ABSTRACT

PRAFKA, DAVID WILLIAM. Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive; A Descriptive Case Study of Leadership. (Under the direction of Dr. Timothy Hatcher, Committee Chair.)

The purpose of this dissertation is to describe the role and leadership of a learning executive [Chief Knowledge Officer, Chief Learning Officer] within a publicly traded corporation. My writing depicts a unique learning executive within a leading multinational medical technology corporation. I pursued three researchable questions (a) How does a learning executive contribute to their organization? (b) What contextual factors affect a learning executive’s ability to exhibit leadership? (c) What type of leadership does a learning executive exhibit within their organization? My research focused on leadership as a key job competency for a learning executive. Additional outcomes from my research include a narrative description of contextual factors that influence leadership, a thorough portrayal of the job as viewed by research participants, and a how-to guide for Human Resource Development (HRD) and Human Resource Management (HRM) professionals. Reviewed literature incorporated theory in the following topical areas, leadership, upper echelon leadership, human and social capital, organizational learning, knowledge management, organizational context, and existing portrayals of the role. The dissertation relied on descriptive qualitative case study research technique to make sense of observed phenomena. I relied on in-depth participant interviews, extant organizational and public data to further my observations. The findings of the dissertation suggest that the researched learning executive was able to influence the prosperity of his corporation as an outcome of his leadership. His leadership can be described as situation-ally dependent, behaviorally complex, and integrative. Two vetted leadership theories are utilized to portray his leadership, TRC and
Transformational leadership theories. The results of the research contribute to existing literature in the areas of leadership theory, human and social capital theory, knowledge management, human resource development, qualitative business research, and literature on the role of learning executives.
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive;  
A Descriptive Case Study of Leadership

by
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, to my parents, and to my academic committee who were a continued source of inspiration. Dedication also goes to the researched learning executive who made my research possible, giving his time and attention. Thank you all for your endless support.
BIOGRAPHY

David William Prafka was awarded a Bachelor of Science Degree from Purdue University and a Masters of Education Degree from North Carolina State University. His professional career entails both private and public sector employment. He has achieved credentialing as a human resources and human resource development professional. He has assumed multiple roles in industry to include management and individual contributor roles.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Why are knowledge and the management of knowledge critical concerns for today’s businesses? The answer to this question has been termed a “new awakening”; today’s organizations have discovered that knowledge is displacing capital, natural resources, and labor as basic economic resources (Davenport, De Long, & Beers, 1998; Drucker, 1993; Earl & Scott, 1999; Martensson, 2000).

In a private enterprise economy the business firm is the basic organization for the production of goods and services (Penrose, 1995). The greater part of economic activity is channeled through firms (Penrose, 1995). In order for firms to survive and prosper they must generate above-normal rates of return [i.e. rents] to achieve competitive advantage in today’s marketplace (Porter, 1985).

Organizational resources and capabilities that are rare, valuable, non-substitutable, and imperfectly imitable form the basis of a firm’s competitive advantage, its ability to generate rent, all originating from an organization’s intellectual capital (Barney, 1991). Mahoney and Pandian (1992) further Barney’s claim stating that the crucial aspect for competitive advantage involves the productive services of rent-generating resources and resource combinations which cannot be easily imitated or substituted; patents, copyrights, entrepreneurial insight, superior organizational routines, distinctive competence and managerial capacity resulting from organizational capabilities (know-how) that enable a firm to gain advantage and generate rent. Knowledge is the most important asset that firms
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

possess; it is a key source of both Ricardian and monopoly rents, and as such it must be nurtured and protected (Liebeskind, 1996). This emerging perspective is a key shift from the historically dominant theme of value appropriation to one of value creation (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

To further convey the significance of knowledge (accumulated intellectual capital), Spender (1996) asserts that knowledge has become the most important strategic factor of production, so managers must focus on its production, acquisition, movement, retention, and application. As such, organizations are becoming aware of the need to manage knowledge from within to ensure their future in today’s dynamic economy (Drucker, 1993).

Recognizing the significance of knowledge, to become aware of its potential, is critical to ensure an organization’s prosperity (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Davenport et al., 1998; Drucker, 1993; Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Polanyi, 1967; Reed & DeFillippi, 1990; Spender, 1996; Teece, 2000; Wenerfelt, 1984). I have incorporated the following definition of knowledge as proposed by Davenport et al. (1998); knowledge is information combined with experience, context, interpretation, and reflection. One may take the perspective that knowledge is a high value form of information that is ready to apply to decisions and actions.

The concept of a knowledge based firm complements this notion by proposing that the sole purpose for business organizations is to create knowledge that results in the development of marketable products and services (Bierly & Chakrabarti, 1996). Covin, Hall, Smalt, and Strivers (1997) surveyed senior management teams throughout North America and concluded that knowledge is critical to organizational success. The firm is a
body of knowledge; the firm provides the context in which explicit and implicit knowledge is selected by interaction with the marketplace and then stored for use by future generations of employees through organizational routines (Spender, 1996).

The significance of knowledge in the workplace is not new, almost a half-century ago historians, economists, and scientists published similar observations (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Quinn, 1992, Senge, 1993). It has become a widely held premise that people provide organizations with the most significant source of sustainable competitive advantage and that the effective management of human capital, not physical capital, may be the ultimate determinate of organizational performance (Pfeffer, 1994; Prahalad, 1983; Reich, 1991). Nelson’s (1959) research concluded that only thirteen percent of the increase in output per worker in the United States between the years 1910 and 1950 could be statistically explained by increases in capital equipment per worker. Nelson (1959) stressed that an improvement in the quality of human resources, better management practices, and improved environmental factors attributed for the remaining eighty-seven percent.

It is not possible for a society to prosper without making substantial investments in human beings (Schltz, 1961). Organizational research conducted by Pennings, Lee, and Witteloostuijn (1998) revealed that industry-specific human capital (know-how) is a valid predictor of firm survival. Schultz (1961) observed that Western society’s human capital growth rate has matured at a much faster pace than the nonhuman capital growth rate (see Figure 1) and as such the productive capacity of human beings is vastly larger than all other forms of wealth taken together.
Quinn (1992) argued that the economic and producing power of modern corporations lies more in the intellectual and service capabilities than in its hard assets, this has yet to be recognized by many in business. He noted that the value of most products and services depends on the management and development of knowledge-based intangibles within one’s workforce (Quinn, 1992).

Drucker (1993) furthered Quinn’s observation stating that the basic means of production has shifted in our economy from capital, labor, and natural resources to knowledge. The rate at which individuals learn within organizations quite possibly has become the only sustainable competitive advantage in today’s marketplace, especially in knowledge intensive industries (Strata, 1989).

Teece (2000) pointed out that knowledge and its applications are the very roots of modern economic growth and prosperity. Society’s “know-how” is the key-limiting factor to its economic growth (Horvat, 1958). Horvat is recognized for his formulation of the optimum rate of investment that treats knowledge and skill as a critical investment variable, termed the \( A \) factor, in determining the rate of economic growth. Paul Romer, noted economist and chief architect of the New Growth Theory purports that economic growth doesn’t arise from adding more labor to capital, but from new and better ideas expressed as technological progress [innovation]; this is exemplified by Americans today are seven times richer that they were in 1900 primarily due to technological change (Bailey, 2001).

Value in modern organizations is created through productivity and innovation, both being applications of workplace knowledge (Drucker, 1993). Drucker goes so far as to claim
that the main producers of organizational wealth have become knowledge and information (Drucker, 1993). Youndt, Snell, Dean and Lepak (1996) take the position that if firms want to achieve success in they must develop and maintain a highly skilled, technologically competent, and adaptable workforce that can deal with non-routine and exceptional circumstances requiring creativity and initiative (human-capital-enhancing-approach). Penrose (1995) noted that if firms are to survive they must be able to anticipate if not at least match threatening innovations in processes, products, and marketing techniques of their competitors; a firm achieves this through the attainment of competence.

![Graph showing the components of Standard and Poors 500 Market Value from 1975 to 2005.](image)

*Figure 1. Components of Standard and Poors 500 Market Value (Ocean Tomo, 2006).*
Over the last thirty years the industrial economy has transformed to the knowledge economy. Intellectual capital has emerged as the leading asset class. In 1975 more than 80% of the market’s value was composed of tangible assets: factories, machines, and inventory (Ocean Tomo, 2006). In 2006, less than 21% of the market’s value is composed of tangible assets (Ocean Tomo, 2006).

My writing cites literature that spans roughly fifty years, all of which highlights the significance of knowledge in today’s workplace. How can an organization build meaning around the know-how that is resident within it? The answer lies in the construct known as organizational knowledge. Organizational knowledge is reflected in an organization’s services and products. An alternative definition of organizational knowledge is the competitive advantage that separates companies in today’s global marketplace (Davenport et al., 1998). It is not surprising that today’s organizations implement similar technologies to create and market their products but attempt to differentiate themselves through their use of organizational knowledge (Nonaka, 1991; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Senge, 1993; Teece, 2000).

The literature suggests that organizations must be able to adapt and learn, the rate of which determines organizational survival; adaptation and learning leads to innovative products and services, further differentiating organizations (Drucker, 1993; Drucker, 1995; Liebowitz & Beckman, 1998; Porter, 1990; Stewart, 1994). Porter (1990) bolsters this notion by claiming that a nation’s future depends on the capacity of its industry to innovate and to upgrade. March (1991) asserts that organizations must not exclude exploration to engage in
exploitation if they are expected to survive and prosper; organizations must maintain an appropriate balance between exploration and exploitation. The business literature reflects a common theme; organizations must be proficient learners to survive.

This observation is underpinned by Lado and Wilson’s (1994) concept of organizational competencies, defined as firm specific resources and capabilities that enable an organization to develop, choose, and implement value-enhancing strategies. Lado and Wilson (1994) argue for the need to develop organizational competencies if firms are to survive. This strengthening of organizational competencies potentially results in enhanced organizational capabilities to include innovation; Lado and Wilson term this phenomena entrepreneurship (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Lado and Wilson (1994) support the observations of Drucker, Liebowitz and Beckman, Porter, and Stewart, arguing that individual and organizational learning is necessary elements of entrepreneurship.

Yet another perspective is Nonaka and Takeuchi’s (1995) resource-based approach to organizational competition. The resource-based approach sees workforce competencies, capabilities, and skills as strategic assets as opposed to a fixed capital perspective on organizational productivity and competitiveness. Spender (1996) observed that firms are increasingly moving towards explicit objectified knowledge but remain dependent on their employees’ skilled practices, automatic skills, hunches and intuitions [tacit knowledge] to maintain their economic existence further amplifying the validity of the resource-based approach.
Promoting innovation in an organization is very difficult; Choi (2000) stated that it is impossible to make adequate progress against this goal without strong top-management leadership and commitment. The writings of Ribiere and Sitar (2003) stressed that leadership gets the whole process going, without leadership nothing happens. The primary task of leaders in contemporary organizations is to ensure that a learning culture exists, one that reinforces the notion of perpetual learning; there exists a causal link between leadership and learning (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Ribiere and Sitar (2003) buttressed Argyris and Schön’s observation by stating that leadership, by its influence component, facilitates the implementation of knowledge activities in organizations.

Teece (2000) stressed the need for organizational leaders to adopt radical, non-formalistic strategies in order to overcome the inertia that inhibits breakthrough innovation; management is charged with the responsibility to ensure continued innovation. There are three necessary strategies (see Figure 2) that leaders must adopt to ensure innovation (a) increase exposure to ideas and approaches external to the firm, (b) design organizational structures and incentives to catalyze and reward creativity, (c) and promote the continued shedding of established assets and routines (Teece, 2000).
Determinants of the Rate and Direction of Firm Level Innovation (Teece, 2000)

Figure 2. Determinants of the Rate and Direction of Firm Level Innovation (Teece, 2000).

This figure represents necessary determinants of firm innovation; each determinant interacting with other determinants, the sum of their influence amounting to firm total innovation (Teece, 2000).

Organizations and their leaders need to be perpetual learners (Schein, 1992). Tichy (2002) claimed that the difference between winning and losing organizations is that winning organizations understand that teaching, learning, and leading are all intertwined. Drucker (1993) stressed the need for organizational leaders to drive the creation and application of knowledge within their organizations noting that the only thing that will increasingly matter in modern organizations is management’s ability to make knowledge productive. Prewitt
(2003) furthered Tichy’s and Drucker’s claims stating that organizational leadership behavior is the key to learning organization success.

Penrose (1959) observed that a firm’s long-term growth is limited if it lacks sufficient managerial capacity. Visible leadership and commitment is required to sustain organizational innovation and learning (Bass, 2000; Davenport et al., 1998; Dress & Picken, 2000). Recognizing the need for leadership and the significance of innovation if firms are to survive and prosper, the private sector is creating the role of learning executive to foster the development of organizational competence (Earl & Scott, 1999).

The Learning Executive

Knowledge creates value and the failure of organizations to fully exploit the potential of knowledge threatens the future of organizations; a new type of corporate leader is beginning to emerge. This new leader is the learning executive. The terms Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO) or Chief Learning Officer (CLO) are commonly used descriptors for job incumbents (Clinton, 2004; Davenport et al., 1998; Earl & Scott, 1999; Herschel, 2000; Kamikow, 2005). The learning executive has been given the mandate to initiate, drive, and coordinate organizational knowledge (Earl & Scott, 1999; Herschel, 2000; Liebowitz & Beckman, 1998).

A common definition of the role does not exist and in some instances the literature describes the learning executive as a phenomena, a passing fad, an organizational hierarchy due to the current business climate (Earl & Scott, 1999; Herschel, 2000). Intuitively the role of the learning executive makes sense but is it based on intuition or logic?
The writings of Earl and Scott (1999) argue that the appointment of a Learning Executive within an organization galvanizes an organization’s commitment to the management of knowledge but it is unlikely to be sufficient. The literature suggests that stakeholders do not understand the job of the learning executive nor do they grasp her potential to contribute to an organization’s future (Browsher, 2004; Chang, 2005; Herschel, 2000; Martensson, 2000). This lack of understanding is reflected by Boyd’s (1988) comment that learning executives aren’t needed, warning that many people believe that the learning executive role is meaningless and should be avoided.

Statement of the Problem

Throughout the next several paragraphs I identify key aspects of the study beginning with my definition of the research problem. Clarification and eventual declaration of the research problem is critical to the success of my research. Creswell defined a problem as an issue that exists in the literature, theory, or practice that leads to the need for the study (Creswell, 1994). To help formulate my research problem I have imposed several conceptual filters or criteria asking the following questions: (a) How will the research contribute to the literature? (b) Is the research feasible? and (c) How intellectually engaged am I in the proposed research? Marshall & Rossman (1999) termed this the should-do-ability, do-ability, and want-to-do-ability of a research proposal.

The learning executive is typically a member of the senior management team. The person may be well compensated, have access to the organization’s inner circle, and have the potential for significant influence. He or she may also cause significant damage. Mondy and
Noe (1996) noted that any executive hiring decision is critical for an organization’s continued prosperity. A number of estimates predict the cost of a senior management hiring decision may range anywhere from $500K to 1.5M, a disparity exists in leadership contribution potential, it could be as high as 3 to 1 if the wrong executive is chosen (Huber, Gregory, & Neale, 1990).

Leadership is recognized as the key organizational driver that must be cherished and nurtured if organizations are to succeed (Bundy, 2002; Porter, 1990; Teece, 2000; Tichy, 2002; Yukl, 1998). Bass (1990) espoused that leadership is recognized as the single most important factor in the success or failure of institutions. Collins (2001) supported Bass’s observation by claiming that leadership matters if organizations are to transition to greatness. Day and Lord’s (1988) research claimed that the effect of leadership on an organization might account for as much as twenty to forty percent of the variance in organizational outcomes. Maccoby (1981) claimed that higher levels of leadership are needed now more than ever if organizations are to be expected to survive in today’s dynamic global business environment, this is just as true today as it was in 1979.

At a time when the creation, management, and eventual dissemination of knowledge has never before been so critical to our nation’s prosperity we seem to know very little about this emerging organizational role. In a sense the global market has created the need for the learning executive preceding our understanding of the job. The role is being created in organizations with little forethought or understanding, potentially resulting in failure for the incumbent and their organization (Browscher, 2004; Earl & Scott, 1999). Organizations will
likely continue employing learning executives, not understand the role’s potential or worse
incumbents may not contribute in the role due to a lack of role clarity (Herschel, 2000;
Martensson, 2000).

Nickerson and Zenger (2004) stated that a key question facing today’s manager is
how to organize and efficiently generate new knowledge and capability. As a member of the
senior management team, the learning executive may be capable of influencing their
organization by exhibiting a particular type of leadership that encourages the creation of
organizational capability (Bowsher, 2004). If leadership is so critical, what type of
leadership does a learning executive exhibit?

The literature lacks sufficient clarity; this lack of understanding potentially threatens
the future prosperity of our nation’s private sector. Recognizing that leadership and learning
are necessary components of innovation, learning executives may be capable of influencing
the future of their organizations. As the researcher I focused on the following problem; as an
emerging organizational role very little is known about the job of a learning executive and
leadership that a private sector learning executive exhibits.

**Purpose of the Research**

To further clarify the direction of the research its purpose should be stated, the
purpose statement captures the essence of the study (Creswell, 1994). The purpose of the
qualitative study is to describe the role and leadership of a learning executive within a
publicly traded corporation. My description depicts a unique learning executive within a
given organization’s context; it describes his contributions while in the job. My research
focused on leadership as a key job competency for a learning executive. Leadership is recognized as a necessary skill for effective leaders of learning, to ignore leadership lessens the value of my research (Drucker, 1993; Penrose, 1959; Prewitt, 2003; Ribiere & Sitar, 2003, Schein, 1992). Additional outcomes from my research are a narrative description of contextual factors that influence leadership as exhibited by a learning executive and a thorough portrayal of the job as viewed by research participants.

Through the conduct of my research a word picture of incumbent roles and organizational influence took shape; fostering a richer understanding of leadership phenomena, empowering others in the role to be cognizant of their practice, in a sense providing a how-to guide for practitioners, contributing to organizational practice, and equipping research participants with a better understanding of a learning executive’s potential to contribute to their organization.

Research Questions

Research questions define the topics of interest and establish parameters for the research design (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I proposed three researchable questions, a benefit of qualitative research method is its ability to react to change resulting in far less control and predictability, this resulted in greater understanding of leadership phenomena.

**Question 1: How does a learning executive contribute to their organization?** By exploring how a learning executive contributed to his/her organization, their organizational role, organizational factors, and types of leadership emerged. This was the first step to bring greater clarity to organizational context in which study participants found themselves.
Incumbent workplace contributions provided an initial listing of roles (formal as well as informal). My understanding of job roles evolved with the research and was influenced by organization context. The first question narrowed the scope of my research, empowering me to further define the role within the context of a particular organization.

**Question 2: What contextual factors affect a learning executive’s ability to exhibit leadership?** A leader’s ability to exhibit leadership can be influenced by situational demands (Bass, 1990; Porter & Grace, 2006; Vera & Crossan, 2004). Contextual factors such as resource availability, culture, environmental stability, economic influence, political, social and legal influences, stakeholder support, all potentially impact a leader’s ability to exhibit leadership (Bass, 1990). Schein (1985) confirms Bass’s observations stressing that organizational context may serve to unleash valuable leadership talents. Barney (1992) supports Schein’s research arguing that organizational context can be a source of sustained competitive advantage. Pettigrew and Whipp (1991) make a similar point stating that leadership is acutely context sensitive. My research accounted for the impact of context.

**Question 3: What type of leadership does a learning executive exhibit within their organization?** A learning executive has the potential to impact their organization by influencing others through leadership. This question attempted to describe the type of leadership that a learning executive exhibited as they interacted with superiors, peers, and subordinates. Building on the previous questions the third question answered how and why a learning executive influenced their organization. Recognized leadership theory provided an initial basis for interpreting the results of my research; forming a basis to rationalize my
conclusions, quite possibly resulting in a type of leadership not yet described by popular literature.

The research questions form the core of my proposal’s critical inquiry; I crafted an integrative framework resulting in a thick narrative description of leadership as exhibited by a private sector learning executive. The questions were a product of the literature review and were negotiated with my academic committee. During the course of my research I did not alter my original research questions; I attribute this to a thorough review of the literature prior to formulating my research questions.

Propositions

Yin (2003) notes five components of research design that are especially important for case study research: (1) the study’s questions; (2) its propositions; (3) its unit(s) of analysis; (4) the logic linking the data to the propositions; (5) the criteria for interpreting the findings. Propositions are unique to case study research and provide additional framing for the researcher (Yin, 2003). As a critical component of my research I purported three propositions.

(P1) I propose that a private sector learning executive fosters the creation, implementation, and management of organizational knowledge. (P2) A number of organizational contextual factors influence the learning executive’s ability to exhibit leadership; the most significant is organizational culture. (P3) Learning executive leadership may be characterized as integrative; integrating various aspects of recognized leadership theory but has yet to be identified by the literature. The propositions were developed from
my review of scholarly literature. I acknowledge the pitfalls of predicting potential findings and have attempted to limit my bias as described by the third chapter of my writing.

**Significance of the Study**

The study is significant due to the nature of the research problem. The changing global economy is compelling organizations to implement systems that effectively create, manage, and disseminate knowledge in hope of survival. This global knowledge phenomenon is an emerging event, one not yet fully understood, but evolving at an alarming pace. I believe that leadership is necessary for organizational success; leadership as exhibited by a learning executive has yet to be rigorously researched. My research is needed.

The study has potentially contributed to existing literature in the areas of knowledge management, human capital formation, leadership, and human resource development. My research has the potential to enhance the rigor of popular business literature through the application of recognized research technique. Learning executives currently in the role may benefit from my research; using my research as possible justification for planned actions, providing a basis for understanding their leadership, and benchmarking their actions with those of the researched learning executive. Individuals reading the research will hopefully develop a better understanding of the role, how-to assume the job of a learning executive, its potential to contribute to an organization, and leadership that a unique learning executive exhibits.

Lowe and Gardner (2000) found that only one-third of articles published employed a qualitative methodological approach to study leadership. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003)
asserted that more subtle interpretive methods are needed to research leadership, they
recommended research approaches that explore in depth what people mean combined with
openness for incoherence, variation, and fragmentation. Lee (1999) suggested that
qualitative research is the most appropriate paradigm if the study’s purpose is exploratory,
investigating poorly understood phenomena. Lee (1999) furthered his argument in favor of
qualitative paradigm noting that qualitative research is needed if new theoretical propositions
have the potential to emerge, or managerial action is required, or the researcher does not fully
understand the phenomena under study. My choice of qualitative research paradigm has the
potential to further scholarly organizational research.

Method

Building on the philosophical foundation of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I have implemented a qualitative paradigm to conduct my research. Leadership
phenomena are composed of multiple constructed realities; those realities can only be
effectively studied if done so in a holistic manner (Schein, 1992). Qualitative research
provides the tools to explore the complexity and richness of leadership, revealing the
phenomena in its context, exposing underlying, non-obvious issues (Miles & Huberman,
1994). Due to the complexity of the phenomena qualitative research enabled me to
sufficiently explore my questions.

I immersed myself in the research context, knower and known becoming inseparable,
facilitated by prolonged engagement with study participants. Engagement was negotiated
with research participants as a part of organizational access. Only through prolonged
engagement could I hope to understand the influence of context on learning executive leadership. I evolved a thick description reflecting the experienced realities of the study’s participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Wolcott, 2001; Yin, 2003). Engagement sufficiency was determined by the quality of my depiction of research phenomena. Quality was judged through on-going collaboration with my academic committee and the implementation of peer debriefings.

Recognized theory formed the basis for my study’s conceptual framework (see Figure 3). I provided the reader with a focused overview of leadership theory in conjunction with research on senior management teams [top management teams], limited literature on learning executives and the creation and management of knowledge. During my review several authors alluded to transformational leadership as the most common type of leadership exhibited by leaders of learning (Bass, 2000; Herschel, 2000). Good research required that I trust the findings of my study, not relying solely on the literature as the means of knowing. The complexity of leadership phenomena required my research method to be sensitive to potential nuances of leadership behavior (Bass, 2000).
The noted constructs form the study’s basis for inquiry, the main things that will be studied through the conduct of the research.

Case study technique is an accepted research approach in business settings (Bryman, 2004; Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2002; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) argued that case technique is preferred in examining contemporary events where relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated. Rouse and Daellenbach (1999) coin in-depth case study research as a promising approach to further organizational research. Porter (1991) claims that case study technique is necessary to support one’s understanding of complex phenomena.

Figure 3. Conceptual Framework.
I employed a descriptive case study research technique that focused on a learning executive within a private sector corporation as the case and exhibited leadership of a learning executive as the unit of analysis; relying on purposeful sampling, themes were generated and categorized, constructs defined, empirical observations and descriptions evolved to portray the subjective realities of study participants. I pursued a single case unit of analysis design to answer my research questions. Implementing a constant comparative technique I highlighted similarities and differences in my observations while generalizing to existing theory, building a thematic description of observed phenomena (Merriam, 1998).

Bryman, Stephens, and Campo (1996) noted that the single case qualitative design typically results in a rich narrative description of phenomena. Several examples of single case study design are Alversson (1992), Hunt and Ropo (1995), and Renshon (1998). Renshon (1998) utilized a single case, descriptive technique to construct a psychologically framed portrait of Senator Bob Dole during his 1996 bid for the Presidency of the United States. In this writing, Renshon (1998) targeted a select group of personal character constructs to enrich the reader’s familiarity with Senator Dole the candidate; the personal constructs of ambition, skills, talents, character, integrity, relatedness, decision-making, judgment, and leadership are depicted by the author (Renshon, 1998). Renshon (1998) relied on extant data and published literature to build his thesis.

(1992) used case study research to describe the relationship between an organization, Computer Consultancy Company, and leadership exhibited by organizational managers. Alvesson (1992) implemented a single-case design using the company as the case. All three examples relied on a single-case design to pursue case study research.

Possible disadvantages in pursuing a single-case design include the potential for misrepresentation and the inability to gain access to an organization to conduct the research (Yin, 1993). An additional concern is studies based on a small number of cases may not be able to evaluate probabilistic theory (Ragin & Becker, 1992). My research is not intended to develop probabilistic assumptions; its intent is descriptive. The third chapter of my writing provides additional justification for my choice of research design.

Access to learning executive peers, co-workers, and subordinates was critical. As such I will relied on a variety inquiry techniques. The tools that supported my data collection included: (a) semi-structured and in-depth interviews (qualitative interviewing), (b) extant data that existed within the incumbent’s organization, (c) and questionnaires, however, questionnaires were not required. The third chapter details the use of my research tools.

Yin (2003) stressed that each of the proposed sources of evidence are typically used to conduct case study research. Bryman (2004) claimed that qualitative interviewing (semi-structured, in-depth, unstructured, and biographical interviewing) is usually the main method of data collection when conducting qualitative research on leadership. Bryman (2004) noted infrequent use of leader observation to collect data in his review of leadership research; this was likely due to a lack of access.
My research took place in the private sector, gaining access to a learning executive and stakeholders within a learning executive’s organization. Due to the uniqueness of the role I had difficulty locating study participants with the formal title of learning executive. I experienced a period of two years in which potential participants initially agreed to participate in my research then later withdrew from my research. I had a number of options, the first being to locate participants who have similar duties and responsibilities as defined by Earl and Scott (1999). An additional option was to choose a different organization or industry in which to conduct my research, one that facilitates the study’s focus and supports my access to research participants. My search for a willing research participant eventually resulted in success; I was able to locate a learning executive who was willing to participate in my research.

My research method required me to implement an interactive means of data analysis as noted by Figure 4 (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The main elements of the model are data reduction (the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that evolves from my field notes and transcripts); data display, (an organized, compressed assembly of information that empowers reaching conclusion and resulting action); conclusions, describing what things mean. All three elements must be interwoven and continuous, operating in parallel to data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
A graphic display of the study’s data analysis process. The qualitative data analysis process was interactive and continuous (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

**Trustworthiness**

The term trustworthiness is used to connote the concepts of validity and reliability. Merriam (1998) uses the term trustworthiness as a broad descriptor; case study research is trustworthy if there is an accounting for validity and reliability. The study took place in a learning executive’s organization, the natural setting, to ensure that the research is not separated from the experienced realities of study participants. I acted as the primary data
collection instrument. I attempted to describe participant’s realities as my research progressed, subjecting my interpretation of the data. I recognize that multiple realities exist that can only be appreciated through the close interaction of myself with research participants. Prolonged engagement is a technique that I implemented to enhance the reliability [dependability and confirm-ability] of my research. To heighten the accuracy of the studies findings I confirmed the meaning of study data with the participants through member checks. Triangulation was used to establish construct validity, furthering the reliability of the case’s evidence. As a further means to ensure trustworthiness several members of my academic committee reviewed my research, my chosen method and its outcomes.

I did not attempt to discover or verify the ultimate truth about a particular phenomenon. The study’s findings are not expected to be generalize-able across an entire population but are instead tentative based on the experienced realities of study participants within one organization. Merriam (2002) stressed that the readers of case study research determine what they can apply to their own individual context, not the researcher; this is termed case-to-case transfer or reader generalize-ability.

I did attempt to inquire into the phenomenon with sensitivity, rigor, and integrity in an effort to make sense of it hopefully providing utility for others who are struggling with the phenomenon in similar contexts. I have developed a cursory portrayal of leadership that eventually evolved into a convincing depiction of a learning executive’s leadership as practiced within the context of a particular organization.
**Context**

The research was conducted in a multinational healthcare [medical technology] corporation. The corporation was chosen as a research target due to the dynamic nature of the industry in which the corporation is situated, relatively short patent lifecycles, the need for constant innovation, and the value placed on continuous learning. I did receive approval to conduct my research, to solicit organizational members, to utilize facilities, and to source organizational data as confirmed by the researched learning executive.

The healthcare industry recognizes the significance of knowledge and innovation, it is getting more difficult and taking longer, currently an average of 12 years to develop new medicines (GlaxoSmithKline, 2005). Despite a substantial increase in global research and development expenditures, fewer novel medicines were launched in 2003 than at any time during the past 20 years (GlaxoSmithKline, 2005). The President and Chief Executive Officer of Merck, Raymond V. Gilmartin at the time of this writing, stressed the primary attribute of the environment in which Merck must operate is simply stated: patients, physicians, and payers will continue to demand ever greater value from the drugs the industry offers (Merck, 2005). As such, the industry is under ever-greater pressures to deliver value to society at large.

A comprehensive depiction of organizational context emerged once I was granted access. Potential contextual factors were initially identified as a result of the literature review. Further references to research context reside in the third chapter of my writing.
Definitions

Researchers define terms so that the readers can understand the context in which terminology is used as well as to clarify the meaning of unusual or restricted constructs; the overriding purpose being to enable the reader to better understand terms at an appropriate point in the study (Creswell, 1994). The following definitions are provided to support the interpretation of the study’s constructs and to enhance the reader’s understanding of the phenomena in question. I expect this list to grow as my research makes use of additional literature.

Leadership is a construct exhibited by learning executives (Bass, 2000; Earl & Scott, 1999; Herschel, 2000). The term leadership is taken from common vocabulary and incorporated into the technical vocabulary of a scientific discipline without being precisely defined (Janda, 1960). As a consequence it carries extraneous connotations that create ambiguity of meaning (Janda, 1960). Additional confusion is caused by the use of imprecise terms such as power, authority, management, administration, control, and supervision to describe the same phenomena. For the purposes of this proposal leadership is defined as the process wherein an individual member of a group or organization influences the interpretation of events, the choice of objectives and strategies, the organization of work activities, the motivation of people to achieve objectives, the maintenance of cooperative relationships, the development of skills and confidence of members, and the enlistment of support and cooperation from people outside the group or organization (Yukl, 1998).
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

Learning executives may not only exhibit leadership to influence individuals or small teams but they may attempt to influence entire organizations (Earl & Scott, 1999). Organizational leadership may be interpreted as a separate construct unto itself. Selznick (1957) suggests that organizational leadership can be characterized as: (a) defining an organization’s mission and goals, creating a purpose for the organization; (b) creation of a structure to accomplish the purpose; (c) defining the organization; and (d) reevaluating or constantly evaluating the effectiveness of the organization.

The effectiveness of study participants did arise during my data collection; this construct was not a goal for my research. Leader effectiveness is typically reflected by group or team performance. In some cases a leader may be influential but not effective; leadership roles entail a variety of competencies that includes the ability to influence others. If a leader fails to demonstrate a key competency they may be viewed as ineffective. Leader Effectiveness is defined as meeting the measures of success (subjective and objective) as determined by the incumbent's organization, superior(s), peers, and subordinates (Howell & Dipboye, 1986).

One of the most enduring ideas in organizational theory is that environments impose constraints on individuals (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), making it exceedingly difficult for any one person, even the Chief Executive Officer, to control all aspects of organizational life. Given the great ambiguity and complexity inherent to strategic decision-making (Mintzberg, 1973), the formation of a coalition of individuals at the top of an organization seems a more
plausible outcome. This coalition is termed the *top management team* (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996).

Top management teams have three central conceptual elements: composition, structure, and process (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). All three conceptual elements are related to the social makeup and interactions of the top team in the process of making strategic decisions (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). There is general agreement that the top management team resides at the strategic apex of an organization. The top management team is the group of top executives with overall responsibility for the organization (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Another plausible definition is those executives with the greatest power to affect the overall strategic direction of an organization (Finkelstein, 1992; Thompson, 1967).

Organizational knowledge begins at the individual level (Autio, Sapienza, & Almeida, 2000). New individual knowledge is incorporated into organizational knowledge only when it is shared and eventually assimilated into an organization (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Garvin (1993) viewed organizational learning as a process that unfolds over time and is linked with such topics as knowledge acquisition and improved performance. Garvin suggested the following definition for *organizational learning*, an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge (Garvin, 1993). This definition begins with a simple truth: new ideas are essential if learning is to occur. The ideas may come from moments of insight by organizational members or they may come from scanning the environment that surrounds the organization (Garvin, 1993). Whatever the source, these ideas are the raw materials for
leadership as exhibited by a private sector learning executive.

Garvin (1993) points out that the ideas alone don’t qualify an organization as capable of learning. A learning organization must be able to implement changes in the way work gets done (Garvin, 1993).

To foster organizational learning, management may appoint a learning executive to galvanize, direct, and coordinate organizational knowledge. For the purpose of this study a learning executive is someone whose primary job responsibilities entail: supporting the creation of new organizational knowledge, managing knowledge created by an organization, and ensuring the dissemination and eventual transformation of organizational knowledge (Earl & Scott, 1999; Garvin, 1993). The above definition incorporates themes highlighted by learning executive literature.

To support my depiction of leadership I recognize that culture is an important element of organizational context. Schein (1992) defined culture as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group has learned as it solves problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid enough to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to problems.

Organizational culture is the essence of an organization’s informal structure; structure that is representative of the pattern and beliefs and expectations shared by organizational members (Teece, 2000). These beliefs and expectations produce norms that powerfully shape behavior or individuals and groups (Teece, 2000). Organizational culture can be thought of as the central norms that may characterize an organization (Teece, 2000). Beliefs
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

held by those lower in an organization reflect an organization’s true culture (Teece, 2000). If a firm’s strategy and culture are not aligned efforts to innovate will likely fail (Teece, 2000).

Knowledge management is the explicit and systematic management of vital knowledge and its associated processes of creating, gathering, organizing, diffusion, use and exploitation (Skyrme, 1997). The American Productivity and Quality Center (1999) defined knowledge management as a conscious strategy of getting the right knowledge to the right people at the right time and helping people to share and put information into action in ways that improve organizational performance. Davenport and Prusak (1998) asserted that knowledge management is a new dimension of strategic information sharing. They claimed that knowledge management is the process of capturing, distributing, and effectively using knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). To differentiate between organizational learning and knowledge management the following descriptive interpretation is offered; organizational learning focuses on learning and adaptive processes while knowledge management focuses on knowledge creation and diffusion processes.

Merriam (1998) defined a case study as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. Yin (2003) defined a case study as empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when, the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Yin (2003) stressed that the case study technique should be used if the researcher deliberately wants to cover contextual conditions, believing that they may be significant to the outcome of the research. The case study is a research strategy that comprises an all-encompassing method
covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis (Yin, 2003). The third chapter of my writing provides a more in-depth depiction of case study technique.

**Limitations**

Creswell (1994) defined limitations as identifying potential weaknesses of the study. One limitation of my research is that I focus on those questions identified as researchable; in a sense building a conceptual fence. I have attempted to counter this though the use of field notes, reflecting on my observations in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of my experiences during fieldwork. Forced reflection challenged me to consider alternate perspectives and potentially enhanced the quality of my inquiry.

James MacGregor Burns (1978) once called leadership one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth. This lack clarity is reflected by the literature, it is often confusing and misleading (Yukl, 1998). Leadership literature generally lacks empiricism, hindered by current leadership fads (Bass, 1990; Northhouse, 2004; Yukl, 1998). Past research on leadership phenomena indicates that incumbent success (influence) is temporal and defined by local stakeholders (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 1998). The transitory nature of leadership did prove challenging and must be considered as a limitation.

My review of the literature may be viewed as a limitation. My review reflects trends in literature, when a particular problem or topic was in vogue. To some a significant amount of my sourced empirical literature may appear dated, published empirical research reflects trends, what gets published gets researched. I have striven to incorporate early research as a
basis for discovery while reflecting on the empirical foundations of a particular theory. To counter this limitation I have attempted to stay grounded in the scholarly literature through the duration of my research. As the sole researcher I may not have incorporated a particular body of research or cited a particular author that others may identify as pertinent to the topic of my research; this possible omission is an outcome of my limitation as an adult student who is actively employed within the private sector. I have not mindfully discounted or ignored literature that would improve the quality of my discovery.

As the researcher I have formulated assumptions (propositions). I was cognizant of the potential for presupposed limitations imposed by propositions as my research progressed, I ensured that my data collection and eventual data analysis was not unduly influenced.

The sample population has framed the study. I expected a limited sample size; this potentially inhibits the generalize-ability of the study’s findings. The study focused data collection efforts towards organizational members who held key roles. Gaining access to these individuals did prove difficult. An additional limitation is the limited number of organizations that employ learning executives.

An additional observation is that the research did provide insight into the situational realities experienced by the study’s participants, the context in which they find themselves. The study design is inherently limiting; as a form of naturalistic inquiry the case study method limits generalize-ability to other settings and individuals.

I acknowledge that a multiple-case design and a larger sampling of learning executives may have the potential to result in greater trustworthiness, and more significant
findings but I am also cognizant of the resources at my disposal as the sole researcher and my
inexperience in conducting qualitative research. My choice to pursue a single-case design
can be considered a limitation. Those who may find my work as not meaningful or useful are
at liberty to engage in research that works for them.

There are a number of disadvantages to using qualitative research to study leadership;
the first of which is that qualitative research tends to be less cumulative than quantitative
research on leadership (Bryman, 2004). To overcome this disadvantage I reviewed both
qualitative and quantitative research in order to incorporate learning from divergent research
methods.

Bryman (2004) noted that qualitative researchers are hesitant to engage in theoretical
reflection, wary of straying too far from what their research subjects have told them. I
managed this quandary by literally reflecting on recognized theory as a basis for
understanding while listening to my study participant’s perceived realities.

A third weakness in qualitative leadership research is the potential for qualitative
researchers to implement deductive as opposed to inductive reasoning (Bryman, 2004). I
guarded against this tendency, making use of my academic committee as the formal body
charged with the review of my research. Though my findings are not generalize-able they
may be transferable to other settings resulting in a richer understanding of leadership
phenomena.

I am very much aware of my shortcomings as a beginning researcher. This is my first
attempt at research and my research is not flawless. It may be unrealistic to expect beginning
researchers to perfect research technique even with the benefit of expert coaching. My research findings are conditional, reflective of my skills as a novice researcher. I do claim that my research is useful; my research provides concrete, context-dependent examples of the life experiences of a particular learning executive, a very senior leader within a multinational corporation who is charged with the development of his organization’s human capital.

To further the progress of my research I conducted a review of literature that I have deemed pertinent. The literature review acts as a filter for the researcher, supporting further conceptualization of the research problem by locating related research and theory (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). My review provided me a foundation to interpret experienced research phenomena, to understand, to question. The content of my review incorporates literature on the constructs of leadership, context, and the job of a learning executive; my review evolved as my research progressed, my findings required that I incorporate additional literature to inform my research that included upper echelon, social and human capital, resource based, and organizational learning theories.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Yin (2003) stressed the need for the researcher to be theoretically well grounded before one progresses with case study research. The literature review provided a basis for my study’s conceptual framework. My review accomplished the following goals; it assisted me in the conceptualization of my research problem, empowered me to find the frontier of research as well as its historical roots, provided me with suggestions on how to approach my research, enhanced the efficiency of my research, and provided the basis for my conceptual framework; all of which were critical to the formulation of my research.

The purpose of my research is to describe the role and leadership of a private sector learning executive, as such I narrowed the scope of my review to the following literature: leadership theory, contextual factors that affect leadership, executive leadership, and the learning executive. Peer reviewed literature in the content areas of knowledge management, innovation, organizational learning, and human resource development (HRD) is referenced throughout the review but is not exclusively cited in a conscious effort to limit the breadth of my review. The review incorporates both primary and secondary sources including scholarly journals in management science, organizational psychology, business, training and education. I have referenced the works of well-known authors in the fields of leadership theory, organizational science, and management. I relied primarily on a computer search strategy to access referenced scholarly materials.

The overall quality of the review was improved by sourcing both citations and key words. Key words included knowledge management, learning organization, social capital,
human capital, innovation, leadership theory, organizational leadership, top management team, Chief Knowledge Officer, learning executive, organizational culture and context. I have sourced a qualitative list-serve, LISTSERV@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU, using the list-serve to network with a variety of qualitative researchers.

As discussed in the previous chapter my literature appears dated, this is a limitation impacting the potential quality of my research that can be attributed to trends in research; the bulk of literature on leadership appears from the nineteen sixties through the nineteen nineties. More recent leadership research is incorporated in my review but is primarily focused on the phenomena of transformational leadership. Research on executive leadership [upper echelon] was in vogue during the nineteen seventies through the nineteen nineties. Literature on learning executives emerged in the late nineteen nineties. As my review matured I incorporated literature on a when-as-needed-basis, examples being literature on the topics of human and social capital (see Figure 5). I was challenged to be mindful of the breadth of literature available to me, their existed the potential to become overwhelmed with literature due to the topic of my research. I did attempt to scrutinize theory before incorporating it into my review; this evaluation was needed to manage the breadth and quality of my review. I consistently scanned for emergent theory yet attempted to incorporate existing, vetted theory to enable my interpretation of phenomena.
Review of the Literature

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<th>Leadership Theory</th>
<th>Leadership and Context</th>
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<td>Influence (Context) Theory</td>
<td>Upper Echelon (TMT) Theory</td>
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<td>Social Capital Theory</td>
<td>Learning Executive Role</td>
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<td>Human Capital Theory</td>
<td>Resource Based Theory</td>
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<td>Organizational Learning Theory</td>
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Figure 5. Review of the Study’s Literature.

The above figure depicts the main bodies of literature that were reviewed to support my discovery. My review assumed an inductive search for meaning as my research matured.

My review of literature evolved through the span of my research. I reviewed existing literature to build meaning, reflecting on theory and recognized empirical concepts. Additional themes arose as a result of my review; new themes were incorporated into this chapter as my research evolved to respond to emerging constructs and ideas. I guarded against biasing my findings by not entering into the research with preconceived notions of
learning executive leadership. A more detailed reflection of targeted literature appears in the discussion chapter.

As noted by the first chapter of my writing, leadership matters. What type of leadership does a learning executive exhibit in their organization? The first body of literature addresses leadership theory. I have attempted to limit the number of theoretical propositions basing my writing on Yukl’s (1998) *Leadership in Organizations*. I choose Yukl’s categorization scheme due to the sheer magnitude of leadership literature. Yukl’s (1998) scheme incorporates a number of recognized theories, grouped under the general theoretical headings of (a) power-influence, (b) behavioral, (c) trait, (d) skills, (e) situational, and (f) transformational and charismatic approaches.

**Overview of Leadership Theory**

The study of leadership has been an important part of the literature on management and organization behavior for several decades (Yukl, 1989). Publications range in the thousands (Yukl, 1989). Oddly enough 1990 was the year in which the first empirical journal devoted exclusively to leadership began publication (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). The massive size and scope of the literature precludes a detailed description of individual studies or an extensive listing of every leadership reference; instead I have identified major theories and then provided brief descriptions. As my fieldwork evolved I reviewed my findings against recognized theory at which point I provided a more detailed review of a particular theory or theories.
Researchers usually define leadership according to their individual perspective and the aspect of the phenomenon of most interest to them (Yukl, 1989). Most definitions of leadership involve an influence process, but the numerous definitions of leadership that have been proposed appear to have little else in common (Northouse, 2004). The differences reflect deep disagreement about identification of leaders and leadership processes (Northouse, 2004; Yukl, 1989). These differences have led researchers to divergent phenomena on which to conduct their research and to differences in interpretation of the results (Yukl, 1989).

One major controversy involves the issue of leadership as a distinct phenomenon (Bass, 2000). Some theorists believe that leadership is no different from the social influence processes occurring among all members of a group, and these theorists view leadership as a collective process shared among members (Bass, 2000). The opposing view is that all groups have role specialization, including a specialized leadership role (Bass, 2000). This view assumes that there is usually one person who has much more influence than other members and who carries out leadership functions that cannot be shared by the group (Bass, 2000).

Some theorists limit the definition of leadership to an exercise of influence resulting in enthusiastic commitment by followers (Bass, 2000). Proponents of this view argue that a person who uses authority and control over rewards and punishments to manipulate or coerce followers is not really exhibiting leadership (Bass, 2000). The opposing view is that this definition is too restrictive, because it excludes influence processes that are important for
understanding why a formal leader is effective or ineffective in a given situation (Bass, 2000).

A similar controversy continues over the differences between leadership and management (Northhouse, 2004). The literature shares numerous examples of persons exhibiting leadership without being a manager, and a person can be a manager without leading (Bass, 2000; Northhouse, 2004; Yukl, 1989). The literature does not propose that managing and leading are equivalent, but the degree of overlap is a point of sharp disagreement (Northouse, 2004). The essential distinction appears to be that leaders influence commitment whereas managers merely carry out position responsibilities and exercise authority (Northouse, 2004; Yukl, 1989). This depiction was needed to aid my recognition of leadership.

*Findings From The Major Approaches*

The field of leadership is presently in a state of ferment and confusion (Yukl, 1989). Most of the theories are beset with conceptual weaknesses and lack strong empirical support (Bass, 2000; Northhouse, 2004; Stogdill, 1974). Stogdill (1974) notes that several thousand empirical studies have been conducted on leadership effectiveness, but most of the results are contradictory and inconclusive.

The confused state of the field can be attributed in large part to the disparity of approaches, the narrow focus of most researchers, and the absence of broad theories that integrate findings from the different approaches (Chemers & Ayman, 1993; Yukl, 1998). Leadership has been studied in different ways, depending on the researcher’s conception of
leadership and methodological preferences (Yukl, 1989). Most of the studies divide naturally into distinct lines of research and can be classified according to whether the primary focus is on power-influence, traits, or situational factors that interact with behavior, traits, or power (Bass, 2000; Yukl, 1998). Most researchers deal only with a narrow aspect of leadership and ignore the other aspects (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Although an all-inclusive theory of leadership has yet to be developed, progress continues to develop a better understanding of leadership traits, behavior, power, and situational factors (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Chemers & Ayman, 1993). An additional problem with leadership theory is that one new theory is often substituted for an “older” theory that has fallen into disfavor (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Rather than building on earlier theories, there is a tendency to discount them for the sake of introducing new concepts or ideas (Bass & Avolio, 1993). This is an important observation; as a researcher I have relied on “older”, recognized theory, theory that is pertinent to my research to support the interpretation of my findings. Readers of my research will see this approach reflected throughout my review.

*Power-influence approach.*

Much of the research arising from the power-influence approach attempts to explain leadership effectiveness in terms of the amount of power possessed by a leader, the types of power, and how power is exercised (Yukl, 1998). Power is important not only for influencing subordinates, but also for influencing peers, superiors, and people external to the organization (Yukl, 1998). One major question addressed by research and theory is the source of power for individuals, and the way characteristics of the individual and the
situation interact in determining how much power a person has (Yukl, 1998). A related question is the way power is gained or lost through reciprocal influence processes (Yukl, 1998). There appears to be a great deal of confusion about the concepts of power and influence in the literature (Bass, 2000; Yukl, 1998). Sometimes power is defined as potential influence, and other times as enacted or realized influence (Yukl, 1998). Sometimes power is viewed as influence over that attitudes and behavior of people, and sometimes as influence over events (Yukl, 1998).

One distinction that continues to be widely accepted is the dichotomy between personal power stemming from attributes of the person, and position power stemming from attributes of the situation (Bass, 2000). The literature purports that the two forms of power are not mutually exclusive (Bass, 2000). Research indicates that an interaction model (person x position) is likely to prove more useful than an additive model (person + position) for explaining why some people have more power than others (Bass, 2000). McCall (1978) proposed that the combination of being in the right place at the right time with the right resources equips a person with power. An example being, it is not enough for a person to have expertise or information; there must also be the opportunity to use expertise to solve problems for others who are dependent upon the person, or to use exclusive information to influence decisions (McCall, 1978).

The literature purports that the power typology proposed by French and Raven (1959), (see Table 1) is also widely accepted (Yukl, 1998). Most research on this power typology has floundered on the issue of measurement, which is complicated by the fact that
potential influence is largely a matter of perception (Yukl, 1998). Power depends on the target person’s perceptions of the agent’s attributes, resources, and credibility (Yukl, 1998). A number of researchers note a key confounding factor, the questionnaires used in leadership research to measure reward, coercive, expert, legitimate, and referent power are deficient further undermining the validity of the research (Podsakoff & Schriessheim, 1985; Yukl, 1998).
Table 1

French and Raven’s (1959) Power Taxonomy

- **Reward Power:** Target person complies in order to obtain rewards controlled by agent
- **Coercive Power:** Target person complies in order to avoid punishments controlled by agent
- **Legitimate Power:** Target person complies because they believe the agent has the right to make the request and the target person has the obligation to comply
- **Expert Power:** Target person complies because they believe that the agent has special knowledge
- **Referent Power:** Target person complies because they admire or identifies themselves with the agent

The study of reciprocal influence processes between the leader and their followers has been an important line of research for learning about emergent leadership and the acquisition of power by leaders (Yukl, 1998). Social Exchange Theory describes the process by which greater status and expert power are accorded someone who demonstrates loyalty to the group and competence in solving problems and making decisions (Hollander, 1978). Innovative proposals are a source of increased expert power especially when they lead to success, but leaders lose power if failure occurs and it is attributed to poor judgment, irresponsibility, or pursuit of self-interest at the expense of the group (Hollander, 1978). Research on charismatic leadership provides additional evidence about the acquisition of influence, and is
generally consistent with the research on expert power (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Demonstration of exceptional expertise may result in attributions of charisma by subordinates if the leader implements innovate strategies that involve high risk of personal loss (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

The way in which characteristics of the person and position combine to determine relative power is described as Strategic Contingencies Theory (Bass, 1985, Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977). The amount of power gained by demonstrating competence in solving problems depends on how important the problems are for the organization and for the overall performance of the organization (Bass, 1985). Acquiring and maintaining power also depends on the extent to which the person has unique skills and resources that are difficult to replace (Bass, 1985).

