

Toward Strategy Implementation Success: An Empirical Study of the Role of Senior-Level Leaders in the Nevada Gaming Industry

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Abstract

The study is an investigation of the relationship between effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation in the Nevada casino industry. The study's findings mostly agree with earlier research on the concept of strategy implementation and reaffirm the role that strategic consensus plays in the strategy implementation process. The study also reinforces findings that frequent communication up and down the organization structure enhances strategic consensus through the fostering of shared attitudes and values. In addition, it reaffirms the concept that an organization which ties rewards to the success of the strategy employed is rewarded with higher levels of organizational performance and concludes that strategy implementation plans must be clearly developed, indicating particular tasks for individuals, with clear-cut time frames, and identifying the people responsible for task completion.

Key Words: Strategic management, strategy implementation, senior-level leaders, leadership behavior, success, failure, barriers

Introduction

The business world is entering a new frontier composed of rapid, unpredictable change and substantial uncertainty that are transforming the nature of competition. Success in today's business world requires new managerial mindsets that emphasize global markets, strategic flexibility, and the ability to tolerate and harness change (Hitt, Ricart, & Nixon, 1998). Furthermore, the time frames of all strategic actions are significantly being reduced (Hitt, Keats, & DeMarie, 1998).

This new business setting requires new forms of managerial thinking and organizational structures, global mindsets, considerable strategic and structural flexibility, and innovative methods for implementing strategies. A scientific reawakening will bring about the rise of new industries, change how businesses compete, and possibly transform how companies are managed (Pascale, Millemann, & Gioja, 2000).

Business leaders know that plans made in the past are unlikely to be implemented unchanged (Bozeman & Straussman, 1980). Business strategy has entered the aptly named market-driven era because of its central focus on the market as the basis for strategy design and implementation (Cravens, Greenley, Piercy, & Slater, 1998; Day, 1994). In order to cope with these dynamic changes for the strategic management field, more research is needed in this field (Okumus, 2001).

This study had three research objectives: (1) to identify, where possible, effective or ineffective leadership behaviors encountered by senior-level leaders who worked exclusively in the Nevada casino industry and had tried to implement their strategic

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plans; (2) to determine what involvement senior-level leadership had with achieving the company's financial and/or strategic performance targets; and (3) to determine what senior-level leadership changes should possibly be needed to further assure that the financial and/or strategic performance targets set by the company are, in fact, met.

In this study, *senior-level leaders* refers to chief executive officers and/or presidents, owners, other executives (e.g., CFOs, COOs, controllers, directors, etc.), and other senior-level managers. *Implementation* is operationally defined as those senior-level leadership behaviors and activities that will transform a working plan into a concrete reality (i.e., implementation of the strategy).

In 1991 a previous survey of 93 Fortune 500 United States firms revealed that over half of the corporations experienced the following 10 problems, listed in order of frequency, when they attempted to implement, from a leadership behavior perspective, a strategic change (Alexander, 1991):

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

According to Richard A. Cosier, Dean of Purdue University's Krannert Graduate School of Management, but stated anonymously in *Industry Week* (2002, p. 15): "There are five behavioral factors that lead to failed leadership: (a) Greed, (b) Loss of focus, (c) Poor change management, (d) Failure to listen, and (e) Bad luck." It is also alleged that up to 70% of the strategic change initiatives fail (Higgs & Rowland, 2005). They fail because senior-level leaders do not make a realistic assessment of whether the organization can execute the plan (Bossidy & Charan, 2002).

Since such a high percentage of business strategies fail, the rationale of this study was to understand the competencies of implementing a strategy among senior-level leaders who work in the Nevada casino industry. The following research question was used to help identify various human behavioral performance factors that positively or negatively affect the implementation of a strategic plan:

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

In this study, *Success* is operationally defined as the achievement or accomplishment of the specific objectives set by the organization. *Failure* is operationally defined as the barriers that block strategy implementation. *Barriers* are those things, which, if ignored, will make it difficult or impossible to implement the strategy (Knorr, 1993).

Review of Literature

Conceptual Framework for Understanding Strategy Implementation

There seems to be widespread concurrence in the literature regarding the nature of strategic planning, which includes strategy implementation. The strategy implementation literature also presents various models showing the organizational characteristics suggested as significant factors for effective strategy implementation (Guffy, 1992). Strategy implementation is also portrayed as a lively process by which companies identify future opportunities (Reid, 1989).

Starting in the early 1980s, several frameworks have been developed that are largely conceptual and/or descriptive (Okumus, 2001). For example, Pressman's and Wildavsky's (1984) typology of evaluating implementation, while over 20 years old, still provides

a useful perspective on the differences and complexity of ensuring successful strategy implementation; it also is significant because it portrays a struggle over the realization of ideas. It was selected for this study because it addresses an implementer's clear-cut guide to effectively implementing a strategy by emphasizing the answers to five basic questions: (1) When? (2) Where? (3) For whom? (4) What? (5) Why?

The strategy-implementing/strategy-executing task is easily the most complicated and time-consuming part of strategic management (Thompson & Strickland, 2003).

In contrast, strategy formulation is primarily an intellectual and creative act involving analysis and synthesis.

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Implementation is a hands-on operation and action-oriented human behavioral activity that calls for executive leadership and key managerial skills. In addition, implementing a newly crafted strategy often entails a change in corporate direction and frequently requires a focus on effecting strategic change (de Kluyver & Pearce, 2003).

