Strategy Implementations—Can Organizations Attain Outstanding Performance?

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Abstract
Using the Northern Nevada plumbing industry as the sample, this article assesses and tries to validate the correlation between the challenges of effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation.

The study’s findings mostly agree with earlier research (Schaap, 2006) on the concept of strategy implementation. The present study reaffirms the role that strategic consensus plays in the strategy implementation process. It also reinforces findings by other researchers as well that frequent communication up and down the organizational structure enhances strategic consensus through the fostering of shared attitudes and values. In addition, it reaffirms the concept that senior-level leaders who have been trained in strategic planning and implementation are more likely to meet the performance targets than are those without training in the field. Based on the evidence presented, the study concludes that in order to achieve outstanding performance, strategy implementation plans must be clearly developed with clear time frames, indicating specific responsibilities for individuals and identifying the people accountable for task completion.

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

INTRODUCTION
The business world is now entering a new frontier composed of rapid, volatile transformations and considerable uncertainty that is changing the nature of competition. Success in today’s commerce requires new managerial attitudes that emphasize the use of global markets, strategic flexibility, and the ability to accept and harness change (Hitt, Ricart, & Nixon, 1998). Moreover, the time frames for implementation of all strategic actions are appreciably being reduced (Hitt, Keats, & DeMarie, 1998). Because of this, the business frontier demands 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). Meanwhile, research suggests, from a strategic planning standpoint, that adopting and implementing the right practices is essential to attaining outstanding performance (Brown et al., 2007; Laugen et al., 2005).

All organizations face a familiar challenge when implementing a new strategic plan: how to effectively manage the changes that will happen as the new plan is deployed (Saunders, Mann, & Smith, 2008). But, without an actual sound and aligned implementation process, even the most
superior strategy is useless. Rightly so, as in the dynamic, hypercompetitive environment of today, savvy executives must realize that strategy implementation is just as critical as the development of effective strategies (Pryor, Anderson, Toombs, & Humphreys, 2007).

Business strategy, too, has entered a new boundary—the appropriately named market-driven age because of its central focus on the marketplace as the basis for strategy design and implementation (Cravens, Greenley, Piercy, & Slater, 1998; Day, 1994). However, in order to properly prepare senior-level management to cope with these vibrant changes for the strategic management discipline, more research is needed in this dynamic field (Okumus, 2001). This is further supported by Pryor et al. (2007, p.3) who stated that: “Whereas strategy formulation has received robust examination in the literature, explicit guidance toward strategy implementation has been meager.” Ironically, it is only in the last few years that processes for implementing strategy have been examined (Saunders et al., 2008).

This study, conducted with senior-level leaders who worked exclusively in the northern Nevada plumbing industry, had three research objectives: (1) to identify, where possible, effective or ineffective leadership behaviors encountered by senior-level leaders had tried to implement their strategic plan(s); (2) to ascertain what involvement senior-level leadership had with achieving the company’s financial and/or strategic performance targets; and (3) to uncover what senior-level leadership changes should possibly be needed to further make certain that the financial and/or strategic performance targets set by the company are, in fact, met.

In this analysis, senior-level leaders refers to owners, chief executive officers and/or presidents, general or assistant general managers, vice presidents, and others. In most companies, senior-level leaders have influential strategy-making roles and generally engage in some form of strategic management (Thompson et al., 2006). Further, senior-level leaders are usually involved in the strategic management process, particularly the strategic planning phase, with the CEO and/or president wearing the mantle of chief direction-setter, chief objective-setter, chief strategy-maker, and, most importantly, chief strategy-implementer for the total enterprise (Thompson et al., 2006).

Also in this study, strategy implementation is defined as an operations-oriented make-things-happen activity aimed at shaping the performance of core business activities in a strategy-supportive manner (Thompson et al., 2006) and is often carried out by different people from the strategy makers who did the conceptual work (Saunders, Mann, & Smith, 2009). It is easily the most demanding and time-consuming part of the strategy-management process. Converting strategic plans into actions and results tests a leader’s ability to direct organizational change, motivate people, build and strengthen company competencies and competitive capabilities, create a strategy-supportive work climate, and meet or beat performance targets. Initiatives have to be launched and managed on many organizational fronts (Thompson et al., 2006).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework for Understanding Strategy Implementation

Strategy implementation in business has been studied from a variety of perspectives. The prescriptive literature considers strategy to be a formalized statement of intent or plan that identifies objectives and intended actions. Further, strategy is seen as consciously identified, proactive,
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and formulated prior to decisions and actions (Bhimani & Langfield-Smith, 2007). This noteworthy observation, “great strategy, shame about the implementation” (Okumus & Roper, 1998, p. 218) captures the essence of one problem that afflicts strategy implementation—a general lack of academic attention (Atkinson, 2006). Okumus and Roper (1998, p. 219) further observed that “despite the importance of the strategic execution process, far more research has been carried out into strategy formulation rather than into strategy implementation.”