Research on the use of different forms of power by leaders suggests that effective leaders rely more on personal power than on position power (Bass, 2000). Research on positive reward behavior and use of punishment suggests that both can be used to influence subordinate’s behavior in some situations (Podsakoff, Todor, & Skoy, 1982). Other research suggests that legitimate power is a major source of daily influence on routine matters for managers in formal organizations (Katz & Kahn, 1978). The literature reflects that more effective leaders rely on a combination of power sources (Kotter, 1985; Yukl & Taber, 1983). They develop referent and expert power to supplement their position power, and they use it to make non-routine requests and motivate commitment to tasks that require high effort, initiative, and persistence (Bass, 2000).
The manner in which power is exercised largely determines whether it results in enthusiastic commitment, passive compliance, or stubborn resistance (Bass, 2000). Effective leaders exert both position power and personal power in a subtle, easy fashion that minimizes status differentials and avoids threats to self-esteem of subordinates (Bass, 2000; Yukl & Taber, 1983). In contrast, leaders who exercise power in an arrogant, manipulative, domineering manner are likely to engender resistance (Bass, 2000; Yukl & Taber, 1983).

Researchers have identified a variety of influence tactics used by managers, including rational persuasion, exchange of benefits, consultation, inspirational appeals, and appeal to authority (Yukl, 1998). Effective leaders probably use a variety of tactics and select tactics that are appropriate for the situation (Kotter, 1985; Yukl, 1998). In addition to overt influence attempts, there are a number of indirect tactics for exercising power, including intentional role modeling, political tactics such as forming coalitions, co-opting opponents, gaining control over key decisions, and institutionalizing power (Yukl, 1998).

The amount of position power necessary for effective leadership depends on the nature of the organization, task, and subordinates (Bass, 2000). Leaders who lack sufficient position power to make necessary changes, reward competent subordinates, and punish or expel chronic troublemakers will find it difficult to develop a high performing organization (Bass, 2000). Leaders must have the capacity to provide satisfactory benefits and facilitate their organization’s work; the group depends on the leader’s upward and lateral influence (Bass, 2000). Upward and lateral influence can be viewed as a source of increased position
power, but is also a way of by-passing the constraints of formal authority to get things accomplished (Bass, 2000).

Too much position power entails the risk that the leader will be tempted to rely on it exclusively and neglect alternative forms of influence, such as persuasion, participation, and inspirational appeals, and reward power (Bass, 2000; Yukl, 1998). This path leads to resentment and rebellion (Bass, 2000). Kipnis (1972) found that leaders with greater reward power used it more to influence subordinates, devalued the work of subordinates, maintained more social distance from subordinates, and attributed subordinate effort to the leader’s use of power, becoming focal as opposed to subordinate motivation. The optimal amount of power may be a moderate amount, and it is desirable to have some organizational constraints on a leader’s use of power (Yukl, 1998).

Behavioral approach.

The behavioral approach emphasizes what leaders and managers actually do on the job, and the relationship of behavior to managerial effectiveness (Yukl, 1998). The typical pattern of managerial activity reflects the dilemmas faced by most managers (Yukl, 1998). Relevant information exists only in the heads of people who are widely scattered within and outside of the organization (Yukl, 1998). Managers need to make decisions based on information that is both incomplete and overwhelming, and they require cooperation from many people over whom they have no formal authority (Yukl, 1998). The descriptive research shows that managerial work is inherently hectic, varied, fragmented, reactive, and disorderly (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 1998). Many activities involve brief oral interactions and
provide an opportunity to obtain relevant up-to-date information, discover problems, and influence people to implement plans (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 1989). Many interactions involve people other than subordinates, such as lateral peers, superiors, and outsiders (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 1989).

Descriptive research on managerial decision-making and problem solving provides additional insights into the nature of managerial work. Decision processes are highly political, and most planning is informal and adaptive to changing conditions (Bass, 2000). Effective managers develop a mental agenda of short and long-term objectives and strategies (Kotter, 1982). The network of relationships inside and outside of the manager’s unit is used to implement plans and strategies (Bass, 2000; Kotter, 1982). For plans involving significant innovations or affecting the distribution of power and resources, the manager must forge a coalition of supporters and sponsors, which may involve expanding the network of contacts and allies (Kaplan, 1984). Effective managers are able to recognize relationships among the streams of problems, issues, and opportunities they encounter (Bass, 2000; Kotter, 1982). By relating problems to each other and to informal objectives, a manager can find opportunities to solve more than one problem at the same time (McCall & Kaplan, 1985).

Earlier research focused on activity patterns and how managers spend their time, but research in recent years has examined the content of managerial activities using content categories referred to as managerial roles, functions, and practices (Bass, 2000). Confusion has been created by a proliferation of behavior constructs and competing taxonomies (Bass, 2000; Yukl, 1989). Except for task-oriented and relationship-oriented behavior, there has
been little agreement about what categories of behavior are meaningful (Bass, 2000; Yukl, 1989). However, task and relationship behaviors are too abstract to provide a basis for understanding how leaders handle specific role requirements confronting them (Yukl, 1989).

Major taxonomies used to classify observations of managerial activities include Mintzberg’s (1973), Luthans and Lockwood’s (1984) taxonomies of leadership, and Stodgill’s (1974) and Yukl’s (1989) managerial behaviors. Major taxonomies for describing managerial position responsibilities include those by Carroll and Gillen (1987). Despite differences in purpose, scope, method of development, and level of abstraction, some commonalities are evident among the behavior categories in the various taxonomies (Bass, 1990). Yukl (1989) proposed generic behaviors applicable to all types of leaders and organizations, and they may occur in interactions with subordinates, peers, superiors, or others external to the organization.

Another line of behavior in terms of task-oriented behavior research has sought to identify aspects of leader and manager behavior associated with effective leadership (Bass, 2000). The research method examines differences in behavior patterns between effective and ineffective leaders (Bass, 2000). Progress has been hampered by difficulties in the conceptualization and measurement of leadership behavior (Bass, 2000).

Participative leadership is another aspect of behavior that has been the subject of many studies (Yukl, 1998). The literature is inconclusive; participation sometimes results in higher satisfaction and performance, and at other times doesn’t (Bass, 2000; Yukl, 1998). However, this conclusion is in sharp contrast to the findings from descriptive case studies of
effective managers (Yukl, 1998). Participation and empowerment of subordinates is an integral part of leadership found to be characteristic of effective managers (Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

A large number of studies have identified positive reward behavior as being linked to leadership effectiveness (Bass, 2000). A review of the literature by Podsakoff, Todor, Grover and Huber (1984) found that praise and contingent rewards usually increase subordinate satisfaction and performance. The importance of recognition and appropriate rewards has been noted also in case studies of effective organizations (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Clarifying roles and objectives is identified by the literature as a component of initiating structure (Yukl, 1998). Clarifying was related to managerial effectiveness in four of six samples in questionnaire research reported by Yukl (1998). Setting specific, challenging, but realistic goals is an important component of clarifying behavior (Yukl, 1998). Additional behaviors have been associated with managerial effectiveness to include planning, problem solving, monitoring, the exhibition of motivating behaviors, and networking (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 1998).

Trait approach.

The trait approach emphasizes the personal attributes of leaders (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 1998). Early leadership theories attributed success to possession of extraordinary abilities such as tireless energy, penetrating intuition, uncanny foresight, and irresistible persuasive powers (Stogdill, 1974). Stogdill (1948, 1974) analyzed and synthesized findings from over
287 trait studies finding that leadership is determined by both personality and situational factors, validating that the leader’s characteristics are an important component of leadership. The focus of recent trait research has been on managerial motivation and specific skills (Bass, 2000). Some researchers have attempted to relate traits to specific role requirements for different types of managerial positions (Yukl, 1998).

The search for traits relevant to effective leadership has continued over the years, the research findings have produced a rather consistent pattern of results (Bass, 1981; Northouse, 2004). Traits that relate most consistently to managerial effectiveness or advancement include high self-confidence, energy, initiative, emotional maturity, stress tolerance, and belief in internal locus of control (Bass, 1981). Northouse (2004) lists five key leadership traits that appear to be common across the research; they are: (a) intelligence, (b) self-confidence, (c) determination, (d) integrity, and (e) sociability. With respect to interests and values, successful managers tend to be pragmatic and results oriented, and they enjoy persuasive activities requiring initiative and challenge (Bass, 1981; Yukl, 1989).

Managerial motivation is one of the most promising predictors of effectiveness (Yukl, 1989). A program of research on managerial motivation conducted over the years by Miner (1978) found that the most relevant components of managerial motivation were desire for power, desire to compete with peers, and a positive attitude toward authority figures. Research by Stahl (1983) found evidence that effective leaders in large, hierarchical organizations tend to have a strong need for power, a fairly strong need for achievement, and a relatively weaker need for affiliation. Effective managers have a socialized power
orientation due to high emotional maturity (Stahl, 1983). They were more interested in building up the organization and empowering others than in personal gain or the domination of others (Stahl, 1983). Entrepreneurs, on the other hand, tend to have a dominant need for achievement and a strong need for independence in order to be effective leaders (Stahl, 1983).

Northouse (2004) noted that the trait approach reflects a number of weaknesses, the first being an endless list of traits that leaders must exhibit in order to be successful. A second criticism is that the situation in which an individual finds themselves, the context of their organization, influences their success; typically not considered by trait researchers (Northouse, 2004). A third criticism is that trait research tends to be highly subjective, resulting in inconsistent findings (Northouse, 2004).

Skills approach.

Skills are another possible predictor of managerial effectiveness. Technical skills, conceptual skills, and interpersonal skills are necessary for most leadership roles (Bass, 1981). However, the relative importance of the three types of skills varies greatly from situation to situation (Bass, 1981). In addition, the optimal mix of specific component skills and the nature of technical expertise required by a leader vary greatly by organizational type (Boyatzis, 1982; Kotter, 1982). Even for the same type of organization, the optimal pattern of traits and skills vary depending on prevailing business strategy (Gupta & Govindarajan, 1984). Specific skills such as analytical ability, persuasiveness, speaking ability, memory for details, empathy, tact, and charm are probably useful in all leadership positions (Bass, 2000).
Katz (1955) suggested that effective leadership depends on three basic personal skills: technical, human, and conceptual. Technical skill is being proficient in a specific type of work or activity (Katz, 1955). Human skill is having knowledge about and being able to work with people (Katz, 1955). Conceptual skill is the ability to work with ideas and concepts (Katz, 1955). Katz (1955) portrays management skills necessary at various organizational levels in his 1955 writings in the *Harvard Business Review*. The graphic representation of skills (see Figure 6) may be indicative of the role of a learning executive; the below noted graphic is titled *Top Management* by Katz (1955).

**Management skills necessary at various levels of an organization (Katz, 1955)**

![Needed Skills Diagram](chart.png)

*Figure 6. Management Skills Necessary at Various Levels of an Organization (Katz, 1955).*
This depiction portrays the potential distribution of management skills needed by a learning executive. The figure reflects typical skills required of executives, I was mindful of Katz’s research while collecting my research data.

One of the key principles arising out of the trait approach is the idea of balance (Bass, 2000). In some cases balance means a moderate amount of some trait such as need for achievement, need for affiliation, self-confidence, risk taking, initiative, decisiveness, and assertiveness, rather than a very low or a very high amount of a specific trait (Bass, 2000; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). In other cases, balance means tempering one trait with another, such as tempering a high need for power with the emotional maturity required to ensure that subordinates are empowered rather than dominated (Bass, 2000; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Sometimes balance must be achieved between competing values (Bass, 2000; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Concern for tasks must be balanced against concern for people (Blake & Mouton, 1982). Concern for a leader’s own needs must be balanced against concern for organizational needs (Blake & Mouton, 1982). Concern for the needs of subordinates must be balanced against the need for organizational continuity and predictability (Blake & Mouton, 1982). Balance is not only a question of individual leaders, in some cases balance involves different leaders in a management team who have complementary attributes that compensate for each other’s weaknesses and enhance each other’s strengths (Bradford & Cohen, 1984).

*Situational approach.*
Situational leadership theory or sometimes termed contingency theory is based on the assumption that different behavior patterns are effective in different situations and that the same behavior pattern is not optimal in all situations (Yukl, 1998). A variety of situational theories describe how aspects of the situation moderate the relationship between leader behavior and task outcomes.

Path-Goal Theory (Evans, 1970; House, 1971; House & Mitchell, 1974) proposes that leaders motivate higher performance by acting in ways that influence subordinates to believe valued outcomes can be attained by making serious effort. Aspects of the situation such as the nature of the task, the work environment, and subordinate attributes determine the optimal amount of leader behavior required for improving subordinate satisfaction and performance (Yukl, 1998).

Hersey and Blanchard’s Situational Leadership theory (1969; 1988) proposes that the optimal amount of task and relation behavior depends upon subordinate maturity. The theory prescribes different patterns of the two behaviors, depending on a subordinate’s confidence and skill in relation to the task. Hersey and Blanchard’s theory is one of the most recognized situational leadership theories (Northouse, 2004).

According to Leadership Substitutes Theory (Kerr & Jermier, 1978) supportive and instrumental leadership by designated hierarchical leaders is redundant or irrelevant in some situations. Various characteristics of subordinates, tasks, and organization serve as substitutes for hierarchical leadership or neutralizers of its effects (Kerr & Jermier, 1978).
Normative Decision Theory (Vroom & Yetton, 1973) identifies the decision procedures most likely to result in effective decisions in a particular situation. The moderator variables are characteristics of the immediate situation that determine whether a particular decision procedure will increase or decrease decision quality and acceptance (Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

Fielder’s (1967) Contingency Theory deals with the influence of position power, task structure, and leader-member relations on the relationship between a leader trait termed LPC (Least Preferred Co-worker) and leader effectiveness. The model specifies that high LPC leaders are more effective in some situations and low LPC leaders are more effective in other situations (Felder, 1967). Fielder (1967) regards LPC as an indicator of a leader’s motive hierarchy, with affiliation needs dominant for high LPC leaders and task-achievement needs dominant for low LPC leaders.

Vertical Dyad Linkage Theory, called Leader-Member-Exchange Theory, describes how leaders develop different exchange relationships over time with different subordinates (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). Some subordinates are given greater influence, autonomy, and tangible benefits in return for greater loyalty, commitment, and assistance in performing administrative duties (Dansereau et al., 1975). The theory is situational only in the sense that leaders treat subordinates differently depending on whether they are part of the in-group or the out-group (Dansereau et al., 1975). The theory has been extended to include a manager’s upward relationships; a leader who has a favorable exchange relationship with
his or her own boss has more potential for establishing a special exchange relationship with subordinates (Cashman et al., 1976).

Cognitive Resource Theory examines the conditions under which a leader’s cognitive resources (e.g., intelligence, experience, and technical expertise) are related to group performance (Fielder, 1986; Fielder & Garcia, 1987). Situational variables such as interpersonal stress, group support, and task complexity determine whether a leader’s intelligence and experience enhance group performance (Fielder, 1986). The theory proposes that a leader’s cognitive resources affect group performance when the leader is directive and the task is unstructured (Fielder, 1986). According to the theory, leader intelligence is related to group performance only when stress is low, because high stress interferes with the use of intelligence to solve problems and make decisions (Fielder, 1986). Leader experience will be related to group performance under high stress but not under low stress, presumably because experienced leaders rely mostly on experience for solving problems when under high stress, whereas they rely mostly on intelligence under low stress (Fielder, 1986).

The Multiple Linkage Model (Yukl, 1989; 1998) was developed to help advance theory and research on effective managerial behavior in different situations. The model begins with the assumption that work unit performance depends primarily on six intervening variables: member effort, member ability, organization of the work, teamwork and cooperation, availability of essential resources, and external coordination with other parts of
Leaders can influence these intervening variables in a number of ways, although the effects of leader behavior depend in part on the situation (Yukl, 1998). In the short term, most leader actions are intended to correct deficiencies in the intervening variables, whereas in the long term, leaders seek to make the situation more favorable by actions such as implementing improvement programs, initiating new products or activities, forming coalitions to gain more control over resources, modifying the formal structure, and changing the culture of the unit (Yukl, 1998). The short-term actions are intended to raise the intervening variables up to their short-term maximum levels, whereas the long-term actions are intended to raise the ceiling to higher levels (Yukl, 1998).

Wofford (1982) proposed a situational theory that is similar to the earlier versions of Multiple Linkage Model (Yukl, 1971; Yukl, 1998). Subordinate performance is dependent on four intervening variables: ability to do the work, task motivation, clear and appropriate role perceptions, and the presence or absence of environmental constraints (Wofford, 1982). A leader can influence subordinate performance by influencing the intervening variables (Wofford, 1982). In each case there is diagnostic behavior to assess deficiencies in the intervening variables, and corrective behavior to deal with any deficiencies that are found.

Effective leaders avoid deficiencies in subordinate ability by using improved selection procedures, increased training, or redesign of the job to match subordinate skills (Wofford, 1982; Yukl, 1998). In order to achieve optimal levels of subordinate motivations,
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Effective leaders select subordinates with a high need for achievement, set specific but challenging goals, and provide appropriate feedback and encouragement (Wofford, 1982; Yukl, 1998). The leader may also use incentives, participation, competition, job redesign, or communication of high expectations to increase motivation (Wofford, 1982; Yukl, 1998). To achieve role accuracy and clarity, effective leaders use instruction, guidance, feedback, goal setting, formalization, or job redesign (Wofford, 1982; Yukl, 1998). To deal with constraints in the work environment, effective leaders recognize the work, modify technology, provide resources, and remove physical constraints (Wofford, 1982; Yukl, 1998). Leader behavior is influenced in turn by leader traits, situational variables, and feedback from the intervening and outcome variables (Yukl, 1998).

The situational approach emphasizes the importance of contextual factors such as the leader’s authority and discretion, the nature of the work performed by the leader’s unit, the attributes of subordinates, and the nature of the external environment (Bass, 2000). One theory for describing how the situation influences managerial behavior is Role Theory (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, & Snock, 1964). The role expectations from supervisors, peers, subordinates, and outsiders are a major influence on a leader’s behavior (Kahn et al., 1964). Leaders adapt their behavior to role requirements, constraints, and demands of the leadership situation (Kahn et al., 1964).

Other theories have identified key aspects of the situation that create demands and constraints on a manager. According to Stewart’s (1982) Demands-Constraints-Choices Theory, the pattern of interactions and how time is spent with subordinates, peers, superiors,
and outsiders depends on the nature of the work, and whether it is self-generating or reactive, repetitive or variable, uncertain or predictable, fragmented or sustained, hurried or unhurried.

Another theory is the Multiple Influence Model (Hunt & Osborn, 1982), which emphasizes the influence of macro-level situational determinants such as level of authority in the organization, size of the work unit, function of the work unit, technology, centralization of authority, lateral interdependence, and forces in the external environment on leader behavior. It is evident that leader behavior is strongly influenced by the situation in which they are confronted with (Bass, 2000).

In their influential writing entitled “Toward a contextual theory of leadership”, Osborn, Hunt, and Jauch (2002) claimed that leadership effectiveness is in large part dependent on the context in which the leader finds themselves. The study of leadership in organizational contexts has been coined as neglected by a number of researchers (Bryman et al., 1996; Osborn et al., 2002). Contextual theorists support the argument that leadership does not exist in a vacuum; some would claim that you can’t separate leaders from their context (Osborn et al., 2002).

If an organization’s context changes, leadership will change, as well as leadership effectiveness (Osborn et al., 2002). Osborn, Hunt, and Jauch (2002) argue that leadership is embedded in the context of an organization, embedded within the environment, structure and technology of organizations. Leadership is socially constructed in and from the context where patterns over time must be considered and where organizational history matters; leadership is bound by organizational history (Osborn et al., 2002).
The context in which leaders operate is both radically different and diverse further complicating the study of leadership (Osborn et al., 2002; Yukl, 1989). Researchers must recognize that when they select a particular theory of leadership it may empower them to recognize some features at the cost of missing others (Osborn et al., 2002). Researchers must look across time, examining processes as an integral part of collective leadership (Osborn et al., 2002). Osborne et al. (2002) stress that organizational context can be so complex that no single microscopic view is sufficiently detailed and comprehensive to suggest a singular productive view of leadership or leadership effectiveness; a series of theories is needed.

Effective leadership depends on a wide variety of environmental (cultural, economic, industry setting) and organizational (strategy, size, technology, structure) conditions (Osborn et al., 2002). A number of contextual sub-dimensions should be considered such as environmental volatility, munificence and interdependence or technical sophistication, and structure variations or organizational climate (Osborn et al., 2002). The meaning and importance of various leadership dimensions varies by organizational context (Osborn et al., 2002). Osborne et al. (2002) stressed the need for researchers to view context in an explanatory role describing the influence of outer-economic, societal, political, competitive, and technological environments; inner-mosaic, structure, control, and political environments that help shape the process. Researchers should stress temporal interconnectedness: emphasizing past, present, and future temporality; emphasize holistic as opposed to linear process explanations; linking process analysis to the location and explanation of outcomes or
criteria resulting in a dynamic explanation of qualities of people and organizations engaged in various streams of activity (Osborn et al., 2002).

Two contextual factors that are not typically researched are patterning and networks (Osborn et al., 2002). Patterning is defined as isolating what is important and what is given attention from and endless stream of events, actions, and outcomes (Osborn et al., 2002). The choice of goal priorities and the manner of implementation are critical activities for senior leadership of a system (Osborn et al., 2002). Osborne et al. (2002) stress that the patterning of attention is likely to have aspects unique to each corporation and its elites. Miller and Shamsie (2001) suggest that once a senior executive identifies a stable pattern of what is important and successful they may be less likely to explore change resulting in the eventual deterioration of organizational performance.

The contextual factor of the network consists of direct and indirect interpersonal communication and information patterns of influence by the leader or groups of leaders (Osborn et al., 2002). Hunt, Osborne, and Martin (1983) defined network leadership as the development and maintenance of interpersonal ties up and across individual position holders within and outside a system. The selection of the network in which leaders operate and the membership of this network are not independent from the context of the firm (Osborn et al., 2002).

Networks are prime conduits for information; clearly the individual information networks of leaders are potentially important (Osborn et al., 2002). Osborne et al. (2002) suggest that researchers examine aspects of the social networks developed by corporate
leadership in order to understand the impact of organizational context. Contextual factors such as the flow, quality and quantity of information, communication network architecture, and information processing impact the potential effectiveness of leaders (Osborn et al., 2002).

Despite the situational demands and pressures, managers have choices in what aspects of their jobs to emphasize, how to allocate time, and with whom to interact (Kotter, 1982, Stewart, 1982). Managerial effectiveness depends in part on how well a manager understands demands and constraints, copes with demands, overcomes constraints, and recognizes opportunities (Bass, 2000). Effective leaders are able to reconcile role conflicts caused by incompatible role expectations from different role senders, and they take advantage of role ambiguity as an opportunity for discretionary action (Kahn et al., 1964). Effective leaders seek to expand their range of choices, exploit opportunities, and shape the impressions formed by others about their competence and expertise (Kahn et al., 1964). Over the long run, effective leaders act to modify the situation to increase their discretion (Yukl, 1981).

*Transformational and charismatic [neo-charismatic] approaches.*

Casico (1995) suggested that with the continued globalization of markets, the increasing diversity of workforces, and the emphasis on time as a critical element in an organization’s ability to compete, the need for organizations to develop transformational leadership skills and competencies has never been greater. Avolio (2004) observed that in a rapidly changing world, one in which the continuous potential of one’s workforce is
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considered a prerequisite for remaining competitive, the reliance on transactional leadership will result in failure. House and Podsakoff (1994) claim that the nature of work itself has changed and as such requires a dramatic change in workplace leadership; a transformation is needed.

Transformational leadership refers to the process of influencing major changes in the attitudes and assumptions of organization members and building commitment for an organization’s mission, objectives, and strategies (Burns, 1978; Yukl, 1998). Burns (1978) purports that leadership is exceptional when its exhibition results in transforming both leaders and followers, progressing both along Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Transformational leaders are agents of change who foster performance beyond expectations, both leader and followers expectations (Rowland & Heinitz; 2007).

Transformational theory describes a leadership process that is recognized primarily by outcomes such as major changes in the culture and strategies of an organization or social system (Yukl, 1998). Transformational leadership involves the influence by a leader on subordinates; the effect of the influence is to empower subordinates to participate in the process of transforming their organization (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 1998). Transformational leadership is usually viewed as a shared process, involving the actions of leaders at different levels and in different subunits of an organization, not just those of senior management (Burns, 1978).

Bass and Avoilo’s (1994) model of transformational leadership, termed full range, entails seven factors; the first grouping is termed the 4 I’s, idealized influence and charisma;
the second factor is inspirational motivation; the third factor is intellectual stimulation and the fourth factor is individualized consideration. The fifth factor is contingent reward (CR). The sixth factor entails a combination of management by exception, active and passive corrective transactions (MBE-A and MBE-P). The seventh factor is termed laissez-faire or non-transactional leadership (LF). The seven factors (see Figure 7) span a gamut of leadership behaviors; factors one through four are considered transformational leadership. Factors five and six are normally perceived as transactional leadership in nature, and the seventh factor is typified as the non-leadership factor.

**Bass and Avolio's (1994) Full Range Model, the Seven Factors**

![Diagram of Full Range Transformational Leadership Model](image)

*Figure 7. Full Range Transformational Leadership Model (Bass & Avolio, 1994).*
My choice of research method did not incorporate surveys that are typically utilized to measure each leadership factor; as such I attempted to be mindful of each factor’s definition when exploring the learning executive’s leadership.

Burn’s theory of transformational leadership was developed mostly from descriptive research on political leaders. Burns (1978) described leadership as a process of evolving inter-relationships in which leaders influence followers and are influenced in turn to modify their behavior to meet responsiveness or resistance. Transformational leadership is viewed as both a micro-level influence process between individuals and as a macro-level process of mobilizing power to change social systems and reform institutions (Burns, 1978). According to Burns (1978), transformational leaders seek to raise the consciousness of followers by appealing to higher ideals and values such as liberty, justice, equality, peace, and humanitarianism, not to baser emotions such as fear, greed, jealousy, or hatred. Followers are elevated from their “everyday selves” to their “better selves” (Burns, 1978). For Burns (1978), transformational leadership may be exhibited by anyone in the organization in any type of position. It may involve people influencing peers or superiors as well as subordinates (Burns, 1978). Burns contrasted transformational leadership with transactional leadership in which followers are motivated by appealing to their self-interest (Yukl, 1998). He also differentiated transformational leadership from influence based on bureaucratic authority, which emphasizes legitimate power for rules and tradition (Yukl, 1998).
Building on the earlier theory by Burns, Bass (1985) proposed a more detailed theory to describe transformational processes in organizations differentiating between transformational, charismatic, and transactional leadership. Bass (1985) defined transformational leadership in terms of the leader’s effect on followers. Leaders transform followers by making them more aware of the importance and values of task outcomes, by activating their higher-order needs, and by inducing them to transcend self-interest for the sake of the organization (Bass, 1985). As a result of this influence, followers feel trust and respect toward the leader, and they are motivated to do more than they originally expected to do (Bass, 1985).

Bass views transformational leadership as more than just another term for charisma (Yukl, 1998). Charisma is defined as a process wherein a leader influences followers by arising strong emotions and identification with a leader (Bass, 1985). Bass considers charisma a necessary but not sufficient condition for transformational leadership (Yukl, 1998).

Key transformational behaviors [4Is] entail: (a) Charismatic leadership [idealized influence] is characterized by pride in and respect for the leader; the followers identify with the leader, the leader appears trustworthy, he/she is energetic, a role model, leaders are viewed by followers to possess extraordinary capabilities; (b) Inspirational motivation is the articulation and representation of a vision; the leaders optimism and enthusiasm to obtain and support the exposed vision; providing meaning and challenge to the work of others; (c) Intellectual stimulation is a process where leaders increase follower awareness of problems
and influence followers to view problems from a new perspective; followers are encouraged to question established practice; (d) Individualized consideration is a subset of behaviors from the broader category of consideration, and it includes providing support, encouragement, and developmental experiences to followers; understanding the needs and abilities of each follower, developing and empowering the individual follower (Bass, 1985, 1998). Charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration interact to influence changes in followers, and the combined effects distinguish between transformational and charismatic leadership (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders seek to empower and elevate followers, in charismatic leadership, the opposite sometimes occurs (Bass, 1985; Yukl, 1998).

Bass defined transactional leadership in broader terms than Burns, it includes not only the use of incentives to influence effort, but also clarification of the work needed to obtain rewards (Yukl, 1998). Transactional leadership in its corrective form focuses on setting standards (Bass & Avolio, 2004). In its active form it closely monitors occurrences for mistakes; in its passive form it involves waiting for mistakes before taking action (Bass & Avolio, 2004). Transactional leadership is characterized in the full range model by: (a) Contingent reward, exchange occurs between leader and follower on what is expected from the follower and what the follower will receive in exchange, typically characterized by most performance management systems; (b) Management by exception [active and/or passive] is characterized by corrective transactions that tend to be more ineffective than contingent reward or transformational behaviors; the distinction between passive and active
management is depicted as the leader’s reaction to deviances, mistakes, and errors before taking corrective action; (c) Laissez-fair leadership is the avoidance or absence of leadership and is typically the most ineffective (Bass, 1985, 1998). Bass views transformational and transactional leadership as distinct but not mutually exclusive processes, and he recognizes that the same leader may use both types of process at different times in different situations (Yukl, 1998).

Transformational leaders create a strategic vision, communicate that vision through framing and use of metaphor, model the vision, and build commitment towards the vision (Zhu et. al., 2005). Transformational leaders typically have a clear vision of where a company is headed and what the future holds for their company (Avolio, 1999). The effective communication of vision links an organization’s shared history or shared values, to goals for the future and a claim to moral legitimacy, and identifies the role for individuals in making the future a reality (Locke & Kirkpatrick, 1991). This vision normally embraces a much-improved company and/or better way of running a business (Avolio, 1999). Leaders must create an innovative vision; believe very strongly in the vision, be able to articulate it, and communicate it to employees so that they too will believe in the vision and become excited by it (Avolio, 1999; Zhu et. al., 2005). Transformational leaders listen attentively and pay attention to follower’s needs for achievement and growth by acting as mentors, coaches, by encouraging followers to take responsibility in order to develop their potential, and implement effective human capital enhancing strategies (Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Zhu et. al., 2005).
If enacted transformational leadership will result in high levels of cohesion, commitment, trust, motivation, and performance (Zhu et. al., 2005). Empirical research indicates that transformational leadership has a positive effect on individual performance, innovation, and organizational outcomes through a committed and motivated workforce, working in an environment of trust, flexibility, and empowerment that amplifies a leader’s ability to demonstrate effective leadership (Avolio, 1999; Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999; Zhu et. al., 2005). Avolio (1999) furthers the above observations noting that a manager’s transformational abilities will result in an organization accomplishing its business goals.

Organizational cultures are strongly affected by leadership (Bass & Avolio, 2004). For an organization’s culture to become more transformational, its top management must articulate and make changes that are required (Bass & Avolio, 2004). Bass and Avolio (2004) claim that leaders concerned about organizational renewal will foster cultures that are hospitable and conducive to creativity, problem solving, risk taking, and experimentation. After consulting, leaders will articulate the change then take action to enact change (Bass & Avolio, 2004).

Bass (1985) proposed that charisma is the main component of transformational leadership. Charismatic leadership represents a significant component of transformational leadership theory and as such justifies further exploration. Charismatic leadership is defined more narrowly and refers to the perception that a leader possesses a divinely inspired gift and is somehow unique and larger than life (Weber, 1947). Followers not only trust and respect the leader, but they also idolize or worship the leader as a superhuman hero or spiritual figure.
(Bass, 1985). According to House (1971), the indicators of charismatic leadership include follower’s trust in the correctness of the leader’s beliefs, unquestioning acceptance of the leader, affection for the leader, and a willing obedience.

House (1971) proposed a theory that identifies how charismatic leaders behave, how they differ from other people, and the conditions under which they are most likely to flourish. The theory specifies indicators of charismatic leadership that involve attitudes and perceptions of followers about the leader. The theory also specifies leader traits that increase the likelihood of being perceived as charismatic, including a strong need for power, high self-confidence, and strong convictions. Behaviors typical of charismatic leaders include impression management to maintain follower confidence in the leader, articulation of an appealing vision that defines the task in terms of ideological goals to build follower commitment, communication of high expectations for followers to clarify their expectations, and expression of confidence in followers’ ability to build their self-confidence (House, 1971). In addition, charismatic leaders set an example in their own behavior for followers, and if necessary they act to arouse follower motives appropriate for the task (House, 1971).

The version of charismatic theory proposed by Conger and Kanungo (1987, 1988) is based on the assumption that charisma is an attribution phenomenon. Followers attribute charismatic qualities to a leader based on their observations of the leader’s behavior and outcomes associated with it (Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1988). The behaviors are not assumed to be present in every charismatic leader to the same extent, and the relative importance of each behavior for the attribution of charisma varies somewhat with the
situation (Conger & Kanungo 1987, 1988). The behaviors include: (a) enthusiastically advocating an appealing vision that is highly discrepant from the status quo, yet still within the latitude of follower acceptance, (b) making self-sacrifices and risking personal loss of status, money, or membership in the organization in the pursuit of the espoused vision, and (c) acting in unconventional ways to achieve the espoused vision (Conger & Kanungo 1987, 1988). Traits enhancing attributions of charisma include: (a) self-confidence, (b) impression management skills, (c) the cognitive ability needed to assess the situation and identify opportunities and constraints for implementing strategies, and (d) the social sensitivity and empathy required to understand the needs and values of followers (Conger & Kanungo 1987, 1988). With respect to power, attributed charisma is more likely for a leader who relies mostly on expert and referent power to influence followers rather than authority or participation (Conger & Kanungo 1987, 1988). As for situational variables, charismatic leaders are more likely to emerge when there is a crises requiring major change or followers are otherwise dissatisfied with the status quo (Yukl, 1998). However, even in the absence of a genuine crisis, a leader may be able to create dissatisfaction in order to demonstrate superior expertise in dealing with the problem in unconventional ways (Yukl, 1998).

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) in the most recent version (5X) is the primary tool used to assess the full range of leadership behaviors (Bass & Avolio, 2004). The MLQ is designed to capture a broad range of leadership behaviors while differentiating ineffective from effective leaders (Bass & Avolio, 2004). The MLQ focuses on individual behaviors, observed by associates at any organizational level that transform individuals and
their organizations (Bass & Avolio, 2004). The questionnaire also assesses leadership behaviors that motivate individuals and organizations (Bass & Avolio, 2004).

At the ineffective end of the survey’s range, the MLQ assesses perceptions of leadership behaviors that represent avoidance or responsibility and action, typically termed Laissez Fair leadership. At the most effective end of the range, the MLQ assesses perceptions of leadership behaviors that generate higher order performance effects termed transformational leadership. The range of ineffective and effective leadership behaviors in the MLQ is typically broader than other leadership surveys in common use (Bass & Avolio, 2004).

The MLQ (5X-Short) is a validated form of 45 items; the MLQ (5X-Long) contains 63 items. Nine different subscales or transformational and transactional leadership are measured. The MLQ (5X) has been validated by both discriminatory and confirmatory factor analysis. The MLQ (5X-Short) measures key leadership and effectiveness behaviors shown in prior research to be strongly correlated with both individual and organizational success (Bass & Avolio, 2004). The MLQ (5X-Long) adds two additional items per component that tend to load on more than one component of the model (Bass & Avolio, 2004). The MLQ assess leadership at a single point in time (Rowold & Heinitz, 2007). Bass and Avolio claim that for the past 25 years, the MLQ has been the principle means they were able to reliably differentiate highly effective leaders from ineffective leaders (Bass & Avolio, 2004).

MLQ survey kits entail the Full Range of Leadership model guide, self-rating and rater forms, previous and current investigations on leadership development, and scoring
forms. Mind Garden™ is the current proprietor of the survey. Mind Garden™ provides both paper and web-based collection of multi-rater data to include a comprehensive feedback report if requested.

Typically the MLQ feedback is an individualized, computer-generated report that provides an in-depth summary of how often leaders are perceived to exhibit specific behaviors along a full range of leadership performance. The report includes a full description of the model and leadership development with the MLQ.

There are may positive attributes about the full range model that have proven to apply to a wide range of settings there is still a need for elementary research targeting the constructs of transformational and charismatic leadership; a noted potential area of research is the extent to which transformational and charismatic leadership differ (Rowold & Heinitz, 2007). The MLQ-5X creates the potential for confusion about the underlying meaning of transformational and charismatic leadership, the criticism being that empirical literature uses the terms transformational and charismatic leadership inconsistently and interchangeably (Rowold & Heinitz, 2007).

More recent leadership theories include authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), principled centered leadership (Covey, 1991) and value-centered leadership (Fry, 2003) all place a premium on creating a positive work environment for spiritual growth and development while highlighting self-awareness. Each of these theories places a premium on transforming beliefs into action and each is nested within transformative theory as espoused by Bass (1985). Berson et al. (2006) note a current trend in leadership research is leader’s
impact on followers, attempting to view leadership from follower’s perspectives to better understand leadership phenomena.

*Bryman's Research, a Qualitative Exploration of Leadership*

My review of the scholarly literature would be incomplete without examples of qualitative leadership research. Alan Bryman (2004) reviewed a large number of articles derived from qualitative research on leadership that were published prior to 2004 in peer-reviewed journals. He notes that qualitative research has shed light on facets of leadership that have not been revealed by the strict use of quantitative method (Bryman, 2004).

From his review of qualitative research he noted the following common themes. Leaders need to lead the process of change, secure commitment to the change process, address multiple constituencies, convey a sense of the need for change, and instill a vision of how change should be implemented and what the future state of the organization will look like (Bryman, 2004). Leaders sometime have to engage in types of leadership that are inconsistent with the images of themselves as leaders such as micro-management (Bryman, 2004). Bryman (2004) found that transactional leadership was the most frequent type of leadership identified by the leadership research that he reviewed.

Qualitative research on leadership seems to identify the following two leader characteristics as particularly important factors for effective leadership (a) good communication on the part of the leader and, (b) the leaders integrity and how far he or she is trusted and how far he or she trusts others (Bryman, 2004). Leaders are seen as people who draw upon their follower’s ideas, beliefs, and values and recycle them back in the form of a
distinctive leadership framework (Bryman, 2004). Bryman’s (2004) review highlights that
leaders need to be managers of meaning, actively manipulating symbols in order to instill a
vision, manage change, and achieve support for their direction. The final observation from
Bryman’s writing is that others often see leadership as being shared between leaders who
occupy different roles and tasks (Bryman, 2004).

As my research progresses I will be sensitive to the potential to bias my findings
based on a review of literature that suggests that a learning executive demonstrates a
particular type of leadership. The reviewed literature entails early theories developed
primarily to explain the leadership phenomena between leader and those who are led. A
second body of literature deals with organizational leadership, leadership phenomena
between the leader and their organization. This second body of literature is needed to
support my understanding of the potential for influence by a learning executive on their
organization.

The Impact of Leadership on Organizations

Does leadership matter? Surveys of job satisfaction from the 1920s onward illustrate
the importance of leadership (Bass, 2000). They uniformly report that employees’ favorable
attitudes toward their supervisors contribute to employee satisfaction (Kornhauser & Sharp,
1932). In addition, favorable attitudes towards supervisors are related to productivity of a
work group (Lawshe & Nagle, 1953). Scott and Bruce (1994) report that leadership, support
for innovation, and managerial role expectations are significantly related to individual
innovative behavior enhancing the long-term survival of organizations. Hambrick and
Finkelstein (1987) noted that organizations that foster high levels of managerial discretion increase the potential marginal product of managerial influence on firm performance. Leadership seems to have a substantial effect on some organizational outcomes (Northouse, 2004).

Despite the skepticism about the reality and importance of leadership, all social and political movements require leaders to begin them (Tucker, 1981). Leadership is often regarded as the single most critical factor in the success or failure of institutions (Tucker, 1981). Chandler (1962) stated that a historical analysis of leadership over significant periods has shown that leadership has had a profound effect on organizations. To further support Chandler’s findings, Charan and Colvin (2000) noted that the wrong CEO can destroy a company and in aggregate senior organizational leadership influences the prosperity of a nation.

Conventional views of organizational leadership assume that leaders have a significant and possibly crucial impact on the organizations they lead. Contextual-ists have argued that situational factors influence organizational performance more than the individual leader (Hall, 1977; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Bass (1990) notes a list of situational moderators that potentially impact the effectiveness of leadership. The list includes such factors as business environment, market stability, and economic-political-social and legal influences all of which have the potential to influence a leader’s ability to lead (Bass, 1990). In practice, the contextual-ist argument has rested on the findings of Lieberson and O’Connor
(1972), which is cited with regularity in the literature as the major counterpoint to the proposition that leadership makes a difference.

Liberson and O’Connor (1972) found that leadership differences have little to no impact on organizational performance, in each case the vast majority of performance variation is accounted for by non-leadership factors. The literature notes that the findings of the study were startling; numerous researchers have challenged their findings (Hall, 1977). Predominantly, those challenging the findings of Lieberson and O’Connor have questioned the study’s methodology, which has been held by some to be inadequate and insufficient to support the contention that leader’s don’t make a difference (Hall, 1997).

Lieberson and O’Connor’s (1972) research into leadership and performance in large corporations was set in the context of an examination of environmental constraints on leader influence. The study’s focus was to determine the relative impact of leadership and the organizational environment on organizational performance. They questioned the impact of persons in top leadership roles on organizational performance. To address their questions they obtained data on sales, earning, profit margins, and periods of leader incumbency for 167 major publicly owned US corporations from the years 1946-1965. Samples from six to eighteen firms were drawn from within each of the thirteen industries. The samples that were chosen were selected to reflect various market attributes, government influence, size, and other targeted demographic characteristics. The analysis used three dependent performance variables (sales, earnings, and profit margins) and four independent variables (year, industry, company, and leadership).
The analytical strategy was to attribute variance in each of the performance measures to each of the independent variables by means of a sequential decomposition of variance. The end product of the analysis was a set of statistics that indicated the percentage of performance variance that was explained by each independent variable. On the basis of these studies it has been concluded that leadership differences have little or no impact on organizational performance, in each case the vast majority of performance variation is accounted for by non-leadership factors (Lieberson & O’Connor, 1972).

The most comprehensive critique of these studies is that of Weiner (1978). In a replication study, based on a sample of 193 privately owned U.S. manufacturing corporations over the period 1956-1974, Weiner (1978) showed that the order in which the independent variables are discounted in the decomposition analysis makes a difference to the results. Using both the order adopted by Lieberson and O’Connor and the reverse order, Weiner (1978) found that under the former, leadership accounted for 16.1 percent of profit variance, 19.0 percent of sales variance, and 8.7 percent of profit margin variance, which confirmed the original findings of Lieberson and O’Connor (1972). But when the variables were discounted in reverse order, leadership accounted for 96.1 percent of profit variance, 94.8 percent of sales variance, and 77.5 percent of profit margin variance. Weiner (1978) concluded that Liberson and O’Connor’s results were merely an artifact of the order in which the variables had been entered into the analysis.

In his influential text on organizations and environments, Aldrich (1979) noted that Lieberson and O’Connor had found only limited effects of leadership changes on company
performance. Later he made an important point that revealed a fatal flaw. Lieberson and O’Connor’s results showed that leaders had little impact on profits (net earnings) and sales but a sizable impact on profit margins (Aldrich, 1979). Since the latter is the ratio of the former and hence dependent on them, Aldrich (1979) argued that it is not possible for an executive to have an impact on profits (profit margins) and little impact on net earnings and sales. He concluded that Lieberson and O’Connor’s findings were suspect (Aldrich, 1979).

Hambrick and Mason (1984) suggested that Lieberson and O’Connor employed a combination of dependent variables and data analysis that made it difficult if not impossible for the leadership variable to have a significant influence on the study’s key measures. The Lieberson and O’Connor study is seen as flawed because it does not allow the leadership variable to enter into the equation and the choice of independent and dependent variables renders useless conclusions (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). The five main methodological criticisms of Lieberson and O’Connor’s study are (a) the arbitrary effect of the order of entry of the independent variables to the decomposition of variance analysis, (b) the definitional dependence between the performance measures, (c) the absence of organization-specific control variables, (d) internal inconsistency in the results that cannot be easily interpreted, and (e) sample design.

Thomas performed an identical analysis on a significantly different sample of firms. Thomas’ (1988) findings confirmed those of Weiner (1978), the independent variable displays the largest portion of total performance variation, and in each study it is the organizational variable that does this. What this reflects is that each firm’s level of
performance tends to be very different from that of any other firm and that these differences persist over time.

Day and Lord (1988) found that the positive organizational impact of a high performing executive was at least fifteen percent greater than that of an average performing executive. This difference could translate into at least $25 million in a Fortune 500 company (Day & Lord, 1988).

Leaders are constrained with respect to different kinds of performance outcomes. Thomas’ (1988) concluded that; leader differences do account for performance variations within firms and these impacts are generally insufficient to outweigh the inbuilt differences among firms that largely account for performance variation as identified by Lieberson and O’Connor (1972).

Alvesson and Sveningsson’s (2003) research proposed a descriptive term, minimalist leadership; leadership that has little to no impact on organizations and those who are employed by them. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) acknowledge the existence of leadership in organizations, fragile though it may be. Their argument for minimization recognizes the impact of local context on a leader’s ability to exhibit leadership; the cultural dimensions within the organization; and the language within the organization used to characterize leadership (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) call for future researchers to approach leadership research with a skeptical attitude, utilizing more open methodological approaches, and more in-depth qualitative research is needed.
An organization’s context does influence a leader’s potential to be effective (Alvesson & Sceningsson, 2003; Schein, 1992). From the above review one can see the significance of leadership, its potential to make better or to destroy. My review incorporates a brief overview of the complex reciprocal relationship between culture and leadership.

Organizational Culture and its Influence on Leadership

Leadership in organizations does not take place in a vacuum; leadership occurs in organizational contexts (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). Culture is a key component of an organization’s context and as such justifies a through examination. The culture of a group can be portrayed as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the a group has learned as it solved problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1992).

Culture is a mechanism of social control within an organization, explicitly manipulating its members into perceiving, thinking, and feeling in certain ways (Schein, 1992). Schein (1992) argues that neither culture nor leadership can be understood in isolation, to truly understand leadership one must understand the culture that a leader is embedded in. Schein (1992) observed that once an organizational culture emerges, culture determines who will or will not be a leader within the organization. Leadership and culture are conceptually intertwined (Schein, 1992).

Schein (1992) argues that leadership is the source of group beliefs and values and that leadership is needed to get a group moving to solve its challenges. The only thing of real
importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and the unique talent of leaders is their ability to understand and work with culture (Schein, 1992). Leaders create and change cultures, while managers and administrators live within them; this is a critical distinction (Schein, 1992).

Schein (1992) continues his portrayal of culture noting that culture is the result of a complex group learning process that is only partially influenced by leader behavior, its elements are typically stable and least malleable. But if the group’s survival is threatened because elements of its culture have become maladapted, it is ultimately the function of leadership to recognize and do something about the situation (Schein, 1992). The salient point is that if leaders do not become conscious of the cultures in which they are embedded, those cultures will manage them; cultural understanding is essential if leaders are to lead (Schein, 1992).

Overt phenomena typically associated with the term culture include: (a) observed behavioral regularities when people interact, their language, the customs, and traditions; (b) group norms, the implicit standards and values that evolve in working groups; (c) espoused values, the articulated, publicly announced principles that a group claims to be trying to achieve (Schein, 1992). Typically large organizations exhibit multiple subcultures; some of these subcultures will be in conflict with one another (Schein, 1992).

Schein (1992) proposes a cultural analysis scheme that utilizes three distinct levels, they are: (a) artifacts; visible organizational structures and processes, typically easy to observe but difficult to understand; (b) espoused values; strategies, goals, philosophies, group
members who can successfully influence the group (espoused values) will be identified as leaders; and (c) basic underlying assumptions; unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. Schein (1992) argues that the essence of culture lies in the pattern of basic underlying assumptions.

_Culture’s Influence on Leadership_

Schein’s (1992) research indicates that new leaders can easily enter new organizational cultures if they remain within a given industry having acquired the necessary cognitive frames associated with specific core technologies. If new leaders do not emulate an organization’s basic underlying assumptions they will be immediately expelled (Schein, 1992).

Without a group there can be no culture; group growth and culture formation are intertwined, and both are the result of leadership activities and shared experiences amongst members of the group (Schein, 1992). Leaders shape culture through influence, a leader is able to influence groups by defining: (a) mission and strategy; obtaining a shared understanding of core mission, primary task, manifest and latent functions, (b) goals; developing consensus on individual and group goals, (c) means; developing consensus on the means used to attain goals, (d) measurement; developing consensus on the criteria used to measure how well the group is doing, and (e) correction; developing consensus on the appropriate remedial or repair strategies to be used if goals are not being met (Schein, 1992). Typically leaders are evaluated on their ability to influence groups, if they cannot create a group that succeed, they are considered failed leaders (Schein, 1992).
Early leadership of a group is very important, in particular during the forming stage of the group (Schein, 1992). In mature companies one can trace many of the assumptions of its management team to the beliefs and values of founders and early leaders (Schein, 1992). The unique role that these early leaders play is the proposing of solutions to early crisis and challenges and if successful the solutions form the basis of the organization’s culture (Schein, 1992). Both founders and new group members will be anxious in the process of group formation and will look for solutions. The early leader’s proposal normally always receives special attention in the early phase of group formation (Schein, 1992). Once the group is formed and its culture embedded the group must be cognizant of environmental changes and have the ability to alter its culture to embrace accurate assumptions, a process which is very difficult if the founder of the organization is still in control of the organization (Schein, 1992). This phenomenon is the result of the original leader’s ability to embed their assumptions in the various routines of the organization over time (Schein, 1992). Culture change, (i.e. learning) can occur through the exchange of ideas, proposals by strong group members and if successful become embedded in the organization’s culture (Schein, 1992).

Leaders have the potential to embed culture in their organizations. Culture embedding in a young organization is primarily accomplished through socialization (Schein, 1992). Leader imposed teaching forces a group to acquire culture reflected by members perceiving, thinking, and feeling; leader charisma, the leader’s ability to communicate major assumptions and values in a vivid and clear manner enable a leader to impose his desired culture (Schein, 1992). An emerging culture will reflect not only the leader’s assumptions
but also the complex internal accommodations created by subordinates to run the
organization in spite of or around the leader (Schein, 1992).

A Leader’s Influence on Culture

Organizational context can be a dependent variable of leadership action (Porter &
McLaughlin, 2006). Schein’s (1992) research portrays six mechanisms as primary by which
founders or leaders of organizations are able to embed their own assumptions in the ongoing
daily life of their organizations: (a) what leaders pay attention to, measure, and control on a
regular basis, (b) how leaders react to critical incidents and organizational crisis, (c) observed
criteria by which leaders allocate scarce resources, (d) deliberate role modeling, teaching,
and coaching, (e) observed criteria by which leaders allocate rewards and status, and (f)
observed criteria by which leaders recruit, select, promote, retire, and excommunicate
organizational members. At this stage the climate created by founder leaders precedes the
existence of a group culture (Schein, 1992).

Secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms reinforce organizational
culture but do not create culture (Schein, 1992). The six secondary mechanisms are (a)
organizational design and structure, (b) organizational systems and procedures, (c)
organizational rites and rituals, (d) design of physical space, facades, and buildings, (e)
stories, legends, and myths about people and events, (e) formal elements of organizational
philosophy, values, and creed (Schein, 1992). Once an organization has matured and
stabilized, secondary mechanisms come to be primary culture-creating mechanisms that will
contribute to future leaders (Schein, 1992). Secondary mechanisms should be interpreted as
cultural artifacts, resulting from founders and earlier leaders, which are highly visible but may be difficult to interpret without insider knowledge (Schein, 1992).

As an organization matures it inevitably differentiates itself resulting in a number of subcultures within the organization. The content and resulting cultures that develop within the subgroups are dependent on the individuals, their personalities, professions, and assigned tasks (Schein, 1992). As the number of subcultures evolve they will become difficult for senior leaders to integrate (Schein, 1992). Leaders should recognize that forming an organization is really a process of integrating a number of subcultures; therefore a leader must be sensitive to subcultures and must develop skills to work across cultural boundaries (Schein, 1992). Building an effective organization is ultimately a matter of meshing the different subcultures by encouraging the evolution of common goals, common language, and common procedures for solving problems (Schein, 1992).