Strategic change entails: (1) Establishing a sense of urgency, (2) Creating the guiding coalition, (3) Developing a vision and strategy, (4) Communicating the change vision, (5) Empowering board-based action, (6) Generating short-term wins, (7) Consolidating gains and producing more change, and (8) Anchoring new approaches in the culture (Kotter, 1996, p. 21).

When looking at the different strategy implementation models, this researcher concludes that the nine-step theoretical model developed by Thompson, Gamble, and Strickland (2006) truly extends the literature in this field of study. The nine steps are:

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

The Dynamics of Leadership as Part of Strategy Implementation

Emerging during a time of rapid economic growth, the 1970s style of strategic planning, with its internal direction, focus on past experience, and incremental strategy implementation is no longer pertinent to a society in which markets and technologies are rapidly changing and firms are facing competition from a number of unpredictable sources. In terms of profits, it was projected that firms achieving superior performance

in the 1980s and 1990s would be those that took a forward-, outward-looking approach to strategic planning. These firms would take advantage of change as an opportunity to excel (Gluck, 1985). Nonetheless, in the mid-1980s, the focus was on strategy. Execution, or strategy implementation, took a back seat. In fact, execution was often an afterthought. In today's business environment, though, the focus is on execution—"getting things done"—and rightfully so. Execution cannot succeed unless the strategy itself is designed to be executable, and the execution will not result in outstanding performance unless it is designed around the goal of maximizing financial value (Frigo, 2003).

Guffy (1992) investigated, at least in part, the demographic impact on communication and the most effective level of management perceived by employees in terms of communication. The findings of Guffy's (1992) research also support the Mathieu and Zajac (1990) suggestion that effective leadership communication and organization commitment are correlated. The findings from this study certainly support and extend the work of Guffy (1992), and that of Mathieu and Zajac (1990).

Rapert, Velliquette, and Garreston (2000) stated that communication and shared understandings play a principal role in the implementation process. In particular, when vertical communication is frequent, strategic consensus is enhanced and organization performance improves, as evidenced by higher levels of net operating income, gross revenues, and net revenues. Consensus is considered to be critical in resolving differences, promoting a unified direction for the firm, increasing strategic commitment, and enhancing the successful implementation of a given strategy (Dess & Priem, 1995).

In a more recent study about effective leadership behavior in which 38 organizations were studied, Howell (2005, p. 108) stated: "Effective champions are distinguished by three behaviors: (a) conveying confidence and enthusiasm about the innovation, (b) enlisting the support and involvement of key stakeholders, and (c) persisting in the face of adversity."

Although the growing need for change in organizations is widely acknowledged by researchers, it is alleged that up to 70% of change initiatives fail (Higgs & Rowland, 2005). But, why do change efforts not succeed? Execution cannot succeed unless the strategy itself is designed to be executable. Apart from wasting significant amounts of time and money, they result in lower employee morale, a diminished trust and faith in senior-level leadership, as well as create an even more rigid organization since a company that has failed to change will encounter more employee skepticism in its next attempt (Heracleous, 2000).

Research suggests that senior-level leaders are more than willing to communicate, but they often approach the task on a tactical rather than a strategic level (Clampitt, Berk, & Williams, 2002). In addition, these same people are trained to plan but not execute plans (Hrebiniak, 2005). While the reader may perceive strategy implementation to be complex, sufficient allocation of resources together with thorough research of the marketplace will boost chances of success. CEOs must endeavor to: (a) Identify the market factors that bear most upon a strategy, (b) Set up contingencies for known situations that are susceptible to unknown changes, and (c) Have various measures in place to cope with the real possibility of encountering unexpected developments in the external environment (Anonymous, 2003, p. 4).

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

The key to successful implementation is to recognize that senior-level leaders do what they think, upon reflection and validation, rather than what they say—which is

Execution cannot succeed unless the strategy itself is designed to be executable.

often prejudiced by their need to preserve their image and influence in the organization (Beaudan, 2001, p. 68). Therefore, in order to be efficient, a business strategy needs to be complemented by an equally well-thought-out implementation strategy.

Design and Methodology

This study involved hypotheses testing to examine the strength of relationship between the variables being investigated. It was designed, for the most part, as a correlation study in a non-contrived setting with minimal researcher involvement and no manipulation of organizational activities. The data-collection method was a self-administered, close-ended questionnaire (See Appendix). Surveys were mailed to participants at the workplace for completion at their own convenience.

There were four primary reasons for choosing a self-administered survey, which is best intended for (1) measuring variables with numerous values or response categories that are too much to read to participants in an interview or on the telephone, (2) investigating attitudes and opinions that are not usually observable, (3) describing characteristics of a large population, and (4) studying behaviors that may be more stigmatizing or hard for people to tell someone else face-to-face. Also, the anonymity of self-administered questionnaires permits respondents to be more honest (Nardi, 2003).

Research Hypotheses

Based on the research question: *How do the behaviors of senior-level leaders, as perceived by themselves, contribute to the success or failure of strategy implementation?*

This researcher has developed three reasonable hunches about the exploratory query:

1. Effective senior-level leadership behaviors will be directly related to successful strategy implementation.
2. Employees who understand and agree with the company's strategic plan will most likely have a higher commitment to the firm's success than employees who do not know or agree with it.
3. Those senior-level leaders who have been trained in or studied strategic planning and implementation are more likely to meet the performance targets set for the company.

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

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

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

Setting and Participants

The selected sample for this research study included 890 senior-level leaders who work on a full-time basis in various casinos within the state of Nevada. The data base of these names, which originally consisted of a total of 3,722 names (i.e., the population), from senior executives to front-line supervisors who also work in Nevada casinos was provided by the Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming, University

of Nevada, Reno, Nevada. Nevada's data base was selected by the researcher because he could personally visit these casinos in order to possibly increase the response rate.