Reasons put forward for this apparent lack of research effort include the belief that strategy implementation is less “glamorous” a subject area than is strategy formulation, and that researchers often underestimate the difficulties involved in investigating strategy implementation, especially as it is thought to be fundamentally lacking in conceptual models (Alexander, 1985; Goold, 1991; Aaltonen and Ikavalko, 2002). Even if strategy implementation is considered to be less than exciting, a researcher who comes up with a brilliant strategy, a blockbuster product, or breakthrough technology can put you on the competitive map; only a solid strategy execution can keep you there (Neilson, Martin, & Powers, 2008).

Nonetheless, strategy implementation may help leaders shape the future (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2008) by enabling an organization to produce excellent performance by means of implementing an outstanding strategic plan. As an ally and not an adversary, the implementation process works side-by-side with the formulation process, and such collaboration leads to plans that are financially, socially, and ethically responsible strategies for a company. Successful implementation of a well-formulated and appropriate strategy will enable a company to become better and better over time, therefore achieving its longer-term vision of a good mission, good planning, and overall corporate success (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2008). Strategy implementation requires the involvement of managers at all levels of the organization. Furthermore, implementation is an action-oriented human behavioral activity that calls for senior-level leadership and key managerial skills (Schaap, Stedham, & Yamamura, 2008).

At the core of a successful approach to strategy implementation is the recognition that different types of capabilities, organizational processes, and systems need to be adjusted in order to implement the selected strategy (Homburg, Krohmer, & Workman, Jr., 2004). In addition, there seems to be widespread consensus in the literature regarding the nature of strategic planning, which includes strategy implementation. The strategy implementation literature also presents a few models showing the organizational characteristics suggested as significant factors for effective strategy implementation (Guffy, 1992). It is also depicted as a dynamic development by which companies identify future opportunities (Reid, 1989).

Starting in the early 1980s, a number of 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 now 25 years old, still provides a useful perspective on the differences and complexity of ensuring successful strategy implementation; it also is noteworthy because it depicts a struggle over the realization of ideas. It was selected for this study because it addresses an implementer’s clear-cut guide to efficiently implementing a strategy by emphasizing the answers to five basic questions: (1) When? (2) Where? (3) For whom? (4) What? (5) Why? Further, management approaches to strategy implementation can be placed on a continuum with prescriptive planning at one end and process approaches at the other (Saunders et al., 2008).
As mentioned above, many scholars have lamented the lack of attention given to strategic implementation (Aaltonen and Ikavalko, 2002; Al Ghamdi 1998; Alexander, 1985; Noble 1985). Yet, the strategy-implementing/strategy-executing task is easily the most complicated and time-consuming part of strategic management (Thompson & Strickland, 2003). Rightly so, as in the dynamic hypercompetitive environment of today, savvy executives realize implementation is just as critical, if not more so, than the development of effective strategies (Atkinson, 2006; Higgins, 2005; Kaplan & Norton, 2001) and “that strategy execution will emerge as one of the critical sources of sustainable advantage in the twenty-first century” (Biglar, 2001, p. 3).

Having studied the various strategy implementation models, this researcher concludes that the nine-step theoretical representation developed by Thompson, Gamble, and Strickland (2006) most broadens the scholarly prose in this field of study. The nine steps are:

- Staffing the organization with the needed skills and expertise, consciously building and strengthening strategy-supportive competencies and competitive capabilities, and organizing the work effort.
- Creating a company culture and work climate conducive to successful strategy implementation and execution.
- Developing budgets that steer ample resources into those activities critical to strategic success.
- Ensuring that policies and operating procedures facilitate rather than impede effective execution.
- 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.
- Installing information and operating systems that enable company personnel to better carry out their strategic roles day in and day out.
- 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.
- Tying rewards and incentives directly to the achievement of performance objectives and good strategy execution.
- 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 the Strategy Implementation Discipline