Leaders may be required to act as agents for change. Leaders should recognize that different organizational functions are served by culture at different organizational stages, formative, midlife, and declining and therefore change issues will be different at each stage (Schein, 1992). The culture creation and development process must be handled sensitively with full understanding of the anxieties that arise with change (Schein, 1992). The leader must unfreeze the existing culture resulting in cognitive redefinition as a way of developing new cultural assumptions (Schein, 1992). Leadership starts the change process (Schein, 1992). The change process must provide an opportunity for refreezing, which occurs when
new cultural assumptions consistently solve problems and reduce group member anxieties (Schein, 1992).

A turbulent business environment requires a culture that embraces learning and the resulting change (Schein, 1992). A learning culture exhibits a number of characteristics (a) organizational members function as proactive problem solvers to manage their world, (b) human nature is good and can be mutable, (c) a complex blend of individualism and group-ism is appropriate for complex problem solving, (d) authoritarian and participative systems are appropriate provided there is trust, (e) the best organizational time frame is between near and far future for learning and its resulting change, (f) communication and information are central to organizational well-being, accurate and relevant information must be capable of flowing freely in a fully connected network, (g) the more turbulent the environment the more diverse but connected organizational units need to be in-place, (h) both task and relationship orientations are desirable, (i) a recognition that the world is intrinsically complex, consisting of interconnected elements in which multiple causation and over-determination are more likely than linear or simple causes (Schein, 1992). Learning leaders should promote the above noted cultural assumptions, rewarding those whose behaviors reinforce a culture of learning (Schein, 1992). As pockets of subcultures emerge and innovative solutions to existing organizational problems are put in-place, a new and innovative culture will gradually emerge (Schein, 1992).

*The Unique Influence of Leader’s of Learning*
Leadership is the attitude and motivation to examine and manage culture (Schein, 1992). Learning leaders need to have heightened insight into their organization, its culture and themselves in order to change that which is dysfunctional (Schein, 1992). Learning leaders must have extraordinary levels of motivation to endure the pain of learning and change; they need to assume the role of perpetual supporter for a learning culture (Schein, 1992). Learning leaders have a responsibility to help others recognize their personal insight, how their organizations can learn and learn faster (Schein, 1992). To accomplish this, leaders must portray confidence that active problem solving leads to learning and therefore control of one’s future (Schein, 1992).

An additional task for learning leaders is to ensure good cross-cultural communication and understanding throughout their organizations (Schein, 1992). Learning leaders should stimulate diversity at both the individual and group level; such diversity will result in the inevitable emergence of subcultures and those subcultures will eventually be a necessary source for learning and innovation (Schein, 1992). The more turbulent, ambitious, and out of control the organization’s environment becomes, the more a culture of learning will need to be embraced by all members of the leader’s organization (Schein, 1992). Learning leaders are likely to fail at this effort if they are unaware of the cultural underpinnings of what they are doing or the assumptions of the group in which they are imposing new solutions (Schein, 1992).

Denison (1996) notes that much of culture research falls short of its promise of impact; there is still confusion over terminology an example being the difference between
organizational culture and organizational climate. Leadership is viewed by most as a culture influencing activity, an activity that attempts to manage meaning for others (Alvesson, 2002). Current trends in culture research include the implementation of quantitative measures in an attempt to tease-out comparative dimensions of an organization’s culture the result being the quantification of discrete variables in an effort to model ideal organizational performance (Alvesson, 2002).

The reviewed literature provided me with a more holistic understanding of leadership. You can see that the context of leadership continues to weave itself throughout my review. My understanding of contextual factors is critical to describing the complexity of leadership phenomena.

Learning executives typically are members of their organizations most influential management group, the top management team (Clinton, 2004; Davenport et al., 1998; Earl & Scott, 1999; Herschel, 2000). As such, a learning executive may be required to leverage power by influencing their peers, their organization, and its culture. A third body of leadership literature that supports my research is top management teams.

*Top Management Teams*

One of the most enduring ideas in organization theory is that environments impose constraints on individuals making it exceedingly difficult for any one person, even the chief executive officer, to control all aspects of organizational life (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). While it may be understandable that the popular press treats senior organizational leadership as a solitary and even heroic phenomenon, it is surprising how current models and theories in
organizational studies also assume this perspective (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). As a result, the nature of effective senior leadership is often tied to an individual’s personal qualities and actions (House & Podsakoff, 1994). Given the ambiguity and complexity inherent in strategic decision-making, organizations have formed coalitions of individuals to provide leadership; researchers should pay close attention to these coalitions when studying leadership (Mintzberg, 1973).

The study of groups of top managers offers the following advantages: (a) as an aggregation of individuals, organizations have multiple goals that are often in conflict (Weick, 1979). The existence of multiple goals and multiple preferences at the top of leadership hierarchies may affect how organizations strive toward organizational outcomes, as well as the characteristics of those outcomes; (b) descriptions of an organization’s strategic decision–making process typically emphasize stages, sequences, and processes that involves a group of top managers interacting toward desired ends (Nutt, 1984; Pettigrew, 1973); (c) to the extent individual top managers effect organizational outcomes, predicative ability is enhanced when a group of top managers is considered (Hambrick & Mason, 1984); and (d) the interactions among top managers creates outcomes of interest to strategists and fragmentation within top managerial groups (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Though popular literature gives the impression that the chief executive officer plays a particularly important role in the strategic decision making process, a more realistic assumption is that there is a group of executives at the top who are potentially influential (Finkelstein &

A large number of potential intervening processes exist between top management team [the upper echelon] composition and organizational outcomes (Finkelstein, 1988). For example, the strategic decision making process has many steps, including the generation and evaluation of alternatives, selection, implementation, and overall evaluation (Finkelstein, 1988). Before a decision can affect organizational outcomes, it must go through each of these stages with top management team members interacting throughout the process (Finkelstein, 1988). From the literature it is evident that top management teams are really top management groups (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996).

**Context’s Influence on Upper Echelon Leadership**

Demographic (and cognitive) homogeneity and social integration may increase top management consensus (Pfeffer, 1983). Homogeneous teams develop greater cohesiveness over time (Pfeffer, 1983), which promotes greater agreement about the organization and its goals (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985). Consensus is formed, as top management team members are able to coalesce around a shared understanding of what the organization seeks to accomplish (Wiersema & Bantel, 1992). Top management team heterogeneity may weaken consensus on goals and perceptions (Amason & Schweiger, 1992; Priem, 1990). To further these observations, Social Capital theory research asserts that social capital is positively correlated to increased job incumbent desirability and influence (Belliveau,
O’Reilly, & Wade, 1996). Top management consensus may be positively related to top management team homogeneity and integration (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996).

Organizations in complex environments are typically confronted with conflicting demands from multiple constituencies (Thompson, 1967). The more diverse an organization’s environment, the more necessary it becomes to have a differentiated top management team in order to appropriately monitor the diversity of the environment (Lawrence & Lorsh, 1967). Firms in complex environments often face ill-defined and novel problem solving situations, suggesting that larger, more heterogeneous top management teams may be more common under these conditions (Janis, 1972). Such teams have a broader range of skills represented among its members (Steiner, 1972), are more likely to develop diverse interpretations and perspectives (Wanous & Youtz, 1986), and tend to engender more debate and questioning among team members (Hoffman & Maier, 1961). In simpler, less complex environments, such heterogeneity is not required and indeed may be dysfunctional to the extent that it promotes poor communication (Zenger & Lawence, 1989) and conflict (Ebadi & Utterback, 1984).

Environmental complexity promotes greater differentiation within the top management team and reduces the opportunity for executives to interact, share resources, and operate in a cohesive manner (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). The greater environmental demands characteristic of this setting force greater task specialization and make coordination more difficult (Mintzberg, 1979). While these circumstances may call for greater integration (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), the demands on top team members from environmental
constituencies may make such integration difficult to achieve (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). As Galbraith (1973) has argued, complexity forces greater specialization and decentralization, reducing opportunities for coordination and increasing both the number of individuals involved in decision making and their decision-making independence.

Environmental complexity is expected to have a direct effect on top management team social integration and consensus (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Environmental complexity forces top management team members to attend to multiple stimuli and demands that highlight differences within the top team (Mintzberg, 1979). At the same time, the added demands of complex environments also reduce opportunities for team development and cohesion (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). This is consistent with Bourgeois’s (1980) contention that complexity promotes conflict. A number of observations arise as a result of a complex business environment; the more complex the environment the greater the heterogeneity within the top management team; the larger the size of the top management team; the less the role interdependence within the top management team; the less the degree of social integration within the top management team; and less degree of consensus within the top management team (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996).

Munificent environments help buffer organizations from external threats and enable them to accumulate slack resources (Cyert & March, 1963). In addition, munificence enables an organization’s flexibility and growth opportunities (Aldrich, 1979). To a considerable extent, the general lack of external threat allows top management teams to operate with less
constraints than otherwise might exist (Aldrich, 1979). As a result, predicting the consequential effects on top management teams is difficult (Aldrich, 1979).

Greater organization slack often accompanies environmental munificence (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Williamson (1963) has suggested that firms with slack resources tend to hire more staff than needed—especially at the executive level. Environmental munificence may have a direct effect on top management team size; the more munificent the environment the larger the size of the top management team (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996).

Executive Leadership and Firm Strategy

Strategy formulation requires an analysis of external threats and opportunities and an assessment of internal weaknesses across functional areas (Cyert & March, 1963). The alternatives that arise from this analysis are assessed and debated before settling on a satisfying solution (Cyert & March, 1963). Top management team members need to be active throughout this process, in part through direct participation and in part by setting agendas (Kotter, 1982), by delegating to others (Mintzberg, 1983), and by signaling ideas and preferences (Pfeffer & Salanick, 1978). Many top management team tasks center on the process of strategic renewal, an iterative process associated with promoting, accommodating, and using new knowledge and innovative behavior to bring about change in an organization’s core competencies or product market domain (Doz, 1996). Much of the top management team’s task work concerns deciding on the resources necessary to achieve a given strategy
and approving and directing the resources to enforce the strategic position (Floyd & Lane, 2000).

Firm strategy may impact the characteristics of the top management team; organizations and the strategies they follow may be a reflection of their top managers (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). The greater the interdependence of a firm’s diversification posture, the less heterogeneity within the top management team (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). The greater the degree of role interdependence within the top management team, the greater the degree of social integration, and the greater the degree of consensus within the top management team (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). The greater the interdependence of the diversification posture, the larger size of the top management team (Hambrick & Mason, 1984).

A firm’s competitive, or business, strategy is also likely to affect the composition, structure, and process of its top management team (Miles & Snow, 1978). Prospector (growth, innovation, and the search for new opportunities) and Defender (cost control, stability, and efficiency) firms call for different top management team characteristics (Miles & Snow, 1978).

Defender firms suggest that they face fewer strategic contingencies and do not require larger, more differentiated top management teams (Pfeffer, 1983). Firms following Defender strategies generally exhibit lower growth, constraining internal labor markets by limiting promotion opportunities for top managers (Pfeffer, 1983). Prospectors are not only more growth-oriented, they are also more innovative and forward-looking (Pfeffer, 1983).
These differences between Prospectors and Defenders may have several implications for top management teams. First, it is likely that top management teams will be smaller and less heterogeneous in Defenders, given the importance of maintaining existing domains (Pfeffer, 1983). Such internally focused top management teams do not require the same breadth and diversity that top management teams with Prospector strategies might need (Pfeffer, 1983).

Top management teams in Prospector firms need to be receptive to change and innovation; searching for new opportunities may require new perspectives and approaches that are more likely to exist when top management teams are heterogeneous (Wiersema & Bantel, 1992). In contrast, top management teams in firms with Defender strategies have already coalesced around a specific product-market and a narrow range of competitive weapons to defend their firm’s position in the product-market (Wiersema & Bantel, 1992). Top management teams with Defender strategies are more likely to exhibit greater cohesiveness and develop congruent beliefs about their firm and how it operates, making it easier for them to reach agreement (Dutton & Duncan, 1987).

Strategic change effects an organization and its top management team (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Changes in firm strategy often disrupt existing ways of doing business, involve shifts to new domains or new tactics within the same domain, and create new power bases within the firm (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985). These changes have significant ramifications for the functioning of the top management team; established communication patterns, knowledge structures, needed competencies and processes, and patterns of
interaction all shift (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985). To the extent that the strategic changes are severe, threatening the integrity of the organization or the positions of top managers, constriction of power and control may result (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985). Under these conditions, one could expect to see several changes in the top management team; greater heterogeneity and size to try to cope with the changes, less role interdependence as it becomes more difficult for top managers to coordinate activities, less social integration as a consequence of disrupted patterns of interaction, and greater difficulty in reaching consensus because norms are changing (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985).

**Strategic Change and Change Management**

Strategy implementation involves mobilizing the resources needed to ensure that the strategic initiatives selected are appropriately executed (Nutt, 1986). The implementation process typically requires significant integration of people and resources, takes considerable time, and depends on the cooperation of numerous individuals both in and out of the top management team (Galbraith & Kazanjian, 1986). Effectively implementing strategic decisions is challenging because executives who find particular changes threatening or objectionable often have numerous opportunities to disrupt the process (Bardach, 1977; Guth & MacMillian, 1986). As a result, it becomes important to gain acceptance and commitment to a strategic decision (Nutt, 1987), especially in light of evidence that direct intervention, persuasion, and participation implementation tactics are superior to the use of edicts (Nutt, 1986).
The literature on strategic change complements the concept of strategy implementation; strategic change involves an attempt to change current modes of cognition and action to enable an organization to take advantage of important opportunities or to cope with consequential environmental threats (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). In most organizations the top management team normally assumes a crucial role in guiding an organization through such change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Members of the top management team are given primary responsibility for setting strategic direction and formulating plans for their organization, as well as the responsibility for guiding actions that will realize those plans (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

The literature suggests that organizational members, including the top management team, need to understand the proposed change ensuring that it makes sense, fitting into a revised interpretive scheme (Bartunek, 1984; Ranson, Hinings, & Greenwood, 1980). The top management team must first develop an understanding of the organization’s internal and external environment and define a revised conception of the organization (Thomas & McDaniel, 1990). Following this interpretive work by the top management team some abstract vision of the changed organization emerges and is eventually disseminated to stakeholders and organizational members (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Typically symbols and symbolic action are used to communicate that the existing interpretive scheme is no longer appropriate; organizational change is needed (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

Organizational instability is introduced when change occurs, disrupting organizational members’ ways of understanding; demanding that organizational management
create new ways of making sense (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Poole, Gioia, & Gray, 1989; Ranson et al., 1980). This provides an opportunity for top management team members to articulate and advocate their vision or preferred interpretive scheme for stakeholders and organizational members, in a sense opening a door to change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). This typically occurs through consensus building (Straus, 1978; Walsh & Fahey, 1986). Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) use the terms sense-making and sense-giving to describe the iterative process of strategic change.

Gioia and Chittipeddi’s (1991) research on strategic change revealed four phases. The phases consist of: (a) envisioning, (b) signaling, (c) re-visioning, and (d) energizing; these in turn are associated with the concept of sense-making and sense-giving. Each of the phases demonstrates overlapping transitions into the next phase.

The envisioning phase typically entails the leader gathering information resulting in an embryonic strategic vision being formulated to support the change. The developing vision is filtered through an interpretive scheme derived from their prior experience and understanding (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Shein’s (1992) writings suggest two approaches to visioning: (a) the strong vision model, the leader has a clear vision of where the organization should end up, specifies the means of how to get there, and consistently rewards efforts to move in that direction; and the (b) fuzzy vision model, where a new leader states forcefully that the present is intolerable and that organization and individual performance must improve within a specified time, the leader then relies on the organization to develop
visions on how to improve. As various proposals for improvement are generated the leader selects and reinforces those that make sense (Shein, 1992).

The signaling phase may overlap the previous phase and typically entails the public declaration of the strategic change effort resulting in the disruption of the status quo (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). The organization is infused with anxiety; an ambiguity by design effect results in symbolizing change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). This phase is necessary both substantively as well as symbolically to facilitate a new framework for understanding by organizational members as well as organizational leadership (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

During re-visioning top management team members are seen as vivid symbols supporting the change effort (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Gioia and Chittipeddi’s (1991) research revealed the emergence of organizational resistance and tension increasing during this phase of the change effort. Strategies may need to be created to diffuse resistance to change and in turn the leadership team may be required to modify some change initiatives based on organizational feedback (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

The final phase is termed energizing and is characterized by substantive activities to communicate the need for change as well as the direction for change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Formal systems are implemented to energize stakeholders to take action on the espoused vision for change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) provide a conceptual lens to view the phases of change; the lens is termed sense-making and sense-giving. Their research suggests that the first step in any strategic change is making sense of the change by creating a vision (sense-making)
Sense-making requires refining the vision based on organization-wide feedback resulting in a re-visioning of the proposed change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Sense giving is the final stage in which stakeholders make sense of the vision resulting in organization-wide commitment to take action (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Gioia and Chittipeddi’s (1991) research revealed episodic periods of sense-making and sense-giving that were dominated by periods of understanding and influence and in turn correspond in parallel fashion to periods defined essentially as cognition and action by those impacted by the change. The strategic change literature may enhance my understanding of observed leadership.

**CEO Influence**

Chief executive officers play a major role in the composition and functioning of top management teams (Jackson, 1992). CEOs are central members of the top management team (Jackson, 1992) who have a disproportionate impact on team characteristics and outcomes (Finkelstein, 1992). One characteristic, openness, is of interest. CEO openness may be described as a composite of such facets as awareness of multiple perspectives, valuing discourse and debate, and openness to new ideas (Jackson, 1992). CEO openness may be gauged by an array of characteristics including a broad educational background, a higher level of education, newness to the organization, and a high variety of work experience, such as multiple functional areas and industries (Jackson, 1992). CEOs with this type of background are more likely to value diversity of opinion for the intellectual discourse it promotes as much as for the more varied range of ideas that are generated (Jackson, 1992).
The effects of CEO openness are not expected to remain constant over time (Jackson, 1992). Although CEO interest in discussion and debate promotes heterogeneity and inclusiveness, it is expected to dissipate over time (Jackson, 1992). Gradually, CEOs develop routine procedures (Keck & Tushman, 1993), stronger opinions on appropriate strategies and how to achieve them (Gabarro, 1987), greater interest in perpetuating their power (Finkelstien & Hambrick, 1989), and more concern for their legacy (Westphal & Zajac, 1995). Long tenure not only attenuates the effects of CEO openness, it also reduces top management team heterogeneity directly because shared understandings about decision-making and strategy become progressively more refined over time (Keck & Tushman, 1993).

Responsibility for selecting a top management team generally resides with the CEO (Kotter, 1982). The more powerful or dominant the CEO, the greater his or her influence on the executive selection process (Kotter, 1982). Dominant CEOs are likely to select top managers who are similar to themselves (Byrne, 1971); individuals may derive self-esteem by belonging to a group of similar individuals (Tsui, Ega, & O’Reilly, 1992); and by selecting individuals with similar perspectives, CEOs can consolidate power (Westphal & Zajac, 1995).

Although CEO dominance is expected to reduce heterogeneity within the top team, it is likely that the actual size of the team may grow. Several writers have noted the tendency for powerful individuals to add staff and personnel in an attempt to build a protective core around their positions (Mintzberg, 1983). The more powerful the CEO, the greater their
ability to institutionalize power within the organization (Pfeffer, 1981); the net affect of such
dominance is a larger top management team (Pfeffer, 1981).

CEO dominance may also reduce the degree of consensus achieved in reaching
strategic decisions. Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) found that power centralization was
associated with a higher degree of political activity within the top management team. Where
CEOs were less dominant, there was greater sharing of information, and the decision process
was described as consensus style (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988).

Executive Team Characteristics

The literature suggests that top management teams with certain characteristics, such
as large size and heterogeneity, are likely to generate more alternatives, evaluate those
alternatives along more dimensions, and as a consequence, make higher-quality decisions
than top management teams without these attributes (Bantel & Jackson, 1989).

Heterogeneous teams are more innovative, have greater problem solving skills, and employ
multiple perspectives (Bantel & Jackson, 1989), all of which should increase the number and
variety of alternatives under consideration. In addition, top management team members can
rely on their heterogeneous backgrounds to gather information from different internal and
external contacts (Jackson, 1992), something that is less likely in homogeneous teams.

Moreover, evaluation of alternatives should be comprehensive, given the propensity and
willingness of heterogeneous team members to challenge and debate each other (Schweiger,
Sandberg, & Rechner, 1989). To the extent that decision quality depends on analytical
effectiveness, the resulting strategic choices may prove superior (McGrath, 1984).
In contrast, social integration within top management teams may have the opposite effect (O’Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989). Socially integrated teams value cooperation, are more cohesive, and are motivated by a desire to maintain cordial relations among members (O’Reilly et al., 1989). Furthermore, highly cohesive groups tend to exert more pressure for conformity than less cohesive groups (Hackman, 1976). For example, Lott and Lott (1965) found that cohesiveness was highly correlated with pressures for attitudinal conformity. In top management teams, this emphasis on cooperation and conformity may limit the quality of both alternative generation and evaluation (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996).

Many of the positive features of heterogeneous top management teams, such as debate, multiple perspectives, and confrontation, also have negative side effects, including dissatisfaction and dissension (Priem, 1990; Schweiger et al., 1989). These problems are particularly important for implementation because successful implementation often depends on obtaining the involvement, cooperation, endorsement, or consent of managers (Nutt, 1989). When team members disagree with a decision, implementation becomes problematic (Hitt & Tyler, 1991). Thus, the ultimate value of high-quality decisions depends to a great extent on the willingness of managers to cooperate in implementing those decisions (Woolridge & Floyd, 1990).

If heterogeneity is disadvantageous for strategy implementation, social integration and consensus should be beneficial. Social integration is associated with cooperation, frequent communication, and group identification (O’Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989); all
of which may facilitate the implementation process (Guth & MacMillian, 1986). Top management team consensus tends to engender greater feelings of satisfaction with the decision–making process, promoting decision acceptance and commitment (Fredrickson & Iaquinto, 1989; Isabella & Waddock, 1994).

If top management team composition, structure, and process affect strategic decision making, they are likely to also affect the types of strategic choices made (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Demographic heterogeneity is associated with cognitive heterogeneity, both of which increase the number of strategic alternatives considered by a top management team and the quality of the evaluation of those alternatives (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Rigorous strategy formulation, in turn, is expected to lead to higher quality decisions (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). The literature suggests that top management team heterogeneity affects the process of making strategic decisions much more than it does the content of those strategies (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Wiersema & Bantel, 1992). The reviewed literature, classic leadership theory, leadership in organizations, and research on top management teams form the basis for categorization of exhibited leadership, supporting my ability to recognize leadership as exhibited by a learning executive.

*Foundational Theories for the Role of Learning Executive*

Researchers have argued that human resource management practices can contribute to organizational competitive advantage insofar as they elicit and reinforce role behaviors that result in lowering costs and enhancing product differentiation (Schuler & Jackson, 1987). If one subscribes to the belief that managers are as much responsible for their organization’s
success as they are for its failure then learning executives should strive to facilitate the development of competencies that are firm specific, produce complex social relationships, are embedded in a firm’s history and culture, and generate tacit knowledge; learning strategy should be linked to organizational strategy (Lado & Wilson, 1994).

As my research continued I became aware of a number of theories that one may interpret as foundations for the role of learning executive. One theory is social capital theory whose focus is on relations between actors and among actors, including organizations (Coleman, 1988). Like other forms of capital (physical and human capital) social capital is productive, fostering the achievement of certain ends. Human capital theory provides yet another theoretical perspective on which to explore the role of a Learning Executive. Intellectual and human capital are often interpreted to represent the same construct, the construct of human capital is more encompassing. A third theory is termed resource based theory. Conner and Prahalad (1996) propose that a knowledge-based view is the essence of the resource-based perspective; privately held knowledge is a basic source of advantage for organizations and individuals. The fourth theory is organizational learning; organizations learn and adapt enhancing their ability to survive (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). In their work, Foil and Lyles state that organizations learn at two levels, lower and higher levels (Foil & Lyles, 1985).

**Social Capital Theory**

All resources including knowledge are created through two generic processes, combination and exchange (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Firms can be portrayed as social
communities specializing in the speed and efficiency in the creation and transfer of knowledge, organizations are knowledge systems (Kogut & Zander, 1996). As such organizations possess particular capabilities for creating and sharing knowledge that give them distinct advantages which may be attributed to their ability to create and exploit social capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) claim that social capital facilitates the development of intellectual capital by affecting conditions necessary for the exchange and combination of knowledge to occur.

The term social capital initially appeared in community studies, highlighting the importance, survival and functioning of urban neighborhoods dependent on personal relationships developed through trust, cooperation, and collective action of its members (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Social capital is broadly defined as an asset that inheres in social relations and networks (Leana & Van Buren, 1999).

Social capital is a core concept in business, viewed as a person’s location in a structure of relationships, individual, organizational, and societal (Wikipedia, 2007). Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) define social capital as the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit.

Social capital is a quality created between people; investments needed to create social capital are inherently different than investments required for human capital (Burt, 1997). The central proposition of social capital theory is that networks of relationships constitute a valuable resource for the conduct of social affairs, providing the networks members with

Lin (2001) portrays social capital as investments in social relationships that are expected to return to today’s marketplace. Social capital is as an opportunity to leverage individual talents and competencies (Burt, 1997). Social capital is an asset that can benefit both the organization and its members; like other forms of capital more is better (Leana & Van Buren, 1999).

Tangible examples of social capital include interpersonal linkages between organizational members (network ties), personal relationships that members have developed with one another over time, and shared meaning amongst organizational members (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Although social capital takes many forms, each of the forms have two characteristics in common (a) they constitute some aspect of social structure, and (b) they facilitate the actions of individuals within the structure (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

Social capital is created through combining and leveraging knowledge resources (Dees & Shaw, 2001). As such social capital should be viewed as a public good (organization-wide resource), rather than a private good (individual resource), this portrayal is important because knowledge based resources are typically tacit in nature (Dess & Shaw, 2001).

Social capital theory predicts that returns to intelligence, education, and seniority depend on an individual’s location in the social structure of a market or organization’s hierarchy (Burt, 1997). Social capital has the potential to influence organizations through
members’ levels of collective goal orientation and shared trust, which create value by facilitating successful collective action (Leana & Van Buren, 1999). Social capital increases the efficiency of action and reduces the cost of information transaction within and between organizations (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

In today’s environment firms must look beyond their organizational boundaries to create value for their organization and strengthen competitive advantages (Dees & Shaw, 2001). Managers should view their firm as part of a system of value chains and analyze where they can add value for the firm, as well as suppliers, customers, and alliance partners (Dees & Shaw, 2001). Research indicates that productivity gains in an organization’s value chain is possible when trading partners are willing to make relation-specific investments and combine resources in unique ways (Dees & Shaw, 2001).

Scholars regard social capital as an asset that must be managed appropriately if its value is to be realized (Leana & Van Buren, 1999). Burt (1997) notes that while human capital is surely necessary for success, it is useless without the social capital of opportunities in which to apply it. Combining and leveraging knowledge-based resources and creating firm-specific ties clearly adds value, perhaps synergistically to an organization (Dess & Shaw, 2001).

Certain network forms deemed social capital can enhance management’s ability to identify and develop opportunities for their organization (Burt, 1997). An organization’s formal leadership network provides access to information well beyond what any one
individual could process alone (Burt, 1997). The benefit derived from management’s social capital takes the form of access, timing, and referrals (Burt, 1997).

Network structure is yet another consideration, three properties of network structure includes density, connectivity, and hierarchy (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Networks and network structures influence the range of information that may be accessed and what may be available for combination (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). These structures constitute a valuable resource as channels or conduits for knowledge diffusion and transfer (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

Intellectual capital is a social artifact; knowledge and meaning are embedded in shared context based in the cognitive realm of organizational members (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The cognitive dimension of social capital is influenced through shared language, codes, shared narratives, trust, norms, obligations, shared expectations, self and group identification (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

The value of social capital to a firm increases in knowledge-based organizations (Dees & Shaw, 2001). Moreover, social capital losses resulting from voluntary turnover are likely to threaten the economic survival of a firm than human capital losses (Dees & Shaw, 2001). In an era in which more than fifty percent of developed economies gross domestic product (GNP) is knowledge based, social capital must be accounted for and managed (Dees & Shaw, 2001).

Dees and Shaw’s (2001) writing builds on the notion of learning platforms stressing individuals with strong networks of relationships are valuable in terms of having access to
both information and resources for their employing firms, attracting high-performing individuals into their organizations, and maintaining strong network ties to external stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, and alliance patterns. Thus these individuals are positioned to create learning platforms from which new resource combinations may emerge to add value to a firm (Dees & Shaw, 2001).

Dees and Shaw (2001) argue that the true sources of competitive advantage are to be found in management’s ability to consolidate corporate–wide technology and production skills into competencies that empower individual businesses to adapt quickly to changing opportunities. Management may be uniquely positioned to broker information, consolidate information amongst disconnected people resulting in optimal exchange of information and skills (Burt, 1997). Some portion of value that a manager adds to a firm is his or her ability to coordinate with other people; identifying opportunities to add value within an organization, getting the right people together to develop opportunities to further their organization (Burt, 1997). Knowing whom, when, and how to coordinate is a function of the manager’s network of contacts within and beyond the firm (Burt, 1997).

The managerial process of effectively combining tacit knowledge and human competence is enhanced through social capital (Dees & Shaw, 2001). Social capital is yet another bundle of resources that can be viewed as unique to a firm, difficult for competitors to imitate resulting in value to the firm (Dees & Shaw, 2001). Managers with more social capital get higher returns from their human capital because they are positioned to identify and develop rewarding emerging opportunities (Burt, 1997).
Research demonstrates that individuals in long-standing groups develop trans-active memory, a shared memory phenomenon supporting the encoding and storing of information in a social system (Dees & Shaw, 2001). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) make an important observation, knowledge is created and expanded through social interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge. Individual employees cultivate external memory and information through others and in so doing become members of a larger social system (Dees & Shaw, 2001). The sharing process relies on trust; trust is a key facet of social capital accumulation (Dees & Shaw, 2001). The sharing process reduces the cognitive load of any one individual and gives the group in which the employee is a member of a larger pool of information across multiple domains (Dees & Shaw, 2001).

Burt (1997) introduces his theory coined structural hole theory to depict a network of structure of social capital. The structure of a network indicates the redundancy of its information benefits. There are two network indicators of redundancy the first is cohesion (Burt, 1997). Cohesive contacts, contacts strongly connected to each other, are likely to have similar information providing redundant information benefits (Burt, 1997). The second indicator of redundancy is structural equivalence; equivalent contacts, contacts that link individuals to the same third parties result in the same sources of information (Burt, 1997).

Non-redundant contacts offer information benefits that are additive rather than redundant (Burt, 1997). Structural holes are gaps between non-redundant contacts (Burt, 1997). A structural hole indicates that the people on either side of the hole circulate in different flows of information (Burt, 1997). Individuals who span structural holes, through
strong relations with contacts on either side of the holes, have access to multiple information
flows (Burt, 1997). The more holes spanned the richer the information benefits of the
network (Burt, 1997).

Brass and Burkhardt (1993) in their review of social network literature, propose three
alternate centrality measures that are relevant to the conceptualization of social capital. The
first is the concept of in-degree centrality, which can provide an indicator of a person’s
prestige, it is an indicator of how often a person is chosen or sourced (Brass & Burkhardt,
1993). The second measure of centrality closeness indicates both the direct and indirect links
a person has to others (Brass & Burkhardt, 1993). The third measure of centrality is
between-ness, this measure refers to the extent to which the focal person falls between pairs
of other persons on the shortest path connecting the pairs (Brass & Burkhardt, 1993).

Current thinking reflects a general acceptance that social capital is essential to an
organization’s profitability (Dess & Shaw, 2001). The impact of social capital, its creation
and loss, is more significant to knowledge intensive organizations whose effective use social
capital results in increased likelihood of innovation (Dess & Shaw, 2001). Current trends in
social capital research entail the attempted quantification of social interaction within and
between organizations and their members (DasGupta & Serageldin, 2000).

Learning executives may enhance their organization’s success by advocating social
capital. The second theory, termed human capital theory provides yet another body of
literature that may aid the learning executive in their role.

*Human Capital Theory*
The productive capacity of human beings is now vastly larger than all forms of wealth taken together (Schultz, 1961). Although it is obvious that people acquire useful skills and knowledge, it is not obvious that these skills and knowledge are a form of capital and that this capital is for the most part a substantial outcome of deliberate investment (its technological competencies as well as its knowledge of customer needs and supplier) (Schultz, 1961). This investment in human capital is probably the major explanation for the rate of economic growth in Western societies, outpacing the factors of land, labor, and physical reproducible capital (Schultz, 1961).

To better understand the significance of human capital it is important to place it in the context of the firm. The business firm can be viewed as a repository for knowledge; knowledge is embedded in business routines and processes (Teece, 2000). Distinctive processes under-gird firm specific assets and competencies (Teece, 2000). The firm’s knowledge base includes capabilities (Teece, 2000). These competencies reflect individual skills and experiences as well as distinctive ways of doing things inside the firm. To the extent that such competencies are difficult to imitate and are effectively deployed in the marketplace they can provide competitive advantage (Teece, 2000). The essence of the firm in today’s economy is its ability to create, transfer, assemble, integrate, protect and exploit knowledge assets (Teece, 2000). Knowledge assets underpin competencies, and competencies underpin the firm’s products and services (Teece, 2000). Wealth creation in a world of heightened competition requires developing and owning difficult to replicate (intangible) assets, and orchestrating them astutely (Teece, 2000).
Learning executives may be charged with oversight of firm knowledge assets to include human capital development. Learning executives should attempt to improve human capital formation while being mindful of the investment required. Human capital theory provides a rational, a neoclassic foundation for decisions regarding educational policy and as such has the potential to influence learning executive decisions and resulting leadership (Sweetland, 1996).

Human capital theory suggests that individuals and society derive economic benefits from investments in people (Sweetland, 1996). Although types of human capital investment generally include health care, nutrition, and internal migration; education consistently emerges as the prime human capital investment due its ability to be empirically analyzed (Sweetland, 1996).

The literature relating to human capital theory distinguishes among several types and means of education. Sweetland (1996) suggests that the four types of education are: (a) formalized education, primary, secondary, and higher levels; (b) informal education, at home and at work (c) on-the-job training and apprenticeship; and (d) specialized vocational and higher education at secondary and higher levels. It is appropriate to assume that education increases or improves the economic potential of people (Sweetland, 1996).

Human capital theory formally evolved in this century, 1960 but is traceable to prominent economists several centuries ago notably Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Alfred Marshall (Sweetland, 1996). Five Nobel prizes have been awarded to scholars in or affiliated with the field of human capital theory, the two most pronounced theorists are
Theodore Shultz and Gary Becker (Sweetland, 1996). In recent years policy makers have increasingly relied on human capital theory and its economic reasoning to gain support to educational initiatives (Sweetland, 1996).

Sweetland (1996) cites four studies as key to the field of human capital theory the first of which is the writing of Mincer. Jacob Mincer (1958) developed a model for examining the nature and causes of inequality in personal incomes. Mincer (1958) maintained that training and skill (human capital) significantly affected personal income dispersions. Mincer’s (1958) findings concluded that years of work foregone to pursue education were rationally compensated with higher earnings when one enters into the workplace. Occupations demanding high levels of education afford higher compensation, at least sufficient to ensure that lifelong receipts equalized the present value of compensation received by workers with less education (Mincer, 1958).

Mincer (1958) claimed that industries requiring high levels of human capital must investment in the training of their workforce. Mincer’s (1958) research reveled two distinct correlations: (a) as more skill and experience are acquired with time, earnings rise; and (b) in later years aging often brings a deterioration of productive performance and results in a decline in earnings. Mincer (1958) also observed less-decline in later years for high earners, suggesting that productive performance differs among occupations and individuals. Mincer (1958) noted that inter-occupational differences in earnings are a function of specialized training and intra-occupational differences arise when that concept of human capital investment is extended to work experience.
Solomon Fabricant researched United States productivity from 1889 to 1957. The purpose of his research was to clarify the causes of discrepant statistical results (Sweetland, 1996). Fabricant (1959) discovered that the methods and assumptions underlying productivity figures frequently promoted the underestimation of intangible capital investment (human capital) and resulting overestimate of productivity. This discovery commenced his efforts to emphasize the importance of intangible capital, human capital (Sweetland, 1996).

The importance of accounting for intangible capital inputs can be associated to the work of Abramovitz (Sweetland, 1996). His writing revealed that national output increased at a greater rate than traditional inputs can explain. Abramovitz (1956) termed the difference between output and explained inputs as a measure of our ignorance. Fabricant (1959) asserted that this measure of our ignorance had grown at an increasing rate through the period 1889-1957.

Gary Becker (1960) studied differentials in personal incomes that had accrued to college graduates in the United States. Becker (1960) attempted to determine if national expenditure on higher education was adequate and if American college student quality could be improved. Becker’s method compared personal incomes of college graduates with that of high school graduates. Income differentials between the two populations were then related to costs of attending college in such a way that Becker was able to mathematically derive a rate of return on investment in education.

After adjusting for background variables, Becker derived a rate of return on college education between the ranges of 7 to 9 percent (Becker, 1960). Although Becker was not
able to support his stated hypothesis, evidence of under-investment in college education, the
design of his study provided an important methodology for analyzing human capital
investment (Sweetland, 1996).

The productivity of employees is a function of their ability and the amount invested in them (i.e. human capital) in conjunction with the intensity of their work (Becker, 1962). Becker (1962) asserted that workers increase their productivity by learning new skills and perfecting existing skills while on the job. On-the-job training is a process that raises future productivity (Becker, 1962). Future productivity can be improved only at a cost; included in cost are values placed on the time and effort of those being trained, the cost of teaching, and materials used (Becker, 1962). Their should be a comparison made in costs between current productivity and productivity needed in the future, based on the results of the comparison an argument can be formulated to support investment in human capital (Becker, 1962).

Becker (1962) incorporates the use of the notion of earning streams to aid in the quantification of human capital investment. Investment in human capital should be based on returns expected (Becker, 1962). An increase in life span or an activity would increase the rate of return on an investment and thus on the incentive to invest (Becker, 1962). Becker (1962) notes that determining the rate on return from an investment in human capital is very difficult and imprecise since the investment usually extends over a long period of time and cannot be determined by a known investment period.

Becker (1962) makes a distinction between general and firm specific training. He claims that rational firms in competitive labor markets provide general training only if they
do not have to pay any of the costs due to the transportability of human capital termed *capital loss* (Becker, 1962). Individuals should be willing to pay these costs since training raises their future potential for wages (Becker, 1962). In theory, income-maximizing firms would not pay the cost of general training and would pay trained persons the full market wage (Becker, 1962).

If general training costs were paid, many people would seek training, few would quit during the training period, and labor costs will potentially be high (Becker, 1962). Firms that did not pay trained persons the market wage would have difficulty achieving desired skill requirements and would be less profitable than other firms (Becker, 1962). Firms that paid for general training and paid less than market wage would attract too many trainees and too few trained persons, the worst of both worlds (Becker, 1962).

Becker (1962) asserts the value of firm specific training; firm specific training is defined as training that increases productivity in the providing firms and is not useful to other firms. On-the-job training, firm specific training, increases productivity in firms that provide it (Becker, 1962). Firms situated in insulated labor markets typically engage in firm specific training in hopes of recovering their investment through increased productivity of their workforce (Becker, 1962). On the other hand firms in extremely competitive labor markets face constant threat of raiding and as such risk their investment in human capital (Becker, 1962). Employees with specific training have less incentive to quit and in turn firms have less incentive to discharge them than employees with no training or general training (Becker,
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1962). Turnover should be least for employees with extremely specific training and most for employees receiving general training (Becker, 1962).

Rational firms pay generally trained employees the same wage and specifically trained employees a higher wage (Becker, 1962). Becker (1962) purports that firms can mitigate the loss of skilled employees by offering higher wages after training than can be received elsewhere; the economic effect being offering the employee a return on their investment in training. Becker (1962) stresses the importance of shifting some training costs as well as returns to employees, firms no longer incur all training costs nor do they collect all the return but they share both with their employees.

Theodore Schultz (1961) synthesized his analysis based on the field of agricultural economics. Schultz (1961) explained that national income had risen significantly during the period 1900-1956. Of the factors contributing to national income growth, the estimated stock in education in the workforce had grown nearly twice the rate of reproducible capital (Schultz, 1961). Direct expenditures on education, health, and internal migration to take advantage of better job opportunities; the investment in human capital accounts for an impressive rise in the real earnings per worker (Schultz, 1961). In a later writing Schultz (1962) claimed that economists have uncovered numerous signs pointing to improvements in human resources as one of the major sources of economic growth within the United States.

Schultz (1961) discussed the inescapable problem of distinguishing between expenditures for consumption and investment. To clarify the problem he suggested that analysts categorize expenditures as one of three types: pure consumption, pure investment,
and expenditures for education belong to the third category, expenditures exhibiting both characteristics (Schultz, 1961).

Employees of organizations have become capitalists, not from the diffusion of stock, but from the acquisition of firm knowledge and skill that has measurable economic value (Schultz, 1961). This knowledge and skill in combination with other human investment predominantly accounts for the productive superiority of the technically advanced economies (Schultz, 1961). Shultz’s (1961) writing stressed the need for human capabilities to stay abreast of physical capital, coined the rate of absorption. If human capital does not keep pace with physical capital, human capital will become a limiting factor for continued economic growth (Schultz, 1961).

Shortcomings of human capital theory include a failure on the part of theorists to account for market imperfections, the inaccurate portrayal of formal schooling being portrayed as the robbery of opportunity for job specific training, the stark reality of incomplete capital markets, imperfect information, and the possible divergence of decision makers (employers) and recipients of the investment (employees) (Bowles & Gintis, 1975). Human capital theory typically excludes the relevance of class and class conflict (Bowles & Gintis, 1975). Bowles and Gintis (1975) argue that labor is dependent on the social and political structure of an enterprise; issues of power and class enter on a fundamental basis, not determined in a sphere of perfect exchange relations.

Peak level performance by workers benefits the capitalist rather than the worker (Bowles & Gintis, 1975). On average the value of labor will normally exceed the cost of
labor, resulting in profits (Bowles & Gintis, 1975). The result of this phenomena being labor extracted from workers at the lowest possible wage (Bowles & Gintis, 1975).

Bowles and Grintis (1975) suggest that to the extent that any more specific explanations are suggested by human capital theory, that schooling increases worker productivity through increasing cognitive capacities, and that learning abilities differ, the theory is substantially incorrect. Bowles and Grintis (1975) note that there is no reason to expect equality in rates of return resulting from investment in human capital, either among different types of schooling or between schooling from other forms of investment.

More recent research in the field of human capital theory suggests that the attained education of Western economies has far exceeded the opportunity to apply their education resulting in underemployment (Livingstone, 1999). A second observation from more recent literature is that the impact of human capital development on organizations has been grossly undervalued by early human capital theory (Wößann; 2003). A third observation is that the value and uniqueness of human capital varies by employment type, one’s role, and the nature of one’s industry (Lepak, 2002). Yet another theory is Resource based theory.

**Resource Based Theory**

Resource based theory draws attention to organization’s resources and capabilities, portraying them as not freely bought nor sold in today’s marketplace. To the extent that these firm-specific resources and capabilities yield economic benefits that cannot be perfectly duplicated through competitor’s actions, they may be potent sources of sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). A firm’s resources encompass all input factors that include both
tangible and intangible, human and nonhuman, that are owned or controlled by the firm and are utilized in the production of goods and services to satisfy customers (Lado & Wilson, 1994).

Organizational capabilities characterize the dynamic, nonfinite mechanisms that enable a firm to acquire, develop, and deploy its resources to achieve superior performance relative to its competition (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Capabilities are dependent on the firm’s capacity to generate, exchange, and utilize the information needed to achieve desired organizational outcomes through the firm’s human resources (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Among the organizational capabilities that have been identified as potent sources of sustained competitive advantage are organizational culture, learning, routines, and entrepreneurship (Lado & Wilson, 1994).

A fundamental premise of the resource-based view is that organizational competencies that are heterogeneous and immobile form the basis of sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Organizational competencies include all firm-specific assets, knowledge, skills, and capabilities embedded in the organization’s structure, technology, processes, and interpersonal and inter-group relationships (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Heterogeneous competencies are characterized as different, unevenly distributed across multiple firms within a given competitive environment (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Firms gain advantage if these competencies are valuable and only a small number of firms in a particular competitive environment possess the competencies (Lado & Wilson, 1994).
Organizational competencies must be immobile to confer durable economic benefits to the firm (Lado & Wilson, 1994). An example is organizational culture, organizational routines, and a firm’s reputation may not be perfectly transferred across organizational settings (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Additional firm attributes needed to inhibit the mobility of competence, termed isolation mechanisms (Rumelt, 1984) include unique historical conditions, socially complex interactions, specialized assets, tacit knowledge and skills, and casual ambiguity (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Organizational competencies must have no close substitutes to confer durable economic benefits to the firm (Barney, 1991).

Organizational competencies must be continually replenished, upgraded, and deployed in order for the firm to gain and keep a competitive advantage (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Competency theory categorizes organizational competency as (a) managerial competencies, (b) input-based competencies, (c) transformation-based competencies, and (d) output-based competencies (Lado & Wilson, 1994).

Managerial competencies are critical to the success of an organization (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Managerial competencies include: (a) the unique capabilities of the organization’s strategic leaders to articulate a strategic vision, communicate the vision, and empower organizational members to realize the vision, and (b) the unique ability to enact a beneficial firm-environment relationship (Lado & Wilson, 1994). These managerial competencies influence the acquisition, development, and deployment of organizational resources, the conversion of these resources into valuable products and services, and the
delivery of value to organizational stakeholders, can be potent sources of sustained competitive advantage (Lado & Wilson, 1994).

Input-based competencies encompass the physical resources, organizational capital resources, human resources, knowledge, skills, and capabilities that enable a firm’s transformational processes to create and deliver products and services that are valued by customers (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Firm-specific human capital is valuable because it potentially enhances the productive capacity of human resources, it is not widely available in the external labor market, and other resources cannot readily substitute for it without having to incur heavy replacement costs (Barney, 1991; Lado & Wilson, 1994). Researchers argue that achieving sustained competitive advantage depends upon the firm’s ability to utilize existing stocks of resources and its ability to accumulate new resource stocks more efficiently and effectively relative to competitors (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Input-based competencies are directly influenced by managerial competence (Lado & Wilson, 1994).

Transformation-based competencies describe organizational capabilities required to advantageously convert inputs to outputs (Lado & Wilson, 1994). These capabilities include innovation and entrepreneurship, organizational culture, and organizational learning (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Schumpeter (1934) recognized that innovation and entrepreneurship constituted the crux of the capitalist economic system. Sustained economic development was possible only when firms engaged in a process of creative destruction, referring to the carrying out of new combinations of resources, methods, systems, and processes to generate new products and services that effectively fulfilled actual and potential needs of customers
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(Schumpeter, 1934). Organizations that have the ability to quickly adapt to revolutionary changes can earn and sustain supra-normal returns relative to firms who lack these competencies (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Entrepreneurial skills are a non-substitutable strategic asset (Lado & Wilson, 1994).

Single and double loop learning takes place when for given work related stimulus, employees respond in different and qualitatively better ways from their responses to similar stimuli in the past (Lado & Wilson, 1994). To the extent that such responses over time or result in increased gains in productivity, learning is economically efficient (March, 1991). Double-loop learning may enhance organizational flexibility by enabling members to think and respond divergently to changes in the internal and external work environment (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Single-loop learning enables a workforce to develop a deeper understanding of work processes and practices needed to perform their jobs in a dexterous and cost-effective manner (Lado & Wilson, 1994). MacDuffie and Kochran (1995) found that firms with high levels of investment in employee training exhibited higher productivity levels compared to firms with low levels of such investments; one outcome being skilled problem solvers.

Strategy researchers have recognized organizational culture as a rent-yielding strategic resource that potentially generates sustainable competitive advantage (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Organizational culture may enhance firm profitability by reducing the uncertainty and ambiguity inherent in strategic decisions and actions (Lado & Wilson, 1994).
Barney (1992) argues that organizational culture can be the source of sustained competitive advantage insofar as it is valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable.

Output-based competencies include all knowledge-based, invisible strategic assets, such as corporate reputation or image, product or service quality, and customer loyalty (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Because these competencies entail large amounts of firm-specific investments of financial, technological, human, and organizational resources that are developed over a considerable period of time and are not freely tradable, they have the potential to generate future streams of economic rents, and thus, be potent sources of sustained competitive advantage (Lado & Wilson, 1994).

Organizational Learning Theory

Learning can improve the performance of organizations (Levitt & March, 1988). Working, learning, and innovating are closely related forms of human activity that are conventionally thought to conflict with each other yet for organizations to succeed they must be proficient at all three (Brown & Duguid, 1991). Learning necessitates experimentation, unlearning of past methods, and encouraging multiple points of view (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

Organizational learning is the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Though there is acceptance of the importance of learning to organization strategic performance, no theory or model of organizational learning is widely accepted (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). In most instances the assumption is made that learning will improve the future performance of an organization (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).
Learning may not result in organizational behavioral change; rather learning may result in new and significant insights and awareness (Huber, 1991). An entity learns if, through its processing of information, the range of potential behaviors is changed (Huber, 1991). Huber (1991) declares that an organization learns if any of its entities acquires knowledge that is recognized as potentially useful. A corollary assumption is that organizations learn something even if not every one in the organization learns that something (Huber, 1991). It can be argued that organizational learning occurs when most of an organization obtains knowledge and recognizes its potential (Huber, 1991). More organizational learning occurs when more and more varied interpretations are developed that eventually results in uniform comprehension of various interpretations (Huber, 1991).

It is important to recognize that learning does not always increase the learner’s effectiveness or their potential for effectiveness (Huber, 1991). Lessons from history are replete with examples of entities incorrectly learning or correctly learning that which is incorrect (Huber, 1991). The ultimate criterion of organizational performance is long-term survival and growth (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). To achieve long-term survival, organizations must align with their environments to remain competitive and innovative (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Alignment infers that a firm must have the potential to learn, unlearn, or relearn based on experience (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Alignment is enabled through innovation that is empowered through leadership and organizational slack (Levitt & March, 1988).

The performance of an organization affects its ability to learn and to adapt to changing environments (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Both exploration and exploitation are essential
for organizations, but these efforts compete for scarce resources (March, 1991). Adaptive organizations that engage in exploration to the exclusion of exploitation are likely to find that they suffer the costs of experimentation without gaining many of its benefits (March, 1991). They typically exhibit too many underdeveloped new ideas and too little distinctive competence (March, 1991). Conversely, organizations that engage in exploitation to the exclusion of exploration are likely to find themselves trapped in sub optimal stable equilibrium (March, 1991). Maintaining an appropriate balance between exploration and exploitation is a primary factor in system survival and prosperity (March, 1991).

Learning itself can be embraced as one of the technologies in which organizations develop competence (Levitt & March, 1988). The general expectation is that learning will become common when it leads to favorable outcomes and that organizations will become effective at learning when they implement frequent learning (Levitt & March, 1988). In competitive situations, small differences in competence at learning will tend to accumulate through a phenomenon known as the competence multiplier, driving slower learners to adapt (Levitt & March, 1988).