Statistical Analysis

A quantitative statistical package, MicroCase® Analysis System 4.8, was used to analyze the data from the questionnaire. MicroCase® is a straightforward, no-nonsense, easy-to-use piece of statistics software. It has the capability to measure instruments that reflect strength of attitudes, perceptions, views, and options. MicroCase® performs data analysis using univariate (i.e., distribution for a single variable), bivariate (i.e., cross-tabulation, chi-square test, t-Test or ANOVA, regression, and correlation); and multivariate analyses (i.e., multivariate cross-tabulation, multiple regression, and correlation).

With regards to levels of significance, 0.01 (i.e., **) and 0.05 (i.e., *) levels of significance were used in the various tests performed. In this case, when the probability of finding a relationship in data if the two variables are not related in the population is less than 0.05 (i.e., no asterisk is shown), the researcher would reject the null hypothesis that the two variables were unrelated (Fox, 2003) and further determined that the data were not statistically significant.

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

Negative Relationship			No Relationship				Positive Relationship			
<i>r</i> = -1.00	-.80	-.60	-.40	-.20	.00	.20	.40	.60	.80	1.00
Perfect	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Perfect		

Results and Discussion

Participants were asked a total of 35 questions that consisted of: (a) one preliminary question; (b) 22 questions about strategic planning and implementation; (c) four queries about leadership; and (d) eight background information questions (as shown in Appendix A –Questionnaire).

The survey results netted a total of 120 usable questionnaires. This represents a response rate of 13.5%.

With regard to the demographic profile of the respondents, men comprised 77.5% of the respondents while women comprised 22.5%. The data illustrates a relatively mature senior-level leader workforce, with 76.7% of the leaders being 41 years of age or older. With regard to education, 58.3% attained an associate's degree, or greater, while 41.7% did not earn a college degree. Of the 58.3% of the respondents who earned a college degree, 78.3% were males, while 21.7% were females. Some 40.8% of the respondents had been in their senior-level leadership position for 4 years or less, while 59.2% of the respondents had been in their current position for 5 years or longer. Even though 58.3% of the respondents earned a college degree (i.e., Associate Degree or greater), 50.8% had not been trained in or studied strategic planning and implementation. Of this 50.8%, 73.8% were males and 26.2% were females. And in terms of the current titles of these senior-level leaders, 23.3% of the respondents were general managers, 16.7% were owners/CEOs/presidents, 16.7% were directors, and the remaining 43.3% made up all other title categories. The demographic profile data can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1				
Demographic Profile				
Gender	Frequency	% of the Total	Male	Female
Male	93	77.5		
Female	27	22.5		
Age				
21 – 30	4	3.3	4	0
31 – 40	24	20.0	20	4
41 – 50	41	34.2	29	12
51 – 60	41	34.2	30	11
61>	10	8.3	10	0
Education				
12th Grade or Less	1	0.8	1	0
High School	10	8.3	7	3
Some College	39	32.6	31	8
Associate Degree	7	5.8	5	2
Bachelor Degree	45	37.6	34	11
Master Degree	16	13.3	14	2
Professional Degree	1	0.8	1	0
Doctoral Degree	1	0.8	0	0
Other	0	0.0	0	0
Employed in Current Position				
0 – 4 Years	49	40.8	38	11
5 – 9 Years	33	27.5	25	8
10 – 14 Years	17	14.2	13	4
15 – 19 Years	8	6.7	7	1
20> Years	13	10.8	10	3
Trained/Studied Strategic Planning and Implementation				
Yes	56	46.7	45	11
No	61	50.8	45	16
Not Sure	3	2.5	3	0
Current Title				
Chairman of the Board	2	1.7	2	0
Owner, Chief Executive Officer, and/or President	20	16.7	17	3
General Manager	28	23.3	26	2
Assistant General Manager	5	4.2	5	0
Senior or Executive Vice President	9	7.5	8	1
Vice President	8	6.7	5	3
Chief Financial Officer or Controller	12	10.0	9	3
Chief Operating Officer	1	0.8	1	0
Executive or Senior Director	3	2.5	3	0
Director	20	16.7	11	9
Senior-Level Manager	8	6.7	3	5
Other	4	3.3	3	1
N = 120				

With regard to hypotheses testing, mixed support for Hypothesis 1 is found in that there were both positive as well as negative correlations for each set of bivariate variables (refer to Table 2). The results of these relationships, independent of each other, statistically significant at either the 0.01 or the 0.05 level, are shown as correlations along with their appropriate *t*-value. The reader can also refer to Appendix A—Questionnaire—for the specific queries and choices.

Table 2
Results of Testing the First Hypothesis

Dependent Question (D) & Independent Questions (I)	Correlation & t-value Results
(D): In terms of the company trying to accomplish its financial and/or strategic performance targets, was the achievement of those objectives successful?	
(I): Extent you have been involved with strategy implementation?	0.25** (2.79**)
(I): Your involvement in trying to achieve the strategic performance targets has strengthened your own ability to be a more effective senior-level leader?	0.19* (2.14*)
(I): Factors/behaviors that motivated you to put effort into achieving the strategic performance targets set for the company? Personal financial reward.	0.20* (2.24*)
(I): Factors/behaviors that might discourage you from exerting effort in implementing a strategic plan in the future? Implementation took significantly longer than originally planned.	-0.15* (-1.67*)
(I): Which of the following characterize your style of leadership? I facilitate others. I inspire others. I lift the aspirations of others.	-0.17* (-1.85*) 0.31** (3.56**) 0.24** (2.63**)
(I): How would your subordinate(s) characterize the strengths in your leadership style? Take their input into consideration. Provide them with clear expectations.	0.21* (2.31*) 0.16* (1.80*)
(I): Senior-level leadership dynamics that are characteristic in implementing the strategic plan in your company? Unclear strategy and conflicting priorities. Ineffective senior management team. Poor coordination into teamwork through realigning roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities with strategies.	-0.24** (-2.68**) -0.25** (-2.79**) -0.24* (-2.68**)
(I): No. of employees (full- and part-time), including yourself, are employed in the company?	-0.19* (-2.06*)
(I): Categories that best describes the company's current yearly revenues?	-0.27** (-3.03**)