In order to understand the dynamics of leadership within the confines of a successful strategy implementation, the dynamics of leadership first need to be defined. Leadership is social influence. It means leaving a mark. It is initiating and guiding, and the result of change. The product is a new character or direction that otherwise would never be. By their ideas and deeds, leaders show the way and influence the behavior of others (Manning & Curtis, 2003).
Leadership, as it pertains to strategic management, including strategy implementation, requires equal attention to both path-finding and culture-building. This means that in performing the leadership role, strategy formulation and strategy implementation are no longer sequential and separate but are subsumed in the complementary leadership activities of the strategic leadership process (Nicholls, 1994).

The 1970s style of strategic planning, with its internal direction, focus on past experience, and incremental strategy implementation, is no longer applicable to a society in which markets and technologies are rapidly changing and firms are facing competition from a number of volatile sources (Schaap, 2006). In terms of profits, it was projected that firms achieving exceptional performance in the 1980s and 1990s would be those that took a forward- and outward-looking approach to strategic planning. It was thought that these organizations would take advantage of change as an opportunity to excel (Gluck, 1985). Nonetheless, in the mid-1980s, the focus was on strategy. In fact, a failed implementation of strategy has too often been considered a strategic afterthought (Raps, 2004).

In today’s business environment, though, the focal point is on execution—“getting things done”—and rightfully so (Schaap, 2006). Implementation 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 organizational commitment are correlated. The findings from this investigation support and extend the work of Guffy (1992) and that of Mathieu and Zajac (1990). Kanter, Stein, and Jick (1992) also stressed that leaders need to create a sense of urgency, develop enabling structures, communicate, involve people, be honest, reinforce, and institutionalize change. Smith and Sandstrom (1999) indicated that as a key strategic issue, business leaders should be perceived by employees as taking the lead in implementing their strategic plans. 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.

Rapert, Velliquette, and Garreston (2000) stated that communication and shared understandings play a major 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). Although the growing need for change in organizations is widely recognized and accepted by researchers, it is alleged that up to 70% of change initiatives are unsuccessful (Higgs & Rowland, 2005). Why do so many attempts to effect such change fail? For one thing, the costs of unsuccessful implementation efforts to the organization are huge (Schaap, 2006). Apart from wasting significant amounts of time and money, ineffective attempts
at organizational change often result in lower employee morale, a diminished trust and faith in senior-level leadership, and create an even more rigid organizational resistance to change because a company that has failed to change will encounter more employee skepticism in its next attempt at change (Heracleous, 2000).

Finally, Kaplan and Norton (2005) attribute the strategy-to-performance gap, at least in part, to the fact that 95% of a company’s employees are not aware of or do not understand their company’s strategy. Thus, it is deduced from previous explorations as well as this study that successful strategy implementation and outstanding performance are 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 (Schaap, 2006). The key to successful implementation is to be aware that senior-level leaders 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 (Beaudan, 2001, p. 68). Therefore, in order to be effective, a business strategy needs to be complemented by an equally well-thought-out implementation strategy (Schaap, 2006).

**The Problems of Strategy Implementation**

It is important for the reader (i.e., senior-level managers, administrators, and academicians alike) to understand the challenges of this subject within the strategic management discipline. In addition, the tribulations of strategy implementation are approached from a chronological slant even though it might lead to some time-line gaps. In order to understand the difficulties of successfully implementing a strategy, it is only fitting to first define the problems associated with this topic. Strategy implementation failure is defined as: “the gap between the planned activity and the enacted activity” (Smith, 2009, p. 474). Alexander (1985) found that ineffective coordination of activities as well as distractions from competing activities inhibited strategy implementation. Reed and Buckley (1988) identified four key problem areas associated with strategy implementation. They acknowledged the need for a clear fit between strategy and structure, and claimed the debate about which comes first—strategy or structure—is irrelevant providing there is congruence in the context of the operating environment. Further, Reed and Buckley (1988, p. 88) warned that although budgeting systems are a powerful tool for communication, they have limited use in the implementation of strategies. This is because budgeting systems are dominated by monetary-based measures, and due to their size and the game-playing associated with budget setting “it is possible for the planning intent of any resource redistribution to be ignored.”