Powerful organizations, by virtue of their ability to ignore competition, may be less inclined to learn from experience and less competent at doing so (Levitt & March, 1988). There are a number of shortfalls from learning from experience that include: (a) the paucity of experience, learning from experience in organizations is compromised by the fact that nature provides inadequate experience relative to the complexities and instabilities of history, particularly when the environment is rapidly changing; (b) the redundancy of the experience
problem, ordinary learning tends to lead to stability in routines, extinguishing experimentation that is required to make a learning process effective; and (c) the complexity of the experience problem; organizational environments involve complicated causal systems as well as interactions among learning organizations (Levitt & March, 1988). Each of these various parts fit together to produce learning outcomes that are hard to interpret by organizational stakeholders (Levitt & March, 1988).

Four constructs are normally associated with organizational learning; they are knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation, and organizational memory (Huber, 1991). Knowledge acquisition is the process by which knowledge is obtained and entails the sub-constructs of congenital, experiential, and vicarious learning (Huber, 1991). Information distribution is the process by which information from different sources is shared and in turn leads to new information resulting in one or more common interpretations and entails the sub-constructs of grafting and searching (Huber, 1991). Information interpretation is the process by which distributed information is interpreted and entails the sub-constructs of cognitive maps, framing, media richness, information overload, and unlearning (Huber, 1991). Organizational memory is the means by which knowledge is stored for future use and contains the sub-constructs of storing and retrieving and organizational computer-based memory (Huber, 1991).

There are three classical observations drawn from behavioral studies of organizations that are insightful to the discussion of organizational learning (Levitt & March, 1988). The first is that behavior in an organization is built on routines; action stems from a logic of
appropriateness or legitimacy more than from a logic of consequentiality or intention (Levitt & March, 1988). Organizations typically rely on matching procedures to situations more than rationally determining choices (Levitt & March, 1988). The second observation is that organizational actions are history-dependent (Levitt & March, 1988). Routines are based on interpretations of the past more than anticipation of the future (Levitt & March, 1988). Organizational behavior adapts incrementally in response to feedback about outcomes (Levitt & March, 1988). The third observation is that organizations are oriented on targets (Levitt & March, 1988). Their behavior depends on the relation between outcomes they observe and the aspirations they have for those outcomes (Levitt & March, 1988). Organizations are seen as learning by encoding inferences from history into routines that guide their behavior (Levitt & March, 1988).

Organization knowledge, i.e. routine is diffused to organizational members through various forms of instruction, indoctrination, and exemplification (March, 1991). An organization socializes new recruits to the languages, beliefs, and practices that comprise an organization’s code (1991). Simultaneously, the organizational routine is adapting to individual beliefs (1991).

Within this discussion, organizations are seen as learning by encoding inferences from history into routines that guide their behavior (Levitt & March, 1988). The term routine depicts rules, forms, procedures, conventions, strategies, and technologies in which an organization is constructed and through which they operate (Levitt & March, 1988). It also includes the structure of beliefs, frameworks, paradigms, codes, cultures, and knowledge
Routines are independent of individual actors who execute them and are capable of surviving considerable turnover in individual actors (Levitt & March, 1988). Routines are transmitted through socialization, education, imitation, professionalization, personnel movement, mergers, and acquisitions (Levitt & March, 1988). They are typically recorded in the collective memory of an organization but are sometimes lost (Levitt & March, 1988).

Routines and beliefs change in response to direct organizational experience through two major mechanisms. The first is trial-and-error experimentation (Levitt & March, 1988). The likelihood that a routine will be used is increased when it is associated with success in meeting a target and in turn decreased when it is associated with failure (Levitt & March, 1988). The second method is organization search (Levitt & March, 1988). An organization draws from a pool of alternative routines, adopting better ones when they are discovered (Levitt & March, 1988).

Rules, procedures, technologies, beliefs, and cultures are conserved through systems of socialization and control (Levitt & March, 1988). They are retrieved through mechanisms of attention within a memory structure (Levitt & March, 1988). Not every routine is recorded in an organization, recording of routines involve costs (Levitt & March, 1988). The costs are sensitive to information technology (Levitt & March, 1988). Even with the advent of information technology a good deal of organizational experience is not recorded because the costs are too great (Levitt & March, 1988).
Unless the implications of experience can be transferred, the lessons of organizational history are likely to be lost through the turnover of personnel (Levitt & March, 1988). Knowledge disappears from an organization’s active memory (Levitt & March, 1988). Routines are not conserved due to limits on time or legitimacy of the socializing agents (Levitt & March, 1988). Even with an accepted set of organizational routines, only part of an organization’s memory is likely to be evoked at a particular time, or in a particular part of an organization (Levitt & March, 1988). Availability is associated with the frequency of use, the recent-cy of its use, and its organizational proximity (Levitt & March, 1988). Availability is a significant element of the direct cost of finding and using what is stored in organizational memory (Levitt & March, 1988).

Organizational learning depends on characteristics of individual memories (Levitt & March, 1988). Although organizational learning occurs through individuals it is not the sum of organizational member learning, rather it is manifested in learning systems that transmit organization history, cognitive systems, worldviews, ideologies, routines, and norms to others (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Organizational learning relies on people and groups within organizations as the agency for transferal (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Learning enables organizations to build an organizational understanding and interpretation to their environment to assess viable strategies (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

Fiol and Lyles (1985) identify four contextual factors (see Figure 8) that affect the probability that organizational learning will occur (a) corporate culture conducive to learning, (b) strategy that allows flexibility, (c) an organizational structure that allows both
innovativeness and new insights, and (d) the environment (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

Organizational learning can be delineated as (a) cognitive associations developed by organizational members and (b) the behavioral outcomes that reflect cognitive associations that have developed (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

Small changes in behavior do not tend to instigate major cognitive development, nor do major changes in behavior imply equally large advances in cognitive development (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Organizational action taken resulting in change may not be caused by cognitive growth but merely the need to do something (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Creating change may create the illusion of learning; i.e. management appears to be in control (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

Hedberg (1981) suggests that the development of associations requires both change and stability. Although too much stability and unchanging behavior within an organization can lead to stagnation rather than cognitive growth, the opposite extreme may overload organizational members (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).
Learning and change, depiction of organization position with regard to change and learning and with regard to fit with their environment (Fiol & Lyles, 1985)

Figure 8. Learning and Change (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

The above figure depicts an organization’s context, its openness to change. Organizations traverse along the noted curve reflecting a complex dynamic between readiness for change and organizational learning (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

A number of strategic implications exist when viewing a firm’s position with regard to change and learning and with regard to fit with their environment (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Position A is typical of bureaucratic firms in which programs deemed successful, are in-place, and no attempts are made to change (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Position A may be appropriate in stable and predictable environments in which there is little incentive to change.
and learn (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). An example is a mature industry with dominant market share (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

Position C produces few changes, but the changes result in meaningful learning for the organizations (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). New beliefs, tools, interpretive schemes develop (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Position C may be most appropriate in turbulent environments in which renewal and innovation are crucial for survival but too much change would cause the organization to lose its sense of direction (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

Position D reflects a high propensity for learning and change that may be appropriate in moderately turbulent environments (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Organizations that are constantly changing with few well-defined rules are organizations that are better at learning, problem formulation, and resulting problem solving (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

Position B represents firms that keep taking action, changing strategies, and restructuring but with very little learning taking place (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Organizations in crisis typically take action in hopes of one of the changes reducing the crisis; their actions are not based on learning or knowledge of what will work (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Position B produces shocks for the organization with little resulting sense of direction (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). In an unpredictable environment, position B may be a temporarily desirable style suggesting a retrenchment strategy to minimize organizational losses (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

Within the category of cognitive development two hierarchical levels are identified, lower and higher level-learning (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Lower-level learning occurs within a given organizational structure that utilizes a given set of rules (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). It
typically leads to the development of rudimentary associations of behavior and outcomes, but these usually are of short duration and impact only part of what the organization does (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

Lower-level learning is the result of repetition and routine and evolves from association (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Lower level learning typically occurs in organizations in which management believes it can control its environment (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). The effect of this level of learning is immediate, focusing on a particular activity or facet of the organization (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). This has been termed functional rationality, rationality based on learning what has worked in the past as a result of clear-cut problems and can be thought of as a desired level of learning for routine decisions (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Argyris and Schön (1978) refer to this level of organizational learning as single-loop, that process that maintains an organization’s theory-in-use or set of rules and restricts itself to detecting and correcting errors within that given set of rules.

Higher-level learning aims at adjusting overall rules and norms rather than specific activities or behaviors (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). The outcomes from higher-level learning have long-term implications and impact the organization as a whole (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). This type of learning occurs through the use of heuristics, skill development, and insights (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). It can be characterized as a more cognitive process than is lower-level learning (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Argyris and Schön (1978) refer to higher-level learning as double-loop, resolving incompatible organizational norms by setting new priorities and weighing of norms or by restricting norms altogether.
The context for higher-level learning is ill defined, making purely repetitive behavior meaningless (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). This ambiguity and environmental complexity characterizes upper level management decision-making (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Considerable evidence suggests that some type of crisis is necessary for change to occur in an organization’s higher-level learning (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). The desired consequence to this type of learning is often not behavioral outcomes, but rather the development of frames of reference, or interpretive schemes, new cognitive frameworks within which to make decisions (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Unlearning may be one of the most important consequences (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

Organizations incorporate the experience of other organizations through the transfer of encoded experience in the form of technologies, codes, procedures, and similar routines (Levitt & March, 1988). Mechanisms for the diffusion of organizational learning can be likened to literature on the epidemiology of disease. Three broad processes of diffusion can be characterized. The first diffusion process, termed single source broadcasting can be described as learning broadcasted across an organization’s population of potential but not necessarily vulnerable, victims (Levitt & March, 1988). The second process of diffusion involves the spread of learning through contact between members of the population that are knowledgeable and one who is not, sometimes mediated by a host carrier (Levitt & March, 1988). The third process is a two-stage diffusion involving the spread of knowledge within a small group by contagion and then broadcast from them to the remainder of an organization’s population (Levitt & March, 1988).
Imitation has been credited with contributing substantially to knowledge diffusion (Levitt & March, 1988). The dynamics of imitation depend not only on the advantages that come to an organization as it profits from the experience of others, but also on the gains or losses that accrue to those organizations from which the routines or beliefs are drawn (Levitt & March, 1988). In many situations diffusion of experience has negative consequences for organization’s that are copied (Levitt & March, 1988).

One can view organizations as collections of subunits, learning in an environment that consists largely of other collections of learning subunits (Levitt & March, 1988). This structure is complicated by the simultaneously adapting behavior of organizations, a routine may produce a different outcome at different times, or different routines may produce that same outcome at different times (Levitt & March, 1988). The ecology of learners further complicates the systematic comprehension and modeling of learning within an organization (Levitt & March, 1988).

There is general recognition amongst scholars that there is a lack of cumulative work and resulting synthesis needed to create a mature body or research on organizational learning (Smith, Crossan, & Nicolini; 2002). More recent findings from the research entail the best learning culture is one that reinforces perpetual learning, a renewing of competencies, where learning competence results in improved innovation and error detection (Argyris, 1999).

Organizational learning theory provides a holistic model on which a Leaning Executive can systemize knowledge and the creation of knowledge within their organization.
The next element of my review explores the job, the learning executive. This element of the review accentuates my ability to recognize potential contributions of the learning executive, enhancing my understanding of the role and the role’s potential for leadership.

The Learning Executive

Literature on the topic of learning executives appears in popular business literature. It is typically descriptive, not based on empirical research (Bontis, 2001; Herschel, 2000). The lack of empiricism is most likely a function of the phenomena (Herschel, 2000). The literature relies on quasi case study research that typically lacks rigor (Herschel, 2000). The writings that I reviewed reflected a general trend; researchers on the topic of learning executives have approached their writings with ill-defined objectives in mind resulting in to broad a scope (Herschel, 2000). I intend to avoid this criticism by directing my research towards the key job competency of leadership.

Organizational research conducted by Baron and Bielby (1986) on the topic of proliferation of job titles in organizations revealed that organizations proliferate job titles in two ways, horizontal and vertical fragmentation. Baron and Bielby (1986) argued that different factors produce fragmentation within organizations; the factors of highly institutionalized organizations, the need for status graduations within specific occupations, organizations operating in broader more diverse environments, and personnel specialization typically results in greater job title fragmentation. The job of learning executive may have arisen due to a unique niche, a need that was not sufficiently addressed by existing roles or job titles within organizations, fueled by the changing nature of our economy. Hershel and
Nemati (2000) note that a learning executive is needed to manage the intangibles, knowledge and know-how, that add value to most products and services.

Learning executives manage knowledge in their enterprise, converting knowledge into profits by leveraging their organization’s intellectual assets (Earl & Scott, 1999). Earl and Scott (1999) further this characterization by stating that learning executives initiate, drive, and coordinate knowledge management programs. Bontis (2001) stated that a learning executive is an evangelist who preaches and exemplifies the important skills required to leverage the knowledge embedded in every person and system; the learning executive must be able to manage the knowledge stocks and flows of groups and individuals in order to effectively leverage an organization’s learning system.

Pemberton (1997) purported that the focus of the learning executive should be on developing organization know-how. He defined the scope of the job to include managing knowledge currently held by organizational members, creating new knowledge, accessing knowledge within and external to the organization, representing knowledge through various media accessible to employees, and ensuring that knowledge is transferred so that others can benefit (Pemberton, 1997). Guns (1998) furthered Pemberton’s description by stating that the learning executive’s primary role is to convert knowledge into profit by leveraging the corporation’s knowledge infrastructure. However, given the newness of the role, the literature suggests that both the job of the learning executive and the discipline of knowledge management are still being defined (Bontis, 2001, Earl & Scott, 1999). My review of the
literature revealed little to no empirical research on the type of leadership exhibited by learning executives.

As identified by Bontis (2001) and Earl and Scott (1999) the management of knowledge is a critical aspect of the learning executive’s job. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) noted that once the importance of knowledge for organizational viability is recognized, its management also becomes a central issue. The management of knowledge requires identifying relevant knowledge for an organization, diagnosing, designing and implementing a process that ensures that relevant organizational knowledge is made available and applied (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2002).

In order to manage knowledge two dimensions need attention: crafting the entity as a learning organization and developing a knowledge infrastructure (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2002). The first of these dimensions deals more directly with the human dynamics of the organization; the second is more concerned with technology (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2002).

A balance is needed between the two dimensions; most learning executives have yet to achieve that balance (Earl & Scott, 1999; Herschel & Nemati, 2000). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) suggested that the management of knowledge is not possible without nurture by organizational leadership. This lack of balance may be attributed to the novelty of the role of the learning executive; not only is the incumbent unaware of their responsibilities but those who the learning executive reports to may be unaware of the potential for the role (Earl & Scott, 1999).
In an era characterized by rapid change and uncertainty, successful companies are those that consistently create knowledge, disseminate it through the organization, and embody it in technologies, products, and services (Nonaka, 1991). Barkema, Baum, and Mannix (2002) further Nonaka’s observation by introducing a phenomena known as the Red Queen phenomena; in global competition what matters most is not a firm’s absolute rate of learning and innovation, but the pace of its development compared to that of its rivals further triggering experiential learning and innovation, resulting in still stronger competition. The more rapidly firms accumulate competitive experience, the faster they learn, and the more potent they become (Barkema et al., 2002). Further complicating research on organizational learning is the fact that an accepted definition of knowledge management does not yet exist though most organizations recognize the criticality of knowledge and the need to manage it to ensure their future survival (Earl & Scott, 1999).

The literature notes that learning executives tend to agree on three points (a) knowledge today is a necessary source of competitive advantage, (b) knowledge is not a physically identifiable entity, and (c) knowledge derived from technology can provide advantages to business but eventually competitors will imitate the technology mitigating any advantage (Barkema et al., 2002; Earl & Scott, 1999; Nonaka, 1991). Knowledge derived from social relationships, however can provide long-term competitive advantages to business (Bontis, 2001). Bontis (2001) notes that this is because people centered knowledge is unique and context dependent which other firms cannot easily imitate.
There is a general recognition that organizations are not good at managing knowledge (Earl & Scott, 1999). They may undervalue the creation and capture of knowledge; they may lose or give away what they possess; they may deter or inhibit knowledge sharing, and they may under-invest in both using and reusing the knowledge they have (Earl & Scott, 1999). Above all, they may not know what they know (Earl & Scott, 1999). This is probably true of explicit or articulated knowledge (Earl & Scott, 1999). It is undoubtedly true of tacit or unarticulated knowledge (Earl & Scott, 1999).

Lucier and Torsilieri’s (2001) writing reinforces the notion that for organizations to generate extraordinary value for their shareholders, a company must learn better than its competitors and apply that knowledge through its business faster and more widely than they do. The learning executive has the potential to play a critical role in today’s turbulent and information rich business environment (Earl & Scott, 1999). The research of Ellinger, Ellinger, Yang, and Howton (2002) indicates a positive association between the learning organization concept and a firms’ financial performance, suggesting a payoff for organizations’ that embrace practices and strategies consistent with learning organizations. Recognizing the potential for knowledge management to create value and management’s failure to fully exploit it, some organizations have embarked on knowledge management programs (O’Dell & Grayson, 1998). Current movements such as intellectual capital management and organizational intelligence are closely related to knowledge management (O’Dell & Grayson, 1998). Together with other related themes such as organizational learning and information management, they may be conceptualized or practiced differently.
from the emerging praxis of knowledge management, or in some cases, they may be much the same (O’Dell & Grayson, 1998).

A significant challenge for the learning executive is to deliver value from knowledge initiatives (Lucier and Torsilieri, 2001). Effective results can only be realized if organizations expend significant effort, limiting the number of knowledge initiatives to the critical few, systemizing initiatives to effect replication, and ensure that an explicit link exists between organization improvement and use of knowledge (Lucier and Torsilieri, 2001). How knowledge is used by an organization is the determinate of success of knowledge management initiatives, not the volume of knowledge resident in the organization (Lucier and Torsilieri, 2001). Lucier and Torsilieri (2001) stress the need for results driven approach to assure value is achieved from knowledge management initiatives.

Bontis (2001) observed that learning executives oversee all knowledge activities related to human behavior. The overall strategic responsibility of a learning executive is to establish processes for converting and eventually leveraging organizational knowledge into profit (Bontis, 2001). Under this competency umbrella are more specific responsibilities such as: (a) developing new capabilities, ensuring that their organizations avoid competency traps by instituting a “trouble is good” organizational culture, creating the necessary vision to close knowledge gaps; (b) ensuring the right kind of technology is in-place and planned for to include conceptual models, architecture, and needed organizational language (knowledge taxonomy); (c) managing patent portfolios, privatizing organizational know-how; (d) furthering the development of environmental search strategies; (e) warehousing and tracking
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information and maintaining a knowledge inventory; (f) linking organizational members together using information systems, in a sense creating “small world structures”, facilitating knowledge derived from research being integrated with knowledge derived from analysis of data and the knowledge derived from experience; (g) identifying valued skills, knowledge, and expertise in the organization; (h) collecting best practices; and (i) ensuring that the necessary resources are amassed to implement and support a knowledge management system; (j) establishing and reporting key system metrics that complement strategic goals and objectives examples being competitive advancements (patents), knowledge created, speed of response, development of experts, sharing and participation in learning; (k) manage relationships with external providers of information and knowledge (Barkema et al., 2002; Earl & Scott, 1999; Herschel & Nemati, 2000, Katila & Ahuja, 2002).

This list of responsibilities will of course vary within each organization and the role’s positioning within the company (Herschel & Nemati, 2000). Learning executives are expected to make use of two principal design competencies: they are technologists and environmentalists (Earl & Scott, 1999). They encourage and initiate investments in information technology and also in their organization’s social environment (Earl & Scott, 1999).

Learning executives face many challenges. Earl and Scott (1999) hinted that Learning Executive roles are ill-defined resulting in constant scrutiny; the role is so immature that in some cases there are no job specifications. Given these challenges, a number of underlying skills are needed for success. Interpersonal and communication skills are key for
incumbent success (Earl & Scott, 1999; Nick, 2001). Learning executives are relatively new in organizational structures (Earl & Scott, 1999). They are still creating awareness within their own organizations about how value can be created through leveraging knowledge (Nick, 2001). They are attempting to build an influence base from which to launch more aggressive knowledge building efforts (Earl & Scott, 1999; Nick, 2001).

Learning executives must engage management at various levels in an organization in order to understand possible individual or local knowledge gaps or opportunities and to initiate customized knowledge management projects (Earl & Scott, 1999; Nick, 2001). Caudron (2003) noted, Learning Executives prove their worth by focusing organizational resources toward projects and processes that help their companies meet business objectives. Learning executives must understand the strategic goals of their organizations and how learning contributes to attaining those goals in order to gain organizational influence (Caudron, 2003).

Learning executives typically initiate and manage the implementation of knowledge interventions within their organizations (Earl & Scott, 1999; Nick, 2001). Bontis (2001) noted that before Learning executives can begin to view their organizational role they must comprehend the role of knowledge in their business. One technique that is used to identify opportunities is termed boundary spanning; successful executives constantly span their environments for opportunities (Harrison & Harrell, 1993). Additional techniques such as front-end analysis and needs assessment are considered viable methods to identify organizational needs.
Often a Learning executive’s view of the management of knowledge is driven by their preference for explicit or tacit forms of knowledge (Herschel & Nemati, 2000). Learning executive’s that are preoccupied with explicit knowledge typically promote the use of technology to enable information distribution and learning, examples being the employment of text storage and retrieval systems, expert systems, groupware, and intranets (Herschel & Nemati, 2000). Implicit knowledge may ultimately be more valuable to an organization. Learning Executives who emphasize implicit knowledge typically spend a significant effort to enable, facilitate, and promote informal dialogues (Hershel & Nemati, 2000).

Harrison and Harrell’s (1993) research findings suggest that managers who initiate projects that become unprofitable are more likely to continue supporting those projects than managers who did not initiate them. The rationale given for this irrational behavior is that managers are trying to justify past behavior (Harrison & Harrell, 1993). This finding is confirmed by agency theory as well (Harrison & Harrell, 1993). According to the principal-agent model (a) agents will act in their own self-interest and (b) goal conflict can exist between principals and agents. The literature (Bass, 2000; Bontis, 2001; Earl & Scott, 1999; Hershel & Nemati, 2000) suggests that effective Learning executives should show early visible results from their efforts, guard against the potential to defend failing knowledge management interventions, and exercise sound evaluative practices when spanning their environment for potential organizational interventions.
A number of contextual factors have the potential to influence Learning executive success, they include: (a) an organization that sees learning as a critical element to achieve its business strategy, not just a nice thing to have; (b) an environment that recognizes that there is a collective intelligence throughout the organization, embedded in its workforce; (c) a commitment to embed and integrate learning in all business processes; and (d) a need to enhance innovation in conjunction with mitigating knowledge leakage (Herschel & Nemati, 2000). Ultimately the success of the learning executive will be judged by their ability to enhance the worth of their enterprise (Herschel & Nemati, 2000).

Recognizing that learning executives may have to work through others to accomplish initiatives Earl and Scott (1999) identified four management types that learning executives regularly interact with in their organizations. The first type is termed Knowledge Champions, managers who are excited about particular knowledge management ideas and projects (Earl & Scott, 1999). The second type of manager is termed a Knowledge Sponsor; these are senior managers who are willing to invest in knowledge management projects (Earl & Scott, 1999). The third type is the Knowledge Skeptic, managers who are hostile or doubtful of the value of knowledge management (Earl & Scott, 1999). The fourth management type is termed a Knowledge Partner; they are willing to ally with the learning executive in the implementation of knowledge management interventions (Earl & Scott, 1999).

Hansen and Oetingner (2001) proposed a managerial taxonomy termed the T-shaped manager; the T-shaped manager is probably the ideal manager that a learning executive will
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interact with in their organization. Hansen and Oetinger (2001) defined the T-shaped manager as a new kind of executive who freely shares knowledge across the organization while remaining fiercely committed to individual business unit performance. Learning executives should be willing to experiment with organizational design, being mindful of the need to contribute to the success of their organizations (Bontis, 2001).

Leadership has been identified as a vital aspect of the work of the learning executive (Bass, 2000; Bontis, 2001). Bass (2000) goes so far as to claim that successful companies rely on leadership as an engine of change. Executives do not affect their organizations only through their strategic choices but also by influencing organizational members who make choices (Bass, 2000). Spender (1996) claims that a diffuse leadership style is needed to assure the creation and eventual dissemination of knowledge in organizations. He notes that top management should provide a context in which employees at every level become independent agents, take responsibility, experiment and make mistakes as they learn resulting in continuous improvement (Spender, 1996).

Learning executives may benefit from an exploration of high performance work practices; in particular contributions made by managing organizational knowledge, learning, and the formation of firm specific human capital. The United States Department of Labor (1993) published an insightful overview of best practices that if pursued may improve the financial performance of firms. The publication identified three specific practices that if implemented together as a system usually results in increased productivity and long-term financial performance; they are (a) employee involvement in decision-making, (b) employee
compensation directly linked to performance, and (3) firm training has a positive effect on productivity (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1993).

The organizational vision that learning executives need to craft is that of a learning organization, and its resulting benefits (Bass, 2000). The literature notes that learning executives need to demonstrate an entrepreneurial attitude, that of being in the forefront or leading edge of an important organizational initiative (Bontis, 2001). Learning executives need to have a clear concept of what the organization would look like once the vision has been realized (Bontis, 2001).

The learning executive must first be a leader; strong leadership is needed to evolve an organizational culture into a learning organization (Herschel & Nemati, 2000; Ribiere & Sitar, 2003). Ribiere and Sitar (2003) further their description of knowledge organization leadership by portraying transformational leadership as one of the most appropriate leadership types for knowledge organizations though they recognize that transactional leadership has the potential to accomplish the required change in culture (Ribiere & Sitar, 2003).

Bass (2000) reflects on the role of the learning executive and leadership by stating, leadership in an organization has to change with the development and maturation of the organization. Schein (1995) noted that early in the life cycle of an organization the leader must serve as an animator [kick-start]; as the organization develops the leader furthers the development of the organization’s culture, and when changes in the organization are needed leaders must become change agents [transformer]. The writings of Schein and Bass stress
leaders need to be sensitive to contextual factors, exhibiting the ability to lead change within their organizations (Bass, 2000; Schein, 1995).

Schein (1992) uses the term learning leader to conceptualize the leader of a learning organization. Schein (1992) noted that in a rapidly changing world, the learning leader must not only possess a vision but also the means to implement it within their organization. He furthers his description of a learning leader by stating that the learning leader must assume a perpetual supportive role, flexible and ready to change (Schein, 1992). Learning leaders must be ready to create order out of chaos, providing their own assumptions as an initial road to a solution (Schein, 1992). Learning leaders have a responsibility to create culture and embed it within their organizations (Schein, 1992). Learning leaders must constantly be exposed to new ideas; they must be willing to learn new assumptions in order to perceive what might be possible for their organizations (Schein, 1992). Schein (1992) contends that the learning leader must be a skilled change manager who accurately diagnoses what their current organizational culture is, figures out what has changed in the business environment, takes action on needed change, implements a vision, and eventually embeds a new culture into their organization.

Business acumen is a necessary skill for learning executives (Guns, 1998). The learning executive needs to be grounded in the business of business (Guns, 1998). A core skill for the incumbent is being familiar with the financial levers of their organization, identifying the kinds of strategies that will impact those levers, and implementing those strategies (Bontis, 2001).
Collaborative skills, the ability to interact with people across major functions and geographic reach of the business is fundamental to learning executive success (Bass, 2000; Earl & Scott, 1999; Guns, 1998). Implicit in this competency is the ability to build a team (Bass, 2000). The term consultant is used by the literature to reflect their role in dealing with others in the organization (Bass, 2000).

The literature highlights integrative skills as being needed by the learning executive (Bass, 2000; Earl & Scott, 1999; Guns, 1998). The learning executive needs to command a broad perspective of the business and integrate all relevant pieces within that perspective in order to leverage intellectual capital (Bass, 2000; Earl & Scott, 1999). Learning executives engage a list of specialties to include legal and technical, library science, information technology, training and development, human resources, and core business functions (Earl & Scott, 1999; Herschel & Nemati, 2000).

The above depiction provides a limited portrayal of the role. My review confirmed that there is little to no literature depicting leadership that learning executive’s exhibit further justifying the need for my research. This completes my review of the literature; each body of literature provided a basis to approach the study’s questions and propositions. The literature review was truly an early step in my actual research, providing the necessary know-how to initiate my research. The third chapter of my research is entitled method; the method chapter portrays a detailed accounting of my research technique, the trustworthiness of my research, and a descriptive narration of the research setting.
Chapter 3: Method

Mohrman, Gibson, and Mohrman (2002) argue that many organizations grapple with new and poorly understood problems as they adapt to dynamic environments. They enact fundamental and rapid change in the design of business services and in their relationships to employees and customers (Mohrman et al., 2002). As organizations adopt new approaches, organizational science has often lagged behind practice furthering the call for useful research (Mohrman et al., 2002). As identified by the first chapter of my writing I am attempting to learn more about this emerging role, to understand leadership within a particular organizational context, within a particular workplace. Because the role is emerging the opportunity presents itself as useful research.

Mohrman et al. (2002) define useful research as more than simply getting practitioners to value and incorporate what academics learn. Useful research should also entail organizational members’ perspectives and the results of the research should be incorporated into members’ organizations (Mohrman et al., 2002). I have included participants’ perspectives enhancing the usefulness of my research and hope that research participants incorporate my findings into their daily practice.

Many of the elements of superior organizational performance are tacit in nature, difficult to identify and articulate (Rouse & Daellenbach, 1999). Rouse and Daellenbach (1999) argue that to understand sources of organizational advantage, organizational effects can only be uncovered and an integrated understanding achieved by doing research in organizations. My research takes place within a multinational corporation, an organization,
situating my research within the learning executive’s organization has resulted in richer, more descriptive possibilities for my data, improving my understanding and ability to make sense of the questions that defined my research.

Qualitative Paradigm

The study implements a qualitative paradigm. Bryman (2004) claims that qualitative research has led to greater methodological diversity, an outcome being better leadership research. Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world of the study participants, applying a naturalistic or interpretive approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible to the researcher as well as to others involved in the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Qualitative research attempts to understand phenomena in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meaning people and context bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). These practices transform the world, turning the world into a series of representations that include field notes, interviews, conversations, memos and other representations of lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Creswell (1998) strengthens Denzin and Lincoln’s depiction stating that qualitative research attempts to portray research findings as complex, a holistic picture based on the perceived realities of those who are studied.

Researcher’s Implementation of Qualitative Paradigm

I entered into the worlds of study participants through prolonged engagement, attempting to truthfully depict their organizational context, the daily realities of research
participants have formed the core of my findings; though messy and awkward they reflect the lived experiences of my research participants. My research focused on participant behaviors, words, and actions. My research attempts to expose the perceived realities of a learning executive. The outcome of my research is a thick narrative description of his role, his leadership, and his context.

I did not impose more than the basic rudiments of social order and social value on my research. Instead I attempted to maximize the discovery of value and order as they emerge from the study’s data (Merriam, 1998). This required my familiarization with theory. Theory became an additional informant supporting my research (Merriam, 1998). Without this basis, pattern recognition would have been limited to the obvious and superficial, depriving me of the conceptual leverage needed to reflect on existing theory to describe and explain observed phenomena.

*Case Study Technique*

Good case study research produces sufficient context-dependent knowledge to evolve learners from rule-based beginners to experts (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Flyvbjerg’s proposition is based on the notion that context-dependent knowledge and experience is at the very heart of expert activity.

Case study research technique has enabled me to gain an in-depth familiarity with phenomena that would have been difficult to achieve through the use of other techniques. Case studies reveal real-life situations, the multiple wealth of details, furthering the development of a nuance view of reality, including the view of human behavior that cannot
be meaningfully understood as simply rule-governed acts that make-up the typical outcomes of other research techniques (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Case technique was important for my own learning as a beginning researcher, it allowed me to mature my skills, to create useful research. Flyvbjerg argued that if researchers wish to improve their research skills, then concrete, context-dependent experience is necessary.

Flyvbjerg’s (2006) writing provides a number of key insights into case technique supporting my choice of a research method: (a) predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs; concrete, context-dependent knowledge is more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals. In essence we have only specific cases and context-dependent knowledge resulting from human behavior research; (b) one can generalize based on a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as a supplement or alternate to other research methods; a case study is an in-depth examination of a single example; (c) case study is useful for both generating and testing propositions and is not limited to these activities alone; (d) case study technique contains no greater bias toward verification of the researcher’s preconceived notions than any other method of inquiry; (e) case studies can be difficult to summarize, they normally contain a substantial element of narrative; it is not desirable to summarize and generalize a case study, good studies should be read as narrative in their entirety; (f) case study research is a necessary and sufficient method for certain research tasks in the social sciences, and is a
method that holds up well when compared to other methods in the gamut of social science research methodology.

I propose that the most advanced form of understanding is achieved when the researcher places herself into the context of what is being studied. The proximity to reality that case technique leverages and the resulting learning process that occurs has enabled me to gain a more in-depth understanding of the phenomena in question; case technique was the appropriate approach to address the study’s questions.

Research Strategy

I have implemented a descriptive qualitative case research technique. Ragin and Becker (1992) claim that cases should be chosen for particular intellectual interest. I am interested in exploring the role, the context, and the leadership of a unique learning executive. Yin (2003) defines a unique case as; the researcher is able to observe and analyze a phenomenon that is rare, unique, and special in nature. For the purposes of this study the case is the incumbent, the learning executive. The unit of analysis is the type of leadership exhibited by the researched learning executive; leadership as exhibited by the researched learning executive is the phenomena of interest. Yin (2003) notes that credible case studies must incorporate unit of analysis. Additional units of analysis did not evolve as a byproduct of my discovery, this was impart due to an effective literature review but also the need to bound the scope of my research to ensure do-ability.

A single-case study design was utilized to approach my research questions. My choice to pursue a single-case was a function of the do-ability of my research in conjunction
with locating willing research participants. Recognizing these challenges, the single case design was deemed appropriate by my academic committee.

Merriam (1998) claimed that trustworthiness can be achieved from an N of 1; qualitative researchers employ different means of persuading readers that a study is trustworthy by incorporating a detailed depiction, actively portraying the phenomena (i.e. learning executive leadership), and attention to the perspectives of those who are studied.

Furthering Merriam’s claim, Scriven (1972) argued that a lot of people experiencing the same thing does not necessarily mean that their accounts are more reliable than that of a single individual. Merriam (1998) noted that qualitative research is not seeking to establish laws in which reliability of observation and measurement are essential; rather, qualitative researchers seek to understand the world from the perspective of those in it. Merriam (1998) furthers her argument by claiming that the goal of qualitative research is to understand the particular in-depth, rather than finding out what is generally true of many.

Yin (2003) provides support for my chosen method noting that unique case studies should implement a single-case design where the phenomena of interest is rare, justifying the thorough documentation and analysis of the phenomena. The research learning executive’s job is emerging, almost novel, yet his performance in his job has earned him notoriety both internal to and external to his corporation; he is unique.

Case Profile

The case for the purposes of this study is defined as a learning executive within a publically traded medical technology corporation that makes and sells medical devices,
instrumented systems and reagents with offices in more than fifty countries worldwide, employing twenty-five thousand employees. The Company serves healthcare institutions, life science researchers, clinical laboratories, industry and the general public.

I have selected this particular research population based on the dynamic nature of the healthcare industry and the value placed on innovation by its leaders. Drucker (1993) emphasized that leaders in the global economy have as their business the production and distribution of knowledge. The healthcare industry transforms knowledge into marketable products; a tablet or syringe is nothing more than organizational knowledge that has been effectively packaged.

The case was bounded by time and events. The bounding of the case was critical; as the researcher I had to place limits on my research or risk that my research would not be doable. For the purpose of my writing data collection occurred between December of 2006 and July of 2007 capturing the lived events of one learning executive within one private sector corporation.

Participants and the Sampling Plan

I implemented purposeful sampling (see Figure 9) to nominate study participants. Purposeful sampling is founded on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight leaving little choice but to [purposefully] select a sample that will offer the greatest potential for understanding (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) argues that the logic and power of purposeful sampling resides in selecting information-rich cases that support in-depth understanding.
A criterion-based selection scheme augmented participant selection; criterion included incumbent job titles, duties, responsibilities, trustworthiness, significance of information, and ease of access. The selection criteria incorporated a feedback tool to monitor the progress of my research assuring that selected participants provide needed information to support my research. A total of seven research participants contributed to my findings.

**Research Participant Network**

*Figure 9. Research Participant Network.*

The figure provides a graphical depiction of research participant reporting relationships within the researched corporation. Solid lines depict a direct reporting relationship and
dashed lines represent an indirect reporting relationship. My research solicited both direct and indirect reports to the Learning Executive.

**Participant solicitation.**

Initial selection criteria for the researched learning executive entailed the following:

(a) supports the creation of new knowledge, (b) design systems and manages the dissemination of knowledge in his organization, (c) provide leadership, is able to influence an organization’s senior management team, (d) develop human capital within the firm, and (e) the incumbent’s job title includes the descriptor of chief knowledge officer.

I contacted a number of organizational gatekeepers to solicit nominations for research participants. Gatekeepers, for the purpose of this writing, were stakeholders that had both formal and informal authority to facilitate my access to the researched organization. Gatekeepers supported my research, empowering me to gain access to a particular organization, the learning executive, and to informants who demonstrated the potential to contribute to my research. I was able to gain access to the researched learning executive through a former academic colleague as suggested by my academic chair; he was familiar with a unique learning executive who was willing to consider participating in formal academic research. I was asked to further clarify my research, the scope and duration with the colleague; once clarified I was put into direct contact with the Learning Executive. Upon contact I marketed that value of my research; identified my needs as a researcher, identified his needs as the key research participant resulting in his willingness to participate in my research.
Additional study participants were required to ensure the quality of my research. Additional participants were solicited through a nomination technique known as snowballing. Snowball sampling entails a process where identified research informants nominate others based on my interaction with the informant (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Snowball sampling is purposeful, ensuring a more efficient means of data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Snowball sampling is a recognized sampling technique commonly used by qualitative researchers to access information rich sources (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Another advantage of snowball sampling is its inherent flexibility (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). As my research progressed, I required increased access to key participants, those who demonstrated credibility and information sufficiency. I attempted to negotiate open access to key participants while being mindful of stated research protocol. In some cases my access was denied, an example being other members of the researched organization’s senior leadership team, the upper echelon. I was granted access to the researched corporation’s Chief Executive Officer, the most senior corporate leader of Human Resources who is the researched learning executive’s immediate supervisor, organizational peers and subordinates.

Collecting Data

The study’s conceptual framework facilitated my data collection effort by providing a roadmap of key phenomena that I attempted to describe. A significant amount of my research data was collected through interviewing. Interview guides were developed as an outcome of my literature review and the formation of my conceptual framework. The guides provided a roadmap for my data collection. Extant organizational documentation that
included financials, measures of effectiveness, and other metrics valued by organizational stakeholders were additional sources of meaningful data. I incorporated requests for extant data within my guides; the interview guides evolved to support my planning for participant interaction and eventually served as valuable data collection audit tools. Through the solicitation of both interview and extant data triangulation was achieved, a way to cross reference information to ensure my data’s trustworthiness (Bodgan & Bilken, 1992).

The most important phenomena is not the researcher’s instruments, critical phenomena may be potentially overlooked or misrepresented if rigid instrumentation is implemented (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1994) support their argument against detailed, prior instrumentation stating that prior instrumentation is usually context-stripped, failing to support the needs of data collection for descriptive case research. Lee (1999) supports Miles and Huberman’s claim stating that qualitative research design needs to be flexible, able to respond to context specific constraints; resulting in instrumentation, methods and modes of analysis that are not standardized.

I developed and later implemented qualitative instrumentation to support my research. Instrumentation included a research journal, case records, contact and document summary forms, and case transcript analysis templates. My instrumentation evolved based on the following criteria, what I needed to find out from whom and why. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend that little prior instrumentation be developed for studies involving a single case. They noted that the majority of fieldwork should consist of taking notes, recording events, and picking up organizational artifacts (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
Their argument is based on the supposition that pre-designed and structured instruments potentially blind the researcher to the site (Miles & Huberman, 1994). My instrumentation improved as my research matured, I regularly sourced the writings of Miles and Huberman (1994) for useable examples of qualitative data collection instruments.

Prolonged engagement was judged as sufficient by the quality of my interactions with study participants and the resulting detail of my research findings. This phase of my research required approximately seven months, entailed a total of ten day-long encounters with research participants the outcome of which was 30 recorded hours of research participant interviews. Prolonged engagement empowered me to evolve an adequate understanding of contextual factors that proved critical to my research.

*Interviews.*

Interviews were my primary technique for data collection. I implemented semi-structured interviews to collect data. Semi-structured interviews empowered study participants to tell their stories, sharing their experienced reality. As noted, interview questions were bounded by the study’s conceptual framework and validated against scholarly literature. The literature review made possible my development of the study’s conceptual framework; the constructs incorporated in the framework were vetted by the literature and eventually by my academic committee. I conducted the interviews at participants’ locations, their offices to ensure my immersion in the researched organization’s culture, enhancing the likelihood of my acceptance by study participants and organizational gatekeepers.
Interview duration with each participant evolved based on my research protocol. Follow-up interviews were negotiated as needed. I did negotiate two additional follow-up interviews, one with the Learning Executive’s supervisor and the other with a Learning Executive subordinate. Both of these interviews were needed post my initial interaction with the identified research participants. The interviews were scheduled based on mutual agreement between research participants, organizational gatekeepers, and myself.

Interviews were captured using a variety of media, digital and analog audio recording, unless otherwise requested by study participants. I did incorporate both internal and external microphones to enhance the overall quality of my audio recordings. All recording equipment was portable and non-obtrusive. My use of audio recording equipment was authorized by the researched corporation’s human resources function.

As noted above I utilized interview guides (see Appendix A for a sample interview guide). The interview guide served as a reference for potential interview questions; an accurate portrayal of the interviews entails normal conversation. My guides did not restrict my ability to acquire necessary information. The guides were simply a point of departure. The guides enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of my data collection.

Prior to engaging key research participants I notified them as to the nature of information that I would solicit to enhance the efficiency of my data collection. Throughout my research I was mindful of research participant access; I recognized the value of research participant time. I was especially mindful of interview efficiency while engaging influential senior organizational leaders.
I explained IRB protocol and informed the study’s participants that they could end the interview at any time or refuse to answer any questions. If participants refused to be audio recorded I attempted to record their interviews by other means, examples being hand written notes and participant journaling. I did experience one research participant’s refusal to be audio recorded, the outcome being my recording the interview by hand written notes.

Document review.

Extant data was sourced to support my research (see Appendix H for sample extant data). I required access to organizational correspondence and published data. Some information resided in the public domain, not requiring special permission. I requested and received permission to use copyrighted externally sourced data for academic purposes. All internal extant data was approved for my use by his organization; I negotiated access prior to initiating my research.

Potential barriers to gaining access included the perception that my inquiry was an attempt to monitor job performance as opposed to studying leadership behavior. Another potential barrier was stakeholder concern for my interpretation and eventual dissemination of collected extant data, the potential for knowledge leakage. Yet another barrier was geographic proximity and necessary funding to support my access.

Overview of Analysis

Pattern matching or constant comparative technique was used to support the linking of the study’s data to evolving propositions and eventually to study results. Pattern matching occurs when collected data is related to theoretical propositions (Merriam, 1998). The
criteria for interpreting the study’s findings were grounded in theory as identified by my review of scholarly literature. As a descriptive study my research was exploratory, due in part to the general lack of empiricism of existing popular literature.

My data collection plan unfolded once I was granted access to the researched organization (see Figure 10); the plan was crafted in conjunction with organizational stakeholders and my academic committee. I authored field notes during my research, constantly reflecting on my engagement as a non-participant observer. The collected data was housed in a case study database and synthesized products resided in case records. The database and records were in-place prior to initiation of my research. A key reflection in my implementation of descriptive case technique is the need to plan for and establish the case study database prior to initiating data collection due to the overwhelming amount of descriptive information that is collected.

Data collection did conform to Institutional Review Board for use of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) policy and procedures. I obtained the informed consent of all study subjects prior to their participation in my research. A listing of study participants was developed through interaction with organizational gatekeepers. Once the study participant list was defined I contacted individuals per approved North Carolina State University IRB and participant organizational requirements. I was required to interface with the legal and human resources functions. I did garner study participant names and consent prior to IRB application.
Components of Data Analysis

![Components of Data Analysis Diagram]

Figure 10. Components of Data Analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The various elements that make up each component of this model were implemented to enable my analysis of the study’s accumulated data. The figure depicts a visual display reflecting the inherent synergies amongst the various analysis elements.

Analysis of research findings.

Yin (2003) notes that case study evidence is especially difficult to analyze and that the researcher should attempt an analytic strategy to further one’s research. Based on Yin’s (2003) recommendation I implemented the following explanation-building technique; I
stipulated a presumed set of descriptive links that were based on theoretically significant propositions as an outcome of my review of the literature. The explanation building process was iterative in nature. I began by making an initial proposition while reflecting on the study’s questions. I compared the findings of my initial research against my study’s propositions typically resulting in a revision of my initial propositions. This in-turn would require a second evaluation of collected data and a further comparison-revision of the earlier revised propositions [termed analytic induction]. Due to the thoroughness of my review of the literature my findings did not require me to revise my propositions.

**Overview of Data Analysis**

![Diagram of Data Analysis Process]

*Figure 11. Overview of Data Analysis.*
The above figure depicts my data collection and analysis steps. These were necessary steps to collect research data and support my analysis.

Coding.

I initially structured my analysis through contact and document summary forms noted by the writing of Miles and Huberman (1994) (see Figure 11). These forms were created prior to the initiation of my research and served as yet another planning tool to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of my data collection (see Appendix B for contact summary form example).

Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend three levels of coding: (a) descriptive, requiring little interpretation; (b) interpretive, as per its meaning; and (c) pattern coding, still more inferential and explanatory (see Appendix C for example coded research transcript). I constructed potential categories of code reflecting on peer-reviewed literature. The construction of codes was iterative; my coding required me to challenge my assumptions, to immerse myself in recognize literature to support meaning making. I implemented open and axial coding technique. These codes changed as my research progressed, some codes did not work and others decayed; a total of 40 codes emerged as sufficient to enable my analysis (see Appendixes D and E for examples of coding and analysis templates). I wrote notes on the data that I transcribed from media to support the further synthesis of my findings (see Appendix F for an example of research memos).

As I collected data I tentatively coded, open coding the potential categories of leadership, role, and organizational context. The study’s data was subjected to a second
round of coding termed axial coding. Axial coding channeled my analysis, enriching my depiction of the study’s theoretical foundation; axial coding categories include (a) causal conditions (categories of conditions that influence the phenomena), (b) strategies (actions or interactions that result from the phenomena), (c) intervening conditions, (d) and consequences (the outcomes of strategies) (see Table 2).
Table 2

*Early Categories of Coded Phenomena*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership: Information that describes Learning Executive leadership.</td>
<td>LDR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role: Information that furthers my understanding of the role of a Learning Executive within an organization.</td>
<td>ROL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Context: General information on organizational surroundings that allow me to place the study in a larger context.</td>
<td>COT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Experience: Reflection on the Learning Executive’s life resulting in on-going personal development.</td>
<td>LIF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning: Information that depicts the Learning Executive’s willingness and ability to learn in a given context.</td>
<td>LRN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image: The Learning Executive’s reflection upon himself and his career or other’s impression of the Learning Executive.</td>
<td>IMG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I manually coded my findings based upon the recommendations of my committee chair. I began coding early in my analysis as opposed to waiting for the end of data collection. Miles and Huberman (1994) stress the importance of early coding as a technique to lessen the potential for bias and incomplete or equivocal data.

*Comparative analysis.*

I constantly compared my observations looking for common themes, patterns, and points that warranted continued investigation. I was cognizant of observations that did not seem to fit emerging categories hoping to explore alternative explanations for my findings,
one example was his marketing prowess, “the guy has moved mountains, he is a consummate promoter” (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). This phenomenon arose from coding several transcripts; at one point the category was its own code and later evolved to the category of influence. These efforts continued until my observations stopped contributing to the categories; this is known as saturation, commonly termed evidentiary adequacy (Merriam, 1998). Theoretical saturation is achieved by staying in the field until no new evidence emerges that informs or underpins the development of a theoretical point (Merriam, 1998). I was sensitive to the tendency to come to closure too early. I relied on my academic committee’s guidance for determining data sufficiency; I met with my committee chair and my methods advisor on several occasions during my data collection and analysis to solicit their guidance and confirmation that my proposed method was correct and that my data was sufficient.

Comparative analysis involved comparing like with like to identify emerging patterns and themes developed through line-by-line analysis of the data (Merriam, 1998). This process identified concepts, explaining relationships between and across observations (see Appendix G for a conclusion display example). By comparing where facts or incidents were similar or different, I was able to generate properties of categories that increase their descriptive and explanatory powers.

Analytical memos were used to support my analysis (see Appendix F). Memos are a means of analysis, primarily conceptual in intent tying different pieces of data into a recognizable cluster to identify a concept or theme (Miles & Huberman, 1994). My use of
memos encouraged me to critically reflect on my observations; my use of memos served to make explicit my tacit observations for future use.

Codification of my findings entailed demonstrating to the reader how the concepts emerged and developed from the data, how the research moved from description through the process of abstraction, and how core categories were developed. I provide a detailed introduction to the researched learning executive’s organization followed by an in-depth depiction of the case that concludes with a thorough evaluation of the study’s unit of analysis. My writing incorporates references to my data, I have attached examples of my analysis, I have portrayed my findings in a transparent manner. I have presented enough information to facilitate understanding so as to limit the potential for being overwhelmed by descriptive data.

*Reporting Study Results*

Reporting the study results entailed bringing the case to life to maximize the reader’s encounter with the complexity of the case (Stake, 1995). I structured my writings taking into consideration the needs of my audience, selecting a compositional structure, and implementing review procedures in an effort to enhance the quality of the report. The reporting phase of the research is my opportunity to contribute to leadership theory.

The initial audience for my writing is my research committee. The committee focused on my demonstrated mastery of methodology and theoretical issues, along with critiquing how my research was conducted. Additional audiences are academic colleagues who will look to my work for findings, theory and use of methods; and stakeholders who
either participated in the research or fostered my access. Stakeholder interests included the accuracy of the research and its potential for transfer to their organization. I have made every effort to craft my writing to meet their needs.

The overall organization of my dissertation is a linear-analytic structure; this is a familiar structure to academic audiences; introduction, review of literature, findings and discussion (Yin, 2003). The final chapter of my research takes the form of a narrative report similar to a comprehensive examination, a case report, questions posed, resulting text and diagrams incorporated to respond to the questions. The benefit to my audience is that my chosen format enables readers to immediately proceed to their area of interest. In addition, if my research were to expand to a multiple case study the format more easily facilitates cross-case comparison (Yin, 2003).

I base my report on the pattern of findings from my research data. I continued to review scholarly literature during my research to identify relevant theoretical trends to enhance its overall quality; an example being the inclusion of Crossan’s 4I Framework of Organizational Learning (Crossan et al., 1999). Initially I identified the benefits of studying the selected case. I identified the boundaries of the case to provide the reader with a context for interpreting the study results. I have attempted to prove that I have exhausted relevant evidence in support of my research conclusions. A thick narrative thematic depiction of Learning Executive’s leadership emerges as an outcome of my research. I have evaluated the do-ability of my research to be sensitive to actual resource constraints. I have considered rival explanations in the course of my research, challenging my interpretation of observed
events. I have presented the study’s findings in a neutral manner, presenting both supporting and challenging data. Finally I have attempted to present my results in an engaging manner, writing clearly, ensuring that my audience understands my research findings.