In testing the next hypothesis, the analysis found that this particular positive correlation, statistically significant at the 0.01 level, which analyzed the relationship between a key strategic-management question and a leadership-behavior query, proves that there is a positive relationship between how well employees at all levels understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan and how committed employees are to the success of the company's strategic plan (refer to Table 3). The results of these influencing variables tell us with almost absolute certainty that the better an employee understands the objectives of the company's current strategic plan, the more committed that employee will be to the success of the company's strategic plan. Because the findings were the most significant in this hypothesis, the researcher believes that the correlation results are a strong positive because when employees know that the objectives are clear and stress the right things (Hrebiniak, 2005), the greater the likelihood that the performance targets will be achieved.

Table 3
Results of Testing the Second Hypothesis

Dependent Question (D) & Independent Question (I)	Correlation & t-value Results
(D): Employees understanding the objectives of the strategic plan	
(I): Employees committed to the success of the strategic plan	0.78** (13.33**)

And in testing Hypothesis 3, the researcher analyzed, independently, the relationship between questions that deal with training on the topics of strategic planning and implementation, a general strategic-planning query, and a strategic-management query. The questions that were examined are shown in Table 4. One correlation was not considered because it showed a level of significance less than 0.05 (i.e., Question 21); even though the researcher was truly hoping to see a meaningful result, no inference was made. Although one finding was not statistically significant, there is weak support for the other positive correlation in Hypothesis 3. The findings of these relationships are shown as correlations along with their appropriate *t*-values.

Table 4
Results of Testing the Third Hypothesis

Dependent Question (D) & Independent Question (I)	Correlation & t-value Results
(D): Trained or formally studied strategic planning and implementation	
(I): Employees understand the objectives of the company’s current strategic plan	0.18* (2.02*)
(I): Company accomplishing performance targets	0.05 (0.51)

Note: The correlation that states “Company accomplishing performance targets” was found statistically not significant.

Interpretation of the Results

So, what do these findings really mean? Referring to Table 2, this first correlation ($r = 0.25^{**}$, $t = 2.79^{**}$), which analyzed the relationship between a key strategic planning question and a leadership-behavior query, illustrates that there is a positive relationship between a company’s success at achieving its financial and/or strategic performance target and the extent that a senior-level leader has been involved with the company’s strategy implementation plans. The next correlation (i.e., $r = 0.19^*$, $t = 2.14^*$) in Hypothesis 1 also shows that there is a positive relationship between the company successfully achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets and a senior-level leader’s personal involvement in trying to achieve those targets, and, in turn, strengthens the person’s ability to be a more effective leader. This is significant because effective leadership in senior-level leader jobs also seems to require a tremendous energy level (i.e., maximum involvement) and a deep desire to use that energy for supplying leadership (Kotter, 1988). Further to this point, the chief executive office must be the catalyst for strategic alignment (Edwards, 2000), and that alignment and involvement is at the heart of the implementation process (Hardy, 1994). When looking at another correlation ($r = 0.31^{**}$, $t = 3.56^{**}$) in Table 2, which analyzed the relationship between a key strategic planning question and a leadership-behavior query, it is clear there exists a positive relationship between companies having success in achieving their financial and/or strategic performance targets, and a senior-level leader’s style of leadership being inspirational to others.

From a human behavior tendency perspective, can the reader think of an effective leader who was not inspirational? As an influencing variable, it is enthusiasm and passion that provides the foundation for the team’s incentive to do well. In fact, chief executive officers such as Herb Kelleher at Southwest Airlines and Fred Smith at Federal Express have been quoted as saying: “Our people come first, even before our customers”

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

In looking at another correlation from Table 2, the analysis indicated a negative correlation (i.e., $r = -0.17^*$, $t = -1.85^*$) that the success of a company achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets is found by senior-level leaders who do not view themselves as being facilitators. However, as an effective leader, one needs to be a facilitator because employees want to be heard and understood (Baggett, 2004). In looking at yet another correlation ($r = -0.25^{**}$, $t = -2.79^{**}$) from Table 2, the analysis found a negative relationship between a company having success in achieving its financial and/or strategic performance targets and an ineffective senior management team.

It is possible that the respondents might have answered one of the questions in such a way because they believed that their fellow senior-level leaders are ineffective in their leadership roles. This leadership dynamic is characteristic in implementing the strategic plan. Another correlation ($r = -0.27^{**}$, $t = -3.03^{**}$) in Table 2, which also analyzed the relationship between a key strategic-planning question and a leadership-behavior query, illustrates a negative relationship between a company having success in achieving its financial and/or strategic-performance targets and the amount of yearly revenues the company makes. Further, this shows that perhaps the amount of annual revenues made by a company is a clear indication of how successful the company was in achieving its financial and/or strategic performance target. Moreover, this negative correlation clearly shows that companies with more revenues are less likely to indicate achieving success in their performance targets.

