for your company.

1. **Provide Pre-Employment Training**

   in cooperation with the Employment Security Commission, can offer a pre-employment training program for prospective employees. Participation in this training does not obligate your company to hire trainees.

   **Cost:** Free

   **Length:** Determined by company in cooperation with staff.

2. **Provide Post Employment Worker Training**

   can custom design an employee training program for your company.

   **Cost:** Free for start-up employees and for net new employees. Subsequent in-plant training costs are $35 per employee.

   **Length:** Start-up training is up to 240 hours. In-plant training can be up to 21 weeks in duration.

   **Note:** Net new employees = number of employees added to company’s workforce above the initial number of employees hired. This does not include employees hired for turnover.

3. **Training Videos**

   A team of trained technicians can assist your company in the development of state of the art training videos.

   **Cost:** Free for new industry.
   $500 for each finished minute of video thereafter.
4. ISO Certification

can assist your company in preparing for ISO certification by providing a certified facilitator who will lead your employees in the development of the ISO documentation necessary for an ISO audit review (audit review costs must be assumed by company).

Cost: Free for new industry start-up.
$50 per hour plus cost of training materials thereafter.

5. Establish a "Train the Trainer" Program

In cooperation with the N.C. Community College System’s (NCCCS) New and Expanding Industry Division, Community College can establish a "Train the Trainer" program to meet the needs of your company for qualified personnel to train your workforce.

Cost: Defrayed by the NCCCS New and Expanding Industry Division.

Length: Determined by NCCCS Staff and your company’s management personnel.

6. Provide Leadership Development Training - Proprietary and/or Customized

*Immediate Training Impact (Zenger-Miller)*

A major independent research study of supervisory and middle management training by Lakewood Research found that when compared with clients of other leading companies in the training industry, Zenger-Miller clients are the most satisfied of all client groups.

According to this study, everyone had high expectations before training started, but Zenger-Miller scored the highest marks in actual training results. After training was completed, Zenger-Miller had performed best in meeting and exceeding clients’ expectations.

Cost: Free for start-up and net new supervisors.
$35 per employee for replacement supervisors plus cost of workbooks.

Length: Frontline leadership modules - up to 69 hours - Working modules up to 36 hours.

*Team Leadership (Zenger-Miller)*

This program helps leaders understand how their leadership style must evolve to maximize team results. This course is designed for all supervisory and management employees.

Cost: Free for start-up and net new supervisors.
$35 per employee for replacement supervisors plus cost of instructional materials.

Length: 7 modules, 4 hours each.
Learning to Learn is designed to teach critical thinking and reasoning skills primarily for application in the workplace. It is a tool that can be used to help both employees and employers think critically and in turn learn new information more quickly and effectively. Participants use core thinking tools to understand, retain, and apply new information on the job.

Cost: Free for start-up and net new employees.
$35 per employee for replacement plus cost of workbooks.

7. Provide Training Space on Campus

will make space readily available on campus for training needs identified by your company.

Cost: Free

Length: Duration of training.

8. Customized Training Programs have been developed for:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>United Carolina Bank</th>
<th>Remote Data Systems</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Pacific</td>
<td>Jasper Textiles</td>
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<td>International Paper Company</td>
<td>Whiteville Apparel</td>
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<td>National Spinning, Inc.</td>
<td>Top Tobacco</td>
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<td>Filtec Precise</td>
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<td>Cold Point</td>
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<td>Penn Ventilator</td>
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9. Offer Wellness Program for Employees

 can custom-design a wellness program for your employees to help them eliminate their high-risk behavior and incorporate healthy behavior in their lives. In addition, your employees will increase the probability of living better and longer while potentially saving your company money on health care costs and increasing employee productivity.

Cost: $35 per employee

Length: 16 weeks
10. OSHA/Safety Related Training Programs

As a member of the National Safety Council, you can utilize the council's resources to custom-design a variety of OSHA and safety related courses meeting national safety certification standards for your company.

Cost: Free for start-up and net new employees.
Subsequent training costs are $35 per employee.

Length: Depends on nature of class.

11. Identify Graduates as Potential Employees

Community College can assist your company in locating students who are trained in the following areas:

- Heating and Air-Conditioning
- Industrial Plant Maintenance
- Office Personnel/Secretarial Support
- Electrical Installation and Maintenance
- Welding
- Electrical Engineering Technology

12. Provide Your Company With Students Who Possess Skills

Electrical Engineering students who have working knowledge in the following areas:

- AutoCAD
- P-Spice
- Process Controllers

Welding students have knowledge of the following:

- MIG
- TIG
- Heli Arc
- Blueprint Reading
- Cutting

Industrial Plant Maintenance students are proficient in the following areas:

- Welding
- Electricity
- Heating and Air Conditioning
- Basic Carpentry
- Motor Controllers
Process Controllers
Blueprint Reading

Electrical Installation and Maintenance students are proficient in the following areas:

Basic Electricity
Electrical Installation
Basic Wiring (Residential and Commercial)
Blueprint Reading

Office Technology students are proficient in the following:

Keyboarding
Office Machines
Computer Software (Lotus, WordPerfect, etc.)

Cost: Free

13. Offer Cultural Enrichment Activities

Community College sponsors cultural enrichment activities for all citizens of Columbus County. These activities include: seminars, lectures, concerts, theatrical performances, musicals and college sponsored golf tournaments.

Cost: Varies
Length: Varies