**Trustworthiness**

Merriam (1998) claims that qualitative research assumes that reality is constructed, multidimensional, and ever changing; there is no such thing as a single, immutable reality waiting to be observed and measured. Merriam’s observation is accentuated by my choice of a limited study population, a small-N study. To strengthen the confidence, the believability of my research I have considered the issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirm-ability (Hirschman, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility, or trustworthiness, involves questioning what I purport to measure. I have striven for credibility through the use of multiple data sources that included (a) research participant interviews, (b) data internal to the organization, (c) external publications, and (d) public information, (e) detailed depiction of observed phenomena, (f) prolonged engagement, and (g) a detailed portrayal of participant realities. As previously noted I garnered the support of study participants, asking for their review of interview transcripts to validate their comments. As the researcher I recognize that no single interpretation of complex social phenomenon an example being leadership, can completely describe the essence of the phenomenon.

Yin (2003) claims that transferability, or external validity, depends upon the extent to which one’s findings are generalizeable to other settings or participants. My findings are not
generalizeable. I purport that no two social contexts are ever identical, challenging the positivist notion of generalize-ability in social research. Ragin and Becker (1992) observed that readers of case study research apply their own interpretation of the research based on their experience. By providing a thick narrative description readers are able to decide what outcomes apply to their particular context (Merriam; 1998).

I couch reliability in terms of dependability and confirmability. Dependability relies on my ability to describe and explain my research in detail, explaining all elements of observed phenomena. To enhance the study’s dependability I have solicited other’s interpretations of my findings, recognizing the potential for misrepresentation of phenomena as a result of the interaction between the investigator and the phenomena. I have incorporated an audit trail in the form of written text that describes how data was collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout my inquiry.

Confirm-ability, whether others agree on what took place was addressed through peer review, review by auditors, member checks, and introspection. Reviews entailed a coordinated effort between my academic chair and a self-selected peer. A peer shadow coded initial transcripts confirming my interpretation of research data. It was my responsibility to assure that review mechanisms were in place. I am cognizant that review by others will not deter the willful misrepresentation of information shared by study participants who desire to falsify their information.
Researcher Biases

Qualitative research required that I become the research instrument (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). As such I am required to make explicit all identities, characteristics, and biases since these qualities will affect the study and eventual interpretations of observed phenomena (Merriam, 1998). As part of the research frame, I was able to establish rapport with the study participants as I sought to understand their realities. I have developed a level of familiarity with the researched learning executive and the researched corporation.

My life experiences have led me to the research focus. The organizations in which I have been employed have historically valued knowledge yet have not been effective in its management, failing to disseminate intellectual capital to those who would benefit from its dissemination. My interest in the creation and dissemination of knowledge, a sense of organizational loyalty, and a passion to be a part of a business that contributes to health of millions, and a desire to assume the job of a learning executive has propelled me to explore the role.

Considering my professed beliefs in the value of intellectual capital, I was careful not to assume that I understood the role of a learning executive in order to expedite the data collection effort. I recognized the need to be patient and clarify the expressed realities of study participants through prolonged engagement. I was careful to temper implicit and explicit theories; I constantly challenged my assumptions.

To counter my biases I did not interject my preconceived notions of influence as exhibited by the learning executive on his organization. I reflected on the expressed realities
of study participants and resisted the temptation to alter their realities to suffice my biases. I attempted to temper my interpretation of the literature and am willing to publish findings that may potentially refute recognized theory. Last but not least I carefully considered the guidance provided by my academic committee. Their guidance and impartial view of my research has aided me to avoid any potential for biased findings from my research.

*Ethics*

I maintained my integrity as a researcher; I conducted this study according to the ethical principles of honesty, fairness, and respect for individuals. I fully informed participants of the study and answered any questions that arose, assuring participants that I would not knowingly deceive them or cause them harm. I informed participants that the primary purpose of the study was to demonstrate my mastery of the research methodology.

A secondary but no less important purpose was to contribute to the body of existing literature, in a sense to further the cause of searching for continued meaning. I shared with participants that the initial audience for the study was my research committee but the results may be published in other forums. This is a key point of negotiation due to the nature of my research. I have discussed the study with participants, guaranteeing their anonymity, and formalizing an agreement with a signed consent form.

At the beginning of the study I identified safeguards to ensure participant confidentiality [anonymity]. My research is bound by the University of North Carolina State protocol as well as governing agencies that oversee research using human subjects. I have
informed participants that they will be given a copy of their transcribed interviews to review for accuracy and to ensure that I have recorded what they intended during the interview.

As the researcher, I was careful not to invade the privacy of study participants, by being respectful of their responses and not probing when it is explicitly or implicitly obvious that the question touches on a sensitivity within the participant. I was attentive to the participants and their organization’s privacy, in particular if information was revealed that could prove potentially damaging to research participants or their organization. No ethical dilemmas arose during the conduct of the research.

*Research Setting*

To provide you the reader with sufficient descriptive detail to support your interpretation, the following information is necessary to ensure your understanding of the case’s context. Much of the factual information contained in this section of my writing was sourced from internal and external extant data to include the Advanced Medical Technology Association [AdvaMed] and the researched company’s annual reports for the years 2005 through 2007.

My research took place in a global medical technology leader. The medical instrument and supply industry, termed medical device industry has been and continues to be one of the fastest growing industries exhibiting high export potential despite its inherent barriers to market entry (AdvaMed, 2004; Medical Device Link, 2005). In 2005 the medical device industry was valued at five billion dollars (Medical Device Link, 2005). The industry is portrayed as thriving due in part to its reliance on innovation sparking a wealth of products
and technologies that literally complement or replace medications, some recent examples are
drug-eluting stents, insulin pumps, implanted sensors and actuators, tissue-engineered
organs, DNA-based diagnostics, remote surgery techniques, artificial joints and other life-

The industry is one of the most vital and dynamic sectors of the United States
economy and a leading force in the revolution that is transforming America’s health care
system (AdvaMed, 2004; Medical Device Link, 2005). This revolution is improving patient
outcomes, speeding recovery time while reducing overall healthcare spending (AdvaMed,
2004; Medical Device Link, 2005). By all relevant measures of growth – employment
trends, production values, exports, global market share, venture capital financing – the
medical device industry sets a standard that is the envy of most business sectors (AdvaMed,
2004).

Fueled by record spending on research and development, the United States medical
device manufacturers are seen as leaders in technological innovations and high quality
products and as such their ability to innovate is viewed as a key competency for the most
successful firms within the industry (AdvaMed, 2004). Today’s practicing surgeon is more
dependent on the medical device industry than at any other time in surgical history (Voyles,
2005).

The industry on average invests between 9 to 10 percent of company revenues on
research (see Figure 12) a much greater portion of revenue than most industries (AdvaMed,
2004). In 2002, the industry spent 11.4 percent of its sales on research and development,
higher than any industry except that of the pharmaceutical industry (AdvaMed, 2004). Small firms, including start-ups and highly innovative firms spent on average 343 percent of their revenue on new product research (AdvaMed, 2004). It is interesting to note that the bulk of research and development expenditures are funded by the private sector as per the Advanced Medical Technology Association (2004), an industry consortium.

*Figure 12. Research and Development Spending as a Percentage of Sales for 2002 (AdvaMed, 2004).*

The medical device industry is second only to the pharmaceutical industry in Research and Development (R&D) spending reflecting the significance of innovation.

The medical device industry’s impressive economic performance is exceeded only by its contributions to improving the health and well-being of patients worldwide (AdvaMed,
Breakthrough medical technologies are able to detect diseases earlier and offer new, more effective treatment options for leading causes of disability and mortality such as heart disease, cancer and other illnesses (AdvaMed, 2004).

More effective treatment options generate economic benefits as well. Over the years, medical device innovations have led to decreases in the number of disabled Americans, increases in outpatient and minimally invasive surgical procedures, and shorter hospital stays (AdvaMed, 2004). In the past twenty years, each additional dollar spent on health care services has produced health gains at the rate of $2.40 to $3.00.

As a result of advances in health care, patients are able to live longer, healthier, more productive lives for far less than it would have cost just a few years ago (AdvaMed, 2004). Between 1980 and 2000 annual death rates declined from 1,039.1 to 872 per 100,000 persons or roughly a sixteen percent drop in mortality rate (AdvaMed, 2004). The life expectancy from birth has increased by 3.2 years or four percent and the number of days that one remains in the hospital has fallen from 129.7 days to 56.6 days per 100 persons or a fifty-six percent reduction (AdvaMed, 2004). Without the recent improvements in health and the associated investment, the United States would have incurred 470,000 more deaths, 2.3 million people with disabilities, and 206 million more days spent in the hospital (AdvaMed, 2004) (see Figure 13). The industry truly has improved the quality of healthcare in the United States but industry critics highlight the failure of the Medical Device Approval Act 510(k) to completely protect the general public from defective or unsafe medical devices.
while ensuring speed to market of devices deemed necessary by chronically ill citizens (AdvaMed, 2004).

![Projected vs. Actual Chronically Disabled Americans](image)

*Figure 13.* Projected vs. Actual Chronically Disabled Americans (AdvaMed, 2004).

The graph depicts the favorable impact of medical technology to reduce disability rates. The significance of this outcome is the impact of medical technology know-how on a nation’s citizenry health.

The future of the industry looks even brighter than the present (AvaMed, 2004). Technology breakthroughs in areas such as device miniaturization and nano-technology, molecular and gene-based diagnostics, information technology, and artificial organs and tissue engineering promise to provide innovative solutions to some of the most persistent and debilitating health care problems (AdvaMed, 2004). Such innovation bodes well not only for
the economic health of the medical device industry but for the overall health of United States patients and the health care system as well (AdvaMed, 2004).

Medical technology assumes a vital role in delivering safe, effective, and high quality health care. Medical innovation has great potential to synthesize advances in the sciences, bioengineering, biomaterials, genomic-s, computing, and telecommunications to develop technologies that will extend our ability to prevent, diagnose, and treat disease (AdvaMed, 2004). Further advances may potentially address the world’s current health challenges, including treating and responding to outbreaks of new infectious diseases, bio-defense, and meeting health needs in underdeveloped areas (AdvaMed, 2004).

Adequate financing is critical to the successful development and eventually commercialization of medical devices (AdvaMed, 2004). Start-up companies are particularly dependent on capital financing prior to achieving a viable revenue source and as such the industry is vulnerable to increase market risk along with many other industries in today’s global economy (AdvaMed, 2004).

The United States medical device industry is the largest producer of medical devices and diagnostics, with production estimated at seventy-seven million dollars in 2002 (AdvaMed, 2004). The United States is one of the world’s leading exporters of medical technology (see Figure 14), selling to other countries an estimated $20.3 billion in 2004 (AdvaMed, 2004). In 2004 the Unites States share of the world market for medical devices was 42 percent (AdvaMed, 2004).
Medical devices make up a significant portion of United States exports; the outcome being infusion of needed capital into the United States economy and resulting job creation.
Figure 15. United States market for medical devices (AdvaMed, 2004).

The figure depicts the steady increase in cumulative expenditure for medical devices within the United States. On-going investment by the industry is needed to fuel continued innovation in a hyper-competitive business environment (AdvaMed, 2004).

As noted by the above figure (see Figure 15) the United States cumulative expenditure for medical devices has steadily increased since 1997 (AdvaMed, 2004). This may be due to not only greater domestic demand for improved healthcare services but also may be driven by product marketing decisions on the part of the medical device industry.
Figure 16. Distribution of United States Medical Device Firms by Industrial Classification (AdvaMed, 2004).

The above figure depicts the significance of each market for the medical technology industry. As depicted (see Figure 16), surgical medical device firms are the most prevalent comprising greater than 50% of the United States medical device manufacturing. Industry data reflects employment of upwards of 330,000 Americans during the year 2002 (AdvaMed, 2004).
Figure 17. Number of Approved Medical Device Patents for the Period 1989-2003 (AdvaMed, 2004).

Application and approval of patents continue to rise within the medical device industry. Patents are an outcome of enhanced innovation and quite possibly a reflection of a hyper-competitive marketplace.

The number of approved medical device patents continues to increase (see Figure 17); this is a reflection of the industry’s continued heavy investment to spur innovation. Figure 18 reflects a measure of speed to market, another critical component of industry success. As depicted by the figure European medical device manufacturers may have an inherent advantage in a global marketplace due to lessened regulatory barriers.
Figure 18. Opinion of Regional Speed to Market in the Medical Device Industry (AdvaMed, 2004).

The figure depicts that European medical device manufacturers may have a significant advantage in meeting the needs of the global marketplace.

The medical device industry has emerged as a significant contributor of health care to millions, the industry provides good opportunities for its members, and contributes to the overall economic prosperity of the United States. The industry embraces innovation, recognizes the importance of knowledge, and faces the reality of global competition as individual companies struggle for economic survival.

Company Profile
The researched organization is a leading medical technology company engaged primarily in the manufacture and sale of a range of medical supplies, devices, laboratory equipment and diagnostic products used by healthcare institutions, life science researchers, clinical laboratories, industry and the general public. The researched company’s purpose is to help all people live healthy lives. The company’s business consists of three worldwide divisions: Medical, Diagnostics, and Biosciences; in 2006 the company’s workforce totaled 25,000 associates. The organization is classified as a member of the healthcare sector, the medical supplies and instruments industry. The company is publically traded, listed by the Standard and Poor 500, Standard and Poor Super Comp 1500, and Ocean Tomo 300.

The Medical division produces an array of medical devices that are used in healthcare settings. They include many safety-engineered injection, infusion and surgery products. The primary markets served by the Medical division are hospitals and clinics; physicians’ office practices; consumers and retail pharmacies; public health agencies; pharmaceutical companies; and healthcare workers. The Medical division collaborates with over two hundred pharmaceutical companies to enhance the use of its products.

The Medical division’s principal product lines include needles and syringes for medication delivery; intravenous catheters and infusion therapy products; insulin injection devices and blood glucose monitors for people with diabetes; surgical blades and regional anesthesia needles; ophthalmic surgery devices; sharps disposal containers; and home healthcare products. The company is a leader in prefilled devices. Injectable drugs sold in pre-filled syringe format reduce the potential for medication error and contamination while
providing opportunities for enhanced product differentiation and improved customer satisfaction.

The Diagnostics division provides products for the safe collection and transport of diagnostic specimens, and instrumentation for analysis for a range of microbiology and infectious disease testing. The Diagnostics division serves hospitals, laboratories and clinics; reference laboratories; blood banks; healthcare workers; patients; physicians’ office practices; and industrial microbiology laboratories. The Diagnostics division’s principal products and services are integrated systems for evacuated blood collection; an extensive line of safety-engineered specimen collection products and systems; plated media; automated blood culturing and molecular testing systems; microorganism identification and drug susceptibility systems; and healthcare consulting. The Diagnostics division is positioned to leverage its unique instrument product portfolio and engineering capabilities to provide a range of systems to rapidly diagnose infectious disease.

The Biosciences division produces research and clinical tools that facilitate the study of cells, and the components of cells, to gain a better understanding of normal and disease processes. Information is used to aid the discovery and development of new medications and vaccines, and to improve the diagnosis and management of diseases. The primary markets served by the Biosciences division are research and clinical laboratories; hospitals and transplant centers; blood banks; and biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies. The Biosciences division’s principal product lines include fluorescence activated cell sorters and analyzers; cell imaging systems, monoclonal antibodies and kits; reagent systems for life
sciences research; products to aid in drug discovery and growth of tissue cells; and diagnostic assays.

In the clinical products sector, the division’s platforms are considered to be the gold standard for CD4 testing, used for HIV/AIDS therapy monitoring and in leukemia/lymphoma typing. The division is a key provider to the pharmaceutical industry, where improving the productivity of the drug discovery process is a leading imperative. Company publications note that fewer than fifteen percent of drugs that enter human clinical trials are ultimately launched, researchers face significant challenges in developing biologics due to complexities surrounding targeting and assessing immune system responses, the company’s products are being used to improve the productivity and effectiveness of drug and vaccine development.

The company’s operations outside the United States are conducted in Canada, Mexico, Europe, the Middle East, Africa; Asia Pacific, Australia; and Latin America. The company has manufacturing operations outside the United States in Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Pakistan, Singapore, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The company conducts its research and development activities at its operating units, and in collaboration with selected universities, medical centers and other entities. The company also retains individual consultants to support its efforts in specialized fields.

Organization’s founding.

The company was founded by an acquisition of its founders of a 50 percent interest in the patent rights to an all-glass syringe developed by an early syringe manufacturer. This
product came to become the basis on which the company grew further. A later acquisition of a Philadelphia surgical company enabled the researched company to manufacture its own metal surgical instruments. This and other early acquisitions helped the company expand its product offering and gained the talents and manufacturing expertise of an expanding workforce. The company incorporated in the state of New Jersey and created a unique manufacturing facility, the first in the United States built specifically for producing thermometers, hypodermic needles and syringes, giving the company an increased sense of focus.

The company manufactured its first syringe in the early nineteen hundreds; it was made specifically for insulin injection. The following year a key patent for a needle tip was issued, an innovation that securely attached the hypodermic needle to the syringe. In 1943, a patent for a syringe with interchangeable parts was introduced. A device to draw blood by vacuum through a needle into a test tube was created and patented in 1949, evolved to become a unique brand of a blood collection system.

In the early 1950s, the company acquired its Canadian distributor in Toronto. The formation of the Canadian subsidiary marked the beginning of international expansion as the company subsequently moved into Mexico and France. The 1955 acquisition of a Baltimore biological laboratory provided a crucial impetus for the company to lead two fundamental changes in healthcare: the conversion to sterile disposables and the emergence of diagnostic medicine.
The start of the next decade marked the introduction of a disposable plastic syringe, which was manufactured in Connecticut. The company became a publicly held corporation in 1962, in order to raise funds for growth. Manufacturing operations were expanded into Singapore (1989), China (1995), and eventually into India.

In 2001, the company acquired a firm serving the life sciences market in the areas of drug metabolism and toxicology testing of pharmaceutical candidates. The same year, the company introduced a uniquely shielded catheter. 2002 saw the company enter into collaboration with the Harvard Institute of Proteomics at Harvard Medical School to generate gene clones involved in biological processes. In April 2003, the company announced plans to discontinue domestic sales of conventional needles and other "sharps" devices across a range of product categories. The company estimated that US hospitals had transitioned over 80% of their sharps product usage from conventional to safety-engineered designs in many product categories.

In February 2004, the company announced the launch of a safety-engineered 1-milliliter syringe in the US market. In December 2004, FIND (Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics) and the company announced an international collaboration aimed at improving diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis (TB) in HIV-infected patients in developing countries.

As previously identified the company is a medical technology company engaged primarily in the manufacture and sale of a broad range of medical supplies, devices, laboratory equipment and diagnostic products. The company has a global presence, which
limits its exposure to any particular economy. However, rising raw material prices are placing pressure on the margins of medical devices companies (see Figure 19).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strengths</strong></th>
<th><strong>Weaknesses</strong></th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Global presence</td>
<td>Greater exposure to customers dependent on reimbursement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong sales growth</td>
<td>Decline in net income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More rapid product introduction</td>
<td>Increasing litigation and anti-trust cases</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Opportunities</strong></th>
<th><strong>Threats</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Continued growth in safety-engineered devices segment</td>
<td>Rising raw material prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in diabetes testing equipment market</td>
<td>Acquisition integration risks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased demand in Biosciences segment</td>
<td>Rapid technology changes resulting in shorter realized gains from patents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competition in the global marketplace</td>
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*Figure 19. SWOT Analysis.*

The SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis provides a structured 2X2 matrix to evaluate one’s business and to enable strategy formulation.

*Strengths*

*Global presence.*

The company is a global medical devices manufacturer. The company has a
presence in over 50 countries across North America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia (including China and India), and Australia. As a result, a significant part of the company’s revenue is generated through sales outside the domestic US market. During fiscal 2004, the company’s international sales were $2498.9 million, accounting for about 51% of the overall sales. In 2005 revenues outside the United States increased 13% over 2004, in 2006 revenue increased 6% over 2005 to $3 billion, reflecting strong sales in Asia Pacific, Canadian, and European regions. The company’s global presence limits its exposure to any particular national economy.

Strong sales growth.

The company has shown strong growth during the years 2001-2006. The company recorded annual revenues of $3.6 billion in fiscal 2001. During 2004, the company had reached $4.9 billion in revenues, in 2005 the company’s revenues expanded to $5.4 billion, and $5.8 billion in 2006 a 7.8% increase from the previous year. This represents a capitalized annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.3% during the three-year period (2001/2004). While constant appreciation of the dollar contributed to some of the increase, higher volumes contributed significantly to this growth. The company has also gained market share in several markets outside the Unites States. Consistently high sales growth is indicative of the company’s strong business model.

Faster new product introduction.

One of the most significant strengths of the company is its ability to introduce new products in quickly. For instance, in 2004, the company expanded its line of safety
engineered products with the introduction of a safety knife with a uniquely designed blade. In the past, the company has been the first to introduce various medical products in the market, and has continued to maintain its leadership position in those markets. The company has a history of leadership in researching and developing pioneering products in the medical devices industry, with annual R&D expenditure of $235 million (see Figure 20).

Figure 20. Intangible Value as a Percentage of Market Capitalization Trend for the Researched Company (Ocean Tomo, 2006).

In the year 2006 the company’s OT 300 Intellectual Property Quotient (IPQ) score was 120, twenty points above the industry index of 100 (Ocean Tomo, 2006). The IPQ is a computer generated numerical ranking score based on multi-variant regression analysis of identified predictor variables (patent metrics) determined to have significant statistical correlation to
patent maintenance resulting in a valuation of organizational innovation (Ocean Tomo, 2006).

The company recognizes the need to sustain innovation; it increased its R&D spending by a rate of 13% (adjusted rate) in both 2005 and 2006 and is predicting continued increases in R&D expenditures at a low double-digit growth rate well into the future. The company’s management claims that this rate of investment will increase innovation leading to exciting new advances in drug delivery, superior diagnostic systems and new bioscience platforms but also recognizes that spending is not sufficient to fuel innovation; in conjunction with spending the right processes must be in-place to develop new products. The company is working to implement improved product and technology development processes, its claim of a culture of continuous improvement are key to continued product leadership. Senior management is implementing the vision of becoming a best-in-class product development company. The company’s pioneering ability places it at a competitive advantage relative to its peers.

Weaknesses

Exposure to customers dependent on reimbursements.

Although the company also sells its products to end users, a significant part of it’s revenues are generated from sales to healthcare providers and hospital and facility operators. Healthcare providers and facilities are generally reimbursed for there services through numerous payment systems designed by governmental agencies and managed care programs. The coverage policies and reimbursement levels of
third-party payers may impact the decisions of healthcare providers and facilities regarding which medical products they purchase and the prices they are willing to pay for those products. Thus, changes in reimbursement level or method may impact sales of products. Exposure to such customers would significantly affect the company’s sales.

*Decline in net income.*

During fiscal 2004, the company’s net income of $467.4 million was a 14.6% decrease from 2003. This was mainly due to losses incurred at a particular unit of the company’s Biosciences segment. Although the company has now sold off the unit, net losses incurred during fiscal 2004 and prior year periods have temporarily impacted the financial position of the company. In 2005 the company did not report any significant threats of this nature.

*Litigation and anti-trust cases.*

In January 2004, a suit was brought against the company. The plaintiff asserts that the company’s cap products and citrate tubes infringe certain European patents. In another instance, an organization filed suit against the company in the US District Court for the Northern District of California asserting that the company’s blood glucose monitoring products infringe certain patents. Both systems account for a significant part of the company’s sales. Pending and potential litigation as well as other proceedings, including product liability claims, patent infringement claims and antitrust claims could adversely impact the company’s financial position as well as reputation. Upon my review of the
medical instrument industry, litigation appears to be a common threat across the entire industry, probably arising from the demand for constant innovation to assure economic survival.

The company claims that its ability to sustain long-term growth will depend on a number of factors that include the expansion of their core business to include geographical expansion, develop innovative new products with higher gross profit margins across multiple business segments, and continue to improve operating efficiencies and organizational effectiveness.

**Opportunities**

*Growth in safety-engineered devices segment.*

Safety engineered medical devices are exhibiting a surge in demand as hospitals and facilities are increasingly concerned about the safety of healthcare workers as well as patients. This trend has benefited the company’s sales. During 2004, revenues from safety-engineered products increased 27% over 2003. With the market expected to grow strongly over the next two years, this segment would represent an important growth opportunity. The company is preparing for this potential by investing as much as $31 million to expand a manufacturing facility Utah. The Utah expansion is part of a $175 million coordinated development of the company’s production capacity in Utah, Nebraska and South Carolina for advanced safety-engineered devices.

*Growth in diabetes testing equipment market.*

Diabetes care is an important growth market for the company. According to
WHO (World Health Organization), the number of diabetes cases are projected to double between 2000 and 2030 (Company Annual Report, 2006, Extant Data). In diabetes care, the company is gaining traction with blood glucose monitors (BGMs). The company’s blood glucose testing business has been growing strongly since the product launch. As a longtime leader in devices for insulin therapy and with successful launch of its BGM product, the company is well positioned take advantage of growing demand for diabetes care products.

_Increased demand in the biosciences segment._

In 2004 the company’s biosciences revenues of $723 million increased 14% (9% constant currency) over 2003. Revenue growth in the Immunocytometry Systems unit accounted for approximately 7 points of the underlying growth. Revenue growth in that unit was driven by sales of the newly introduced analyzers, cell sorters, as well as strong growth of cell analysis reagents. The company’s management expects the biosciences segment to grow by 7 to 8% in 2005. Increased worldwide demand for bioscience products would be a key driver of this growth.

_Threats_

_Rising raw material prices._

Prices for raw materials used for manufacturing medical devices have been increasing. Although inflation did not have a material impact on the company’s operations in 2004 and 2005, the company’s management expects raw material price inflation to have significant effect on margins in 2006 and beyond. For example, in 2004 the company spent approximately $120 million to $150 million per year to purchase supplies of resins, in 2005
the company incurred increased charges of $150 million to $170 million, resins are oil-based components used in the manufacture of certain products. It is anticipated that resin purchase costs will increase during 2007 in part, as a result of recent increases in oil prices. This would place significant negative pressure on the company’s margins.

*Acquisition integration risks.*

Although in recent years the company has significantly grown its operations organically, the company has also engaged in acquisitions to enter new markets. In July 2004, the company acquired a bioscience company, a privately held company specializing in optical instrumentation, software and reagents. The company’s growth through acquisitions will bring with it the challenge of effectively integrating the operations of the acquired company with its own. This would also expose the company to the risk of not getting the desired returns on its investments.

*Rapid technology changes.*

Rapid technological change and scientific advances characterize the life sciences industry. Life science products, especially diagnostic and bioscience products are based on complex technology, which is subject to rapid, and unpredictable change. These advancements in technology usually require additional management capabilities and resources. Unanticipated difficulties or delays in replacing existing products with new products, or the inability to gain market acceptance of new products on a timely basis, could adversely affect the company’s future operating performance.
Technology has as in the past been portrayed as the panacea, a solution to help the industry meet this rising challenge. New technology is normally associated with high access costs to both patients and healthcare providers and at some point development costs may literally deny access to newly developed technologies. This economic phenomena is further complicated by the rapid change in technology within the industry; the average shelf-life of a medical device is two to three years resulting in even greater emphasis on innovation.

*Global cost reduction pressure.*

Company analysts are predicting that the current pressures for cost containment, cost reduction, and further affordability for healthcare services and products will continue potentially lessening profit margins. Global healthcare systems reforms are a result of the aging populations in the West. These potential reforms may further erode the profitability of the company.

*Company competitors.*

Competitors include Alcon Incorporated, Baxter International, Boston Scientific, Johnson and Johnson, and Tyco. These are some of the many competitors of the researched firm. The face of the medical device industry has recently changed due to acquisitions and mergers. Multinational manufacturers are consolidating in order to establish greater presence around the world. Some of the largest medical device companies have a number of subsidiaries such as Johnson & Johnson (e.g., Ethicon, DePuy, Cordis, J&J Medical, Critikon), Boston Scientific (e.g., SciMed, Microvasive, Schneider, EP Technologies),
Baxter (e.g., IV Systems, Edwards Division, Hyland Division, Clintec, Renal Therapy), and Tyco International (e.g., Kendall, Sherwood Davis & Geck, U.S. Surgical).

**Financial Results**

The exploration of the case would be incomplete without an examination of financial performance of the researched company; the financial performance should be viewed as marketplace feedback. The company’s management operates the business consistent with the following core strategies (a) to increase revenue growth by focusing on products that deliver greater benefits to patients, healthcare workers and researchers, (b) to improve operating efficiencies and balance sheet productivity, and (c) to strengthen organizational and associate capabilities in the ever-changing healthcare environment. Company leaders recognize the importance of driving growth through innovation, incremental improvement and expanding profit margins by improving operating effectiveness.

The company purports that senior management monitors a number of key financial measures to enable decision making, they are gross profit margin (financial ratio of operating income to revenues), selling and administrative expenses (financial measure of operating expenses), investment in research and development (financial measure of operating expenses), and cash flows (financial measure of accrued revenue). The table depicts each of the key measures for the years two thousand and six through two thousand and two (see Table 3).
Table 3

Management Key Financial Measures for the period 2002-2006 (Company Annual Report, 2006, Extant Data)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gross Profit Margin (%)</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling and Administrative ($B)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D Investment ($M)</td>
<td>360.0</td>
<td>271.6</td>
<td>235.6</td>
<td>224.2</td>
<td>207.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash Flow ($M)</td>
<td>5834.8</td>
<td>5414.7</td>
<td>4934.7</td>
<td>4463.5</td>
<td>3960.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The company’s Chief Executive Officer asserts that the company’s continued revenue growth will allow the company to achieve its vision of becoming a great company. His definition of a great company is a company that achieves great financial performance (see Figure 21), a great place to work, and finally makes great contributions to society.
A significant increase in net income was realized in 2005. This improvement in financial performance is attributed to the effective implementation of company strategy (Company Annual Report, 2005, Extant Data).

The company’s ability to sustain long-term growth will depend on a number of factors, including its ability to expand its core business to include geographical expansion, develop innovative new products with higher gross profit margins across entire business segments, and the continued effort to improve operating efficiencies through organizational effectiveness. In 2006 management claims to continue to strive to improve profit margins
through increased sales of products with higher margins, aggressive implementation of cost reduction programs, productivity improvements and enhanced category management, and to a lesser extent periodic price increases and adjustments. During 2006 the company pursued continuous improvement activities that targeted Six Sigma, Lean, and Process Validation that resulted in an overall enhancement of company productivity. Company publications note that anticipated revenue growth over the next three years 2006-2009 is expected to come from: (1) core business expansion, (2) expanding the sale of high-quality products across all markets, (3) the development in each business segment new products and services that provide increased benefits to patients, healthcare workers and researchers.

Over the past several years the Medical division of the company has been the most profitable division followed by the Diagnostics and then Biosciences divisions. In two thousand and five the company’s revenue grew by nearly ten percent over the previous year. The company’s gross profit margin continues to increase, powered by greater workplace productivity and increased selling margins on key products and services. The company notes the its strategy to drive innovation and operating effectiveness is driven by the competency and capabilities of its people, their knowledge and expertise. Senior management recognizes that its ability to develop employees to their full potential, to engage them, and to empower them is essential if the company is to survive in the marketplace.

Researcher Access

The following observations were compiled over a seven-month period spanning the years 2006 through 2007. In a sense I approached organizational access through cold calling.
As previously depicted I was introduced to the Learning Executive through a third party contact who is affiliated with North Carolina State University as well as the American Society for Training and Development, through this forum the third party developed sufficient familiarity with the Learning Executive to broker our meeting.

The Learning Executive embraced participating in my research, he stressed that he had limited time, but would support my research by granting me access to him and his organization. This was a critical moment for me, for the past two years I had been negotiating access to Learning Executive’s in various Fortune 500 corporations only to have them not commit to participating in my research.

The Learning Executive provided me direct access to himself, his staff, and others to support my research. He was obviously very busy; during my interaction with him he juggled multiple appointments, frequently was taking calls, had a number of unscheduled visits by others during our interviews, and was required to respond to priority e-mail messages that were delivered to his desktop computer, his daily pace was hectic and hurried. Some requests for information could not be complied with due to the potential for unfair business practices; those requests entailed active business metrics, templates used to manage organizational talent, the knowledge management architecture of the corporation, and organizational data reflecting the impact of learning initiatives sponsored by the Learning Executive’s function. As such, the Learning Executive was extremely supportive of my research and was willing to provide me reasonable access to his organization.
With each visit to the Learning Executive’s corporate headquarters I had to navigate through both external facility and internal security gatekeepers whose role was to lessen the potential information leakage as well as provide physical security for both property and company personnel. The Learning Executive’s office struck me as an ideal work location, of modern architectural design, comfortable, centrally located; it appeared a best-in-class work setting. His team, Global Talent Management was positioned within the Company’s Human Resource function, adjacent to corporate talent acquisition, physically co-located to senior leadership within his company.

The fourth chapter of my writing incorporates findings from my research data to evolve a detailed narration of the Learning Executive’s career, his role, his company’s context, and his leadership. The findings chapter portrays a story, provides you the reader of my research with a detailed accounting of my observations.
Chapter 4: Findings

The Learning Executive’s career can be described as a humble beginning, meager wages as a struggling public educator, frequent job changes and unexpected loss of employment; this is one portrayal of his career. A more accurate depiction is a notable career, unique, composed of multiple developmental challenges, significant responsibility that culminates in meaningful contributions to a global medical technology corporation.

The Learning Executive, Vice President of Talent Management and Chief Learning Officer’s organization is matrix by design, seventeen associates in total, three associates report directly to him and occupy the following roles, Director Leadership Development and Learning, Global Human Resources Leader Talent Management, and Training Coordinator. A total of 36 global senior leaders indirectly report to the Learning Executive through a matrix-ed organizational structure.

The Learning Executive is likeable, he actively engaged others, he is vibrant, he walks with a quickened pace, it is obvious that he is recognized and embraced across the entire corporate headquarters (Researcher Comment, 2006, Researcher Journal). His physical stature is not overbearing, yet his personality is exuberant, he is dominant. I found my interaction with him to be rewarding and insightful.

Typically descriptive case study technique incorporates a detailed description of the research findings; the findings are normally presented as stories incorporating events and their outcomes (Merriam, 1998). The intent of my research is to describe [accurately portray] the Learning Executive’s role, the context of his organization, and his leadership in
his own words and the words of research participants [peers, subordinates, and superiors] so that my observations are sufficiently detailed to support the readers conclusions. The chapter is composed of ideas, comments, and responses to the questions posed by me during participant interviewing and data mined from extant data resident in his organization to include data available to the general public. The stories told and the depictions provided by participants are their experienced reality.

To further suffice the requirements of descriptive case study technique I have incorporated a depiction of the researched learning executive’s career. This early depiction of his life, his education, and his work is necessary to support your interpretation of his role. The chapter makes use of the study’s research questions to organize [advance organizers] my research findings; the chapter provides you with sufficient detail to evolve your understanding of his role, his organization, and his leadership (see Table 4).


Table 4

*Findings Chapter Organization*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 4</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>This Biography provides necessary description of the researched learning executive’s career to support your interpretation of the case study report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Findings From The Research Data</td>
<td>This section of the report utilizes the study’s research questions as advance organizers for the study’s findings; additional subheadings emerge, these headings are reflective of significant research observations and are closely aligned to the study’s conceptual framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Question 1</td>
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<td>Subheading</td>
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*Biography*

The following paragraphs provide a descriptive narrative, a story, of the researched learning executive’s, termed Learning Executive, life, his career, his ascension to the role of a senior leader, and the many challengers that confronted him. The researched learning executive’s interest in participating in the research lie in furthering the profession of Human Resource Development, contributing to his successor’s readiness to assume his role, and his desire to leave a legacy of accomplishment so that others may recognize his life’s work within his company (Learning Executive, 2006, Researcher Journal). The story is that of the researched learning executive, his life’s story, told in his own words and the words of research participants. I invite you the reader to join me to explore the job of a learning executive, the context of his organization, and his leadership in an effort to better understand
this emerging organizational leader. My writing begins with his early childhood and evolves to a depiction of his career as a senior organizational leader.

*The Learning Executive’s Early Years*

At the time of my research the Learning Executive had been in the workplace for thirty-eight years (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2). He has been influenced by a number of challenges and unique professional experiences. His childhood was spent in the suburban neighborhoods of Philadelphia, equipping him with street smarts, a sense of competitiveness, and the ability to survive; skills that have served him well during years of organizational life and corporate strife (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2).

My early interaction with the Learning Executive entailed an appreciable amount of time exploring his early childhood, his parent’s influence and support for him; it is apparent that they cared about his success and were the greatest supporter of his development. Both his parents were hard working, possessed limited means, and did not have the benefit of an extensive education (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2). The Learning Executive credits much of his career success to his mother’s guidance; “she imparted the values of resourcefulness, tenacity, resilience and self-awareness” all of which later influenced the development of him as a leader (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2).

He continued his depiction stating, “when I look back many years I realize that my mother was an extraordinary role model” (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2).
He claimed that his mother demonstrated the unique ability to get along with a wide variety of people, that she was emotionally intelligent, and that she ensured that he acquire this ability at a very early age (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2).

A graduate of the Philadelphia public school system, the Learning Executive gained admission to Temple University where he pursued an undergraduate degree in Education. He shared with me that he had no role models; it wasn’t until his family moved to a more influential neighborhood at the age of thirteen that peers persuaded him to explore higher education (Learning Executive, 2007, Researcher Journal). His decision to pursue education as a career was an outcome of limited exposure to other professions, though he notes that he is sure that he would have eventually chosen education due to a deeply embedded life interest in developing others (Learning Executive, 2007, Researcher Journal). In 1965 he graduated from Temple and was immediately employed as a teacher by the Philadelphia City school system. He soon left this position, primarily due to working conditions and a desire for continued professional challenge, he took a new job in a small private school setting, the Private School of Philadelphia in 1970.

His first formal leadership responsibility was acquired while teaching at the Private School (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2). The position provided him an early opportunity to express his intellectual curiosity that resulted in the design and implementation of an imaginative curriculum consisting of human health sciences, biology, and behavioral sciences. This early experience introduced him to the joy of coaching and indirectly to his emerging interest in leadership phenomena, his interest in developing human
capability, and influencing others to achieve organizational and personal goals (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2).

The Learning Executive reflected on his athletic coaching experiences as the primary leadership development experience in his life having taught him many principles that he applies even now (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2). An example that he shares from his early coaching experiences is assuming risk to do the right thing, “I benched my entire senior squad seeing the need to turnaround my team’s culture, their losing attitude, and their negative influence” (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2). He claims to have learned a number of lessons from this early leadership experience, “to be courageous in the face of adversity, the value in setting standards, and the need to hold others to those standards, the need to take care of the people that you are with, and one of the more significant lessons being the power of a team far exceeds what one individual can achieve” (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2).

In 1972 he completed a Masters in Health Sciences Education from Temple University while fully employed. In 1974 he left Private School to assume a Directorship at the Philadelphia based Alternative High School, a model alternative high school for troubled, resistant and apathetic students where he claims to have been influential in curricula design. The change allowed him to pursue a greater challenge, “the potential to make a difference with youth that others had given up on was exhilarating” (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2). During his tenure at Alternative School he continued his graduate
education at Temple pursuing a multidiscipline Doctorate of Education in the fields of curricula development, group and organizational development.

In 1974 he supplemented his income through a collaborative partnership with the graduate faculty at Temple that resulted in creating the Humanistic Education Center, an education consultative-training think-tank. This opportunity was his first formal consulting opportunity, empowering him to experiment, encouraging deep self-reflection, and enabling him to engage in his early exploration of human capital development while benefiting from expert tutoring, and coaching by Temple’s graduate faculty.

This opportunity culminated in his appointment as Program Director for the Center. The Learning Executive attributes this experience as having taught him the importance of, “internalizing a job, leaving a situation in better shape than how you found it; this can be accomplished by being both a coach and a teacher, influencing one person at a time, relying on facts; what the data is telling you as opposed to relying on emotions” (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2).

He completed his Doctorate education in 1976. The Learning Executive mentions that he is proud to have completed his Doctorate education in four years; during this period he was actively employed and successfully managed a great deal of stress, but experienced an unbelievable opportunity for professional growth (Learning Executive, 2006, Researcher Journal). His formal education provided him necessary occupational skills, equipped him with the ability to learn, and helped shape his occupational interests readying him for future challenges.
The Learning Executive’s Career Ascension

This period in the Learning Executive’s career can be characterized as one of transition; rapid professional growth, increased responsibility, employment change, experimentation, turmoil, loss and fear, resulting in the his achievement of career aspirations. The Learning Executive has sacrificed much to achieve his goals, years as a geographic bachelor, twelve to fourteen hour workdays, earning him the title Vice President of Talent Management and Chief Learning Officer.

In 1978 the Learning Executive transitioned to private sector employment, joining SU Corporation as a Global Management and Organizational consultant. The transition was difficult, he perceived the change as undermining his closely held personal values; “I made a decision that was tremendously difficult for me, if I leave education and join the private sector I’m compromising what I believe in” (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2), his altruistic view of his purpose in life was threatened, his work was no longer focused towards developing youth, the only true profession that he had known. This dilemma culminated in the Learning Executive overcoming a number of self-imposed limits, realizing his potential as a leader and his unique skills as a Human Resources Development professional.

Within the year he assumed the role of Assistant Vice President, Director of Training and Development for RI Company, a leading insurance corporation headquartered in Philadelphia. He was proud of his pioneering work. While in the role he created a comprehensive management development program that was utilized throughout RI (Learning
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2). As a result of his contributions he was embraced by RI’s senior management team, he soon became a corporate rising star. Then his fortune changed.

The company’s leadership structure was altered [restructured] in 1980; the outcome of the restructuring resulted in his immediate dismissal. His dismissal, the way it was enacted was a life-altering event. The Learning Executive shared that he experienced grief over losing a job that he truly valued. He experienced intense fear, the undermining of his trust in others, that eventually awakened him to the need take ownership of his career (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2).

The Learning Executive laments, “in every job that I’ve held, I’ve totally embraced my role; I’m the kind of person that organizations have turned to, either to build things from scratch or turn around organizations to make them better” (Learning Executive, 2006, Research Transcript 2). Even today he expresses disbelief in his discharge.

This was a difficult period in the Learning Executive’s career. He shared that he experienced a breadth of emotions that included uncertainty, fear, and grief. This was his first senior corporate role, a transitional role, what he claims to have worked towards to this point in his career, he experienced anxiety arising from the potential to have to toil day-to-day, working merely for subsistence. The career lesson learned for him was; “life is far too short to work at something not healthy or inconsistent with your values” (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2).
Panicked, he quickly transitioned to what the Learning Executive terms “a life saving job” (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2) with a division of RA headquartered in New York, “I never intended to remain in the position for a significant amount of time, I am a survivor” (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2).

In 1981 he left RA to assume a leadership role with HLR Pharmaceutical Company. As Co-Director, Management and Organizational Development he was able to influence the company’s management development programs, providing internal consultative services that eventually resulted in him being mentored by a very influential senior manager that the Learning Executive coins his “best boss”.

He earned the Learning Executive’s respect and admiration through his tough business acumen. He admired the senior manager’s ability (a) he was extremely intuitive and emotionally intelligent, (b) he possessed excellent coaching skills, (c) he was concerned about employee development, placing team members in stretch assignments, (d) and he had a unique ability to identify early to mid-career talent for development (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2).

Within the first two years of joining HLR Pharmaceutical Company the Learning Executive was promoted to Corporate Assistant Vice President and Director of Drug Regulatory Affairs. His rapid ascension within the company was unheard of at the time. He was charged with the complete re-organization of HLR’s new drug application process. The Learning Executive was challenged to rebuild a broken, business critical system that he claims to have been the “hardest job he ever had to assume, a real stretch assignment in
which I spent countless hours working to not only develop my team but also improve an existing system across the entirety of a corporation” (Learning Executive, 2007; Researcher Journal).

His contributions resulted in his promotion to Corporate Officer and Director, Pharmaceutical New Product Development in 1985. Charged with the oversight of new product development for a multinational pharmaceutical company he was often criticized by his peers who were envious of his rapid assent, they challenged his lack of formal scientific credentialing.

This leadership challenge required him to influence others, coworkers who were highly educated, extremely competent, combative and unwilling to lend their support. He was asked to guide peers across multiple divisions while providing leadership to a global multi-tiered team. His personal contributions resulted in the maturation of HLR’s new drug product portfolio, the reengineering of worldwide processes for new product development, and an enhanced project management approach for the selection of promising molecules. From this experience he learned the following, “never make excuses for why you are promoted over others, do the best job that you are capable of, and remember that you did not make the promotion decision” (Learning Executive, 2007; Researcher Journal).

The Learning Executive shared that as a result of his willingness to assume challenging job responsibilities outside of his functional expertise, leading a global pharmaceutical senior management team for a multi-billion dollar business, he experienced the opportunity, the potential to acquire a completely different perspective on leadership and
management (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). His tenure at HLR was a significant development opportunity, one that prepared the Learning Executive for survival at the highest levels of organizational management (Learning Executive, 2007; Researcher Journal).

In 1990 HLR senior management provided an opportunity for the Learning Executive to return his profession. He was appointed Corporate Officer and Director, Human Resources Planning and Executive Development. His charge was to lead a team to design human resource systems to ensure the competence of newly hired executives within the company, coined on-boarding, which at the time was not a commonly used term within the profession. The Learning Executive credits his success to “agile learning, reflecting on his actions to constantly improve, and his deeply imbedded life interests in coaching and developing others” (Learning Executive, 2006; Research Transcript 2). Having achieved what he viewed as his full potential, he chose to return to consulting.

In 1993 M Consulting employed the Learning Executive; his title was Senior Vice President. During the next several years the Learning Executive was provided the opportunity to refine his consultative, organizational development, and executive coaching skills. This opportunity enabled him to develop a consulting business, to become an entrepreneur, to develop his ability to influence and skills to persuade others, marketing products and services; that resulted in continued maturation of his skills as a Human Resource Development professional.
The Learning Executive’s future (current) employer was a key client of M Consulting. This professional situation provided him the opportunity to develop a close, personal relationship with the Company’s senior leadership team. This intense working relationship with Company key leadership spawned his desire, “to once again become a part of a large organization, a team in which you really believed in what you were doing, really able to make a contribution” (Learning Executive, 2007, Researcher Journal).

In 1997 after having interacted with Company senior management for several years as a consultant he was offered employment as Global Vice President of Human Resources for the Biosciences Division. Focused on human resource processes and capabilities he also served as a sitting member of the Company’s global human resources leadership team. While in this role he gained experience in orchestrating several major internal mergers of key divisions that resulted in broadening his influence. “You must have good influencing skills, if not you quickly become organizational road kill; I have been able to accomplish a great deal through influence throughout my career” (Learning Executive, 2007; Researcher Journal). The Learning Executive shared that his career was typified by themes:

I am gifted teacher, a leader, and a coach. I have demonstrated ability to effectively work with a great variety of people throughout my career. I possess a high level of emotional intelligence. I have learned the value of tenacity and to follow my instincts, I tend to see opportunity before others. I am a visionary. I am a catalyst for change, always leaving situations better than what I was given, making improvements with very limited resources. I am an agile learner, able to learn from experience; I try
to gain insight into my strengths, limitations, abilities, and talents; sensitive to opportunities for self-improvement. I have always strived to develop others, I am most proud of helping my employees to grow to contribute more. (Learning Executive, 2007; Researcher Journal)

In 1999, just two years after joining the Company he was appointed Vice President, Leadership and Career Development and Chief Learning Officer (see Figure 22). In 2005 his title evolved to Vice President, Talent Management and Chief Learning Officer, which was his role at the time of my research. As a senior leader within the Company’s Human Resources function the Learning Executive is responsible for developing global human resource talent and the development of the company’s human capital.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Public Educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Private School Educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Private School Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Program Director University Based Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Corporate Management and Development Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Corporate Asst Vice President, Director of Training and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Corporate Individual Contributor Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Corporate Co-Director, Management and Organizational Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Corporate Vice President of Regulatory Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Corporate Director of Pharmaceutical and New Product Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Corporate Director of Human Resources Planning &amp; Executive Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Consultant, Senior Vice President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Corporate Vice President of Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Corporate Vice President, Leadership &amp; Career Development, Chief Learning Officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 22. The Learning Executive’s Career.*
The figure summarizes the career progression of the Learning Executive. Within fourteen years of achieving his first salaried position as a public educator he achieved the title of Vice President within a major global corporation. He has held senior private sector leadership roles for twenty years, culminating in 1999 with his assumption to the role of Learning Executive.

The study’s conceptual framework provided the theoretical foundation, the necessary constructs, to support my inquiry. My academic committee vetted the study’s constructs prior to initiating my research. Each titled section corresponds to the study’s conceptual framework; his role, the context in which he was situated, and his leadership. Additional categories of descriptive text emerged from my findings. I have implemented a linear-analytic structure [traditional research structure] to depict my case study; this is appropriate (Yin, 2003). My academic committee deemed this structure acceptable.

_Research Question 1: Organizational Role_

To better understand the Learning Executive’s leadership I explored his role, his contributions, the challenges and the opportunities associated with his job. Examples of his leadership emerged as my research matured. The Learning Executive portrayed his role as varied, diverse, a position that entails human resources responsibilities while horizontally aligning to organizational and individual learning (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). He is responsible for providing necessary leadership for global staffing, talent
acquisition, talent development, performance management, human and social capital
development, knowledge management and human resources planning systems. He assures
the alignment of talent acquisition to talent development; he is charged with the management
of his company’s tacit knowledge, its dissemination and use, and the maturation of
organizational culture (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6).

The Learning Executive has formalized knowledge and knowledge sharing processes
within his company. He has provided necessary leadership to transpose critical individual
tacit knowledge into explicit organizational knowledge through business processes having
implemented needs assessments, curriculum, formal course development, and the
implementation of learning technologies that have culminated in enabling his company’s
envisioned future. As a senior human resources leader he has been charged with transposing
strategy into achievable operational goals and objectives:

I think what we’ve done is to capture great knowledge that either existed in some
way, shape or form maybe in pieces in the company and certainly captured great
knowledge, great ideas, concepts from outside the company. What we have done is
we’ve figured out that, in skillful ways, how to package that information in
coursework in courseware and in resource tool chests that are e-accessible so I think
that at some rate we’ve captured some of the best nuggets of ideas that are out there
and knowledge that’s out there. We’ve, I think in many ways creatively designed and
packaged around that and then we’ve been finding any number of ways to get that
knowledge and those ideas, those tools and resources available to our people.

(Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4)

He is the first Learning Executive for his company. At the time of my research a formal job description did not exist (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). His job was not defined, not marketed to potential applicants. It emerged from a perceived performance gap recognized by the top management team in conjunction with the Learning Executive’s ability to influence others to recognize the potential for the role (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). When questioned, the Chief Executive Officer stated, “we were not spending nearly enough time, effort, talent, nor money to develop our people, to develop them to their full potential” this is why we needed a Learning Executive (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7).

The Learning Executive’s self-portrayal entails a business executive who just happens to possess subject matter expertise in Human Resource Development and Human Resource Management (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). He is a competent business leader, “He demonstrates high levels of business acumen” (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2007, Research Transcript 1). The Learning Executive stated:

I think you have to be grounded in the core competencies of our profession such as adult learning, instructional design, curriculum theory, and change management, combined with a real perspective on one’s chosen business. There is not a day that I don’t think of myself first as a business executive who happens to have a certain level of experience. (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3)
His company has historically sponsored workforce development and education as combined functional roles (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). The Learning Executive shared, “there was a Training and Development function in the Company in the 1980s; it was disbanded as a result of a financial downturn” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). The Learning Executive has attempted to differentiate then from now, “we’ve tried to build something here for sustainability” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3) to achieve a long-term solution to actual operational problems (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). This differentiation was needed; knowledge skeptics challenged him during his ascension (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).

To overcome this early organizational friction he learned several key lessons. The first lesson of sustainability is to align interventions to stakeholders needs, ensuring that interventions achieve strategic and operational objectives, to continually demonstrate the value of one’s work. This observation is amplified by; “I think we’re looked to be subject matter experts, to create possibilities to help the organization move itself from where it is to a better place” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4).