Referring now to Table 3, and in looking at Guffy's (1992) work, the researcher concluded, based on the results of his findings, that this particular correlation ($r = 0.78^{**}$, $t = 13.33^{**}$) showed how well employees at all levels understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan and how committed they are to the success of the company's strategic plan. In fact, the results of these variables tell us with almost absolute certainty that the better an employee understands the objectives of the company's current strategic plan, the more committed that employee will be to the success of the company's strategic plan.

As shown in Table 4, the researcher found that one of the positive correlations (i.e., $r = 0.18^*$, $t = 2.02^*$), statistically significant at the 0.05 level, which analyzed the relationship between a strategic planning and implementation training question and a general strategic-management query, substantiates that it can be stated with a certain degree of certainty (i.e., but still considered weak) that there is a positive tendency for the variables to change in tandem between the extent at which employees understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan and whether a senior-level leader has been trained in or formally studied strategic planning and implementation. This means that it is likely that companies that employ senior-level leaders who have been trained in or studied strategic planning and implementation are also more likely to get involved with their subordinates to enable them to better understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan. In fact, senior-level leaders who report high levels of participation with their subordinates tend to effectively deal better with interpersonal conflict and have high levels of morale and cohesion (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2002).

According to Beaudan (2001), the key to successful implementation is also knowing that people do what they think, upon reflection and validation, rather than what they say, which is often prejudiced by their need to preserve their image and influence in the organization. This study supports Beaudan's notion and, to a certain degree, Hypothesis 1 (i.e., with mixed results). It also extends Beaudan's work on

strategy implementation. Over 79% of the respondents who answered Question 3 of this researcher's survey (i.e., To what extent have key stakeholders [e.g., board of directors, mid-level managers, principal advisors, and/or suppliers, etc.] been involved in strategy formulation?) stated that they always (i.e., 34.7%) or often (i.e., 44.9%) are involved with strategy formulation, part of a well-thought-out implementation strategy. For that reason, implementation must be considered during the formulation process, not later, when it may be too late (Hardy, 1994). A tendency, however, to treat strategy formulation and implementation as two separate phases is at the root of many failed strategies (Quinn, Mintzberg, & James, 1988).

Rapert, Velliquette, and Garretson (2000, March) stated that communication and shared understandings (i.e., consensus) play a key role in the implementation process. In particular, when vertical communication is frequent, strategic consensus is enhanced and organization performance improves, as evidenced by higher levels of net operating income, gross revenues, and growth in net revenues. In comparing the above-mentioned comments to this study, especially Question 9 (i.e., From your point of view, was the achievement of a strategic plan successful according to the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?), and Question 16 (i.e., How well do

A tendency to treat strategy formulation and implementation as two separate phases is at the root of many failed strategies.

you feel people at all levels have worked together in implementing the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?), the results (i.e., $r = 0.27^{**}$ & $t\text{-value} = 3.02^{**}$) showed a positive relationship between these two variables. Also, in comparing the above-mentioned comments to the present study, especially Question 3, and Question 16, the results (i.e., $r = 0.25^{**}$ & $t\text{-value} = 2.78^{**}$), once again, showed that there was a positive relationship between these two variables. Therefore, this researcher presumes, as already stated by other researchers, that effective communication up and down the organizational structure plays an important role in the strategy implementation process. In fact, in a survey conducted in association with Robert Kaplan of the Harvard Business School and Business Intelligence (Rousseau & Rousseau, 1999), more than 40% of senior managers and more than 90% of all employees stated they did not believe they had a clear understanding of their company's strategy. The results from this study suggest that successful strategy realization is determined by the coherence of decisions and actions of all employees at all levels of the organization and not just by the people who originally defined the strategy. This study shows that over 38% of the senior-level leaders did not communicate the company's direction and business strategy to all of its subordinates. Therefore, this researcher concludes, relative to Question 7 (i.e., In the past 24 months, has senior-level leadership communicated the company's direction and business strategy to all of its subordinates?), for which there was a strong support that it is possible that at least 38% of the senior-level leaders' subordinates might not know and/or understand their organization's strategy. Therefore, to a certain degree this study extends the work provided by Rousseau and Rousseau (1999).

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

Summary of the Results

The researcher compared many variables associated with successful or unsuccessful strategy implementation to those of effective or ineffective leadership behavior. Overall, this study has generated at least one noteworthy finding (refer to Table 2), one for which the results show strong support and are statistically significant at the 0.01 level. That discovery, which came from Hypothesis 2 of this study (i.e., employees who understand and agree with the company's strategic plan will most likely have a higher commitment to the firm's success than employees who do not know or agree with it), compares favorably to a previous quantitative research study performed by Guffy (1992), who investigated the role of organizational communication in the implementation of a business unit strategy. Guffy's (1992, p. 81) Hypothesis 3, similar to this study's Hypothesis 2, was also supported with a positive correlation (i.e., $r = 0.16$, $\alpha \leq 0.001$): "Employees who know the firm's S.B.U. strategy will have higher commitment to the organization than employees who do not know the firm's S.B.U. strategy."

Limitations

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

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

Conclusions

Galagan (1997) stressed that tailoring every facet of the business to support the strategy, using qualitative analysis as well as financial analysis to measure results, and making strategy implementation are part of the senior-level leader's job. According to this researcher, senior-level leaders often invest in week-long retreats, extensive marketing research, and expensive outside consulting services when trying to develop the strategic plans that will lead their companies to a successful future. Unfortunately, many of these plans do not come to fruition because of inadequate design or poor implementation of the strategic plan. Still, successful senior-level leaders get on with the implementation process. They are the achievers, the action takers; they are not necessarily impetuous, but they do not wait until they have recognized every potential unforeseen event before beginning to take action (Hardy, 1994).