Alexander (1991, pp. 73–113), in a survey of 93 Fortune 500 US firms, discovered that over half of the corporations experienced the following ten problems when they attempted to implement a strategic change:

- Implementation took more time than originally planned.
- Unanticipated major problems arose.
- Activities were ineffectively coordinated.
- Competing activities and crises took attention away from implementation.
- The involved employees had insufficient capabilities to perform their jobs.
- Lower-level employees were inadequately trained.
Uncontrollable external environmental factors created problems.

Departmental managers provided inadequate leadership and direction.

Key implementation tasks and activities were poorly defined.

The information system inadequately monitored activities.

According to Richard A. Cosier, in *Industry Week* (Why leaders fail, 2002, March, 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.” Bossidy and Charan (2002) said strategic-change initiatives fail because senior-level leaders do not make a realistic evaluation of whether the organization can effectively implement the plan. Higgs and Rowland (2005) alleged that up to 70% of the strategic-change initiatives fail. Pryor et al. (2007) contended that the reason for the majority of unsuccessful strategy implementation efforts is the lack of an integrated viewpoint. Unfortunately, strategy implementation has too often been considered a “strategic afterthought” (Raps, 2004, p. 53), but should it be? Most strategy textbooks describe implementation as an entity distinct from formulation, one which is primarily focused on structure (Aaltonen & Ikavalko, 2002). And Pettigrew (1987) wrote that the two must be interconnected (Pettigrew, 1987). Too many in positions of organizational leadership, such as senior-level leaders, seem to “get lulled into believing that a well-conceived strategy communicated to the organization equals [successful] implementation” (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000, p. 29). However, experience dictates otherwise as many carefully crafted strategies are simply never successfully implemented (Fauli & Fleming, 2005; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Mintzberg, 1994; Sterling, 2003) because many firms find it difficult to bridge the knowing-doing gap (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000).

And finally, Smith (2009) stated that while the management problem of strategy implementation is important and complex, it is poorly understood. The intellectual complexity of the problem is demonstrated by the number of differing perspectives from which academic researchers have approached strategy implementation. These include organizational learning (Argyris, 1989); organizational structure (Drazin & Howard, 1984; Miller, 1987); control mechanisms (Daft & Macintosh, 1984; Jaworski & MacInnis, 1989; Kaplan & Norton, 2007); communication (Hambrick & Cannella, 1989); organizational culture (Harris, 1999; Muhlbacher, Vyslozil & Ritter, 1987); market orientation (Dobni, 2003; McGuinness & Morgan, 2005); management self-interest (Connors & Romberg, 1991; Guth & Macmillan, 1986); as well as motivation and organizational commitment (Smith, 2009). The importance of successful strategy implementation is neatly summarized by Bossidy and Charan (2002, p. 5): “Execution [of a strategic plan] 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 a greater extent, ineffective implementation can cripple the firm, as the needed strategy goes wanting even as the considerable energy and resources expended to develop the strategic planning skills and process are wasted (Allio, 2005; Humphreys, 2007; Raps, 2004). But effective strategy implementation can possibly create exceptional results. Strategy “execution is at the core of business success and forms a foundation for applying the firm’s competence” (Joyce, 2005, p. 69).
DESIGN AND METHODS

Since such a high percentage of business strategies fail, the underlying principle of this analysis was to recognize the competencies of implementing a strategy. The following research question, therefore, was used to help identify various 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 paper, success is operationally defined as the realization of the specific objectives set by the organization (Schaap, 2006). Failure, on the other hand, is operationally defined as the barriers that obstruct strategy implementation (Schaap, 2006). Barriers are those things, which if overlooked, will make it difficult or impossible to implement the strategy (Knorr, 1993). The study involved hypotheses testing to look at the strength and/or weakness of relationships between the variables being investigated. It was intended only as a correlation and a hierarchical regression analysis 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. Surveys were either e-mailed or mailed to prospective participants at their workplace for completion at their convenience. Follow-up telephone calls were made to all prospective participants to remind them to mail, fax, or e-mail the questionnaires back to the sender. 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 given 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 HYPOTHESIS

Based on the research question, this investigator has developed three theories further needing investigation about the exploratory query:

- Effective senior-level leadership behaviors will be directly related to successful strategy implementation.
- 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 about or agree with it.
- 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 information 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. In each of the three hypotheses presented in this paper, the different types of leadership behavior questions are noted as independent variables while successful or unsuccessful strategy implementation statements are recognized as dependent variables.

SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

The sample size for this study included 71 senior-level leaders who work on a full-time basis for various plumbing organizations within northern Nevada. The data base found in the 2010 AT&T Yellow Pages was selected so that the researcher could make follow-up telephone contact, if needed, with the potential participants in order to, perhaps, increase the response rate. The original sample size was reduced from 76 to 71 organizations because the telephone numbers of six establishments listed in AT&T’s 2010 Yellow Pages were no longer operational; therefore, there was no way to make direct contact with these businesses.

ANALYSIS

Levels of significance of 0.01 (indicated by two asterisks) and 0.05 (indicated by one asterisk), as shown in Tables 2, 3, 4, were used in the variety of tests performed. When the probability of finding a relationship in data if the two variables are not related in the population is less than 0.05 (no asterisk is shown), the researcher would reject the null hypothesis that the two variables were unrelated (Fox, 2003) and further determine that the data were not statistically significant. When analyzing Pearson correlation coefficients ($r$), which the researcher studied closely in this project, 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. Thus, the researcher used the following rough equivalents (as shown below) to assess correlation coefficients ratings (Fox, 2003, p. 238):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Relationship</th>
<th>No Relationship</th>
<th>Positive Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$r = -1.00$</td>
<td>$-0.80$</td>
<td>$-0.60$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$-0.40$</td>
<td>$-0.20$</td>
<td>$0.00$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0.20$</td>
<td>$0.40$</td>
<td>$0.60$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0.80$</td>
<td>$1.00$</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Perfect | Strong | Moderate | Weak | None | Weak | Moderate | Strong | Perfect

DISCUSSION

Results

From a research and academic perspective, participants were asked a total of 28 questions that consisted of: (a) One preliminary question; (b) 10 questions about strategic planning and implementation; (c) 10 queries about leadership; and (d) Seven background information questions. The survey outcome netted a total of 30 usable questionnaires. This represents a response rate of 42.3%. With regard to the demographic profile of the respondents, men comprised 82.1% of the respondents while women comprised 17.9%. The data illustrates a mature senior-level leader workforce, with 85.8% of the leaders being 41 years of age or older. With regard to education, 35.7% attained an associate’s degree, or greater, while 64.3% did not earn a college degree.
Of the 35.7% of the respondents who earned a college degree, 66.7% were males and 33.3% were females. Some 17.9% of the respondents had been in their senior-level leadership position for four years or less, while 82.1% of the respondents had been in their current position for five years or longer. Even though 35.7% of the respondents earned a college degree (i.e., associate degree or greater), 77.8% had not been trained in or studied strategic planning and implementation. Of this percentage, 66.7% were males and 33.3% were females. And in terms of the current titles of these senior-level leaders, 25.0% were general managers, 46.5% were owners/CEOs/presidents, 7.1% were assistant general managers, and the remaining 21.4% comprised other title categories. The demographic profile data can be seen in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% of the total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% of the total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21–30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41–50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51–60</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61&gt;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<table>
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<th>Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% of the total</th>
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<th>Female</th>
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<td>High School or equivalent</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
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<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Degree</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Degree</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<th>Employed in current position</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<th>Female</th>
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<td>0–4 Years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–9 Years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–14 Years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–19 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20&gt; Years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Trained/studied strategic planning and implementation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% of the total</th>
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<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current title</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% of the total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO and/or President</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With regard to hypotheses testing, mixed support for Hypothesis 1—effective senior-level leadership behaviors will be directly related to successful strategy implementation—is found in that there were both five positive as well as two negative relationships, all at the moderate level, for each set of bivariate variables reviewed (refer to Table 2 below). Although the outcome of these queries have significant correlations and could possibly contribute to the success of strategy implementation, the results of these questions, unfortunately, do not tap into how senior-level leadership is directly related to successful strategy implementation. The results of these relationships, independent of each other, are statistically significant at either the 0.01 or the 0.05 level, and are shown as bivariate correlations. The researcher then performed hierarchical regression analysis to ensure significance of the variables was measured properly. ANOVA values for most of the variates were found not to be significant. The next step taken was to look for significant variates in variates that were found to be significant. In this case, the researcher found dependent Q11 and independent variables Q18, Q19, and Q20 to be significant; Q20 had an $r$ value of 0.580 and was significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, the researcher found that the vertical-communication process is directly related, at the moderate level, to how well strategy implementation tasks and activities were defined. Also, Q18 had an $r$ value of 0.490 and was significant at the 0.01 level.