The second element of sustainability is resourcefulness. The Learning Executive noted that his team is able to design and deliver a wide variety of educational interventions, “literally at a cost of pennies on the dollar” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). The Learning Executive portrayed his role as needing to be strategically oriented yet operationally close to the day-to-day business, to be situation-ally aware. To achieve this end
senior management expects him to compete for a sufficient budget, and when not fully funded the Learning Executive relies on his immediate team to be creative; to figure a way to accomplish goals with limited resources (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).

The Learning Executive is recognized as resourceful. This notoriety is not due to mere penny pinching but is a reflection of his managerial skills, entrepreneur-ism, the significance of his work, making the most of limited resources. He’s a realist and he is resourceful, it’s that resourcefulness that has contributed to his success in his company (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6).

He appeared self-assured but admitted, “I like to think that I am [confident], I think that there is a certain amount of insecurity in everyone” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). He claimed not to worry about failing; he professed that avoidance of failure typically results in less than optimal performance (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). He mentioned that he attempts to “go out into my workplace with a psychology of winning everyday” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). His comment sheds further light on how he approaches his role.

The Learning Executive openly reflected on his expectations for himself, “I couldn’t look at myself in the mirror if I didn’t attempt to model what it is that I espouse, what I teach; it is my need for congruency between my actions, deeds, and words” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). He claimed to demand the following from himself, integrity, high-energy, and subject matter expertise (Learning Executive, 2007, Researcher Journal).
In turn the Learning Executive expects his employees to work to their capabilities, to know and understand that if their contributions to their company and business unit are successful, and if they are skillful in managing their careers, careful to align them, everyone wins (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). He does not expect his team to contribute as much as he does, that at times he goes to absurd lengths to prepare work deliverables, that he has more to do than he can manage well (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).

During our conversation the Learning Executive noted the importance of talent management, the need to select the best people to become members of his company, “people who really want to do the work that we are about” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). His organization spends a great deal of time aligning team members to the right opportunities, “team members working on things that are very important to them, aligning opportunities with their deeply embedded life interests and values” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). The significance of talent management is its potential to acquire the right human capital for the right jobs, its potential to enhance tacit knowledge development, and further organizational innovation.

The responsibility of a leader is to select the right team, “I really believe that the effectiveness of any leader, the effectiveness of any team, starts with the composition of the team” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). He reinforces the need for selection decisions based on recognized criteria, “we do careful background work, and if you select the right people it’s going to be a great ride” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

Transcript 9). The Learning Executive mentioned that his immediate team is composed of competent members. In areas where his team is less than proficient he relies on an external network of professionals to aid him. This network is an outcome of his active participation in professional societies and associations (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

The Learning Executive is an active learner. Throughout my interaction with him he shared a number of behavioral theories, conferences in which he presented, recent manuscripts that he has been asked to review for comment. This form of active learning is an acquired personal characteristic, a discipline that he has instilled within himself to maintain professional competence.

No one-day is alike, “there aren’t many typical days, I arrive at my office usually at 6:20 a.m., my days consist of back-to-back meetings, a lot of communication” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). He stated that he does not reserve sufficient time in his day to reflect, to critically review projects and team member’s work (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).

As in any job some responsibilities are viewed as less than desirable. He dislikes budgeting; he dislikes having to follow-up with team members that should be capable of completing their work without his intervention; his strategy for managing those things which he dislikes is simply “just disciplining myself to do it”, (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). The Learning Executive is viewed as an agent of change; the following paragraphs reflect his accomplishments, accomplishments that emerged from my observation of his role.
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

Learning Executive Accomplishments

To better understand the job of the Learning Executive I requested that he describe his contributions, his accomplishments. He commented that one significant contribution was his implementation of a formalized corporate-wide learning agenda that is aligned and integrated with his company’s goals and strategies (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). Another contribution is his influence of company culture through defined interventions such as Leaders-as-teachers that has resulted in improved dissemination of key communication and organization-wide replication of know-how (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).

The Learning Executive has furthered social capital formation within his corporation through the implementation of an enterprise web-based system termed Company Connect, an expertise and collaboration tool that enables company associates to actively search for others experience and knowledge relevant to one’s questions (Company Connect, 2008, Extant Data). As a social capital initiative its outcomes entail: (a) better collaboration across discrete business segments, cross-culture, and cross-geography; (b) the ability to identify specific and relevant organizational knowledge, expertise, and best practices to enable the rapid deployment to resolve issues; (c) accelerate innovation processes and improve operational effectiveness; (d) assess potential cross-business opportunities; and (e) quickly establish new knowledge communities to support emerging projects (Company Connect, 2008, Extant Data). Over 400 hundred company associates at 31 locations across the globe
are actively using Company Connect to share and transfer knowledge (Company Connect, 2008, Extant Data).

Yet another accomplishment is the establishment of the corporate university, he shared that the University is his most significant contribution (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). Members of the senior leadership team have publicly announced that the Learning Executive role is vital to the company. His role is needed to enable learning, continued innovation, organization-wide communication, to embed preferred culture and core values (Learning Executive, 2007, Researcher Journal).

Others’ comment, “as a result of the Learning Executive’s leadership, his team has raised the level of talent acquisition, diversity, the whole sourcing and employee development process, resulting in the Company becoming more focused on people and their development” (Team Member, 2006, Research Transcript 1). The Learning Executive’s immediate supervisor remarked that the Learning Executive has enabled the alignment of corporate values to strategic imperatives; the Learning Executive’s team has embedded a culture of learning (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6).

The Vice President of Human Resources [Learning Executive’s Supervisor] and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) portrayed his contributions as valued, respected; his efforts have resulted in the formalization of organizational learning within the Company. The Learning Executive’s supervisor noted that his work adds value to the company, and because its value is recognized he continues to garner support, “his sheer resourcefulness has made
him successful in this organization” (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6).

The CEO noted that the Learning Executive has put in-place the means to discern what is expected of leaders (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7). He continued his depiction adding that the formal learning opportunities provided by the company’s university motivates his workforce, “we have engendered in our leaders a sense of responsibility, engagement that teaching others, that teaching is a notable calling, I believe that there is a correlation between good leaders and corporate performance” (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7). The Chief Executive Officer furthered his portrayal sharing that the Learning Executive’s work contributes directly to enabling great performance by company employees, shaping the workplace culture to be a great place to work (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7).

Important work in corporations typically takes the form of projects, my discussion with the Learning Executive evolved towards the topics of project management, project selection, and the eventual evaluation of projects. The Learning Executive remarked that he prefers to source project nominations internal to his team, “what we are hearing and sensing or what is coming to us by way of direct requests; our biggest challenge is managing our current project portfolio” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). The Learning Executive shares that his team utilizes a portfolio management process for significant projects and less formal processes for minor projects (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).
He mentioned that one very influential internal customer evaluates the impact of the Learning Executive’s programs by, (a) did performance improve, (b) did the program influence existing organizational culture, and (c) did information flow (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). The Learning Executive shared that his team has used traditional evaluative tools, but stresses, “we’ve just now opened the door to exploring more specific ways of assessing impact and the transfer of learning” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).

Thirteen key metrics termed KBOs (Key Business Objectives) drive the Learning Executive’s business unit and in turn each member of the Learning Executive’s team has assigned individual impact goals that are clearly aligned to attaining KBOs (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). The Learning Executive stressed that he is attempting to adopt the tenets of (a) clearly defining business outcomes, linking programs to true business needs, (b) designing learning for a complete learner experience, (c) delivering learning for application, showing how content relates to current business results, (d) driving initiatives through completion ensuring learner accountability, (e) deploying learning, actively ensuring its full support, and (f) collecting credible data on outcomes then using this data to market program offerings (Six Disciplines of Breakthrough Learning, 2007, Case Study Data Base).

The Learning Executive commented that the senior leadership team depends on his subject matter expertise, to actively engage the entire corporation to embrace change, “they look to my team to generate viable ideas, to create possibilities to help the organization move
it-self to become a better place” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). He quickly noted that the Company’s senior leadership team [upper echelon] does not appreciate idealists; he is expected to regularly demonstrate “practical visionary” skills (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). He completed his depiction stating “we are expected to have a very defined process in a never ending state of continuous improvement, and in turn, to be a catalyst for learning, performance management, human resources planning, talent acquisition, and associate engagement” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4).

In his role he is faced with the challenge of assuring that interventions are integrated and aligned with company strategy (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). He relies on his intuition along with surveying internal customers to capture their voices, their needs and opportunities to improve through workplace learning and the management of knowledge (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).

His team conducts this analysis by implementing a questionnaire, a survey composed of questions, the results of which influence planning for a three-year period (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). The survey attempts to solicit future needs as well as assess current levels of service by his team. He shared that he is extremely proud of his ability to sense, to perceive, what senior leaders want even though they have difficulty verbalizing their needs (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). The top management team relies on him to demonstrate subject matter expertise in the areas of knowledge management and the development of human capital..
The corporate university.

A company’s only sustainable competitive advantage is its ability to innovate, adapt, and create new value for its customers (Chief Executive Officer, 2004; Case Study Data Base Extant Data). The Company’s Chief Executive Officer recognizes that to achieve sustained advantage a company must be great, to achieve the status of a great company is very much people dependent, adaptability dependent, and engagement dependent (At C-Level Interview, 2004; Extant Data).

The CEO continued his depiction stating that his role as his organization’s most senior leader is to prepare his company for the next 100 years; the Company must develop new skills, abilities, and approaches (At C-Level Interview, 2004; Extant Data). The best way to do this is through a combination of formalized curriculum, on-the-job training, key developmental assignments, and leaders serving as teachers all of which has eventually culminated in the need for a corporate university (At C-Level Interview, 2004; Extant Data).

The Learning Executive mentioned that the ability to learn, to demonstrate many new and different capabilities, is required of all our leaders and associates (When Leaders are Teachers, Good Things Happen, 2003; Extant Data). Our organization’s leaders must be capable of demonstrating better and consistently more effective leadership (When Leaders are Teachers, Good Things Happen, 2003; Extant Data). New products and marketing platforms have to be successfully launched, our manufacturing processes need to become more efficient, leaner, and capable of on-going improvement, our workforce needs to acquire new skills and knowledge at a much greater speed; personal and organizational agility is
essential for our continued success as a corporation (When Leaders are Teachers, Good Things Happen, 2003; Extant Data).

In March 2000, the first corporate university program was launched. Since then seven years of building learning and teaching capability within the Company has culminated in more than nine thousand associates participating in learning and development (Company University History, 2007, Extant Data). More than five hundred leaders support the University as professionals who co-facilitate company educational programs (Company University History, 2007, Extant Data). Line managers lead 90% of the University’s management and leadership development programs (University Actionable Leaders-as-Teachers Framework, 2005, Extant Data). The University is the principle company endorsed process for developing the skills and knowledge of associates and is viewed as a primary means to enable the company’s future (Company University History, 2007, Extant Data). The Learning Executive stated, “prior to 2000 we were an organization that had inconsistent learning and training practices that frequently lacked sustainability and were often subject to the ebbs and flows of annual business performance” (Learning Executive, 2007; Researcher Journal). This situation has since changed.

The Learning Executive shared, the University is a primary means to ensure learning and development, its teachings should always be closely tied to the Company’s core business strategy by: (a) accelerating top-line growth through innovation and developing higher value products for patients and our customers; (b) improving bottom-line performance growth through improved operational effectiveness; achieved by (c) enhancing organizational,
leadership and associate capabilities, daily (When Leaders Are Teachers Good Things Happen, 2003; Extant Data). Extant data reveals the approaches adopted by the Learning Executive to engage leaders in the classroom has strengthened organizational leader’s coaching capabilities beyond the classroom (University Actionable Leaders-as-Teachers Framework, 2005, Extant Data).

The Learning Executive portrayed the University as facilitating the sharing of tacit knowledge; that this is what is needed to ensure the company’s continued prosperity (When Leaders Are Teachers Good Things Happen, 2003; Extant Data). He continued his depiction noting that the University is viewed as the catalyst for corporate change (When Leaders Are Teachers Good Things Happen, 2003; Extant Data). The Learning Executive comments that he “constantly reflects on his company’s strategy, asking who are we, what do we want to become, what are our business goals, our strategies needed to achieve the goals; learning is a key competency that is necessary for our continued success” (Learning Executive, 2007; Researcher Journal).

The University’s program, entitled Leaders-as-teachers is built upon the writings of Noel Tichy, Bernard Haldane, Jim Waldroop, Tim Butler, and John Kotter (Leaders as Teachers, 2004; Extant Data). The Leaders-as-teachers approach requires senior members of management to assume teaching roles, disseminating organizational history, stories, tacit know-how, to facilitate a series of formal learning events that include instructor led training and coaching activities. The premise of the initiative is built upon the proposition that leaders have two fundamental and intertwined goals: to improve their organizations and to
improve themselves. Both goals require investment in time and capital to achieve this desired end. The Learning Executive noted:

Corporate universities offer some advantages over traditional academic institutions: they are better able to meet educational and career development needs that are focused, aligned, and specific to one’s organization; they can provide access to highly customized content and up-to-the-minute information within an organization to include strategy and goals, and they offer participants opportunities to interact with peers, subject matter experts, and mentors within the organization (When Leaders Are Teachers Good Things Happen, 2003; Extant Data). An additional advantage is that faculty can be recruited from the leadership ranks of one’s organization (When Leaders Are Teachers Good Things Happen, 2003; Extant Data).

An emerging benefit that was not expected in the design of the corporate university was the maturation of social knowledge, social capital within the Learning Executive’s company (When Leaders Are Teachers Good Things Happen, 2003; Extant Data).

The University aids senior leadership to manage globally, integrating values, standards, and desired skills and behaviors (When Leaders Are Teachers Good Things Happen, 2003; Extant Data). The Learning Executive’s supervisor stressed the value of the University, “the University ensures the development of leadership, good leadership, but not only good leadership but also synchronized thinking amongst leaders, reducing the potential for chaos in our organization” (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6).
The Learning Executive shared, “if one wants their university to have maximum effect it must be embedded into the human resource system of their organization” (Chief Learning Officer, 2003; Extant Data). The Learning Executive’s company performs an annual assessment of leader development needs that feeds its human resources planning system; the University is one of the keys to bridging a leader’s needs (Chief Learning Officer, 2003; Extant Data).

The University is viewed as an indispensable, institutionalized resource for achieving Company goals and, also, as a catalyst for associates’ professional and career growth (Company University History, 2007, Case Study Data Base Extant Data). The University’s mission statement claims to, “Engage all Company associates in applied learning focusing on leadership, business and operational effectiveness, and career development to fuel our journey towards greatness.” (Company University History, 2007, Extant Data). The vision portrayed by the Learning Executive for the corporate university is:

(a) To be consistently viewed by our associates and leaders as an indispensable, an institutionalized resource for achieving our business goals and, also, as a catalyst for associate’s professional and career growth; and (b) to be identified by new associates as a clear example of the Company’s commitment to learning and career development, and as a key reason they selected our company. Current associates will regularly describe how the University helps them stay professionally engaged and prepared for current and future opportunities. Associates from around the world will be able to benefit from the University; (c) Noted by our customers, competitors, other
companies and professional associations that our Company is a learning organization
and the company’s efforts towards developing a culture of learning is cited as one of
the outstanding corporate learning programs in the world (Company University

At the time of my research the University was composed of five Colleges, a
Leadership College, Business Skills College, a Career Assessment/Development College,
Operational Effectiveness, and a United States College of Sales (Company University
History, 2007, Case Study Data Base Extant Data). A core element of the Company’s leader
development program is all leaders are required to complete the assigned curriculum, a set of
five courses and a series of e-learning activities that address the various skills that leaders
must have to enable the Company to achieve greatness. The courses are entitled (a) coaching
for performance and development, (b) diversity awareness, (c) ethical fitness, (d) managing
for performance excellence, (e) selecting the best, and (f) a series of packaged blended
learning opportunities that entail corporate learning, human resources planning, employee
development, employee performance and compensation systems. The program requires a
total of sixty-six hours of formal course work and additional time for pre-work activities
(Company University, 2007, Extant Data).

The Learning Executive’s team has recently completed a strategic review of the
corporate university resulting in six strategic imperatives termed keys to success that include
(a) tighten alignment of the University to support growth strategies, (b) ensure easy access
and the effective use of University resources, (c) ensure excellence in learning content and
delivery of learning, (d) successfully implement a learning management system, (e) irreversibly embed current learning initiatives in the Company’s culture, (f) contribute in measurable ways to current and future leadership talent practices (Company University History, 2007, Extant Data). From this depiction the themes of alignment, prediction, enhanced access, customer delight, learning, and business impact emerge.

Some senior leaders within the Learning Executive’s company have openly challenged the decision to invest company resources into a corporate university, demanding evidence of return on investment. The Company assesses the University’s contributions by asking, is the company more successful, is the company growing at a faster rate, is the company more profitable, and are we achieving ever higher customer satisfaction ratings (Company University History, 2007, Extant Data)? The Learning Executive’s supervisor mentioned, “the University has enabled the company to achieve its goals much faster than what would have been possible if the University had not been in-place. The Company exhibits a culture of learning because of the University” (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Transcript 6). The Chief Executive Officer shared:

One thing I’d like to be remembered for at the top of the list is that on my watch development of people became embedded in the culture. I believe in the maxim that a company’s only sustainable competitive advantage is the ability to innovate, adapt, and create new value for its customers. I hope that our ability to learn and teach and grow develops its own flywheel and keeps on going. If it does, we will have done
something important for the next generation. (At C-Level Interview, 2004, Extant Data) The company’s university is a tangible outcome of his vision.

*Creating new knowledge.*

When asked how the Learning Executive influences the creation of new knowledge, he remarked that he enables the capture and dissemination of knowledge, ideas, and concepts both internal and external to his company (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). He stated, “we have figured out how to package information in courseware as well as in resource tool chests that are e-accessible” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). The Learning Executive stressed that his team acts as catalysts, supporting the codification and eventual dissemination of new and existing organizational knowledge (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4).

Change makes innovation possible that eventually furthers the creation of new organizational knowledge; the Learning Executive makes note that he leads and participates in many types of changes (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). Organizations gravitate towards a steady, comfortable state; “it is incumbent on leaders to enact change” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4).

To enable change he stressed the importance of creating gaps, cognitive dissonance within others to leverage change (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). He reinforced with me the need to engage those who are being asked to enact the change; to create a compelling, engaging vision of their future, to align their personal needs to that
future, that will result in them demonstrating high levels of energy and determination to enact the desired change (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4).

He prefers to influence individual functional leaders to enact change, “once I’ve done my homework, I’m going to generally schedule as many one-to-one’s that I can ahead of time. Not only to sell the idea but to test it and make some adjustments in the idea” (Learning Executive, 2007, Transcript 5). He furthered his depiction, “if I’m going to present an idea you can count on the fact that I’ve thought allot about how I want to present that idea” (Learning Executive, 2007, Transcript 5).

An example of one pending organization-wide change that involves the management of knowledge is his team is currently partnering with the Information Technology organization to enable fingertip learning and performance support tools (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). He stressed that his organization is still inexperienced with such technologies but claimed that within several years they will have necessary systems in-place to enable web based e-performance support for all Company employees (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4).

The Company’s strategy entails expanding the company’s new product pipeline through innovation to grow revenues while controlling costs to enhance bottom-line results (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). Innovation is important; to enable innovation learning must take place and new knowledge must evolve. Within the Learning Executive’s company innovation is driven through (a) targeted development efforts towards high value products and services, (b) improving existing systems and methods through
operational excellence tools and techniques, and a third initiative (c) building organizational and individual capability; all three are influenced by his role (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4).

If an employee experiences a significant learning outcome as a result of a company sponsored event, a formal commitment on the part of the employee and their management to utilize and support the implementation of the newly acquired skill is put in place through peer coaching and implementing plans to ensure the transfer of learning and eventual return on the investment in learning, both in time and in dollars (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). An additional learning innovation is the Learning Executive’s team is reducing learning outcome variation through recognized Operational Excellence techniques; the result of this work is reducing learning variation amongst associates (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4).

Yet another innovation is the Company’s enactment of Human Resource planning; the company has a formal tool in place to identify needed skills, perform a formal gap analysis, and then formulate recommended courses of action to close the identified gaps (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). The Learning Executive indicates that metrics are being used to encourage innovation; training and education are recognized enablers to the company’s continued ability to innovate (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4).

*Learning Executive Communication*
The Learning Executive’s role requires innovative approaches to formal and informal communication. He has implemented a number of councils, committees, and forums to support on-going purposeful communication. He actively collaborates with others, seeking opportunities to be inclusive. This is exemplified by his participation in professional societies, his reputation as inclusive, and leadership of a number of influential Human Resources teams.

Within his team he relies on informal communication, situational in nature, immediate and direct “we meet on the fly” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). He utilizes teams, councils as a forum to influence others external to his team one example is the Global Strategy Council that is charged with providing strategic direction for the Corporate University (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). Another example is he leads the Talent Management Council, this council is composed of key Human Resource professionals across the Company, the council is charged with providing necessary direction to develop human capital (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).
The Learning Executive’s Communication Network

*Figure 23. The Learning Executive Communication Network.*

The Learning Executive communication network based on Structural Hole Theory (Burt, 1997). The Learning Executive does have a potentially weak connection between he and the senior leadership team; a strong connection with his team, his supervisor, and the CEO.

He makes a conscious effort to ensure good communication by critically evaluating his organization’s communication architecture (see Figure 23); examples include his use of information technology to enable global communication though web-based media and the establishment of an e-platform to enable the global management of human resources,
facilitating a global e-dialog on human capital planning (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).

When he makes a mistake he utilizes a variety of means to mitigate the impact of his mistakes by over-communicating, “I try to communicate in preventative ways, I try to get out ahead of the issue rather than allowing it to escalate” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). He does attempt to keep people informed on a timely basis, proactively communicating to those who have a need to know (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). He stressed that he typically highlights positive aspects of a message, at the beginning of his communication and at the close, positioning negative information in the middle (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

Frequent communication themes include talent management, human resources planning, organization and individual learning, employee development, and employee engagement (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). He stressed that he likes to incorporate factual information as a key foundation to any communication, equipping him to deliver his message in a calm, reaffirming tone (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

Before he communicates he spends an inordinate amount of time preparing, this preparation includes pre-selling his communication to impacted stakeholders (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). This is needed to improve his communication as an outcome of stakeholder feedback (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). Advice
shared by the Learning Executive is, “to align your proposal to the dominant group member’s preferences” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

He stressed that his communication style can be characterized as, “not shying away from things”, it is direct (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 9). He claimed that when he delivers tough messages he works to ensure that others fully understand his perspective, “it is my job to ensure that my team understands my message; our job together is to determine the best solution to a problem or issue” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 9).

**Learning Executive Decision-making**

A critical competency for effective leaders is decision making (Yukl, 1998). The Learning Executive noted, “I try to get good data, I use some logic in analysis and churn it all up with a heavy dose of intuition, then attempt to balance the outcome with my head” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). He evaluates critical decisions against explicit and implicit criteria using defined time lines, short, intermediate and long-term, reflecting on actual work products versus planned deliverables (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). He supports his decision-making by posing critical probing questions in combination with good listening skills (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). He has developed the ability to sense inaccurate or untruthful information, this is a valuable skill that has evolved through multiple leadership experiences (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).
Key decisions include (a) implementing Leaders as teachers and the corporate university, (b) enabling e-learning and blended learning, and (c) successfully implementing curriculum utilizing a Learning Management System (LMS) (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). He had to develop unique implementation strategies for each initiative; this was needed to fully realize their potential to deliver value to his company (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).

One example was aligning the LMS acquisition decision to a potential concern for mandated compliance. From a Human Resources perspective the use of blended learning technologies offers the potential for improved workplace performance; instead organizational stakeholders endorsed the investment based on the potential threat of global product supply interruption due to the potential risk posed by regulatory standards (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). He stressed that key decisions should take into consideration the factors of context and time, “there is a right time for key initiatives to be implemented to enable their success”; the acquisition of the Learning Management System is an example of appropriate sensitivity to time and context (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).

He claims, “I feel good about ninety eight to ninety nine percent of the decisions that I have made, some I feel great about and others just good about” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). He does seek others input, “decisions that are strategic in nature I tend to be inclusive, I genuinely believe that you get better decisions as a result of varied perspectives” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4).
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

Learning Executive Learning

Throughout my interaction with research participants a common descriptor was used for the Learning Executive, he is an active learner. The Learning Executive utilizes benchmarking to learn, to enhance the quality and quantity of designed interventions, and to support his ability to make decisions (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

Two viable benchmarking sources include the American Society for Training and Development’s benchmarking forum as well as the Conference Board’s Council on Learning and Development (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). He actively sources web based information portals for emerging information, he relies on internal and external peer networks developed from many years of professional participation in societies (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

He does expect his team to learn from others both internal and external to the Company to enhance the impact of designed interventions (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). He insists that his immediate team read, participate in professional societies, attend conferences to ensure their continued professional growth, and as an outcome of their growth contribute to their company through their work (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4).

He is active in a number of professional societies where he holds leadership roles (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). The benefit of his participation is access to a network of peers that when confronted with an organizational challenge he is positioned
to effectively resolve the issue (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). An additional benefit is the potential for learning that is not limited by his organization’s context.

**Research Question 2: Contextual Factors**

A leader’s ability to exhibit leadership is influenced by situational demands typically referred to as context (Bass, 1990). To enhance the quality of my research I posed a number of questions to better understand his company’s context. My research would be incomplete if I had not explored the organizational context that he is situated in.

The Company has throughout its history been a company committed to innovation in human healthcare (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7). The context in which the Learning Executive is situated can be labeled dynamic, ever changing, and almost hyper-competitive. A total transformation has taken place; the Learning Executive’s company has evolved from a medical device manufacturer towards a medical technology leader (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6).

The Learning Executive mentioned an influential report entitled Bridging the Skills Gap published by the American Society for Training and Development in 2006 (Learning Executive, 2007, Researcher Journal). He reflected on the report’s currency to the pending challenges that confront his business, a rapid change in jobs and a slowing of workforce growth. Due to this experienced phenomena the Company is at risk of not having sufficient leadership; he mused that the connection between human capital and organizational success is even clearer today as skills shortages threaten the short and long-term success of his business.
Senior leadership recognizes that impact-full leadership is needed to achieve the company’s envisioned future of embarking into new markets, markets that the company has little to no experience; learning is important to ensure the future of the Company (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). The needed transformation can be accomplished by leaders who enable others. Company leaders recognize that significant marketplace challenges require active engagement by all associates, engagement that is an outcome of associate learning (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6).

When asked to depict his company’s culture the Learning Executive used the terms, high performance, very high values and ethics, relationship oriented, a culture of continuous improvement, and a culture of resourcefulness (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). Others describe the culture as warm and collegial, polite, the culture avoids conflict (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1). “It is a culture that encourages cooperation, collaboration, achievement as opposed to competition” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). Yet another depiction is, “a very welcoming place, a place where you meet the nicest people whose only fault is they will welcome you” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

The company is viewed as a prospector, constantly striving to improve customer satisfaction through innovation and valued services (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1). The CEO shared:

We are very good at identifying early on unmet medical needs that are relevant to our space. We apply technology to solve problems, we use our manufacturing skills to
make that solution available wherever it needs to be made available, and then we use our sales marketing and service organization globally to get the product out. We have been the first to identify under-appreciated health care problems (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7).

The Learning Executive noted, “we are just a terrific company that indeed is very understated and therefore is either not known by some or not understood by others” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). The above comments provide insight into the nature of the company as well as how others view it.

The company’s culture expects leaders to challenge existing processes, to engage existing organizational talent, ensuring their total engagement, leader’s having sufficient emotional intelligence to positively embrace conflict and change (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1). Leaders are expected to be resourceful, “you must be able to make a lot out of something small” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). The company controls costs and manages budgets very aggressively (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

The Learning Executive stated, “a culture of teaching and learning does exist within the company, the company does allow for mistakes but expects learning to take place as a result of mistakes” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). In 2007 the company expended nearly nineteen million dollars to support associate learning. This sizeable investment is a tangible reflection of the company’s commitment to enhancing human
capital; the company does embrace learning (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

The Need for Continuous Improvement

A subordinate of the Learning Executive shared that the Company is constantly attempting to innovate through improved levels of customer service, that have resulted in the creation of higher value products that generate greater marginal revenue (Team Member, 2006, Research Transcript 1). The subordinate continued his depiction, “we need organizational leaders to change existing processes while engaging employees to ensure that they contribute” (Team Member, 2006, Research Transcript 1). The Learning Executive’s supervisor added, “there is the potential that if we are not continuously innovating we will become obsolete, for sustainability we need appropriate leadership to ensure innovation” (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6).

A leader must be open to others’ opinions, to include the opinions of his team, and internal customer’s evaluation of the quality of his team’s work (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 9). The Learning Executive shared a story in which his team spent an inordinate amount of time collecting and synthesizing data only to have the final outcome criticized by senior leaders; his initial reaction was to become defensive though with time he came to realize that by implementing their suggestions the end quality of the work was dramatically improved (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 9). One must continuously improve; leaders should constantly enhance their team’s deliverables (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).
The Learning Executive stressed that he is a builder, constantly improving systems and people (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). He demonstrates a proactive nature, “I much prefer being on the offense”; he noted that in business it is better to have a proactive plan and then drive to accomplish it (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). The elements of confidence, due diligence, and preparation while remaining focused on the best interests of the company influence one’s success; “its much less about power and much more about achieving the right thing” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

Access to Others

Access enables influence; the Learning Executive is mindful of his positioning within this Company (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). He is cognizant of his influence; he recognizes the need and value of active communication, and the significance of access to senior leaders within his corporation (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). Due to his years of experience, having occupied senior leadership roles for much of his company’s recent history, he has had the opportunity to shape, to influence key decisions and experience their resulting outcomes (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

The Learning Executive indicated that he does have access to the senior leadership team, the top management team, though he is not a formal member of the team (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). He is dependent on his immediate supervisor for access; she is a member of the corporation’s senior leadership team. He depends on her to
position his initiatives, potentially adding yet another communication filter (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). At the time of my research the Learning Executive was attempting to position his role to become a member of the senior leadership team (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

He does have a formal relationship with senior leaders, one of the Learning Executive’s subordinates remarked, “he is a valued adviser to our company’s Chief Executive Officer” (Team Member, 2006, Research Transcript 1). The Chief Executive Officer shared with me that the Learning Executive, “has access to any and all of the leaders that he needs to have access to, one might be able to technically argue that maybe he should be a member of the senior leadership team” (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7).

The senior leadership team [upper echelon] was supportive of him; the Learning Executive depicted their relationship as “wonderful” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). He shared that at any given time he is coaching individual members of the team, typically on the topic of career management; resulting in high levels of confidentiality, familiarity, and necessary trust between him and members of the senior leadership team (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). When asked for his definition of trust he stated that his company’s culture defined trust as (a) confidence in other’s ability to perform and deliver as agreed upon to enable key business results, (b) a genuine concern for others and their welfare, and (c) a certain earned level of integrity, trustworthiness (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).
He credited his ability to develop meaningful relationships with senior leaders as an outcome of his capacity to earn their trust by regularly delivering recognized value, by achieving the status of subject matter expert, and his early professional experience as a senior leader (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). The Learning Executive lamented that if his direct access to the senior leadership team increased he would be more effective; recognizing this shortfall he attempts to manage this identified influence gap through active communication (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

Organizational Politics

The Learning Executive is a seasoned organizational leader who is sensitive to organizational politics; he seeks to influence others in order to enable his goals. I immediately noticed a level of familiarity between the Learning Executive and the Company’s Chief Executive Officer and others in the executive management suite while conducting my research (Learning Executive, 2007, Researcher Journal).

The Company embraces politically savvy leaders, leaders who do what is right for their company, its shareholders, and customers; leaders who demonstrate high levels of integrity and effectively utilize organizational politics to get things done (TD Magazine, 2004, Extant Data). Organizational leaders are challenged to meet ever-higher performance goals and as such politics is a reality within his company (TD Magazine, 2004, Extant Data).

When asked to describe the impact of internal politics on his organization, his goals, and his career he noted that he views politics as neutral, politics enable access, power, and influence (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). “One should not rely on the
quality of their work to further one’s career; politics are a necessary element of corporate culture” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

An example of influence on his organization is politics’ influence on budgeted departmental monies (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). The company utilizes a zero based budgeting method that requires the Learning Executive’s justification of year-to-year growth in cost center expenditures; he has been known to, “fight like hell” to ensure adequate funding for his team’s initiatives (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). The Learning Executive’s depiction of the budgeting process, the energy that he exuberates during our discussion is confirmation of his tenacity, his inherent competitiveness (Learning Executive, 2007, Researcher Journal).

He stressed that he has a responsibility to be informative, logical, building a methodical business case for resources that he views as necessary for his team (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). The Learning Executive oversees a budget of five million dollars that is primarily stratified around travel, salaries and material expenses (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

Alliance building is a necessary skill within his company, finding common ground with others is a key facet of alliance building (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). The Learning Executive noted the phenomena of multiplicity; he has personally witnessed strong alliances resulting in extraordinary achievements (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). He demonstrates a regular propensity to share, working to form alliances well before others (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).
When asked if he has personally established strong alliances he stated that, “he is well supported”, though this was not always the case throughout his career (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). If alliances begin to falter it is critical to attempt to resolve the causes early as opposed to later, he stressed that a significant amount of energy is required to repair relationships (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

Proactive relationship management is a required skill for successful learning executives (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). Its not unusual to have dozens if not hundreds of complex working relationships in a corporation, some will result in high quality experiences, others may lie outside of that depiction, “it should be expected as one progresses in their role” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

The Learning Executive has had to set his ego aside to either repair or initiate relationships to achieve his goals (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). When asked what technique he uses to repair relationships he stated that he simply asks the individual if they would be willing to find the time to work to repair their relationship; if they aren’t the individual does not have sufficient emotional intelligence to work though the issue and any effort made will typically result in failure (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

During conflict he shared that he attempts to intently listen to others first, “I try not to lose consciousness of what my needs are but I temporarily subordinate them, I try to clarify and confirm my understanding of what the other person is communicating” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). He emphasized that one should ensure, clarify and
confirm what is communicated as well as what it is you are experiencing as a leader before you take action (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).

When asked how he manages inter-company competition he stated, “what is more important to me is collaboration, I love collaborating with others and I love synergy; I really enjoy competing against goals at work, I do have others in my life that tell me that I am highly competitive” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). He quickly added that he attempts to channel his competitiveness to outside of his workplace, “I have found over the years that ill conceived competition at work generally gets things muddy and sticky” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).

Research Question 3: Learning Executive Leadership

Leaders are needed in his company to, “set strategic direction, to develop a vision, to lead others to realize the vision not by pulling, but leading because others believe in the vision, and in the ability of the leader to get them their” (Learning Executive’s Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). Leaders take individuals, teams, and sometimes-entire organizations to places that they wouldn’t normally go (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). Leaders, “see things as they could be, recognize constraints, face up to ambiguity, note barriers, and somehow map a future that appeals to others, eliciting their energy to achieve” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).

The researched learning executive described his leadership as, “energetic, forward thinking, fiercely loyal, and maybe visionary” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). His preferred style of leadership is, “I prefer to be a level five leader, a leader
having fierce resolve to get to a new and better place coupled with humility” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).

Jim Collins (2001) uses the term level five leaders to describe leaders at the highest levels of organizational leadership. Leaders who channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the greater goal of building their companies into great companies; their ambition is foremost for their company not themselves. The Learning Executive shared that now in his sixtieth year of life he is closer to attaining his goal of becoming a level five leader (Learning Executive, 2007, Researcher Journal).

Coworkers and subordinates portray his leadership as coaching; they typically do not interpret his actions as influencing them, but do recognize his ability to influence others (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). He can be decisive, even directive as required (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). This perceived coaching style may be an outcome of his concern for the development of others to enable their greater contribution to their role and to the company, “I am very concerned with the growth and development of those with whom I am charged to lead” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). The Learning Executive’s depiction is confirmed during an interaction with an indirect subordinate, “I consider him a coach, he is close to me and looks out for my welfare, I would depict our relationship as informal and easy, I view him as a role model” (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1).

The Learning Executive’s supervisor describes his leadership as engaging, inclusive, and loyal to his employees; he acts as a silent cheerleader for their accomplishments
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(Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). She mentioned, “he is a proponent of people; a great developer of others, he’s not selfish at all, he coaches informally across our entire organization, he has the ability to make you feel as though you are the only person in the room, when speaking with him he makes you feel that it is all about you” (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6).

She continued her depiction stating that he is tenacious, that she appreciates this aspect of his leadership, “you don’t want him giving up because sometimes his is the minority voice and sometimes the minority voice is the right voice” (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). During my data collection a number of research participants noted his demonstration of unequaled energy, tenacity, his ability to interject high levels of physical and emotional energy to deliver passionate messages.

When questioned why he wants to lead the Learning Executive asserted that he is naturally oriented toward leadership, “I am hardwired to lead” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). He stresses that he has worked to:

Be a person with whom I am satisfied with, meets criteria that I have set for myself, and I have gotten feedback from others that reflect that people respond to my leadership. I have a natural inclination to get people to a better place. (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8)

He frequently used the term principle centered leadership as a part of our discussion, stressing the importance of leading others in the right direction, coaching his comment with, “inspirational for others should they choose to believe” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).
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Transcript 8); he pauses, reinforcing his comment on the importance of other’s choice to be lead. Steven Covey (1991) is the author of the term principle centered leadership. Covey (1991) portrays principled centered leaders as enacting their moral and ethical standards, personal values and virtues, to effect policy development and decision-making as leaders.

The Learning Executive claimed that leaders must carefully choose their values and resulting principles (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). One member of the Learning Executive’s team depicted the Learning Executive as, “a seasoned professional who exhibits strongly held beliefs; his words and actions are consistent” (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1). This comment further reinforcing the notion of principled centered leadership and the Learning Executive’s preferred leadership style.

Subordinates within the Learning Executive’s organization described the Learning Executive’s leadership as dominant, directive, behavior that has resulted in the close monitoring of team member execution of assigned tasks (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1). One subordinate continued his depiction, “some people respond well to his leadership, his passion is infectious; he has the ability to get people excited” (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1). The subordinate used the term empowerment to describe the Learning Executive’s leadership; “his team responds to him through empowerment, he empowers his team to accomplish” (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1).

The Learning Executive’s superiors depicted his leadership as inclusive, coaching subordinates to achieve accomplishments that would not be attainable if he did not influence
their outcomes (Supervisor of Learning Executive, 2007, Transcript 6). The Learning Executive is a teacher, he is not prescriptive; he carefully listens to those he is leading, to his customers, then he leads to ensure that the right path is chosen (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Transcript 7).

The Learning Executive does advocate formal authority, “it is necessary to ensure effective execution within organizations” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). He continued his depiction; frequently those in formally appointed leadership roles lack the necessary skills to lead; “leadership is an earned responsibility” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). Effective leadership is prized by his company; choosing the right leaders is what enables a company to achieve greatness, stressing “first who, then what” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).

Reflecting on the topic of strategy he mentioned, “even the best strategy in times of rapid change can have a very short-life” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). The Learning Executive claimed, “It comes down to the quality of leaders and how well they lead others as to whether an organization will be successful; I don’t know of any great organization that does not have highly competent leaders” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).

Key leadership competencies for his role include subject matter expertise, setting and integrating strategy, change leadership, and managing ambiguity (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 9). The Learning Executive added that important enablers for success are, a bias for action and being results focused (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 9).
Many leadership competencies are common amongst his company’s senior leaders; the difference being he is expected to be a subject matter expert in developing human capital (Learning Executive, 2007, Researcher Journal).

One member of the Learning Executive’s team portrayed the Learning Executive as a passionate influencer who is able to influence not just his team but an entire organization, a coach who consistently exhibits high levels of energy, who is very committed to our company, demonstrating a passion to succeed and win in everything that he does, “he never gives up or gives in, his strong drive is a keen trait” (Team Member, 2006, Research Transcript 1). Through the Learning Executive’s influence his small team is capable of altering the future of the Company (Team Member, 2006, Research Transcript 1). The Learning Executive demonstrates thought leadership, he is able to face up to constraints, face up to ambiguity, face up the barriers and somehow map a future, he is able to draw people’s energy to achieve the future or reach that new place (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).

**Learning Executive Vision**

He is accountable to create and disseminate a vision for his immediate team; he does influence corporate-wide visioning through his interaction with members of the senior leadership team (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). The Learning Executive enables his vision by aligning his team’s functional goals with corporate strategy; one example is the corporate University, “my vision for the team’s future has everything to do with the direction that the Company is going towards, the way we’ve organized the Company...”
University is to be strategically aligned and integrated with the company” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).

The University acts as a more formal means to imbed organizational culture, learning, and communication across the entirety of the company as enabled by its graduates (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). One needs to reflect on the direction of their organization and then align one’s efforts to best serve their company, its leaders, and associates (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).

Input for his vision is sourced through an extensive needs analysis effort termed voice of the customer, facilitated once every three years. The resulting feedback is analyzed for common themes, then appropriate interventions are crafted to meet expressed, specific functional needs, all of which must be adequately resourced to be successful (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). Once developed, the vision is adjusted to better align with evolving strategy as his company progresses through business cycles (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). He noted that, “everything we do is going to be value-added, it will have impact that helps my company achieve” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).

Outcomes from his team’s visioning process are used to (a) enhance the University’s leadership and core business skills content, (b) to assess the impact of attendee learning, and (c) to ensure that learning is making difference to his business (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). The Learning Executive shared that his company hopes to strengthen
its talent acquisition capability, recognizing the need to enhance business unit leadership (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).

The company embraces a learning vision, out of the textbook and into the workplace, that includes the need to instill a discipline of continual learning to empower its workforce to remain competitive (Actionable Leaders-as-Teachers Framework, 2005, Extant Data). The company strives to engage all associates in applied learning focusing on leadership, business and operational effectiveness, and their career development to fuel the company’s journey to greatness.

Senior leaders promote that a great place to work can be obtained by (a) attracting, developing, and retaining the talents and skills critical to the successful implementation of the company’s strategies, (b) becoming more diverse and inclusive, (c) developing reward mechanisms that strengthen accountability for results and support individual and organizational performance, (d) becoming a learning and teaching organization in which the corporation contributes to individual and organizational growth, and (e) measure the progress the Company makes to engage all of its associates to achieve the goal of becoming a great place to work (University Overview, 2006, Extant Data).

The Learning Executive’s vision aligns with that of the American Society for Training and Development’s Public Policy Council (Learning Executive, 2007, Researcher’s Journal). His vision entails a high skill roadmap that requires the competencies of: (a) critical skills and competencies, that contribute to the performance and competitiveness of his company; (b) sufficient business acumen, that includes an understanding of his
company’s business, its markets, financial and business principles; (c) leadership skills, managerial and supervisory capabilities that bring out the best in associates and inspire innovation and performance improvement; (d) technical capacity, hard skills, technology skills related to the company’s current and emergent businesses; (e) adaptability, the necessary capacity to learn new skills quickly and adapt to new responsibilities; (f) innovative thinking, the ability to think creatively and to generate innovative solutions to business challenges confronting his company; (g) taking personal responsibility for learning, each company associate must assume responsibility to continuously improve their capabilities and skills (Bridging the Skills Gap, 2006, Extant Data).

To make his vision tangible he has implemented the following approach (a) he understands his company’s key strategies and performance metrics, (b) he identifies competencies that map to corporate strategy and performance metrics, (c) he assess identified skill gaps, (d) he then sets goals and prioritizes gap closure, (e) he implements learning plans to close the gaps, (f) he measure the results and communicate the impact of gap closure (Bridging the Skills Gap, 2006, Extant Data).

A tangible example of his vision is his contribution to the corporation’s three-part strategy for growth. Because manufacturing is an integral part of the organization, it was important to examine leadership’s role and capabilities across all 52 manufacturing sites (Bridging the Skills Gap, 2006, Extant Data). Senior manufacturing leadership in conjunction with the researched learning executive initiated a five year forward looking plan that focused on how the plants and plant leadership must perform to achieve stated business
goals (Bridging the Skills Gap, 2006, Extant Data). Terms used to describe this process include “as is” [current state] and “to be” [future state] to identify needed improvements (Bridging the Skills Gap, 2006, Extant Data). Thirty six key competencies were identified as necessary enablers of success if achieved, they consisted of a blend of operational and leadership behaviors (Bridging the Skills Gap, 2006, Extant Data). Evaluative measures included overall plant performance, individual capability, plant leadership competency, and organizational change (Bridging the Skills Gap, 2006, Extant Data). The outcomes of the measures were utilized to close identified performance gaps across a broad spectrum resulting in improved manufacturing sector performance that contributed to the increased wealth of his company.

*Learning Executive Influence*

As noted by my findings a pattern of significant influence emerged on the part of the Learning Executive. The importance of his work and the significance of his contributions reflect his on-going influence as a senior organizational leader. When asked how he ensures the actualization of his annual goals he stressed that skillful influencing technique is critical, not only for his role but each member of his team must demonstrate influencing skills (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). He mentioned that he, “never establishes his team’s objectives without review by others outside his function”, this review helps assure alignment, furthering his influence (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8). A subordinate shares this observation of Learning Executive with me, “he is the single greatest influencer of people that I have ever met” (Team Member, 2006, Research Transcript 1).
Key elements of his preferred influencing technique entail developing a logical position and then inspiring action amongst others (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).

A leader must be able to manage disappointment, the Learning Executive stressed the need for resilience, the ability to regain one’s composure and resume one’s effort (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). He noted that his style of managing is aggressively patient, he stressed that he has a bias towards action, that he tends to get things done well before what would be expected from others (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). Reflecting, the Learning Executive notes, “I tend to measure progress not by what was achieved today, but look at achievements month to month or quarter to quarter” in order to monitor the impact of change (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). He is described as energetic, animated, strong willed, he is dominant; he never gives up or gives in (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1).

The Learning Executive coaches individual team members regularly (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 9). He shared, “I am by nature an appreciating and supportive person” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 9). He stressed the importance of motivating individual team members by regularly recognizing their abilities as professionals, honoring their valuable contributions, and reinforcing their sense of individual responsibility to their team and to the Company (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 9). A subordinate shared, “when providing performance feedback he is direct and task driven, he is less concerned with team member feelings and more concerned with team
member accomplishment of their assigned work” (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1).

The Learning Executive emphasized the need to align his team towards a common set of goals, a common vision. He is able to achieve this outcome stating:

It is important for everybody to know how their work fits into the bigger picture, the bigger picture of our function and the bigger picture of our company as a whole. And just that knowledge itself is a really, really good starting point. Meeting and talking and coaching with my team regularly I think gives them a sense of importance (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 9). The key to good leadership is having each employee feel able, valuable and responsible, this is accomplished by molding or sculpting an employee’s role around things that they love or at least value doing. I don’t think you can appreciate people enough (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 9).

Leaders have a responsibility to recognize the contributions of those who work for them, “if deserving you should do everything you can for them” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 9). In turn the Learning Executive stressed the need for direct, honest and candid feedback when team members are not performing (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 9).
Six Key Findings

- Career Ascension – Required to lead others through most of his career, multiple opportunities to lead, leadership outcomes reinforce the image of a good leader
- Business Acumen – Assumed multiple roles, assignments, challenges the outcome being high levels of business acumen
- Subject Matter Expert – Formal and informal learning opportunities provide him subject matter expertise and professional credentialing
- Assumption of Risk – Willingness to assume risk results in greater challenges and further professional growth
- Influential- His ability to influence others enables his personal will in the workplace resulting in him being viewed as an effective leader
- Situational Awareness – His awareness of organizational needs, culture, and context has empowered him to get-it-right

Figure 24. Six Key Findings.

Six findings emerged as I reflected on my data; each finding demonstrating a number of potential themes.

This chapter portrayed the breadth of my interaction with the Learning Executive, in his context, utilizing the words of research participants who know him best. My findings revealed formative life experiences that potentially shaped his leadership and resulting career choices. I described the challenges that confronted him and his opportunities for gain, resulted in a richer depiction of his leadership. My research thoroughly probed his role, reflecting his influence, his leadership on an entire corporation (see Figure 24). My writing
was not intended to capture every utterance by research participants, only to portray collected information that accurately, truthfully depicted my observations as the researcher. The final chapter of the research is termed discussion; the discussion chapter incorporates my observations, my reflections, and my conclusions to aid your interpretation of the Learning Executive’s role, his context, and his leadership.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The fifth chapter is entitled discussion; the discussion chapter incorporates the outcomes of my research in conjunction with my reflections as the researcher. I approached my research to better understand the job, the leadership necessary to assume the role, and to benchmark best practices as implemented by a unique learning executive within his organization. I have incorporated spoken narratives and organizational extant data to support my conclusions; this form of research is typically categorized as qualitative research (Cassell& Symon, 1994). To formulate my observations I utilized a linear analytic case report analysis approach to logically portray the outcomes of my research. The major subtopics of case study report are presented, implications for practice identified, recommendations for additional research proposed, and conclusions stated. This format is typical, normally expected for academic research (Yin, 2003).

I have attempted to depict the complex realities of my research participants by codifying, transforming their thoughts, feelings, and ideas into written text. My writing is less driven by very specific hypothesis and is more concerned with emergent themes and idiographic descriptions. The outcome of my research is descriptive, typifying descriptive qualitative research case study technique. Through my research I have attempted to portray a holistic perspective of the phenomena that I observed. I have provided you, the reader with sufficient context-dependent knowledge to convey the expert knowledge and experience of the researched learning executive (Flyvbjerg, 2006); how he performed his job, his organization’s context and its influence, and a thorough portrayal of his leadership.
Rather than being an uninvolved bystander I interacted with study participants in their own language, on their terms, and in their workplace. I viewed individual and organizational behavior not as a set of finite discrete variables but rather as the lived experience of participants in their workplace, within they’re social setting, within their place of business. My research has resulted in a detailed investigation of an emerging organizational role within one organization’s context; this research is needed.

Due to the limitations of the research method I do not claim that my research is transferable to other individuals or to other organizational contexts. I am not attempting to confirm theory, my research is not meant to generate or test hypothesis. I am not attempting to give rise to new theory. My writing does not attempt to predict phenomena. I have held true to descriptive case study technique. I do claim to have gained an in-depth understanding [familiarity] with the phenomena of a learning executive’s leadership, the job of a particular learning executive, and an enriched appreciation of his organization’s context.

My writing portrays a story, a depiction of real-life situations, exposes you to a sufficient amount of descriptive information, and enables you to view reality as experienced by a very senior corporate leader. I have attempted to describe the key characteristics, his job, his context, and his leadership to further my understanding of this complex organizational role. In the truest sense I am a practitioner, learning from my research, using my research to enhance my professional growth and understanding.

The outcome of my research is grounded within the particular researched organization, the Company, and is bounded by his organization’s context, time, and events
that occurred during the data collection phase of my research. The value of my research is its potential to enhance emergent theory, to aid others to better understand the role of a learning executive, as well as the role’s potential. The reader should view my research as a discrete analytic unit, one of many observations that readers should seek to better understand this emerging vocation.

The interpretation and analysis portion of my case report incorporates questions as advance organizers, the questions act as logical placeholders, categories, to aid the reader to interpret the sheer volume of collected information. The study’s original research questions formed the basis of my inquiry; they have not been adulterated. Additional descriptive categories, information organizers, in the form of questions [i.e. placeholders], represent a collection of descriptive observations that arose from my research data through my data analysis. Narration in the form of questions simply acts to categorize my observations. This approach is deemed appropriate, a better technique to represent case study findings (Yin, 2003).