According to a study performed by Hardy (1994): "A close understanding of strategy implementation successes reveals that the strategists set out with broad game plans in mind but were flexible, open-minded, and always on the lookout for the problems the new strategy would be creating and for ways of solving those problems. These strategists

were opportunists in the most positive sense of the word. They had broad guidance systems, but were spontaneous and responsive as truly successful strategists must be.” (p. 170).

This researcher supports the construct of Hardy’s (1994) comments. And on the basis of the above quote, the following conclusions are drawn. First, the sample of the 120 respondents, considering that the target group was senior-level leaders in the Nevada casino industry, provides an adequate sample size for the various relationships tested. It is noted, nonetheless, that 99.7% of the responses were used as part of data collection as well as data analysis. The correlation analysis performed, which summarizes the relationship between two continuous variables, using Microcase’s statistical software, determined that correlations between certain variables were significant. The findings in this research were based on confidence levels at 0.05 (*) and 0.01 (**) to insure adequate conclusion validity.

Strategic decisions are formulated by senior-level leaders of the firm and then administratively imposed on lower-level management and/or non-management employees with little consideration of the resulting functional-level perceptions (Nutt, 1987). If, however, lower-level management and/or non-management personnel are not aware of the same information, or if information must pass through several (management) layers in the organization, consensus and consistency of that information may never come to fruition. In the end, this lack of shared knowledge with lower-level management and/or non-management employees creates stumbling blocks to successful strategy implementation (Dess, 1987; Noble, 1999).

According to Bossidy and Charan (2002, p. 5): “Execution is the great unaddressed issue in the business world today. Its absence is the single biggest obstruction to success and cause of most of the disappointments that are mistakenly attributed to other causes.” To sum up, this study provides an initial and first-of-its-kind investigation in the Nevada casino industry of the relationship between effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation. This study also reaffirms the role that strategic consensus plays in the strategy implementation process. Consensus, as mentioned earlier in this paper, is considered to be critical in resolving differences, promoting a unified direction for the firm, increasing strategic commitment, and enhancing the successful implementation of a given strategy (Dess & Priem, 1995). In addition, this study’s findings, for the most part, are in agreement with earlier research on the concept of strategy implementation. Also, in firms where rewards are tied to the success of the strategy, organizations are rewarded with higher levels of organizational performance. As a result, this researcher concludes that execution plans still must be clearly developed, indicating tasks, time frames, and the people responsible for task completion (Hrebiniak, 2005).

Implications from the Results

While it is the successful implementation of a strategy that improves performance, no dominant theoretical framework has surfaced in this subject (Williams et al., 1982). Additionally, there is very little research available on the process of implementation and leadership behavior (Guffy, 1992). But why is this still a problem? It is because without successful implementation, a strategy is but an imaginary idea (Hambrick & Cannella, 1989). That in itself helps build a strong case for this study. In fact, many authors (Clark, 1972; Jonsson & Lundin, 1977; Hedberg, 1981; Miller, 1979; Quinn, 1980; Smircich & Stubbart, 1985; Hax & Majluf, 1996) have called for more research addressing the troubles associated with implementing a strategy. Furthermore, Senge (1980, p. 210) said: “Personally, I have come to feel that our failure lies not in unpersuasiveness or lack of sufficiently compelling evidence. It may simply not be possible to convince human beings rationally to take a long-term view.” Hax and Majluf (1996) suggested that an organization’s ability to effectively engage in strategic planning and strategy implementation may be inextricably linked to that organization’s ability to learn. Also, a lack of comprehensive implementation frameworks is mentioned by a number of scholars

(Alexander, 1991; Noble, 1999). But there is considerable need for detailed and complete conceptual models related to strategy implementation (Noble, 1999). As previously stated by Williams et al. (1982, p. vii): "I am convinced that the really important work on implementation remains to be done." Seventeen years later, Noble (1999) stipulated that there still is a great need for comprehensive and complete theoretical models related to implementation. Today, this researcher agrees with Williams et al. (1982) and Noble (1999) that much work still needs to be done in the discipline of implementation.

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

From a literature search, this researcher has found that companies have long acknowledged the need to develop a sound strategy and then reorganize the structure, systems, leadership behavior, human resource policies, culture, values, and management procedures of the company in order to ensure successful strategy implementation. Also, a first-rate implementation of a strategy is the best test of managerial excellence—and the most reliable formula for turning companies into standout performers (Thompson et al., 2005). Hrebiniak (2005), likewise, concluded that it all begins with strategy and that execution cannot occur until one has something to execute. Therefore, effective leadership, when their organization's profitability or productivity is high, especially if these favorable results occur after the leader assumes his/her position following a period of poorer performance (Howell & Costley, 2006), must take on a different approach—it must be execution-based. It must drive the organization to successful execution. And, it also must motivate ownership of and commitment to the execution process (Hrebiniak, 2005).

The results of this study clearly complement the strategy implementation model that has been developed by Thompson et al. (2006). As mentioned before, it is a great course of action that includes the key essentials to creating successful strategy implementation.