In this variate, the researcher wanted to compare what types of leadership styles were used in the company to that of how well strategy implementation tasks and activities were defined. In this case, it was correlated, again, at the moderate level.

In Hypothesis 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—I found that the effectiveness of the vertical-communication process by senior-level leaders and the effectiveness of down-the-line leadership skills have no significant relationship (refer to Table 3 below). In this case, the researcher found that dependent Q20 and independent variable Q22 had an $r$ value of 0.055. According to Fox (2003), examining correlation and linear regression analysis is insignificant because it essentially has no connection—these two variables are neither correlated nor significant.

Table 1 cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% of the total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current title</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant General Manager</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 28

Note: Even though there were a total of 30 responses, 2 participants did not answer the survey beyond Question #1.
(H1:) Effective senior-level leadership behaviors will be directly related to successful strategy implementation.

Table 2
Results of Testing the Hypothesis 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent question (D) &amp; Independent question (I)</th>
<th>Pearson correlation (r) &amp; Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(D–Q5): Where the implementation activities effectively coordinated?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I–Q21): How effective are the down-the-line leadership skills?</td>
<td>−0.462* (0.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(D–Q10): Did departmental managers provide adequate leadership?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I–Q19): How effective is your senior-level leadership team?</td>
<td>0.535** (0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I–Q20): How effective is the vertical-communication process?</td>
<td>0.467* (0.012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(D–Q11): Where implementation tasks and activities well defined?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I–Q18): What type of leadership styles does your company use?</td>
<td>0.490** (0.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I–Q19): How effective is your senior-level leadership team?</td>
<td>0.517** (0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I–Q20): How effective is the vertical-communication process?</td>
<td>0.580** (0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(D–Q13): To what extent have you personally been involved with strategy implementation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I–Q19): How effective is your senior-level leadership team?</td>
<td>−0.397* (0.036)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(H2): 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.

Table 3
Results of Testing the Second Hypothesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent question (D) &amp; Independent question (I)</th>
<th>Pearson correlation (r) &amp; Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(D–Q20): How effective is the vertical-communication process?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I–Q22): How effective are the down-the-line leadership skills?</td>
<td>0.055 (0.781)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And in testing Hypothesis 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—the researcher analyzed whether 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. The researcher found that there is, indeed, a strong correlation between the employee commitment and understanding of the company’s strategic plan (refer to Table 4 below). The result was obtained by performing correlation and regression analysis of Q11 and Q15. The correlation of 0.518 was significant at the 0.01 level. ANOVA and the value of the coefficient also suggest that the variates are, in fact, significant.
Strategic Management Review, 6(1), 2012

James Ike Schaap

Strategy Implementations—Can Organizations Attain Outstanding Performance?

Interpretation of the Results

From a practitioner standpoint as well as an academic perspective, as mentioned earlier, many great strategic plans fail at the implementation stage. In a 1989 Booz Allen study, as cited by Zairi (1995), it was found that 73% of managers believe that the strategy implementation stage is the most difficult phase of implementing a strategic plan. Higgs and Rowland (2005) alleged that up to 70% of change initiatives are unsuccessful. Some researchers estimate the implementation failure rate to be 50% to 90% (Nutt, 1987; Kaplan & Norton, 2001; Sirkin, Keenan, & Jackson, 2005).

Knowing that there is a high probably that strategic plans, as established by senior-level leadership, will most likely fail, what do the findings of the present study really mean? First, the results suggest that the type of leadership styles a company uses is directly related to how well strategy implementation tasks and activities are defined. Second, if employees understand the strategic plan(s), there is a likelihood of success. Third, it is important for companies to find a type of leadership style that communicates clearly with employees on the how strategy will be implemented and in what direction it will take. Finally, convincingly communicating the strategic plan to employees to have them buy into the plan is critical to success. Again, referring to Table 2, the first correlation (i.e., Q5 & Q21: \( r = -0.462^* \)), which analyzed the relationship between the effectiveness of down-the-line leadership skills and whether implementation activities were effectively coordinated, illustrates that there is a negative relationship between effective leadership skills and the coordination of those activities within the company’s strategy implementation plans. Also, the last correlation (i.e., Q13 & Q19: \( r = 0.397^* \)) in Hypothesis 1 shows that there is a negative relationship between how effective the senior-level leadership team is and a senior-level leader’s personal involvement in trying to achieve those strategic targets, and, in turn, this possibly strengthens or weakens that person’s ability to be a more effective leader. This is significant because effectual leadership in senior-level leadership jobs seems to require a tremendous energy level (i.e., maximum involvement) and a deep desire to channel that energy into successful leadership (Kotter, 1988). Further to this point, the chief executive officer must be the catalyst for strategic alignment (Edwards, 2000), and understand that involvement is at the heart of the implementation process (Hardy, 1994).