Case Study Report

My implementation of a case report format falls somewhere between storytelling and a traditional research report; this particular section incorporates my interpretation and analysis of the research findings. I have incorporated the following narrative placeholders to support your interpretation of my findings (a) How does a learning executive contribute to their organization? (b) How has learning impacted his company? (c) What are his prevalent job roles? (d) How does his job compare to popular literature’s depiction? (e) What
contextual factors affect a learning executive’s ability to exhibit leadership? (f) What contextual factors influenced his organization’s ability to learn? (g) How did the researched learning executive manage constraints imposed by his context? (h) How does the financial performance of his corporation impact his job? (i) How does his corporation’s upper echelon impact his role? (j) What Type of leadership does a learning executive exhibit within their organization? (k) Is the researched learning executive’s leadership different? (l) Are the study’s propositions confirmed by my research? Without this additional form of narrative categorization my findings may be viewed as overwhelming (Yin, 2003).

How Does a Learning Executive Contribute to their Organization?

Table 5

Researcher Reflections

How does a learning executive contribute to their organization?

This was accomplished through his influence, his acumen, his earned credibility, and his exhibition of personal energy

- He provides necessary leadership; motivation for the creation, implementation, and maturation of human capital initiatives, he provides vision and how-to
- His most significant contribution is enabling his company to achieve the vision of upper echelon leadership
- He makes possible the realization that learning has the potential to sustain innovation and improve associate productivity
- He influences senior corporate leaders to regularly consider the potential for learning to create organizational wealth
The Vice President Leadership and Career Development and Chief Learning Officer, or Learning Executive as titled by my writing, contributes to his organization by providing necessary leadership, motivation for the creation, implementation, and maturation of human capital initiatives within his corporation (see Table 5). He has codified business critical tacit knowledge, transforming tacit knowledge into codified explicit knowledge enabling its global dissemination. He makes possible the creation of new organizational knowledge and once created he actively manages knowledge as his company’s most senior knowledge manager and leader of learning.

His most significant contribution is enabling his company to achieve the vision of the top management team; a subordinate comments, “the Learning Executive has made great strides to influence our company; the guy has moved mountains” (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1). His work has unleashed his company’s workforce capabilities, those that are rare, valuable, and non-substitutable resulting in significant competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). The Learning Executive has accomplished this through human resource, talent management, learning, and culture systems. Each of these systems are formalized initiatives within the Learning Executive’s company, though listed as separate initiatives they are integrated, focused on the selection and development of his corporation’s workforce; enabling access to embedded intellectual and social capital across the entire corporation culminating in continuous learning and ongoing innovation.
A second but no less important contribution is his ability to influence senior corporate leaders to regularly consider the potential for learning to create organizational wealth; one research participant comments “he is a valued adviser to our company’s CEO, he has the ability to influence not only key individuals but the entire organization” (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1). This is noteworthy, leaders have the potential to significantly impact an organization’s profit margins though their actions (Aldrich, 1979). His influence has resulted in competitive advantage, enhancing his company’s workforce capability [rent-generating resources] in the medical technology marketplace resulting in unique organizational capabilities (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). His ability to influence was achieved as an outcome of earned credibility, establishment of sufficient trust amongst senior leaders, his subject matter expertise, and demonstrated business acumen.

The Learning Executive has instilled the realization that learning has the potential to sustain innovation, the need to develop an organization’s talent [human capital] to achieve an envisioned future, to harmonize workplace efforts to improve efficiencies, and leadership’s recognition that workplace knowledge is his firm’s most valued asset. This realization was achieved as an outcome of his leadership, his ability to influence, his daily advocacy for the capability of his corporation’s workforce to create and sustain wealth. His work has altered senior leader’s views of leadership, from a traditional fixed capital view towards a more progressive resource view. This transition is necessary to ensure the long-term success of his organization.
Argyris and Schön (1996) argue that the primary task of leaders in contemporary organizations is to ensure that a learning culture exists, one that reinforces the notion of perpetual learning. Penrose (1959) observed that a firm’s long-term growth is limited if it lacks sufficient managerial capacity. The Learning Executive provided leadership to accurately diagnose the company’s need for improved leadership [a lack of managerial capacity]; he then successfully marketed this need to senior management, eventually gaining their endorsement resulting in a multimillion-dollar budget and the necessary staff to create a formal learning intervention termed the University and in-turn fostered a culture of learning within his company.

Drucker (1993) stressed the need for organizational leaders to drive the creation and application of knowledge within their organizations noting that the only thing that will increasingly matter in modern organizations is management’s ability to make knowledge productive. Insufficient organizational leadership posed a threat to his company’s survival, the Learning Executive’s personal intervention; his exhibition of impact-full leadership diffused this threat.

This achievement earned him the respect of his peers, the admiration of his superiors, making his influence possible across his entire corporation. Members of the senior leadership team have publicly announced that the Learning Executive is vital to the future of the Company, that his role is needed to enable his company to achieve its desired future through learning, innovation, effective communication, and the embedding of preferred organizational culture and core values. The Learning Executive’s subordinate comments,
“he has enacted an actual transformation of our company’s culture” (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1).

The Learning Executive is a catalyst for transformation, innovation, and resulting change. Changes within his company have been enacted as an outcome of his leadership, his exhibition of personal influence, his charisma and energy. The Learning Executive has positioned his team to rapidly and efficiently disseminate information, knowledge, and learning across an entire global corporation. Senior leaders note, “his work contributes directly to enabling great performance by company employees, shaping the workplace culture to be a great place to work” (Leaders as Teachers Conference Board, 2008, Extant Data).

His contributions are tangible, they include a corporate university, curricula system, learning transfer initiatives, learning management and dissemination systems, social and intellectual capital systems, recruitment and talent management systems all of which are regularly utilized by company employees. His use of enterprise information systems has ensured access to his initiatives by twenty-five thousand employees across the entire corporation. The Learning Executive remarks that his contributions must be:

Continually aligned to the needs of the business to enable: (a) the acceleration of top-line growth through innovation, developing higher value products for patients and our customers; (b) improve bottom-line performance growth through enhanced operational effectiveness, achieved by; (c) improving leadership and associate capabilities, daily. (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 7)
The Corporate Vice President of Human Resources comments, “his work is adding value to the company and because its value is being recognized he continues to gain additional support for his initiatives” (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). It is apparent that his work is recognized and held in high esteem by influential stakeholders.

Though not the only manager of knowledge within his company he is tasked with managing defined bodies of knowledge that include talent acquisition, leadership development, management skills development, entrepreneur-ism, operational effectiveness, innovation, sales skill development, and the dissemination and harmonization of workplace culture (BDU Curriculum, 2008, Extant Data). Each of these content areas is monitored using a global needs assessment process termed voice of the customer.

The needs assessment poses the following questions to stakeholders (a) What are the top learning needs for your business unit for the next 3-5 years? (b) How can the University best support your business as well as individual associate performance? (c) What should the University start/stop or continue to do to add value to your organization? (d) How should the University demonstrate its value, impact and effectiveness? (University Planning, 2006, Extant Data). Once gaps are identified new interventions are implemented utilizing the corporate university as a tool to quickly disseminate know-how across the corporation.

The corporate university acts as the primary means to remedy significant shortfalls in workplace skills, it supports the attainment of improved operating efficiencies though skill building, and disseminates new innovations across the company’s workforce (The Company University, 2008, Extant Data). Early in my writing I incorporated Davenport’s (1998)
characterization of knowledge as information combined with experience, context, interpretation, and reflection; the University enables the transformation of tacit individual information into codified organizational knowledge. The University enables the researched learning executive’s influence within the context of his organization; his ability to enact a learning culture is dependent on the University, its processes, and its outcomes.

The key process that supports exploitation of institutionalized knowledge is knowledge transfer, the dissemination and resulting building of shared understanding amongst organizational members (Berson et al., 2006). To date approximately 500 leaders and professionals have co-facilitated University programs, educated and trained approximately 9,000 company associates since the University’s inception (The Company University, 2008, Extant Data). The University enables the sharing of company specific information resulting varied interpretations amongst participants. This is yet another competitive advantage; Huber (1991) noted that more learning occurs in organizations if varied interpretations are allowed and eventually shared resulting in uniform comprehension, harmonized workplace action, and knowledge exploitation. Knowledge exploitation requires a common interpretation of new cognitive models and a shared vision of how to employ them; the corporate university facilitates this need (Berson et al., 2006).

The University serves as a knowledge portal, providing reasonable access to individual and organizational know-how, ensuring the dissemination of culture and learning (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). His company’s use of the University allows for entrepreneurial insight, ensures awareness across the entire the company, and replicates superior
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

organizational routines that have resulted in distinctive competencies and heightened managerial awareness.

Research on successful corporate universities reflects the following themes: (a) they exist to help their organizations achieve their strategies, they are positioned as strategic levers to enact strategy; (b) corporate universities typically function at three levels, operational, tactical, and strategic; (c) they should strive to become a central organization serving multiple constituencies that help the organization to develop their employee capabilities, those competencies required for success; (d) corporate universities increase shareholder value, they enable stakeholders to manage knowledge assets and learning processes; (e) the key measure of success being the application of knowledge to achieve organizational goals (Allen, 2002). My findings confirm that the researched corporate university has achieved and maybe even surpassed Allen’s (2002) conceptualization of a successful corporate university.

The Company’s learning model has garnered external recognition as a best practice by the American Society for Training and Development, a professional association dedicated to furthering the development of Human Resources within organizations. The company’s Chief Executive Officer noted, “the University strengthens our organizational and individual capabilities” (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Extant Data).

The Learning Executive influences his organization through the selection of organizational messages, an example being the dissemination of expected norms. He is his company’s most senior gatekeeper for information. This information is normally conveyed
through the University and assigned to workplace curricula. The Chief Executive Officer noted, “to prepare my company for the next 100 years the Company needs to develop new skills, abilities, and approaches; this is achieved through a combination of formalized curricula, on-the-job training, developmental assignments, and leaders serving as teachers” (University Actionable Leaders-as-Teachers Framework, 2006, Extant Data).

He is viewed as a thought leader, a subject matter expert in the content areas of human resource development (HRD), adult education, curriculum design, talent management, on-boarding, and the medical technology industry. His mastery of each content area is an outcome of his formal academic preparation; experience gained both within and external to his formal career preparation, his active participation in professional societies, and his commitment to self-directed learning.

Having assumed multiple leadership roles he is well equipped to support initiatives that require his expertise. His formal training, acquired business acumen, and lived history within his organization have enabled him to achieve the status of trusted advisor to his company’s upper echelon. The outcome of this trust is influence, empowering his ability to lead within the context of his organization.

How has learning impacted his company?
Table 6

*Researcher Reflections*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>How has learning impacted his company?</th>
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<tr>
<td>The systemization of learning has resulted in repeatability and predictability resulting in the incremental improvement of individual and organizational competence</td>
<td>• He has equipped his company with the competency of learning, the ability to adapt, resulting in sustained supra-normal returns relative to other firms</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• He has influenced organizational members to learn external to his company the outcome being enhanced learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Investment in human capital has enabled organizational leaders to achieve their vision of innovation while mitigating costs, an outcome of enhanced associate productivity</td>
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The ultimate criterion of organizational performance is the long-term survival and growth of an organization (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). To achieve long-term survival, organizations must align with their environments to remain competitive and innovative (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Alignment infers that a firm must have the potential to learn, unlearn, or relearn based on experience (Berson, Nemanich, Waldman, Galvin, & Keller; 2006; Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Learning offers the potential to improve one’s business, its processes and its products; as such organizational learning is necessary to sustain competitive advantage (Berson et. al., 2006). If one subscribes to resource-based theory, learning is a potent means to gain and sustain competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Lado & Wilson, 1994). Drucker
(1993) claimed that organizational value is created through productivity and innovation, both of which are outcomes of workplace learning.

The medical technology marketplace is characterized by innovation, speed-to-market, extreme pressures to contain costs, unsurpassed demands for product quality, safety and product efficacy. Effective and efficient learning is required to gain entry and to prosper in today’s global markets. This observation is supported by the writings of Mincer (1958) and Becker (1962) who argued that if industries are to prosper they must derive value from human capital; to realize this value they must invest in its development recognizing that workforce productivity is a function of workforce ability and the amount invested in it. Lado and Wilson (1994) observed that organizational competencies must be continually replenished, upgraded, and deployed in order for firms to gain and keep a competitive advantage. The common themes being that learning is necessary for firm survival and that organization’s must continually invest in workplace competence to prosper.

Leaders in organizations play an important role to directly influence creative individuals, recent research has revealed that individuals rarely come up with intuitive ideas and insights without some form of external support, this support is derived through the influence of workplace leaders (Berson et. al., 2006). The researched learning executive has impacted his company’s investment in human capital, learning and competence development are an outcome of his leadership (see Table 6). During his tenure this investment has become more targeted, it has resulted in greater organizational impact, and is more valued by his organization than in the past (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7). The
Chief Executive officer comments; “we continue to invest in our people, as the competency and capabilities of our associates propel our strategy to drive innovation and operating effectiveness” (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Extant Data).

His company’s investment in human capital is in direct alignment with the corporation’s strategy of increasing sustainable growth through innovation, complemented by the aggressive implementation of operating effectiveness initiatives (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Extant Data). Common to all organizational learning is an emphasis on strategic renewal that requires organizations to explore new ways, and at the same time exploit what they have learned (Berson et. al.; 2006).

The American Society for Training and Development recognized the Learning Executive’s contributions in 2007 as “impacting enterprise-wide success through meaningful employee learning and development”. A second notable award recognized the Learning Executive’s contributions to enhanced learning in the healthcare industry. In 2004, Accenture Learning designated the Learning Executive’s company as high performing. Each awarding organization recognized the Learning Executive’s efforts as unique, contributing to the profitability and ensuring the on-going success of his company through meaningful and impact-full learning interventions.

Stated award criteria as noted by Accenture included (a) alignment of learning initiatives to key organizational priorities, (b) measurement of learning’s impact to business performance and financial return, (c) competency development of business critical job-families, (d) expansion of learning initiatives to the extended enterprise, (e) integration of
learning with knowledge management and performance support technologies, (f) innovative leadership development, and (g) the implementation of blended learning (University Leaders as Teachers Program at Conference Board, 2003, Extant Data). Accenture’s research indicated that organizations that excel in the above criteria achieve on average 27% greater workplace productivity, will accrue 40% more revenue, and end their fiscal year having achieved 50% greater net income than organizations who do not effectively implement the above criteria (University Leaders as Teachers Program at Conference Board, 2003, Extant Data).

Since the inception of the researched learning executive’s role the Company has experienced a near doubling of operating and net revenues; I do not assert that his influence is the primary source for his company’s experienced revenue increase but I do assert that his role has contributed to the financial success of his corporation (Company Annual Reports, 2005 & 2006, Extant Data). I purport that he has equipped his company with the competency of learning [adaptability] resulting in sustained supra-normal returns relative to other firms that lack this competency (Lado & Wilson, 1994).

My research revealed that the Learning Executive utilized a systems approach to maximize his organization’s return on human capital development, to achieve knowledge’s potential (see Figure 25). Key elements of his approach include: (a) a robust effort to identify and develop business critical competencies that are aligned to current and emergent marketplace needs through needs analysis and workforce planning; (b) Lado and Wilson (1994) observed that competency identification is necessary for firms to prosper and survive;
he made possible the identification of business critical jobs, ensuring that incumbents who occupy business critical jobs are adequately skilled, and that sufficient human capital is available to occupy those jobs through talent management initiatives; (c) he emplaced a culture that embraced mastery and dissemination of needed competence through formal reward systems; (d) he positioned leaders who are capable of inspiring others to realize the company’s envisioned future, this was achieved through talent management initiatives; and (e) he listened to his marketplace, recognizing required skills and services that his customers were willing to reward, this was realized through a formal needs assessment process; (f) he made use of enterprise information technologies that resulted in efficient and effective dissemination of information and new organizational knowledge.
Figure 25. Knowledge Potential as Realized within the Learning Executive’s Organization.

The model represents the Learning Executive’s actualization of knowledge potential. The Learning Executive’s leadership results in adequate, targeted investment in human capital formation. Investment enables organizational leaders to achieve their vision through their immediate team’s work [marketable products and services] resulting in tangible outcomes that meet or exceed marketplace expectations. In-turn success in the marketplace provides
necessary resources to enable the ongoing re-investment in human capital that results in still
greater potential for knowledge to contribute to his organization.

Crossman, Lane and White’s (1999) 4I framework provides a viable framework to
interpret the researched learning executive’s implementation of organizational learning
practice. The model attempts to establish a clear relationship between organizational
learning and business strategy; my research reflected a consistent pattern of consideration on
the part of the researched learning executive to align individual and team efforts with
company strategy to ensure impact-full organizational learning outcomes. The 4I model
incorporates the necessary tenets of knowledge acquisition, information distribution,
information adaptation, and organizational memory as introduced by Huber’s (1991)
portrayal of organizational learning. The most senior Human Resources leader within the
company notes, “he has taken his time, he has assessed the organization appropriately”
(Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6).

Crossman et al. (1999) view organizational learning as a process change in thought
and action, both at the individual and at the organizational level. The model purports that
managing the tension between assimilating new learning (exploration) and using what has
been learned (exploitation) is the basic challenge of organizational learning (Crossman et al.,
1999). They argue that managing this tension is critical to ensure a firm’s renewal
(Crossman et al., 1999).

Learning occurs at individual, group, and organizational levels, each informing the
others (Crossman et al., 1999). The three noted levels of learning (see Figure 26) are linked
by four social and psychological processes (a) intuiting, (b) interpreting, (c) integrating, and (d) institutionalizing (Crossman et al., 1999). Intuiting is a subconscious process that occurs at the individual level, it is the start of learning (Crossman et al., 1999). Interpreting occurs when others share their individual learning with a group (Crossman et al., 1999). Integrating occurs as an outcome of developing common understanding of the new learning; through group processing learning becomes vetted knowledge (Crossman et al., 1999). Finally institutionalizing incorporates the knowledge across the organization by imbedding it in systems, structures, routines, and practices to become accepted organizational practice (Crossman et al., 1999). Within each process, cognition affects behavior and behavior impacts individual cognition (Crossman et al., 1999).

4I Framework of Organizational Learning (Crossman et al., 1999)

![4I Framework of Organizational Learning](image)

*Figure 26. 4I Framework of Organizational Learning Crossman’s et al. (1999).*
4I Framework of Organizational Learning provides a model of learning to support the reader’s interpretation of how learning has impacted the researched company. Learning initiates within the individual employee (I), the group (G), and then the organization (O) through the process of dialogue fostered by enterprise learning systems, learning becomes knowledge, later to be vetted and codified, transformed to become accepted organizational practice that in-turn is shared to others through enterprise learning systems.

The authors refer to learning as flows; the feed forward flow moves knowledge from the individual and group to the organization making use of each element of the model (Crossman et al., 1999). At the same time, an analogous flow feeds knowledge back forming a new variation on the knowledge and the knowing process (Crossman et al., 1999). The tension between the feed forward and the feed back flows creates tension deemed necessary to a firm’s renewal (Crossman et al., 1999). The feed forward allows a firm to innovate; the feed back process reinforces what a firm already has learned, ensuring the embedding of accepted knowledge within the organization [organizational memory] for use by others (Crossman et al., 1999).

My research revealed that the researched learning executive fed learning forward making use of human and social capital initiatives to impact the flow of learning across each of the model’s stages resulting in enhanced individual and organizational competence to include workplace innovation. The Learning Executive has balanced the feed forward flow
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

of information through enterprise HRM (human resource management) and HRD (human resource development) initiatives to include the corporate university, talent and learning management systems that imbed learning across his entire corporation, to ensure the continual replenishment, upgrading, and deployment of know-how. The dynamic of information / knowledge transformation has resulted in the codification and improved transfer of individual and organization best practices, enhanced individual know-how, aligned workplace efforts, a culture that enables workplace learning, and resulting organizational performance.

An outcome of his work is equipping his company with necessary learning competencies, learning how to learn, resulting in greater organizational adaptability, long-term survival, and growth (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Reflecting on Fiol and Lylels (1985) depiction of learning, the researched company requires meaningful learning as an outcome of a turbulent business environment. Favorable experiences as an outcome of effective organizational learning has resulted in more frequent learning; the reviewed literature notes that in competitive situations, small differences in competence at learning will tend to accumulate favoring organizations that exhibit learning competence (Levitt & March, 1988).

What are his prevalent job roles?
Table 7

Researcher Reflections

What are his prevalent job roles?

He identified the potential for knowledge and its inherent tacit-ness, he put in place necessary organizational architecture to ensure the codification and eventual dissemination of key competencies.

Roles include leader, builder, knowledge manager, collaborator, and change agent.

He is charged with corporate talent management recognizing that leadership effectiveness is key to sustained innovation that results in marketplace leadership.

My research identified five roles or vocational themes that the researched learning executive assumed within his organization (see Table 7). The themes emerged from coded participant narratives. The themes of (a) builder, (b) knowledge manager, (c) leader, (e) collaborator, and (f) change agent emerged as meaningful.

The first vocational theme is builder; the Learning Executive stated that he preferred to build organizations, to improve business systems, to ensure that organizations and the people that are employed by them are better, more effective, valued, and successful.

Research by Stahl (1983) revealed that effective leaders in large, hierarchical organizations are more interested in building up their organizations and empowering others than in personal gain or the domination of others. My research purports that he equipped others with necessary skills; he enhanced the productivity of each member of his corporation through his initiatives to become collectively successful. Burke & Hutchins (2008) noted that enhancing
individual organizational members with skills, one-member-at-a-time, is necessary if learning is to meaningfully impact one’s organization.

My research highlights a general pattern of accomplishment throughout his career. He has emplaced an entire knowledge management system, enabled his company to become a learning organization, built leadership capability as an outcome of talent management, and implanted a culture of learning resulting in enhanced workplace competence and improved organizational capabilities. He has demonstrated a sincere concern for others and concern for the welfare of his company. He constructed systems to ensure the institutionalization of organizational knowledge and ongoing development of human capital well beyond his tenure. He is a builder.

The second theme is knowledge manager. Tacit knowledge is deeply rooted in individual actions, it is difficult to formalize and share with others; leaders have a responsibility to help convert tacit to explicit knowledge by turning individual experiences into shared experiences (Nonaka, 1994). Crossman, et al. (1999) noted that learning typically begins with individuals at an intuiting stage, as a subconscious process, and later becomes conscious at an interpreting stage, where new learning is shared with other group members. Group member input gets integrated at a group or organizational level through debate, or dialog, information that is validated [interpreted] as an outcome of debate is normally institutionalized and imbedded into systems, structure and routines (Crossman et al., 1999).
Leaders help individuals set learning into their organization’s context, to interpret learning, to ensure that learning is meaningful and valued (Berson et. al., 2006). The Learning Executive has implemented an entire suite of initiatives termed Human Resource Management [HRM] to transpose business critical individual tacit knowledge into codified explicit organizational knowledge; aiding organizational members to realize the potential for learning. Knowledge is accessible, valued, and recognized as enabling his company to achieve three key organizational tenets of (a) great contributions to society, (b) great performance, and (c) a great place to work as espoused by senior organizational leaders.

The Learning Executive has provided necessary know-how to accurately diagnose emerging performance gaps. He has designed impact-full knowledge interventions. He has implemented business systems to effectively integrate new organizational learning into existing organizational practices. He has made use of enterprise-wide information technology to disseminate knowledge to those who need it in a just-in-time fashion resulting in improved organizational performance. He has encouraged senior executives to exhibit strategic leadership behaviors that entail transformational leadership, vision development, and transactional leadership as demonstrated by his implementation of progressive HRM practices each being positively related to firm innovation and enhanced organizational learning. He has ensured that organizational knowledge is structured, accessible, and communicated. As a senior manager of knowledge he has made possible the potential for knowledge to enhance his firm’s wealth.
A key outcome from the Learning Executive’s influence was his use of upper echelon leadership to further learning. Leaders and leadership play a central role in organizational learning (a) leaders provide contextual support for learning within an organization, (b) leaders are critical to ensure the integration of learning across multiple groups, (c) leaders provide necessary guidance to integrate what was learned, and (d) leaders are needed to integrate new and existing knowledge into an organization’s practices and policies (Berson et al., 2006).

He has transformed his organization by: (a) helping stakeholders recognize what they know and what they don’t know about their business, their customers, and their markets; about their contributions as both leaders and associates resulted in greater foresight about company capability, making sense of emergent trends; (b) providing formal business systems that foster the exchange of individual and organizational knowledge culminating in the combination of tacit and explicit knowledge; this is needed to derive the full benefit from organizational knowledge creation, empowering organizational members to recognize what to do and how to do it, closing potential knowing-doing gaps; (c) implementing knowledge systems that make possible innovation, making it difficult for competitors to copy, ensuring a durable competitive advantage; and (d) awakening senior leaders to the value of knowledge by creating necessary awareness to its infinite potential.

His most significant contribution as a knowledge manager is his efficient integration of new knowledge across the workforce resulting in the maturation corporate culture. His influence has resulted in a culture that embraces learning, a culture that demands continuous
innovation, a culture that acknowledges that innovation is achieved through learning. He has created a context where associates interpret shared purpose and work effectively, resulting in harmonized workplace efforts that add yet further value to his organization. The Learning Executive can be compared to an artist whose chosen medium is knowledge.

The third theme is leader; the researched learning executive, through his leadership has facilitated the transformation of organizational learning to ultimately affect organizational performance. His leadership has resulted in implementing a suite of enterprise initiatives that have transformed the way organization and associate learning occurs, the way talent is selected and developed, and how knowledge is managed within his corporation.

He has exhibited a consistent pattern of leadership throughout his career. This pattern has incorporated formal and informal leadership roles, assignments, and responsibilities as reflected by the fourth chapter of my writing. Roles that required his leadership included individual contributor, consultant, subject matter expert, as well as formal leadership roles where he was charged with managing entire business systems, teams, and corporations, [i.e. Vice President]. Figure 22 depicts his rapid ascension that is indicative of his leadership.

A more lasting legacy of his influence is the engendering of leadership amongst his company’s workforce, enhancing the likelihood that all associates will contribute to his corporation as leaders. Individual productivity is necessary to sustain his company’s profitability, associates at all levels of the company are expected to provide leadership, to take initiative, to be creative, to solve problems, to collaborate, and to learn.
Schein (1992) identified that learning leaders need to have heightened insight into their organization, its culture and themselves in order to change that which is dysfunctional. Learning leaders must have extraordinary levels of motivation to endure the pain of learning and change; they need to assume the role of perpetual supporter for a learning culture. Learning leaders have a responsibility to help others recognize their personal insight, how their organizations can learn and learn faster (Schein, 1992).

An additional task for learning leaders is to ensure good cross-cultural communication and understanding throughout their organizations (Schein, 1992). Learning leaders should stimulate diversity at both the individual and group level; such diversity will result in the inevitable emergence of subcultures and those subcultures will eventually be a necessary source for learning and innovation (Schein, 1992). The more turbulent, ambitious, and out of control the organization’s environment becomes, the more a culture of learning will need to be embraced by all members of the leader’s organization (Schein, 1992). My research reveals that the study’s learning executive has consistently demonstrated these characteristics earning him the title of learning leader.

Leaders kick-start learning within their organizations through their behaviors and actions, the researched learning executive has integrated knowledge exploration and exploitation as an outcome of his leadership (Berson et al., 2006). His actions entailed (a) inspiring others through stretch human capital objectives, (b) implemented systems that instilled learning discipline and routines, (c) he provided support to organizational leaders
through systems and resources, and (d) he established sufficient trust amongst others to enact his initiatives.

The fourth theme is collaborator; my findings reveal a pattern of active collaboration. Social capital is an asset that can benefit both the organization and its members; like other forms of capital more is better (Leana & Van Buren, 1999). He recognized that the potential for knowledge is achieved through active collaboration with others, in particular building knowledge based relationships both internal to and external to his organization. He has sustained a personal network of knowledge-based relationships over the duration of his career. From these relationships he has identified critical knowledge that he needs to be effective, what resources are available to aid him, and how his network can help him achieve the necessary know-how to be an effective problem solver for his organization.

His in-house networks include peers, senior organizational leaders, and the key stakeholders of his initiatives, i.e. Leaders as teachers. He effectively managed organizational politics through coalitions. He demonstrated an ability to broker desired outcomes while meeting stakeholder expectations. An important outcome from his active collaboration has been the fostering of greater organization flexibility; flexibility in people, processes, and technologies that has resulted in competitive advantage for his company.

Recognizing that relationships offer the potential to reduce knowledge deficiencies he made possible the development of social capital through learning. He accomplished this through investment in human and social capital initiatives. This investment enabled a shared space where tacit knowledge is introduced, refined, and eventually codified and disseminated.
between associates, teams, and individuals. The outcome is a complex entity in which social
capital is being created at various levels within his corporation, fostering the sharing of tacit
know-how through active collaboration. The ongoing investment in the University is a
tangible demonstration of his impact-full collaboration with internal knowledge champions.

This is an important observation; the tangible benefits to his company from social
capital development are many. The writings of Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) claim that
social capital facilitates the development of intellectual capital by affecting conditions
necessary for the exchange and combination of knowledge to occur, in-turn intellectual
capital fuels innovation and resulting organizational know-how. Social capital has the
potential to influence organizations through members’ levels of collective goal orientation
and shared trust, which create value by facilitating successful collective action (Leana & Van
Buren, 1999). Social capital increases the efficiency of action and reduces the cost of
information transaction within and between organizations (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

Social capital results from organizational member’s willingness to share, to
contribute, and to access others (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). A concerted effort to create
and manage social capital is necessary because close working relationships foster the sharing
of tacit knowledge; tacit knowledge is difficult to communicate and requires high levels of
rapport, motivation and interpersonal communication skills; not all organizational knowledge
can be effectively codified and as such tacit knowledge is of critical concern to organizations
(Burt, 1997; Dees & Shaw, 2001; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). His role provides the means
to connect organizational members, encourages collaboration towards cooperation, ensures
that knowledge flows effectively, and provides for individual and group interaction creating a small world dynamic resulting in the codification of business critical tacit knowledge. The researched learning executive has embedded a network of relationships that has strengthened the ties between members of his company, encouraged the acquisition and exploitation of organizational knowledge, lowered knowledge transactional costs, ensured return from workforce development, and reduced the risk of inequitable use of knowledge by organizational members. The Learning Executive stated, “I have put plenty of mechanisms in place to encourage collaboration, cooperation to achieve synergy” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8)

The fifth and final vocational theme change agent. Early in the life cycle of an organization leaders are required to serve as animators; when changes are needed leaders must become change agents (Schein, 1995). Bass (2000) supports Schein’s observation stating that leaders with sufficient position power are able to make changes in their organizations, and unless a leader has sufficient influence an organization will not be effective. Learning executives must be agents of change to be effective in their role.

The Learning Executive has provided necessary leadership influence for organizational changes that required the intellect, imagination, potential, and enthusiasm of his company’s workforce. He was required to detect trends in his company’s macro-environment [external] and microenvironment [internal] to identify needed change and initiate appropriate interventions; his role required that he be an agent of change, a
transformer of existing organizational practices, an innovator to enable his company’s continued good fortune.

The Learning Executive shares, “I lead and participate in many types of change” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). My research revealed that he enacted the following changes: (a) garnered a general recognition amongst leadership that knowledge resources are crucial for his organization’s success; (b) implemented a strong focus on accessing and leveraging both internal and external knowledge resources for business value; (c) developed an appreciation of how tensions implicit in knowledge-related choices can make it hard to achieve the expected outcomes without recognizing and resolving conflicting interests; (d) evolved an understanding of how to pursue an integrated approach to managing knowledge, he sees that choices and activities are part of an interconnected pattern that requires constant adjustment as his organization’s business environment changes; and (e) he has influenced organizational leader’s ability to focus on emergent, future opportunities to ensure the longevity of his company, he has implemented a culture of trouble-is-good. The Learning Executive has awakened his organization by equipping the workforce with better access to available knowledge, the right knowledge at the right time resulting in an unrivalled opportunity to improve organizational performance.

My data suggests that he demonstrated sufficient business acumen to accurately judge conflicting change pressures. He recognized the need to balance opposing alternatives, to select a more effective route to assure competitive advantage when implementing change so as not to overwhelm his organization. A tangible example of this is his implementation of an
enterprise wide Learning Management System, commonly termed LMS. To aid him to maintain the proper balance for effective change he monitored the current value of knowledge versus knowledge’s potential for future value. Paying attention to both the current and future value of knowledge created tension in his organization; as a senior manager of change he effectively mitigated this inherent conflict through effective change management practices.

When implementing local change he: (a) created a sense of urgency, (b) developed a powerful coalition to support the proposed change; (c) created an inspiring vision to provide necessary motivation [organizational leverage]; (d) provided direction to align efforts and processes; (e) assumed responsibility to communicate the change vision; (f) enabled others to act, removing barriers for associates to effect the change; (g) built on early success to sustain the change, enabling momentum; and (h) institutionalized the change through culture, norms, and accepted behaviors.

My narrative findings provide the reader with a word picture his roles within the context of his organization. The themes of builder, knowledge manager, leader, collaborator, and change agent emerged from my data. I would be remiss if I had not compared to outcome of my discovery to other’s findings, the next portion of my report compares the outcome of my discovery to the observations of others.

*How does his job compare to popular literature’s depiction?*
Table 8

Researcher Reflections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How does his job compare to popular literature's depiction?</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due to the lack of role definition he has had to alter his role and its outcomes to viewed as credible by organizational stakeholders</td>
<td>• His job is not well defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• He is expected to manage organizational intangibles to create value</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• He is expected to demonstrate integrative skills and business specific expertise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• His role requires focusing organizational efforts to ensure knowledge impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• He must demonstrate both technologist and environmentalist orientations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tenacity, credibility, and influence are needed to be effective; he assumed the role of knowledge evangelist, organizational learning leader</td>
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Members of organization’s upper echelons lack guidance on how their actions facilitate or hinder learning (Vera & Crossan, 2004). As such firms have just begun to recognize the important role of learning at the organizational level, they are now beginning to appoint senior level executives who are responsible to develop knowledge strategies, map the location of knowledge within their firms, and to facilitate access to key knowledge (Berson et al., 2006). Popular literature identified expectations for the role that included managing
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

knowledge, leveraging intellectual capital, and in particular providing necessary leadership to drive knowledge management initiatives across multiple business functions (see Table 8). Early writings portray the learning executive’s primary role as converting knowledge into profit (Guns, 1998). My research confirms popular literature’s depiction, though my research incorporates organizational specific context that is generally lacking from the reviewed literature.

The researched learning executive identified, and then positioned himself to address a particular emergent need within his company. The need was made evident as an outcome of an organization-wide survey whose results reflected an unexpected diverse operating environment requiring enhanced leadership and organizational know-how if the researched organization was to survive. Organizational transformation was required.

His role was initially created from an immediate niche organizational need. Once identified the Learning Executive effectively positioned him-self to assume his current role. The Chief Executive Officer stated, “the Learning Executive took this assignment on as a labor of love” reflecting great passion and enthusiasm that was necessary to overcome organizational friction (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7). Baron and Bielby’s (1986) observations confirm that more diverse environments typically result in greater job title fragmentation; this is insightful, possibly reflecting an aspect of his organization’s context that allowed for the creation of his role.

The popular literature indicates that learning executive roles are not well defined; their roles are specific to their organization, the role is emerging (Bontis, 2001, Earl & Scott,
1999). My research confirmed this observation, at the time of my writing the researched learning executive did not have a written job description, another example is his need to market, to sell his role to senior leadership. A third example is senior organizational leadership challenging his immediate team to continually improve the products and services.

The lack of role definition is troubling and precarious; there exists the potential for his role is misunderstood, viewed as tentative, not needed, and unable to meaningfully contribute to his organization. There were some within his organization that doubt the need for his role. This lack of clear definition may prevent learning executive’s from acquiring needed resources, restricting their access to key stakeholders, limiting the potential for the role. In turn for the organization, failure to provide necessary forethought, role definition, and codification of expected deliverables could result in significant financial risk. Many of these challenges have been overcome or effectively mitigated by the researched learning executive through his credibility, through his garnering of external recognition, and senior organization leader’s support for his work.

His organization does expect him to manage intangibles, knowledge, leadership, culture, organizational talent, social and intellectual capital, and innovation. My research confirms Bontis’s (2001) depiction that learning executives are knowledge evangelists whose key responsibilities include establishing business processes that convert and eventually leverage organizational knowledge to impact an organization’s profits. My writing has incorporated a number of HRM and HRD initiatives that have impacted his organization.
The researched learning executive demonstrated a unique self-identity. He identified himself as a business leader first and then as a human resource development professional. It appears that this prioritization has contributed to his credibility. The Learning Executive claimed, “I approach my job as a business person first who happens to have this particular area of specialization” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4). His accumulated acumen is a significant enabler. His acumen was built-up through industry specific experience, his assumption of multiple developmental roles outside of his formal career training has resulted in enhanced understanding of business operations; his tenure as a consultant provided him with a working forum of best practices; and his experience as a senior organizational leader, provided him a safe practice field, which in total has equipped him to be successful in his current role. The literature confirms my observation, integrative skills are needed by learning executive’s, they must command a broad perspective of their business to effectively leverage their organization’s intellectual capital (Bass, 2000; Earl & Scott, 1999).

The corporation’s university is a tangible and enduring contribution to his corporation. The University provides a necessary forum, a small world structure, and necessary knowledge infrastructure (knowledge portal) to ensure that business critical organizational knowledge is made accessible to others (Bontis, 2001). Achterbergh and Virens (2002) note that the effective management of knowledge requires identifying the knowledge needed for an organization’s vitality and then implementing a process to ensure
that the knowledge is made available. My research revealed that the corporate university met this need within the context of his organization.

A focused effort is needed to successfully infuse knowledge initiatives across an organization (Lucier & Torsilieri, 2001). Burke and Hutchins (2008) claim learning that occurs within one’s organizational context will ensure greater transfer rates, the corporate university is a learning intervention that has enhanced learning and workplace performance, it is an example of sufficient investment by his company’s leadership, a focused effort.

The corporate university is tangible, a focused effort by senior leadership to infuse knowledge that has resulted in meaningful learning whose outcomes include the development of company specific competencies that are embedded within his company’s culture, generating unique firm specific tacit knowledge that is linked to his company’s operational strategy. The University represents a human resource management practice that has lowered operating costs, influenced product differentiation, enhanced intra-company know-how, and contributed to his company’s competitiveness as an outcome of firm specific training. The Learning Executive has made possible the rapid accumulation of competitive experience and necessary learning from experience. He has ensured learning’s dissemination across his entire corporation. Learning from experience and disseminating learning are critical to an organization’s ability to generate wealth (Barkema et al., 2002; Earl & Scott, 1999; Ellinger et al., 2002; Nonaka, 1991).

My research confirms the popular literature’s affirmation that learning executive’s need to be both technologists and environmentalists (Earl & Scott, 1999). The Learning
Executive has effectively implanted learning and knowledge management technologies as well as enabled others to implement enterprise systems. He recognized information technology’s potential to mitigate unmet needs, that information technology can effectively disseminate organizational know-how but must be balanced with user capabilities and an organization’s readiness to embrace its use.

The researched learning executive is credible. Credibility is critical if learning executive roles are to survive in today’s cost conscious organizations (Bass, 2000; Bontis, 2001; Earl & Scott, 1999; Hershel & Nemati, 2000). His credibility was earned as an outcome of his work, not only what was achieved but how it was achieved, and through his regular on-going interactions with internal and external organizational stakeholders resulting in mutual trust between himself and upper echelon leadership. My research reveals that others view him as trustworthy, as a subject matter expert, he is a seasoned organizational leader, and he is constantly mindful of the best interests of his organization. A subordinate notes, “his credibility was earned by him achieving results” (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1).

He has positioned himself to exhibit sufficient influence to (a) engender senior leader’s recognition that learning is required to sustain the long-term financial success of his corporation, (b) make possible investment in social and human capital formation should not be viewed as discretionary, short-term spending, (c) ensure that all senior leaders must champion knowledge, and (d) enable the attainment of his company’s vision while aligning knowledge outcomes to identified strategy; demonstrating the potential for knowledge to
contribute to the profitability of his company. Internal and external stakeholders recognize that the appointment of a Learning Executive has enhanced his corporation’s potential (Letter to Shareholders, 2007, Extant Data).

A portion of the Learning Executive’s success can be attributed to his tenacity, his energy, his ability to effectively communicate within his organization’s context, and the trust that he has engendered amongst key organizational leaders. A learning executive subordinate claims, “his passion is infectious, he gets people excited, he exhibits extreme levels of extroversion” (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1). The most senior human resources leader reflected on his tenacity, “if he’s not getting a lot of play, he will be very persistent to make sure that he gets at least heard, really persistent” (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). Herschel and Nemati (2000) stressed that learning executives must demonstrate tenacity and personal energy to meaningfully influence others; this may be a unique requirement for the role. The Learning Executive shared with me that his company has provided him an ideal job; I agree, a more meaningful depiction would be that the Learning Executive has achieved the goal of person-job-fit.

*What Contextual Factors Affect a Learning Executive’s Ability to Exhibit Leadership?*
Table 9

Researcher Reflections

What contextual factors affect a learning executive’s ability to exhibit leadership?

My findings reflect individual and organizational learning situated within a culture that recognizes and embraces the need for learning.

- The contextual factors of learning culture, organizational constraints, climate, continuous improvement orientation, and organizational hierarchy appeared prevalent.

Context was identified as influencing a learning executive within his organization (Earl & Scott, 1999; Herschel & Nemati, 2000; Schein, 1992). If an organization’s context changes, leadership will change, as well as leadership effectiveness (Osborn et al., 2002). Osborn, Hunt, and Jauch (2002) argue that leadership is embedded in the context of an organization, embedded within the environment, the structure and technology of organizations. Leadership is socially constructed in and from an organization’s context where patterns over time must be considered and where organizational history matters; leadership is bound by organizational history (Osborn et al., 2002). You cannot separate leaders from their context (Osborn et al., 2002).

The contextual factors of strategy, culture, senior leadership, associate commitment to learning, firm performance, markets, the nature of the company’s products and services, firm volatility, organizational structure, the list is endless and each contextual element potentially influences the ability of a learning executive to impact their organization (Herschel & Nemati, 2000). Porter and McLaughlin (2006) support Herschel and Namati’s observation;
there are no universally agreed-upon sets of components that comprise context’s influence on leader behavior. The third and fourth chapters of my writing should be interpreted as an integrated depiction of the researched company’s context, its products and services, markets, culture, leadership, firm performance and firm volatility. My description is meant to provide you with a detailed depiction of contextual phenomena, to enhance your understanding of collected research data, and to suffice the intent of descriptive case study technique (Yin, 2003).

My research revealed the following contextual factors; patterns influenced the researched learning executive’s ability to exhibit leadership within his organization (see Table 9). The patterns are: (a) learning, the Learning Executive’s company can be classified as a learning organization, its culture as a learning culture, in 2006 the Company invested more than 2 million dollars to support associate learning (Learning Executive Interview, 2006, Extant Data); the second contextual pattern was (b) constraints, the Learning Executive was confronted by a number of constraints that he has had to actively manage, they include a sufficient budget [or insufficient budget], stakeholder support and alignment, limited resources, and team capacity; the third contextual pattern is termed (c) supportive climate, the company’s culture is viewed as supportive by both employees and those external to his company, terms used to describe his company include collegial, ethical, and polite; the fourth pattern is (d) improvement, the company’s culture demands continuous improvement, innovation that results in tangible, meaningful outcomes, his organization’s culture expects high levels of performance from all associates, this cultural norm has a number of inherent
associations that once established drives an organization towards learning; the fifth and final contextual pattern is (e) hierarchy, his company reflects a hierarchical structure, job roles, department and functional units, segmented and specialized, representing all of the inherent advantages and disadvantages of hierarchical organizational structures.

Learning does improve current and future performance of an organization and as such is viewed as a necessary competency (Drucker, 1993). The Learning Executive’s company has experienced favorable outcomes from learning. His organization’s culture embraces learning as normal, expected of all employees, a required job competency, the result being frequent learning and tangible improvements to business processes and services (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Extant Data; Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7; Learning Executive’s Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). The dynamic nature of a company’s marketplace requires continuous learning fueling on-going innovation and product differentiation (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Davenport et al., 1998; Drucker, 1993; Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Polanyi, 1967; Reed & DeFillippi, 1990; Spender, 1996; Teece, 2000; Wenerfelt, 1984).

Brown and Duguis’s (1991) writing identified the need for organizations to work, learn, and innovate constantly to be successful. When an organization’s climate is oriented towards change, organizations may not initially seek out transformational leaders but will be receptive to leaders that exhibit this transformational leadership (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). The element of change experienced both internal and external to his corporation may
have shaped his organization’s need for leadership as well as provided the necessary context to enable transformational leaders to succeed.

*What contextual factors influenced his organization’s ability to learn?*

**Table 10**

*Researcher Reflections*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What contextual factors influenced his organization’s ability to learn?</th>
<th>The contextual factors of organizational culture, business strategy, organization structure, and environment influenced his organization’s ability to learn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The need for continuous innovation has provided niche opportunities further justifying his role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is effectively embedded within his organization’s culture resulting in atomization of learning behaviors</td>
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</table>

The Learning Executive’s company regularly demonstrated four key contextual factors (see Table 10) that are necessary for organizational learning (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; McKenzie & Winkelen, 2004) they are: (a) an organizational culture that is conducive to learning; my research reflects a culture of learning suggesting that there is a reciprocal relationship between his organization’s financial performance and support for learning; (b) a flexible business strategy is needed, as portrayed by senior leaders during the course of my research the company’s strategy is flexible, mindful of an envisioned future that entails innovative new products that address significant healthcare problems, delivering unique benefits to patients, healthcare workers, and researchers, to realize this strategy senior leaders have public-ally announced that learning is matters, that it is needed; (c) the structure of the
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

His company fosters both innovation and the creation of new insight; within the researched company investment in research and development continues to increase, it was increased by 13% in 2006 and 19% in 2007 far outpacing the industry average, additional investment is occurring to assure the growth of organizational knowledge and to improve knowledge processes [double-loop learning]; (d) an environment that expects and rewards constant innovation and continuous learning, resulting in meaningful business outcomes that improve his company’s processes and services; continuous improvement, constant innovation is publicly acknowledged as critical by the company’s upper echelons; and (e) a culture that encourages participation, openness, and psychological safety. The Company’s context, its culture, embraces each of these elements further enhancing the researched learning executive’s influence.

His company is, “innovating for impact” (Letter to Shareholders, 2007, Extant Data). His corporation defines tangible innovation as innovation resulting in tangible products and services, products and services that are marketable, sold to others in exchange for capital. Innovation is a significant cultural influence within the context of his company. Company literature claims, “we always seek to improve” as a core value (AMA, 2008, Extant Data). This announced need for constant innovation provides the Learning Executive an opportunity to influence his company through learning initiatives, encouraging innovation and organizational transformation. Barney (1992) and Schein’s (1985) stress that an organization’s context is a potential source of sustained competitive advantage; the Learning Executive has successfully leveraged his organization’s context to further his potential to
influence. The most senior Human Resources leader within his company notes that he has successfully embedded his initiatives within the fabric of his corporation; his initiatives are viewed as necessary (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6).

During the course of my research I collected extant data that reflects his company’s envisioned future, the three greats; great performance for customers and shareholders, making great contributions to society, and a great place to work (Annual Report, 2006 & 2007, Extant Data). Corporate internal communications state that associates are making a difference in global human healthcare, saving and improving lives through company products and services as well as their charitable initiatives and partnerships, “bringing our corporate purpose to life” (Letter to Shareholders, 2007, Extant Data). This public declaration of the company’s future requires the researched learning executive’s participation; his business systems to communicate and vet the vision, his initiatives provide the means to attain his company’s envisioned future.

My findings reflect the consistent themes of individual and organizational learning situated within his organization’s culture, a culture that recognizes and embraces the need for learning. Schein (1992) noted that in turbulent business environments organizational cultures must embrace learning. His company’s culture exhibited the following learning competencies: (a) organizational members function as proactive problem solvers, the talent management system sufficiently rewards associates who solve challenging business problems; (b) the company’s culture does embrace a general recognition that human nature is good, that associates are malleable, they can learn needed skills to assume emerging
challenges, associates are expected to learn; (c) company leadership exhibits a complex blend of individualism and group-ism as appropriate for complex problem solving, exemplified by a robust operational effectiveness, continuous improvement function within his corporation; (d) authoritarian and participative systems are in-place, trust is exhibited amongst organizational leaders and associates, my findings reflect that his company utilizes teams throughout his organization, teams are granted influence; (e) communication and information are central to his organizations well-being, accurate and relevant information flowed freely in a fully connected network that entailed both technology and human capital, his initiatives enabled knowledge formation and information dissemination; (f) the researched learning executive recognized that the more turbulent the environment the more diverse but connected organizational units needed to be; this need gave rise to his role, enabled him to gain influence, and contributes to his role’s longevity; (g) both task and relationship orientations are exhibited within his company; and (h) senior leadership recognizes that their business environment is intrinsically complex, consisting of interconnected elements in which multiple causation and over-determination are more likely than linear or simple causes.

His company has earned notable acclaim, the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index, Fortune’s “Americas Most Admired Companies”, Ethisphere Magazine’s “World’s Most Ethical Companies”, reflect on his company’s espoused values of volunteerism, community, safety and enhancing the environment (Letter to Shareholders, 2007, Extant Data). My research reflects a continued pattern of company leaders seeking external recognition to confirm strategy, to reinforce desired organizational norms, to provide affirmation that
organizational leaders are doing the right things. The Learning Executive has skillfully capitalized on this form of recognition; achieving public confirmation that he has done the right things, and once affirmed he has experienced greater credibility both internal to and external to his organization. The above portrayal provides you with an initial listing of contextual factors that my research has identified as impacting his role and in turn his leadership; I do not claim that my observations are all encompassing but do claim that they are insightful, contributing to your understanding of the case.

_How did the researched learning executive manage constraints imposed by his context?_
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

Initially in his role the researched learning executive faced the challenges of limited resources, a skeptical senior leadership team, and a history of failed corporate educational initiatives; the Learning Executive shared, “there was a Training and Development [T&D] function in the Company in the 1980s; it was disbanded as a result of a financial downturn” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). My research revealed that he effectively overcame these challenges by aligning HRD and HRM initiatives to business strategy, by positioning his organization as the sole source for key educational services, by accurately diagnosing organizational performance gaps, and quickly designing and implementing interventions that resulted in tangible, valued, and cost effective solutions to real business problems (see Table 11). The Chief Executive Officer mentioned that the Learning

Table 11

*Researcher Reflections*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did the researched learning executive manage constraints imposed by his context?</th>
<th>He demonstrates the ability to get-it-right resulting in greater influence and earned credibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient organizational capital is required to manage constraints; his access to capital is a function of his influence, an outcome of his leadership</td>
<td>He aligns with, then enables the actualization of business strategy resulting in meaningful outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He uses enterprise technologies to multiply the impact of his initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He demonstrates business, HRD, and HRM acumen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He is a skilled marketer, he effectively promotes his accomplishments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive’s work contributes directly to enabling great performance by company employees, shaping the workplace culture to be a great place to work (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7).

In 2000 he was able to secure needed capital as an outcome of an organizational survey that identified a significant need for improved leadership and workplace competencies within his company. The Learning Executive recognized the unique opportunity afforded by the survey’s outcomes to gain attention to his felt need for the role (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3). Once equipped with actual respondent data he successfully influenced the senior leadership team to establish his role and the fund the establishment of a corporate university. This portrayal reflects upon his acumen, his ability to leverage opportunity, to influence others.

The founding of the corporate university is an example of the Learning Executive’s ability to get-it-right; to successfully garner senior stakeholder trust. He approached the challenge mindful of limited resources, as an entrepreneur he brokered approval for a small but talented team (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7). He possessed sufficient foresight to recognize that associate access was necessary if the corporate university was to succeed. The University’s success was dependent on the alignment of developed courseware to business strategy resulting in meaningful outcomes from learning. His classroom facilitation model termed *Leaders as teachers* eliminated the need for multiple professional training staffs, this example is indicative of his acumen, his ability to do the
right thing, a unique personal ability that has been developed through years of experience in combination with life-long learning as a practitioner.