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

Recommendations for Further Studies and Research

On the basis of the conclusions presented in this study, the following suggestions for future research are offered. First, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there have been no other studies done relating effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation in the Nevada casino industry. In the process, the researcher has drawn new boundaries of theoretical as well as practical knowledge, even though there have been many previous studies performed in the field of strategy implementation. Second, the primary focus of this exploratory research was investigative. As stated before, very little empirical research has been done in the strategy field to investigate the gap between effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation. In fact, the field of strategic management is relatively young and eclectic; and strategy implementation is a very complex process (Schellenberg, 1983). For those reasons, a conclusion to be drawn

from the findings of this exploration, and the role of leadership behavior and strategy implementation is the need for additional research. Further quantitative research, by expanding the sample size, might possibly confirm the work that has been performed by this researcher. Larger samples, however, should be carefully examined. In addition, response rates, using a quantitative methods approach, reaching 20% would also be more beneficial. Such research, even so, will require close control over an adequate time period to ensure that responses are returned in a timely manner. The research should be kept narrow (e.g., selecting only senior-level leaders) between the notions of effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation. Once the casino industry sample size has been expanded, future studies might look to broaden the sample with additional industries and a more balanced design to enhance the overall focus of this researcher's study. In the meantime, this study moves research another step closer to better understanding the essential workings of strategy implementation. It also sheds some light on the effective human behavior that facilitates successful implementation.

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

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**Appendix
Questionnaire**

Name: _____ Code No: _____

Company: _____

Phone Number: _____

SECTION 1: PRELIMINARY QUESTION

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

Acknowledge by providing your initials _____. Thank you.

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

2. To what extent have you personally been involved with strategy implementation in your current job?
 - a. Always
 - b. Often
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Never
3. To what extent have key stakeholders (e.g., board of directors, mid-level managers, principal advisors/suppliers, etc.) been involved in strategy formulation?
 - a. Always
 - b. Often
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Never
4. How often do you meet to discuss the company's direction, strategy, and future business plans?
 - a. We meet yearly
 - b. We meet every six months
 - c. We meet quarterly
 - d. We meet monthly
 - e. Other
5. In terms of the company trying to accomplish its financial and/or strategic performance targets, was the achievement of those objectives successful?
 - a. It was highly successful
 - b. It was quite successful
 - c. It was somewhat successful
 - d. It was not successful at all

6. Has senior-level leadership communicated the vision and/or mission statement, if there is one, to all of its subordinates?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
 - d. Not applicable – I do not know if the company has a vision and/or mission statement
7. In the past 24 months, has senior-level leadership communicated the company's direction and business strategy to all of its subordinates?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
 - d. Not applicable – We have not had a session in the past 24 months to discuss our company's direction, strategy, and future business plans
8. How long ago was there an attempt to implement a change in direction or a different/new strategic or business plan in the company?
 - a. Within the past year
 - b. 1–2 years ago
 - c. 3–4 years ago
 - d. 5 years ago or more
9. From your point of view, was the achievement of a strategic plan successful according to the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?
 - a. It was highly successful
 - b. It was somewhat successful
 - c. It was somewhat unsuccessful
 - d. It was not successful at all
10. Among the following senior-level leadership factors and/or behaviors, please check (✓) all those that have *positively* affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?
 - a. ___ Built an organization with competencies, capabilities, and resource strengths to carry out the strategy successfully
 - b. ___ Developed budgets to steer resources into those activities that were critical to success
 - c. ___ Established effective strategy-supportive policies and procedures
 - d. ___ Instituted best practices and pushed for continuous improvement
 - e. ___ Installed information, communication, and operating systems that enabled company personnel to carry out their roles successfully
 - f. ___ Tied reward and incentives to the achievement of performance objectives and good strategy execution
 - g. ___ Created a strategy-supportive work environment
 - h. ___ Exerted the internal leadership needed to drive implementation forward and to improve on how the strategy was executed
 - i. ___ Removed executive road blocks to insure executive/management performance
 - j. Other _____

11. Among the following senior-level leadership factors and/or behaviors, please check (✓) all those that have *negatively* affected the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company.
- Key implementation tasks and activities were poorly defined
 - Implementation took more time than originally planned
 - Unanticipated internal business problems arose that slowed things down or put them on hold
 - Uncontrollable external factors created problems such as a competitor(s) lowering its list prices
 - Lower-level management and/or front-line employees are not committed to implementing a strategy – unwillingness to change
 - Inability of senior-level leadership to effectively communicate the financial and/or strategic performance targets to subordinates
 - Deficient senior-level leadership skills
 - Poor coordination across functions, businesses or barriers
 - Lack of adequate human resources – not enough people to make the needed changes
 - Lack of financial resources – not enough money to accomplish what was proposed
 - Lack of knowledge within the management team to achieve the strategy and/or business plan
 - Lower-level employees were insufficiently trained
 - Inadequate way of monitoring or evaluating the performance of the strategy
 - Other _____
12. Has senior-level leadership tied the compensation of immediate subordinates to the achievement of the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
13. Do you feel your involvement in trying to achieve the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company have strengthened your own ability to be a more effective senior-level leader?
- Yes
 - Possibly
 - No
 - Not sure
14. What were the factors and/or behaviors that *motivated* you to put effort into achieving the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company? Please check (✓) all that apply.
- Personal financial reward
 - Sheer enjoyment
 - Challenge of actually executing the plan
 - The ability to succeed in a major leadership and management process
 - The ability to help grow the company
 - Aligning my subordinates and putting resources in place to accomplish our objective(s)
 - It was what I was asked to do, so I just did my job
 - Other _____