Finally, when looking at the five other correlations, all within this hypothesis, ranging from an \( r \) of 0.467* to 0.580**—all of them at, according to Fox (2003), the moderate level, and all
dealing with leadership behaviors, it is clear there exists a positive relationship between companies having effective leadership behaviors and successful strategy implementation.

Can the reader think of an effective leader who was not also inspirational? After all, it is enthusiasm and passion that provide the foundation for the team’s incentive to do well. In fact, former chief executive officers such as Herb Kelleher of 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 include determination and commitment. 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). An effective leader also needs to be a facilitator because employees want to be heard and understood (Baggett, 2004).

Referring now to Table 3, the researcher was hoping that the results would support this hypothesis. However, this was not the case. In fact, the Pearson correlation outcome of these variables tell us, with almost absolute certainty, that there is no relationship (i.e., Q20 & Q22: \( r = 0.055 \)). Therefore, the researcher cannot determine whether even if employees understand and agree with the company’s strategic plan that they will have a higher commitment to the firm’s success. Nonetheless, 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 fact, a survey conducted in association with Robert Kaplan of the Harvard Business School and Business Intelligence (Rousseau & Rousseau, 1999) reported that 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, and that over 32% of the senior-level leaders did not communicate the company’s direction and business strategy effectively to all of its subordinates—the vertical-communication process. The researcher concludes, relative to Question 19 (i.e., How effective is the vertical communication process?), for which there was no correlation, that it is possible at least 32% 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 of Rousseau and Rousseau (1999).

Finally, it was found that one correlation (i.e., Q11 & Q15: \( r = 0.518 \), statistically significant at the 0.01 level), which analyzed the relationship between how long ago an attempt was made to implement change and if the implementation tasks and activities were well defined, illustrates a positive tendency for the variables (see Table 4). 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. As Hughes et al. (2002) wrote, senior-level leaders who report high levels of participation with their subordinates tend to deal better with interpersonal conflict and have high levels of morale and cohesion.

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. The present study supports Beaudan’s notion and, to a certain degree, Hypothesis 1 (i.e., with mixed results—five positive and two negative correlations). It also extends Beaudan’s work on strategy implementation. The respondents who answered Q12 of my survey (i.e., To what extent have you [a senior-level leader] been involved in strategy implementation?) stated that they always (i.e., 39.3%) or often (i.e., 42.9%) are involved with the implementation process. For that reason, implementation must be considered early-on during the formulation process, not later, when it may be too late (Hardy, 1994). The tendency, however, to treat strategy formulation and implementation as two separate phases is also at the root of many failed strategies (Quinn, Mintzberg, & James, 1988).

Since the three hypotheses in this study received mixed, no, and strong results (i.e., mixed support for Hypothesis 1—Effective senior-level leadership behaviors will be directly related to successful strategy implementation.; no support for Hypothesis 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 about or agree with it.; and strong support for Hypothesis 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), this study supports Beer’s and Eisenstat’s (2000) notion that there are at least six key leadership barriers, if not more, that could prevent a senior-level leader from effectively implementing a strategy. And because Hypothesis 3 received strong support, The researcher concludes that when senior-level leaders have not been trained in the field of strategic management, specifically strategy implementation, they are not likely to meet the performance targets set for the company, and there will be a much higher likelihood that the implementation process of that plan will fail.

**SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS**

This study has generated some noteworthy findings (refer to Tables 2 and 4), five for which the results show strong positive support and are statistically significant at the 0.01 level. That discovery, which came from Hypotheses 1 and 3 of this paper, compares somewhat 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 was also supported with a positive Pearson 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.”