The Learning Executive’s selective use of knowledge management and learning management technologies has furthered the impact of his interventions. His enterprise applications have improved associate access to tacit knowledge, heightened levels of compliance, achieved greater efficiencies, enhanced learning outcomes through the implementation of blended learning technologies, and established accountability across the entirety of his corporation. His use of technology has enhanced, literally multiplied his ability to efficiently impact his organization.

“The Learning Executive knows what to do as an outcome of active environmental scanning, internal and external networking, and his acquired mastery of a defined body of knowledge known as human resource development” (Learning Executive’s Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). He relies on professional peers, ongoing benchmarking, needs assessment, and organizational data to confirm the impact of his initiatives (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). The Learning Executive enhances his potential to be effective through his communication, he communicates as a business owner, conveying the impact of initiatives, utilizing recognized business measures found in his organization’s context to ensure dialogue amongst organizational leaders.

The Learning Executive has effectively marketed his initiatives, their outcomes, and their worth to overcome internal resistance (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1; Learning Executive’s Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). As previously
identified his organization’s context tends to embrace external recognition as more valid, a
more meaningful and quite possibly impact-ful form of recognition. The Learning Executive
has capitalized upon this contextual reality and made use of external recognition to enact his
initiatives. The outcome being further enhancing his aurora as a competent leader, that his
work is meaningful as identified by others outside of his organization.

Finally trust is an important enabler; trust enabled the researched learning executive
to overcome constraints. The Learning Executive has established sufficient trust amongst
senior leaders to overcome most issues that prevent him from transforming his organization
(Learning Executive’s Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). The senior leadership team
accepts the Learning Executive as a peer; his good work has engendered credibility, lessened
organizational resistance, and secured necessary support for his initiatives (Chief Executive
Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7).

How does the financial performance of his corporation impact his job?
Table 12

*Researcher Reflections*

| **How does the financial performance of his corporation impact his job?** | ▪ Innovation that results in marketable products and services results in profit; profit creates organizational slack; slack results in continued investment in human capital by his company
| | ▪ Learning is an outcome of slack, learning results in the innovation of marketable products and services whose outcome is increased organizational wealth |

The nature of the medical technology industry demands constant innovation, now more than in the past (MX, 2008, Extant Data). The term hyper-competitive is often used to describe the rate of change; the intellectual capital of the company has emerged as a key source of competitive differentiation (Letter to Shareholders, 2007, Extant Data). The company’s strategy of increasing sustainable revenue growth through innovative technologies appears to be successful as portrayed by the third chapter of my writing (see Table 12). The strategy entails improving operating efficiencies while achieving the three greats, great performance, great contributions to society, and a great place to work resulting in continued prosperity (Letter to Shareholders, 2007, Extant Data). This strategy has been in-place since 2000 and has resulted in improved operating revenues; in addition dividends have more than tripled, in conjunction with other significant financial improvements (Letter to Shareholders, 2007, Extant Data). Though difficult to account for learning’s impact to the
company’s bottom line the company has experienced significant operating improvements during the Learning Executive’s tenure.

The Learning Executive has contributed significantly to the development of organizational know-how, his company’s intellectual capital, and once developed has brought about the necessary culture to embrace learning across the entire company resulting in yet further innovation (Letter to Shareholders, 2007, Extant Data). This dynamic requires balance to ensure that his company can accept and absorb change and that change’s potential is fully realized; the Learning Executive has masterfully achieved this needed balance through his initiatives.

The financial success of the corporation has enabled greater opportunity for enterprise initiatives that include learning, organizational development, talent management, continuous improvement, and the use of information technology to enable the management of organizational knowledge (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). My findings reveal that there is a relationship between the researched learning executive’s contributions and his organization’s prosperity. This prosperity in-turn makes possible slack that enables the potential for continued innovation resulting in further prosperity that in-turn makes possible continued investment in organizational slack resulting in even greater innovation. Levitt and March (1988) note that organizational slack is needed to enable innovation; slack is good.

Williamson’s (1963) research suggests that firms with slack resources tend to hire more staff than needed especially at the executive level. My findings confirm that the
Learning Executive’s role was put-in-place as an outcome of sufficient slack, first identified by the Learning Executive and then by others. His role is now commonly recognized as needed to ensure the continued prosperity of his company (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7). Senior organizational leaders continue to ensure sufficient financial support of his initiatives; funding for the University alone exceeded 2 million dollars during 2007 (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5).

*How does his corporation’s upper echelon impact his role?*
Table 13

Researcher Reflections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How does his corporation’s upper echelon impact his role?</th>
<th>Top management enables innovation through their decisions; learning is needed to make innovation possible and as such validates his role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to learning is necessary to achieve the potential for knowledge to create wealth; this commitment takes the form of capital, resources, senior management edicts, and visible upper echelon participation in organizational learning initiatives</td>
<td>The researched learning executive has obtained the status of personal coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The senior leadership team’s heterogeneity has made his role possible; the upper echelon exhibit both prospector and defender orientations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategy implementation requires his participation to ensure consensus, dissemination, and realization resulting in justifying his role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choi (2000) stated that it is impossible to promote innovation without strong top-management leadership and commitment; garnering senior organizational leadership support is necessary in today’s successful organizations. Top managers are crucial to firm outcomes because of the decisions that they are empowered to make; ultimately they are accountable to make things happen in their organizations (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Leaders are the guiding force behind effective organizational learning (see Table 13); leaders must initiate processes that enhance day-to-day learning (Vera & Crossan, 2004).

Organizational learning has been proposed as a fundamental strategic process and the only competitive advantage of the future (Drucker, 1993; Pfeffer, 1994; Prahalad, 1983;
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

Reich, 1991; Vera & Crossan, 2004). Argyris and Schön, (1996) claim the primary task of leaders in contemporary organizations is to ensure that a learning culture exists, one that reinforces the notion of perpetual learning; there is a causal link between leadership and learning. The CEO is influential, during my interaction with him he stated, “we became convinced through our own insights and frankly through the insights of our organization that we were not spending nearly enough time, effort, treasure, talent, money developing our people to develop to their full potential” (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7). The CEO has become the most influential knowledge champion within his company.

The senior leadership team provides necessary upper echelon leadership for his company, by developing strategy, by providing direction, and enacting needed influence. As a point of clarification I was granted access to the Chief Executive Officer and the Vice President of Human Resources, the most senior Human Resources leader within his corporation, both members of the senior leadership team. At the time of my research the Learning Executive was not a formal member of the senior leadership team though my research findings indicate that he did influence individual senior leaders, he had access to the team, and was viewed as an informal yet influential member (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7).

The Learning Executive has successfully integrated into the upper echelons of his corporation; my research revealed that this integration was influenced by cognitive and social integration phenomena. Due to environmental complexity and resulting marketplace demands the Learning Executive was able to assume the role of executive coach and as such
was viewed as a trusted advisor on issues of leadership selection and development. This role afforded him access, influence, and the opportunity to enhance his credibility one senior leader at a time.

The top management team can be characterized as both prospectors and defenders; Miles and Snow’s (1978) writing portrays prospectors as continually seeking growth, valuing innovation, and constantly searching for new opportunities. Defenders on the other hand are concerned with cost control, stability, and efficiency (Miles & Snow, 1978). The corporation’s strategy is a reflection of both influences; while striving for innovation, efficiencies and cost savings are needed to achieve the vision of a great company. Senior leader’s decisions and resulting actions reinforce the assertion that the senior leadership team can be characterized as both prospectors and defenders, that they recognize the value of learning and its potential to contribute to their organization’s future.

The senior leadership team is rather large; this may be a reflection of environmental munificence (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). My research reveals that this munificence is due primarily to marketplace success and an effort to embrace heterogeneous thinking across multiple functional leaders to improve his organization’s strategy. Galbraith (1973) observed that organizational complexity forces greater specialization and decentralization, potentially increasing the number of individuals involved in decision making. The complexity of the company’s marketplace has influenced the size of the team. Bantel and Jackson (1989) noted that top management teams that are large, that exhibit heterogeneity are more likely to enact improved decision making skills resulting in better quality decisions, the Learning
Executive’s appointment and continued support by the senior leadership team may be an outcome of the team’s heterogeneity.

Strategy implementation typically requires significant integration of people and resources, takes considerable time, and depends on the cooperation of numerous people to include the top management team (Galbraith & Kazanjian, 1986). The Learning Executive is needed to impact strategy, to achieve consensus, to actively manage knowledge, to occupy a seat at the table to influence decision maker’s to consider the value of their organization’s human capital, to aid senior leaders to know what they don’t know. The Learning Executive has successfully positioned his role and his work to be viewed as key enablers of the top management team’s vision and in turn he has been rewarded through continued funding for his initiatives.

The literature suggests that organizational members, including the top management team need to understand a proposed strategic change, to ensure that it makes sense, and that the change fits a revised interpretive scheme (Bartunek, 1984; Ranson, Hinings, & Greenwood, 1980). The top management team must first develop an understanding of the organization’s internal and external environment and define a revised conception of the organization (Thomas & McDaniel, 1990). Following this interpretive work by the top management team some abstract vision of the changed organization emerges and is eventually disseminated to stakeholders and organizational members (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). This eventual dissemination, the sense-making, and eventual dissemination is tasked to the Learning Executive as a trusted advisor to his company’s senior leadership team.
The writings of Berson, Nemanich, Waldman, Galvin and Keller (2006) reflect a number of interesting observations that can be related to the researched learning executive’s organization. One observation is reduced managerial commitment to innovation is typically accompanied by a shift from strategic towards financial controls resulting in an eventual downturn in organizational innovation; a second observation is the demonstration of championing behavior by leaders results in allocation of organizational resources to support new ideas that typically result in facilitating entrepreneurial intuition; and a third observation is a positive correlation exists between managerial attitude toward change and organizational innovation (Berson et al.; 2006). The researched organization’s upper echelon is committed to continued innovation; they recognize that investment in innovation requires investment in human capital formation.

*What Type of Leadership Does a Learning Executive Exhibit Within Their Organization?*
Leadership as Exhibited by a Private Sector Learning Executive

Table 14

Researcher Reflections

What type of leadership does a learning executive exhibit within their organization?

The most effective learning leaders are those who can demonstrate both transactional and transformational leadership as needed (Schein, 1992)

- The researched learning executive exhibits multiple forms of leadership that can be described as situationally dependent, behaviorally complex, and integrative

- Low magnitudes of influence required the exhibition of TRC leadership behaviors

- High magnitudes of influence required the exhibition of transformational leadership behaviors

- The researched learning executive initially relies on individual consideration as a basis for effective influence, followed by idealized influence [charisma]

Leadership is a requisite job competency needed to ensure an organization’s success (Choi, 2000; Drucker, 1993; Penrose, 1959; Prewitt, 2003; Ribiere & Sitar, 2003; Tichy, 2002). The researched learning executive exhibits multiple forms of leadership that can be described as situationally dependent, behaviorally complex, and integrative (see Table 14). Descriptive examples of his leadership are recorded for your interpretation in the findings chapter, the fourth chapter of my writing. The study’s literature review, chapter two, provides a thorough depiction of empirical research, vetted leadership theory. My research
supported my interpretation of his leadership and provided me sufficient information to meaningfully describe his leadership.

Two types of leadership emerged from my data; each leadership type is closely aligned with a particular level of influence. As the analysis of my data progressed it became apparent that I needed to codify levels of influence, leadership is a socially complex phenomenon typically characterized by influence (Bass, 1998; Yukl, 1998).

Influence levels.

The researched learning executive did exhibit influence as an outcome of his leadership. Early in my analysis it became apparent that he exhibited leadership to obtain a particular level of influence that resulted in recognized work. My analysis explored work outcomes first to discriminate levels of influence. Once the level of influence was identified I was equipped to describe exhibited leadership. Codifying the nature of his work, recognizing that influence is a necessary competency for the role equipped me to identify his leadership.

My research revealed that the Learning Executive exhibited two levels of influence. I have incorporated a qualitative analysis display termed influence hierarchy (see Figure 27) to support your interpretation of my findings. Low-influence is utilized by the Learning Executive to achieve regular, daily influence. Low-level influence may be viewed as necessary for maintenance activities within his immediate team.

The second level of influence is termed high. High-influence is needed to initiate and enact organization-wide initiatives, to influence key, upper echelon stakeholders, and to
overcome significant resistance from influential knowledge skeptics. This level of influence is not normally exhibited by leaders except at the highest levels of an organization, senior leaders who are expected to influence entire organizations through their personality, personal energy, or other unique characteristics that enable their influence.

### Influence Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Initiatives</th>
<th>Lessons Learned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| High-influence | •Establishment of his role  
•Implementing the Corporate University  
•Implementing enterprise information technology systems  
•Implementing enterprise curricula  
•Implementing Talent Management system  
•Implementation of enterprise-wide learning initiatives  
•Influencing key senior leaders | +High influence was needed to get things going, to overcome organizational resistance to change, to provide the necessary vision  
•The outcomes listed required extreme levels of personal energy, charisma, persistence, to influence key leaders individually, then influence the entire group collectively  
+High risks are associated with each of the noted initiatives and as such required the Learning Executive to assume risk  
+High levels of capital required the Learning Executive to demonstrate senior project management skills to ensure effective implementation  
+Significant expertise was required by the Learning Executive to implement each initiative |
| Low-influence | •Daily management of his function  
•Annual budgeting  
•Subordinate coaching  
•Monitoring the outcomes of his initiatives  
•Influencing peers and subordinates | •The Learning Executive has effectively balanced task, relationship, and change behaviors, adjusting the level of influence needed |

*Figure 27. Influence Matrix.*
The influence matrix is a 2X2 conceptual cluster matrix to identify levels of influence, associated initiatives that required the influence, and lessons learned as an outcome of his influence.

Recognizing that influence is a key outcome of leadership two forms of leadership emerged from my findings; TRC leadership and Transformational leadership. The following subsection provides a theoretical depiction of his leadership for your interpretation.

*Learning executive leadership.*

The first form of Learning Executive leadership is characterized by Yukl’s (1998) TRC leadership theory (task-oriented behavior, relations-oriented behavior, and change-oriented behavior); this leadership taxonomy is appropriate when low-influence is required. My research revealed that the Learning Executive regularly exhibited the model’s TRC leadership behaviors when interacting with members of his immediate functional team.

TRC leadership is a descriptive integrative model of leadership, typically micro in scope and transactional in nature (Yukl, 1998). TRC can be described as a new depiction of leadership behavior (Yukl, 1998). It incorporates task and relation behavior from the original two-factor depiction characterized by earlier leadership research conducted by Ohio State University researchers in 1953 (Yukl, 1998). Yukl (1998) claims that a three factor taxonomy provides a more useful way to group specific behaviors into general categories commonly termed taxonomies.

The taxonomies include: (a) task oriented behavior, effective managers do not spend their time and effort doing the same kind of work as their subordinates, instead more
effective managers concentrate on task-oriented activities such as planning, organizing, and scheduling work; problem solving, informing, effective managers guide subordinates to set high but achievable goals, clarifying assignments, monitoring, recognizing, and rewarding work and coaching subordinates; effective managers ensure that their employees have sufficient resources; (b) the second taxonomy is termed relations oriented behavior, effective managers were shown to be more considerate, supportive, and helpful with subordinates, attempting to improve relationships, improving teamwork and cooperation amongst team members, enhancing team member identity and aligning their identity with their organization; consideration of employees to include autonomy at work, the employee is treated with a sense of worth and importance; and (c) the third taxonomy is termed change-oriented behavior, the effective manager does things that are primarily concerned with improving strategic decisions, effectively adapting to change and helping others to adapt to change in their environment, demonstrating necessary leadership to make changes to objectives, processes, products or services while gaining commitment to the changes from others; effective leaders practice environmental scanning, effectively communicate an appealing vision, propose innovative strategies, are persuasive about the need for change, encourage and facilitate experimentation, and are capable of developing needed coalitions to enact change (Yukl, 1998). Yukl (1998) notes that all three categories of behavior are relevant for most leaders but a leader’s environment, the organization’s context, and organizational strategy may determine the optimal mix of the three behaviors if a leader is to be successful.
My data revealed that the Learning Executive exhibited all three forms of behavior [taxonomies] in his workplace. Within his immediate team he appears to be more task oriented, this is confirmed from subordinates as well as peers; the Learning Executive notes, “I expect them (his employees) to work at the absolute best of their capabilities” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3), “when their eyes open and those first thoughts come to them, it’s about looking forward to coming to work…being fired up…bringing game” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 3).

His team views him as inspirational, supportive, enabling their futures; he has successfully garnered their acknowledgement that he is a thought leader not only within his immediate team but also within his profession. As a thought leader he inspires change; his ability to inspire is an outcome of his exhibition of personal energy, his acumen, and his credibility. My data suggests that he was a key change agent whose participation was necessary to ensure successful change across his entire corporation, “he is the single greatest influencer of people that I have met, he is a change agent” (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1).

Within his own team he has been required to exhibit change oriented behavior to overcome resistance from team members in order to assure the proper alignment of the right team member to a particular initiative. The Learning Executive has been careful to select team members who are capable, flexible, and able to acquire new skills. He stressed the importance of selecting the best organizational talent available in one’s marketplace, “first who then what” (Learning Executive, 2008, Research Transcript 9).
My research revealed a unique leadership challenge for the researched learning executive. He was charged to obtain the necessary resources to influence an entire organization’s know-how, to somehow transform a corporation of twenty five thousand associates. Senior organizational leadership was not aware of the potential for his role, the scope of work required, and the effort that was required. The Learning Executive emphasized task and change oriented behaviors early in his tenure to achieve sufficient credibility amongst senior leaders; once his credibility was established he was able to implement the second form of influence termed high (see Figure 28).

Learning Executive Leadership

![Diagram](attachment:LearningExecutiveLeadership.png)

*Figure 28. An Integrative Model of Learning Executive Leadership.*
The model represents leadership as exhibited by the study’s learning executive. Two levels of influence were identified by my research; low and high. Low-influence is accurately characterized by TRC leadership theory. High-influence required the exhibition of transformational leadership behavior to enact sufficient influence within his organization. Both forms of leadership are integrative, depicting the complex phenomena of leadership situated within a particular learning executive’s organization.

The second form of leadership can be categorized as transformational. Transformational leadership is an integrative leadership theory that combines the elements of charismatic and contingency theories, typically macro in scope and inspirational oriented (Bass, 2000). Vera and Crossman (2004) note that transformational leadership is appropriate and relevant descriptor for upper echelon leadership and is one of the few leadership theories that have been successfully applied to studying executives. I encourage readers of my research to review the second chapter for a more detailed depiction of transformational leadership theory.

The Learning Executive demonstrated transformational leadership to enact high-influence. Transformational leadership refers to the process of enacting [influencing others to enact] major changes. This is accomplished through the willing manipulation of organization member’s attitudes and assumptions, building their commitment for an organization’s mission, objectives, and strategies (Burns, 1978; Yukl, 1998). Leaders may play a role in forming necessary organizational context that maximizes the creativity of individuals (Berson et al., 2006). Transformational leaders have been associated with
heightened levels of organizational innovation; transformational leadership encourages exploration behaviors in others and is an effective means of challenging an organization’s status quo (Berson et al., 2006).

Transformational leaders, through change-oriented and challenge-seeking behaviors, promote the growth of individual and group learning by inspiring individuals, they are intellectually stimulating, they motivate individuals to reframe problems, take risks, and approach problems in novel ways (Bass, 1998; Vera & Crossan, 2004). Transformational leaders encourage innovation and double-loop learning (Bass, 1998; Argyris & Schön, 1978). Transformational leaders are individually considerate, providing necessary coaching and mentoring of others (Bass, 1998; Vera & Crossan, 2004). When creating new learning opportunities, these leaders pay attention to individual’s unique needs for achievement and growth (Vera & Crossan, 2004). Transformational leaders inspire others by instilling meaning and challenge (Bass, 1998; Vera & Crossan, 2004). Their own example of learning motivates others to learn (Vera & Crossan, 2004). Because transformational leaders tend to demonstrate high levels of charisma, they are natural role models with whom others tend to emulate as well as learn from (Bass, 1998; Vera & Crossan, 2004).

An example of the Learning Executive’s demonstration of transformational leadership was his implementation of an enterprise-wide knowledge intervention [the corporate university] that enabled the transformation of his company’s culture. His demonstration of transformational leadership took the form of influence, influencing others to embrace his vision for change; motivating others to aid him to enact radical change. The
Leaders as teachers’ initiative is a tangible example of his ability to energize hundreds of associates to meaningfully contribute to his company’s future, to create a viable corporate-wide initiative that solicits the voluntary participation of others to enhance their corporation’s success. He held his subordinates accountable while inspiring them to accomplish more than they thought possible or capable of accomplishing, to better themselves, to achieve higher goals not only for their corporation but also for their own careers.

He regularly made use of inspirational appeals to followers, peers, and senior leaders to embrace human capital, to recognize the potential for knowledge, and the need to manage knowledge (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). The Learning Executive is recognized as having exhibited extreme charisma, he is able to influence others; terms used to describe his charisma include animated, energetic, engaging, and amazing (Learning Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1; Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6).

He has provided leadership to build awareness for learning, to manage organizational knowledge, to develop his corporation’s key talent, and the need to enhance human capital within his company (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7). Bass (1985) characterizes awareness building as a necessary element of transformational leadership, one of the 4Is; Bass (1985) termed this awareness factor as intellectual stimulation.

My research revealed that he exhibited transformational behaviors: (a) he viewed himself as an agent of change, he was able to channel the collective energies of organizational members in pursuit of a common vision, his vision as well as the vision of the
top management team; (b) he was willing to assume prudent risks, several research
participants noted his willingness to incur risk; (c) his role required that he demonstrate a
belief that he valued people and was sensitive to their needs, he demonstrated a unique
concern for his subordinates; (d) he effectively articulated a set of core values that guided an
entire organization’s behavior, he inspired subordinates by giving their work meaning; (e) he
exhibited active, flexible learning and embraced learning from experience; (f) he
demonstrated cognitive skills that included disciplined thinking and effective analysis skills,
tangible examples include his preferred decision making technique; and (g) he is a visionary
who trusts his intuition. My interaction with his subordinates, his peers, and senior
organizational leaders has made a lasting impression on me; one of the greatest strengths
exhibited by the Learning Executive is his ability to transform, to empower, to elevate not
only the performance of his immediate team but the performance of his entire corporation,
“the Learning Executive has made great strides to influence our company” (Learning
Executive Subordinate, 2006, Research Transcript 1).

The most effective learning leaders are those who can demonstrate both transactional
and transformational leadership as needed (Vera & Crossan, 2004). When required to exhibit
high-influence he tended to exhibit the 4I’s, idealized influence [charisma], inspirational
motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. My research demonstrated
a propensity by the Learning Executive to initially rely on individual consideration as a basis
for effective influence, followed by idealized influence [charisma]. He did implement
transactional leadership within his immediate team, my findings did not reflect his use of transactional leadership to achieve high-influence amongst others.

My research reveals an organizational culture that makes possible transformational leadership behavior to be exhibited and quite possibly rewards its exhibition through the company’s talent management process. Bass (1998) noted that transformational organizational culture reflects a sense of purpose, a feeling of community. Commitments are long-term; there is a sense of shared interests and shared fate amongst leader and followers (Bass, 1998). The Learning Executive reinforces this observation stating:

I would say in our company most of the systems and the value system as a whole, much more encourages cooperation, collaboration and if we went back to McClelland’s’ classic work on human motives, would encourage much more achievement motivation as opposed to power motivation meaning being as good as we can be either individually or together versus being as good as we can be for a purpose and that is to dominate or overpower others (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 8).

Transformational culture leaders act as role models, mentors, and coaches (Bass, 1998). The organization’s norms change with changes in the organization’s environment (Bass, 1998). Transformational cultures emphasize organizational purpose, vision, and mission; challenges and opportunities are not viewed as threats but as opportunities. The researched organization reflects many of the above characteristics.

Is the researched learning executive’s leadership different?
Table 15

Researcher Reflections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is the researched learning executive’s leadership different?</th>
<th>His leadership is potentially different than other senior leaders; this difference is due to the nature of his role, his organization’s context, and his function’s responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He is required to constantly self-promote, to utilize the transformational behaviors of idealized influence and intellectual stimulation to influence key organizational stakeholders</td>
<td>A noted difference between his leadership and other senior leaders is his exhibition of idealized influence and charisma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A noted difference between his leadership and other senior leaders is his exhibition of idealized influence and charisma</td>
<td>Yet another difference in his leadership is his propensity to utilize intellectual stimulation to influence others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A noted difference between his leadership and other senior leaders is his exhibition of idealized influence and charisma</td>
<td>The tacit nature of his work requires his dependence on organizational slack which in turn shapes his behavior as a leader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My research revealed that his leadership was potentially different; this difference is due to the nature of his role, his organization’s context, and his function’s responsibilities (see Table 15). This observation is attributed to the challenges that he faced, his need to create vision with little to no guidance, and the nature of his role as a leader of organizational learning. His job was not defined; his role did not exist prior to him assuming the job, there was no history to build upon, very few organization’s employed learning executives at the time of his appointment. Even now the learning executive role is viewed as emerging within organizations (Berson et al., 2006; Earl & Scott, 1999).
A noted difference between his leadership and other senior leaders is his exhibition of idealized influence and charisma, key elements of transformational leadership. He is skillful at persuasion, as noted from my data senior leaders depend on his subject matter expertise, “I think we’re looked to be subject matter experts, to create possibilities to help the organization move itself from where it is to a better place” (Learning Executive, 2007, Transcript 4). His charisma is an outcome of his personal energy, his passion to overcome his organization’s resistance to change. A second observation is that he is a skillful self-promoter, masterfully marketing his initiatives. His need for marketing was an outcome of his organization’s deliverables to his corporation, his need to justify initiatives, to garner needed support to subdue knowledge skeptics within his company. Due to the tacit nature of his role his work products are fuzzy, difficult to qualify and quantify, and once quantified challenging to make believable to knowledge skeptics.

Yet another difference in his leadership is his potential to utilize the transformational leadership factor of intellectual stimulation as compared to his peers. My data disclosed several examples where the Learning Executive effectively influenced others by enhancing their awareness to problems and then influenced them to view problems from a new perspective; one example is his organization’s need for his role.

The Learning Executive does depend on organizational slack to enable his influence. He recognizes the need to be mindful of limited organizational resources, to be a good steward of company assets. The Learning Executive’s supervisor comments, “He’s a realist and he is resourceful, it’s his resourcefulness that has contributed to his success within his
company” (Learning Executive Supervisor, 2007, Research Transcript 6). Due to his role, the nature of his work, his organization’s context, and his dependence on organizational slack he was required to exhibit different leadership than his peers.

*Are the Study’s Propositions Confirmed By My Research?*

My use of research propositions focused my research; Yin (2003) noted that propositions are needed to direct attention to what should be researched. My propositions were codified as an outcome of a thorough review of scholarly literature, agreed to by my academic committee chair, and later defended as an element of my research proposal defense. My propositions were thoroughly vetted prior to initiating my research.

My research proposed the following propositions (P1) a private sector learning executive fosters the creation, implementation, and management of organizational knowledge, (P2) organizational contextual factors influence the learning executive’s ability to exhibit leadership; the most significant is organizational culture, and (P3) learning executive leadership may be characterized as integrative; integrating various aspects of recognized leadership theory but has yet to be identified by the literature.

The answer to the above question is yes, though my findings provide a more meaningful depiction of my research observations. My findings confirmed that the researched learning executive fostered the accumulation and maturation of tacit information transforming accumulated tacit information into meaningful, explicit organizational knowledge:
I think what we’ve done is to capture great knowledge that either existed in some way, shape or form maybe in pieces in the company and certainly captured great knowledge, great ideas, concepts from outside the company. What we have done is we’ve figured out that, in skillful ways, how to package that information in coursework in courseware and in resource tool chests that are e-accessible so I think that at some rate we’ve captured some of the best nuggets of ideas that are out there and knowledge that’s out there. We’ve, I think in many ways creatively designed and packaged around that and then we’ve been finding any number of ways to get that knowledge and those ideas, those tools and resources available to our people. (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 4)

He managed knowledge and knowledge interventions, he ensured the efficient dissemination of knowledge across the entirety of his corporation, he made possible the creation of human and social capital; he significantly influenced his corporation’s culture resulting in a culture that embraced learning [the University and Company Connect]. The CEO noted that the Learning Executive has put in-place a means to discern what is expected of leaders (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7). He continued his depiction adding that the formal learning opportunities provided by the company’s university motivates his workforce, “we have engendered in our leaders a sense of responsibility, engagement that teaching others, that teaching is a notable calling, I believe that there is a correlation between good leaders and corporate performance” (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7). The Chief Executive Officer furthered his portrayal sharing
that the Learning Executive’s work contributes directly to enabling great performance by company employees, shaping the workplace culture to be a great place to work (Chief Executive Officer, 2007, Research Transcript 7).

Culture was an important contextual factor that influenced his ability to lead, my research revealed that he was empowered by his context, a culture that embraced learning, in particular transformational leadership, the Learning Executive shares, “a culture of teaching and learning does exist within the company” (Learning Executive, 2007, Research Transcript 5). A culture of learning that is supported by his top management team; that his role within his organization enabled him to more easily assume multiple responsibilities that span the breadth of human capital development; and that the contextual factor of a hyper-competitive marketplace left no other choice than to establish his role.

His leadership was integrative, a complex dynamic that incorporated multiple levels of influence, leadership that required two recognized leadership theories to adequately depict his leadership, TRC and transformational leadership. A subordinate shares that the Learning Executive, “is the single greatest influencer of people that I have ever met” (Team Member, 2006, Research Transcript 1). My observations were consistent with Quinn’s (1988) writings; Quinn noted that senior organizational leaders must develop the ability to assume multiple leadership roles [behavioral complexity] to be effective. His job can be portrayed as complex, his role is influenced by his organization’s context, where sufficient individual influence is needed, a job that is ill defined, at times under resourced, yet exhibits great potential. My research did support the original study propositions; yet another indicator of
the important contributions that the researcher’s literature review makes to enable impact-full research.

Implications for Practice

Multinational corporations face a host of challenges. In an age where technology is easily replicated the last remaining competitive advantage that organizations possess is the productivity and inventiveness of their workforce (Barney, 1991; Berson et al., 2006; Drucker, 1993; Nelson, 1959; Mahoney & Pandian, 1992; Pfeffer, 1994; Prahalad, 1983; Quinn, 1992; Reich, 1991; Teece, 2000). As such today’s organizations are attempting to enhance the performance of their human capital to achieve a competitive edge (Burke & Hutchins, 2008; Nelson, 1959). Human capital development initiatives such as workplace skill development, the management of organizational knowledge, and the use of information technology exhibit the potential to enhance know-how resulting in on-going innovation (Bailey, 2001).

My findings indicate that an influential leader, i.e. the researched learning executive is needed to (a) build awareness to knowledge’s potential for creating wealth, (b) drive innovation within his organization to achieve competitive advantage, (c) implement meaningful initiatives that were aligned to business strategy, (d) establish sufficient credibility to influence senior leader’s regular consideration of human capital, and (e) aid his organization to achieve its envisioned future.

My research revealed that a learning executive is able to influence the prosperity of their organization. They are needed to jump-start, get things going, to provide the necessary
vision to energize others, to communicate a strategy that is appealing, to inspire an entire corporation’s workforce. The ability to inspire is a key competency for the role within the context of the researched learning executive’s organization. Due to the descriptive nature of my research my findings purport a casual relationship between the researched learning executive’s role and his organization’s prosperity, this context dependent descriptive observation was generally lacking from reviewed literature on the role.

Learning executive leadership can be characterized as integrative, integrating characteristics of Transformational and TRC leadership theory. His integrative leadership enabled the researched learning executive to be effective. This observation provides implications not only for leadership theory but also for human resource development practice. Practitioner’s should note that one form of leadership might not be sufficient for learning executives, that effective learning executives may be required to demonstrate multiple forms of leadership, reflecting sufficient behavioral complexity, that is situational and organizationally context dependent.

My research is descriptive, portraying the experienced reality of one learning executive. As such a number of emergent observations may benefit others in the role: (a) learning executives must achieve sufficient credibility to secure needed resources within their organizations, sufficient resources are needed to achieve influence, without influence a learning executive may not be viewed as contributing to their organization; (b) learning executives need to develop trust across multiple stakeholder groups, in particular the top management team, they need to quickly disarm their critics, for the researched learning
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executive this was accomplished through credibility earned as an outcome of his work and his social capital; (c) learning initiatives should be aligned, they should enable an organization’s strategy and its vision, this alignment results in greater influence; (d) dedicated resources must be effectively managed, return on investment must be demonstrated, learning executives must be prepared to regularly justify their roles to skeptics within their organizations, this may be a unique requirement of the job; (e) learning executives must effectively market their contributions, results must be tangible, seen as adding value; (f) learning executives must be effective change agents, able to influence individuals and entire business units, they must assume the role of knowledge evangelists; (g) learning executives benefit from sufficient acumen, subject matter expertise in Human Resource Development, Adult Learning, Knowledge Management, Human Resources and Information Systems in conjunction with business specific information, they must assume the role of learning leaders; (h) prior senior leadership experience garnered from career experiences benefit learning executives, operations and consulting experience may be especially helpful; (i) competitiveness, an urgent approach to one’s work, balance, having a variety of life experiences, demonstrating the ability to focus on what really matters, effective communication skills provided the researched learning executive with the right stuff to succeed.

Qualitative leadership research is needed (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003).

Qualitative research, in particular case study technique provided me an exciting opportunity to apply a recognized research technique to explore my researchable questions. Qualitative
method was appropriate to better understand the questioned phenomena, case technique satisfied the research design and enabled sufficient data to be collected and analyzed. Case technique provided me the freedom to be responsive to challenges that I encountered during my research. Examples being changing research questions during my subject interviews to get-at needed information. This was an advantage. I encourage others to refer to Yin’s (2003) writings to support their understanding of this research technique. I suggest that case researchers consider team research; I found the research process to be extremely information intensive, and at times overwhelming and very labor intensive, possibly inappropriate for a single researcher unless a very limited case is chosen to study.

The central contribution of my research is a model that portrays the leadership of an emerging organizational role, the learning executive as a theoretical depiction. My writing provides insight into how a particular learning executive within his organization’s context performs his job the outcomes of which further one’s understanding of his leadership. A secondary but no less important contribution of my research is to provide practitioners with a how-to guide to further their practice as learning executives. Additional empirical research is needed to better understand the role and its potential for contribution.

Recommendations for Additional Research

Others may want to consider implementing case study research technique as a viable approach to applied business research. If embraced, research would entail exploring multiple cases [learning executives], comparing and contrasted across several characteristics to
include role, context and exhibited leadership. The value of this research would be the potential for generalize-ability of research findings.

I encourage future researchers to consider combining qualitative and quantitative research technique. Much of business relies upon quantification of workplace phenomena as the basis for truth; a wealth of vetted quantitative data collection tools already exist, if one were to combine research technique the quality / usefulness of future research may be enhanced.

Research is needed to address the questions of (a) how does learning executive leadership affect group and organizational performance? (b) What is the relationship between learning executive leadership and their effectiveness? (c) What is the proper balance between task, relations, and change oriented leadership behavior for a learning executive in a given context? (d) What leadership attributes do learning executives emphasize that other senior leaders do not? (e) What are the unique managerial requirements for the role compared to other senior organizational leaders? (f) What differences exist between private and public sector learning leaders? (g) How does a learning executive influence organizational prosperity? (h) How can learning executives more effectively exploit organizational learning within the context of their corporations? (i) What is the full range of leadership behaviors needed to influence organizational learning? Additional research on the role and its influence will better serve future job incumbents, the organizations that employ learning executives, and potentially our nation as we approach a challenging economic future.

Conclusions
Wolcott (2001) suggested that qualitative researchers never really conclude their research. He suggests that researchers avoid incorporating a conclusion and instead seek to provide a succinct review of what has been learned (Wolcott, 2001). I caution you the reader not to rely on the conclusions section of my writing to support your interpretation of my research. Descriptive case study technique provides for the potential for new knowledge through the reader’s individual interpretation of the rich descriptive depiction provided by the technique (Merriam, 1998); this depiction is reflected within the whole of my writing.

My research provided a narrative description of the role of a unique learning executive, his organization’s context, and his leadership. My application of descriptive case study technique ensured that you the reader were provided with sufficient detail to understand the job and the researched learning executive’s contributions. For human resource development practitioners my research provided an opportunity to reflect on and potentially improve individual practice. One example is the researched learning executive’s implementation of a corporate university; another example is his imaginative use of external recognition, a third example is my descriptive portrayal of his ability to influence. My writing provides numerous opportunities for reader’s to learn from an experienced learning executive and quite possibly mimic his actions to enable their practice.

My research provided insight, a thorough depiction of his role, a description of his organization’s context, and his leadership. While reflecting on key lessons from the past, my writing confirmed the significance of knowledge and the necessity of knowledge management in today’s economy. My research portrayed a number of observations that
potentially support the reader’s conclusions about the role of a learning executive and its’ potential. My writing is detailed enough to be considered a how-to guide for aspiring learning executives; it provided an informed glimpse of a unique learning executive. For organizations my research provided an accurate depiction of one learning executive’s job, fostering an initial, tentative codification of role expectations.

My writing incorporated an extensive review of vetted literature, leadership theory, organizational context, the job as depicted by popular literature, knowledge management, top management teams, social capital theory, organizational culture theory, intellectual and human capital theory. The literature review made possible my interpretation of observed phenomena. For the readers of my research the literature brings life to theory potentially supporting one’s understanding of the role. I found the literature necessary to enable my interpretation of my observations.

My research has enabled me as a novice researcher to develop my skills through direct application of descriptive case study technique. My writing incorporated qualitative research technique. As noted by a number of authors qualitative research is needed to enhance the quality of leadership research. The purpose of my research was to describe his role, his leadership, and the context of his organization recognizing that context potentially influences a leader’s ability to influence. My research has achieved this end. My research was situated within the Learning Executive’s organization; I was granted access to extant organizational data, to key leaders, peers, and subordinates of the researched learning executive.
I engaged organizational stakeholders for approximately seven months, interacting primarily in-person, within the context of their organization. The research participants provided input for my observations; their voices are contained within my findings. Participant interviews were the primary means of information [data] collection though internal and external extant data was utilized to further my observations. The trustworthiness of my findings was confirmed through a formal comparison, triangulation of the research transcripts, extant data, and my researcher field notes. I made use of member checks to include the researched learning executive who has not challenged my findings to-date.

My findings revealed that the researched learning executive was the most senior learning leader in his organization; this finding has a number of connotations that are embedded within my writing. He was an architect of human capital development; he was a senior knowledge manager and talent manager within his corporation, each of these roles demonstrates sufficient influence within his organization to impact corporate-wide outcomes. As such he was required to demonstrate thought leadership, expert influencing skills, tenacity, and sufficient business acumen to make possible his vision for his role; that vision entailed realizing the potential for knowledge to contribute to organizational prosperity.

His organization’s context can be described as a learning organization. Senior leaders supported his initiatives; they recognize the value of learning and the potential for knowledge to create organizational wealth. This support was garnered through his unique ability to influence, his demonstrated business acumen, and his credibility that was earned through tangible business results, results that were aligned to company strategy whose outcomes were
valued by key organizational stakeholders that furthered mutual trust between the learning executive and his corporation’s upper echelon.

An additional descriptor of his organization’s context is a culture that supports transformational leadership. Change is expected, constant innovation is needed to remain competitive, transformational leadership is embraced and rewarded through enterprise talent management systems resulting in its’ perpetuation.

The proposed research propositions were confirmed. The researched learning executive’s leadership was potentially different from other senior leaders in his organization. He exhibited an integrative form of leadership, one that incorporated transformational leadership in conjunction with task, relations, and change oriented [TRC] leadership behaviors to sufficiently influence his entire corporation. One outcome of my findings is that the researched learning executive was required to demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors, extreme levels of influence, idealized influence, charisma, and intellectual stimulation; this required him to expend significant personal energy to achieve sufficient influence. His role within his organization demanded that he exhibit sufficient influence to overcome his organization’s initial resistance to change.

I do not claim that my findings are transferable or generalize-able to other research settings; they are instead tentative, only meaningful to the researched learning executive and his organization during a brief period in one company’s history. This limitation was expected, it was a planned outcome of the case’s bounding. If cases are not bounded they are not do-able (Yin, 2003).
I do claim that my research findings are dependable; I have explained my observations in sufficient detail to accurately depict the researched phenomena, his role, the context of his organization, and his leadership. I have solicited other’s interpretations of my findings, my academic committee and research participants. I have established a sufficient audit trail, my writing includes citations to empirical literature, quotes, citations to main ideas from my research data, examples of transcribed interviews, case records, field notes, and extant data. My findings are authentic; they accurately describe the researched phenomena. I have provided you the reader with sufficient detail to support your own conclusions. My research is trustworthy. I have attempted to accurately implement case study research technique.

To conclude, my research provides researchers in HRD, HRM, and organizational learning with a descriptive glimpse of an emerging role, a particular learning executive within the context of his organization. My research indicates that as an outcome of his leadership he was able to realize his vision as a senior organizational leader, influence the abilities of others to contribute to their company, and achieve the potential for organizational knowledge to add value within his corporation.
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APPENDICES
Appendix A

Interview Guide

The enclosed interview guide was utilized during my fieldwork. Each interview guide sourced the study’s conceptual framework and literature review to evolve interview questions. Once the guides were written members of my academic committee reviewed the guides for sufficiency. The noted guide is not complete, it is a representative sample of the guides that I authored to support the data collection phase of my research.

**Question 1: How does a Learning Executive contribute to his/her organization?**

**How did you achieve your current position?** (Grand Tour Question)

Needed to develop an understanding incumbent’s credentials, work experience, prior leadership experience, any potential unique preparation pursued by the incumbent, potential emerging interests as espoused by the Learning Executive.

(Justification)

*Source a copy of resume (Extant Data)*

*Source job description (Extant Data)*

Describe formal and informal leadership roles that you have held within your organization. (Mini Tour Question)
Appendix B

Contact Summary Form

For each research participant encountered I completed a contact summary form.

The form provided me with an on-going history of my research contacts, challenged me to reflect on the quality of my research, and provided me with essential detail to support on-going information collection.

Contact Summary Form

Contact: 3

Name:
Vice President Talent Management and Chief Learning Officer

Phone Number:

E-Mail:

Location:

Contact Date: 02/05/07
Today’s Date: 02/07/07

Author: DP

What were the main themes that arose from my contact?

Continued questions from Question 1 template, role of the Learning Executive.

What information did I fail to get?

LE was not forthcoming on the department goals and metrics. I sensed that this was a function of his concern to protect confidentiality of company sensitive information.

Was their anything else that struck me as salient, interesting, illuminating or important?
What questions do I have upon my next visit?

Continue to implement interview transcript.

Significance or importance of document?

1. Six Disciplines of Breakthrough Learning book review
2. U Strategic Imperatives
3. U overview
4. Annual Report
5. HBR Job Sculpting, the Art of Retaining Your Best People article
6. ASTD Bridging the Skills Gap article
7. LIA When Leaders are Teachers, Good Things Happen article
8. Learning Executive’s organizational chart

Brief summary of documents:

1. See above
Two interview transcripts evolved from this visit, IT2 and IT3. IT2 was recorded in my research journal due to the cost of transcription and the nature of the information shared. IT3 was more closely tied to my defined interview transcript.
Appendix C

Research Interview Transcript

Each research participant was interviewed. Research participant’s responses to my questions were electronically recorded utilizing audio tape and digital recording technologies. Each recording was transcribed by a contracted transcription-ist. I confirmed the content of each interview transcript, monitoring for transcription error. Once transcribed I coded utilizing initial descriptive codes developed as an outcome of the study’s conceptual framework. I utilized the comments function within Microsoft Word™ to enable my management of coded text.

LE: Several years ago….I’m losing track of time right now….maybe three years ago…I’m not quite sure, I was asked to take on additional responsibility. My actual, for whatever titles means, I went through an evolution of that first title of VP of Leadership and Career Development. I think probably not more than a year or two later, the company appointed me as it’s first Chief Learning Officer of the company and then about three years ago now, I was asked to take on additional responsibility and became Vice-President of Talent Management and Chief Learning Officer of the company. In my current responsibilities I have under me our global approaches to staffing, talent acquisition, performance management, HR planning that I personally lead as I mentioned. I still lead
Appendix D

Research Code Matrix

No less than three rounds of coding occurred as a part of my data analysis, descriptive codes, theoretical codes, and pattern codes evolved to suffice the requirement for open and axial coding as proposed. Once transcripts were coded they were transposed to data analysis templates for further refinement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis Level</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Descriptive (Tentative)</td>
<td>Leadership: Information that describes Learning Executive leadership.</td>
<td>LDR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role: Information that furthers my understanding of the role of a Learning Executive within an organization.</td>
<td>ROL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizational Context: General information on organizational surroundings that allow me to place the study in a larger context.</td>
<td>COT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Life Experience: Reflection on the Learning Executive's life resulting in on-going personal development.</td>
<td>LIF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning: Information that depicts the Learning Executive’s willingness and ability to learn in a given context.</td>
<td>LRN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image: The Learning Executive’s reflection upon himself and his career or other’s impression of the Learning Executive</td>
<td>IMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Descriptive (Tentative)</td>
<td>Influence: The Learning Executive’s ability to influence, guide, or change others, business systems, and processes</td>
<td>DINFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity: Identified opportunities for the Learning Executive and his team to contribute further, to improve</td>
<td>DOPPT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenacity: Refusing to quit, examples of the Learning Executive’s endurance in the face of adversity</td>
<td>DTENA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement: Examples of accomplishment either by the Learning Executive or his team</td>
<td>DACHI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation: Innovation exhibited by the Learning Executive or his team</td>
<td>DINNO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication: Depiction, descriptors used to depict the Learning Executive’s communication</td>
<td>DCOMM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability: Examples of organization measures, internal or external metrics, stakeholder expectations, that monitor or influence workplace outcomes</td>
<td>DACCT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigor: Examples of the Learning Executive’s vigor, energy, exuberance, passion resulting in influence</td>
<td>DVIGO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Culture: Examples of organizational and group culture that embrace learning as embedded within the context of the Learning Executive’s role</td>
<td>DLC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theoretical (Tentative) Sourced from reviewed literature</td>
<td>Power-Influence: Examples of Learning Executive leadership that depict his use of power to influence others</td>
<td>TP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior: Examples of recognized behavior that the Learning Executive exhibits to lead others</td>
<td>TB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait: Examples of leadership by the Learning Executive in which his traits form the basis for his ability to influence</td>
<td>TT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills: Examples of Learning Executive leadership influenced by skills exhibited by the Learning Executive</td>
<td>TK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational: Examples of Learning Executive leadership influenced by situation and context</td>
<td>TS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational: Examples of leadership exhibited by the Learning Executive that can be interpreted as transformational</td>
<td>TF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture: Examples of the organization’s culture that inhibit or support recognized theory</td>
<td>TC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Organization: Examples within the organization that inhibit or support learning organization theory</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation: Examples of organizational or individual actions that reinforce or inhibit innovation theory</td>
<td>TI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context: Examples of contextual factors that inhibit or support recognized theory</td>
<td>TX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Pattern (Tentative)</td>
<td>Trustworthy: The Learning Executive has established sufficient trust to enable him to be effective in his role</td>
<td>PATT-TRUSTWORTHY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developer: The Learning Executive enables the development of others to include entire organizations</td>
<td>PATT-DEVELOPER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Agent:</td>
<td>The Learning Executive exhibits leadership behavior influencing his immediate team, professional constituents, business systems and organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Matter Expert:</td>
<td>The Learning Executive is a subject matter expert in the areas of leadership, development, and talent management, this expertise enables him to not only implement business systems but also ensure their continued improvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Maker:</td>
<td>The Learning Executive is a senior decision maker within his organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader:</td>
<td>The Learning Executive exhibits leadership behaviors that influences others including organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builder:</td>
<td>The Learning Executive builds organizations, organizational systems and processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Manager:</td>
<td>The Learning Executive manages the creation, transformation, and eventual dissemination of individual and organizational knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborator:</td>
<td>The Learning Executive collaborates both internally within and external to his organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning:</td>
<td>The organization values learning impacting the Learning Executive’s role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraints:</td>
<td>Organizational and cultural constraints impacting the Learning Executive’s role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive: The organization exhibits a supportive culture impacting the Learning Executive’s role</td>
<td>PATT-SUPPORTIVE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement: The organization embraces continuous improvement impacting the Learning Executive’s role</td>
<td>PATT-IMPROVEMENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy: Organization hierarchy and its impact</td>
<td>PATT-HEIRARCHY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Data Analysis Templates

Seven data analysis templates evolved as an outcome of my analysis (a) communication, (b) context, (c) image, (d) leader, (e) life, (f) learning, and (g) role. Each template served as a platform for further analysis, enhanced my coding, fostered my grouping of emergent themes from each research transcripts, empowering my analysis through constant comparative technique.

Analysis Template

Leadership (LDR)

(PATT-LEADER)

Leadership to me is important because there are bodies that are required to strategically set direction and some of that incorporates 1) a vision of where you want to go David and there are people who can create vision and who can implement it but there’s a special person who takes it and leads others and others want to follow. They’re leading and not by pulling them…it’s almost like the Pied Piper. They’re leading because they want to follow because not only do they believe in the vision, they believe in the leader to help get them there (6)

If you don’t have good leadership in an organization, you can create turmoil. Chaos will happen because anytime something goes wrong or even things that go right, if they’re
Appendix F

Research Memo

My use of research memos furthered my data analysis. Within each data analysis template I actively reflected on what I was learning, what information was evolving from the participant research transcripts, my coding, and the research literature resulting in data saturation. My reflections were captured as research memos.

Memo: Interview Transcript 1 (22 November)

From a subordinate perspective the subordinate’s do not view the Learning Executive as a friend, he has been able to achieve enough credibility with his employees to be viewed as a coach and a role model.

Numerous examples are noted of his ability to influence subordinates, the influence sub-theme is the most dominant theme in the leadership category.

It is apparent that subordinates view the Learning Executive as innovative, from my interaction with the Learning Executive he demonstrates life long learning skills, scanning behaviors, in a later interview he indicated that he typically skims content to support rapid learning.

Another major theme is that subordinates perceive his leadership as be concerned for results as opposed to team member welfare, this orientation has earned him organizational credibility which in-turn may position team member’s for impact and resulting success.

Three new sub-codes; innovation, tenacity, and achievement are utilized to code this transcript.

Memo: Interview Transcript 3&4 (24 December)
Appendix G

Conclusion Display

The final step in my analysis entailed the use of conclusion displays to support my interpretation of patterns and themes that emerged from my research data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Cause [sourced from research findings]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>The Learning Executive has established sufficient trust to enable him to be effective in his role</td>
<td>Genuine behavior, accomplishment of assigned tasks, interest in others, orientation towards tangible business results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developer</td>
<td>The Learning Executive enables the development of others to include organizations</td>
<td>Influence, personal energy, sincere interest in others welfare, subject matter expertise, professional orientation, formal assigned role, communication style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Agent</td>
<td>The Learning Executive exhibits leadership behavior influencing his immediate team, professional constituents, business systems and organizations</td>
<td>Role model behavior, risk taker, skilled at influencing others, effective communicator, high levels of emotional intelligence, tenacious, politically astute, demonstrated leadership behavior, achievement recognized both internal to the company and external to the company, tangible-valued results from his work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H

Extant Data

I actively sourced extant data from research participants and their organizations. Extant data provided organization explicit information that I found to be more reliable than participant narratives. Extant data provided yet another source of information to support the triangulation of research observations enhancing the reliability of my case’s evidence.