15. What are the factors and/or behaviors that might *discourage* you from exerting effort in implementing a strategic plan in the future? Please check (✓) all that apply.
- a. ___ Implementation took significantly longer than originally planned
 - b. ___ Unanticipated major problems arose
 - c. ___ Activities were ineffectively coordinated
 - d. ___ Competing activities and crises took attention away from the implementation process
 - e. ___ The involved employees had insufficient capabilities to perform their jobs
 - f. ___ My immediate superior provided inadequate leadership and direction
 - g. ___ My immediate subordinate(s) provided inadequate leadership and direction to his/her staff
 - h. ___ Lower-level employees were inadequately trained
 - i. ___ Uncontrollable external environmental factors created problems
 - j. ___ Key implementation tasks and activities were poorly defined
 - k. ___ The information system inadequately monitored activities
 - l. ___ Regardless of those things that might discourage me from implementing the strategic plan, I would still try to implement it to the best of my ability
 - m. Other _____
16. How well do you feel people at all levels have worked together in implementing the financial and/or strategic performance targets set for the company?
- a. People worked very well with each other
 - b. People worked somewhat well with each other
 - c. People did not cooperate at all with each other because they could not execute the financial and/or strategic targets set for the company
 - d. Not sure
17. What are your suggestions for internally improving the strategic planning process? Please check (✓) all that apply.
- a. ___ Hire a consultant who has helped companies before
 - b. ___ Involve all the highest levels of management
 - c. ___ Get buy-in from all levels of management
 - d. ___ Change the structure of the organization in ways that influence the way the company can implement change
 - e. ___ Provide open forums to discuss the progress and make adjustments as needed
 - f. ___ Develop management processes that include more thorough planning, programming, budgeting, and reward systems
 - g. Other _____
18. To what extent has there been conflict in the organizational culture based on resistance to the implementation of a strategic plan?
- a. There has been a significant amount of conflict
 - b. There has been a normal amount of conflict
 - c. There has been little conflict
 - d. There has not been any conflict

19. If the company hired a consultant (or a facilitator) within the last five years, how was this person *helpful* to the organization in implementing a strategic plan? Please check (√) all that apply.
- The person was knowledgeable in leading us through the strategic planning process
 - The person challenged us to develop financial and/or strategic performance targets
 - The person understood our business
 - The person monitored our progress during the actual implementation phase
 - Other _____
 - Not applicable
20. If the company hired a consultant (or a facilitator) within the last five years, how was this person *not helpful* to the organization in implementing a strategic plan? Please check (√) all that apply.
- The person did not have the skill set to lead us through the strategic planning process
 - The person never challenged us to develop any financial and/or strategic performance targets
 - The person did not understand our business
 - The person did not monitor our progress during the actual implementation phase
 - Other _____
 - Not applicable
21. How well do the employees at all levels understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan?
- They fully understand
 - They somewhat understand
 - They neither understand nor not understand
 - They do not understand
 - I do not know if the employees understand or do not understand the objectives of the company's current strategic plan
22. How committed are employees to the success of the company's strategic plan?
- Very committed
 - Somewhat committed
 - Neither committed nor not committed
 - Not committed at all
 - I do not know if the employees are committed to the company's strategic plan
23. What changes would be needed to make the task of achieving the financial and/or strategic performance targets more successful? Please check (√) all that apply.
- Personally get more involved – do what is required to make it happen
 - Increase my own level of communication with others
 - Make personnel changes
 - Implement the strategy in phases
 - Train subordinate(s) so that the person(s) better understands how to implement the performance targets set by the company
 - Other _____

SECTION III: LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS (24 – 27)

24. Which of the following characterize your style of leadership? Please check (√) all that apply.
- a. ___ I guide others
 - b. ___ I facilitate others
 - c. ___ I am a change agent
 - d. ___ I inspire others
 - e. ___ I lift the aspirations of others
 - f. ___ I raise the performance of others to higher levels
 - g. ___ I develop others to their fullest
 - h. Other _____
25. How would your subordinate(s) characterize the *weaknesses* in your leadership style? Please check (√) all that apply.
- a. ___ I micro-manage
 - b. ___ I do not give them enough time to complete their work
 - c. ___ I do not communicate as well as I could
 - d. ___ I do not take their input/feedback/comments into consideration when making a decision(s)
 - e. ___ I am not sensitive to what is going on in the organization
 - f. ___ I do not provide them with clear expectations
 - g. ___ I do not encourage or motivate them to succeed
 - h. ___ I have a hard time seeing my own weaknesses
 - i. Other _____
26. How would your subordinate(s) characterize the *strengths* in your leadership style? Please check (√) all that apply.
- a. ___ I give them the freedom to succeed
 - b. ___ I communicate well with people
 - c. ___ I take their input/feedback/comments into consideration when making a decision
 - d. ___ I am sensitive to what is going on in the organization
 - e. ___ I provide them with clear expectations
 - f. ___ I encourage and motivate my staff to succeed
 - g. ___ I am good at influencing others
 - h. ___ I am hard working
 - i. ___ I am focused on the success and reputation of the organization, not my own
 - j. Other _____
27. Which of the following senior-level leadership dynamics are characteristic in implementing the strategic plan in your company? Please check (√) all that apply.
- a. ___ Top-down or laissez-faire senior management style
 - b. ___ Unclear strategy and conflicting priorities
 - c. ___ Ineffective senior management team
 - d. ___ Poor top-down vertical communication
 - e. ___ Poor coordination into teamwork through realigning roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities with strategies
 - f. ___ Inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development
 - g. Other _____

SECTION IV: BACKGROUND INFORMATION QUESTIONS (28 – 35)

28. Your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 36. Any comments _____

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