**CONCLUSIONS**

Clear and well-defined strategy formulation and implementation, which are important corporate governance issues, are needed to help a leader make the right decision about ways to obtain outstanding performance (Sioncke & Parmentier, 2007). However, when it comes to direction for efficiently implementing organizational strategies, managers looking to the scholarly literature are often left wanting and confused as the bulk of this writing is biased toward strategy
formulation—not strategy implementation (Pryor et al., 2007). While we often think of the strategic planning process as a core competency, some researchers have proposed that implementation proficiency and competence as an equally important subject matter for creating and maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage, and it should not be considered a “strategic afterthought” (Raps, 2004). Intense concentration on strategy formulations is absolutely necessary (Pryor et al., 2007). This advice was offered to a variety of American firms, which typically pursued unique business strategies, and Japanese firms, many of which applied ubiquitous strategies but with outstanding implementation. Egelhoff (1993) asserted that the development of such capabilities could lead to a sustainable competitive advantage (Sashittal & Jassawalla, 1998) that could be applied across numerous business functions (Hamel & Prahalad, 1990).

It is also time for management academicians to attempt to shift from specific areas of verbiage and discipline to portray a more united methodology of strategic execution. To not do so risks creating conceptual confusion for those interested in and involved with the most crucial aspect of strategic management, strategy implementation (Pryor et al., 2007). Galagan (1997) stressed that tailoring every facet of the business to support the strategy and successfully implementing that strategy, using qualitative analysis as well as financial analysis to measure results, is 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 (Schaap, 2006). 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 need to get on with the strategy implementation process—it is a critical cornerstone and ally in the building of a capable organization; and the use of the appropriate levers of implementation will be the pivotal hinge in the development of that organization (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2008). 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). Based on the construct of Hardy’s (1994) comments the following conclusions are drawn from this study. First, the sample of the 30 respondents with a response rate of 42.3%, considering that the target group were senior-level leaders in the northern Nevada plumbing industry, provides a small but 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 and regression analysis performed, which summarizes the relationship between two continuous variables, 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). Further, in order to maximize the success of an implementation, the organization needs to carefully match its vision, mission, and strategy with the framework chosen to organize its performance measures (Lawson, Stratton, & Hatch, 2003). 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).

This study provides a first-of-its-kind statistical investigation in the northern Nevada plumbers’ industry of the relationship between effective leadership behavior and successful strategy implementation. This research reaffirms the role that strategic accord 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, agree 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, it is concluded that implementation plans still must be clearly developed, and indicating tasks, time frames, and the people responsible for task completion (Hrebiniak, 2005). 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 strategy implementation and leadership behavior (Guffy, 1992). There is a significant need for more thorough and inclusive conceptual models related to strategy implementation due to the very fragmented research to date. Virtually all prior implementation research has examined factors and outcomes at an organizational level despite the fact that a managerial-level view of implementation may provide valuable insights (Thorpe & Morgan, 2007). So, 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.”

From the literature that was searched, it was 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) with the chance of producing superior results. Hrebiniak (2005), likewise, concluded that it all begins with strategy and that execution cannot occur until one has something to implement. 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). To add to the strategy implementation example that has been extended by these researchers, this researcher feels that strategy implementation is inseparable from an effective leadership and communication standpoint within the organization. And as mentioned before, it is a great course of action that includes the key human behavioral essentials to for creating successful strategy implementation—even before, during, and after the strategy has been developed (Birnbaum, 2010). It was 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).

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS
This study’s results must be analyzed with certain admonitions in mind. First, survey data are prone to errors of leniency, acquiescence, and halo effects (Brownell, 1995). Biases related to such errors may be present in the data. The reader must consider the limitations due to external validity, prediction versus causality of variables’ relationships, and variables not investigated within the questionnaire. Second, the 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. Third, when using self-reported information, some upward bias might be inherent in such data (Baldauf, Cravens, & Piercy, 2001). Fourth, 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. Fifth, the external validity of the study is limited because it was only conducted within one construct—the plumbing industry in northern Nevada. And although the total number of completed survey was low, the response rate was very good. And sixth, while the sample size was not limiting within the population size, the value of predicting results in this same industry is limited since data are not available from other states in order to analyze the effects among the target group (i.e., senior-level leaders).

Still, it may be possible to repeat this study within the plumbing industry in the entire United States. The sample group, based on gender, age, education, trained in/studied strategic planning and implementation, employment in current position, current title, number of employees in firm, and current yearly revenue, may also be limited when considering predictability among a large target group of people.

REFERENCES


Guffy, W. R. (1992). *The role of organization communication in the implementation of a business unit strategy.* Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, VA.


