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A Case Study Understanding Employability Through the Lens of Human Resource Executives

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A Case Study Understanding Employability

Through the Lens of Human Resource Executives

by

Carmeda L. Stokes

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Adult, Career & Higher Education
College of Education
The University of South Florida

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learning, employee development, human resource development

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother Carolyn Williams

who inspired me to keep learning, keep growing,

and keep living to the fullest of my potential.

This accomplishment was possible due to your love,

support, and encouragement to make my dreams a reality.

You never gave up cheering and praying for me.

I love you so much.

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to examine HR executives' perspectives on employability enhancement for employees and how it is operationalized in their workplace. The exploratory questions that guided the study were, What are the perspectives of HR executives regarding employability enhancement for employees, and In what ways and under what conditions is organizational support of employability enhancement demonstrated through workplace learning initiatives? The conceptual framework for this study is based on Clarke and Patrickson's (2008) list of assumptions concerning employability as the premise for the new employment contract.

Data collected consisted of background questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, organizational documents, and researcher reflective journal notes. Cross case analysis yielded four major themes of "Shared Responsibility," "The Power of Learning Attitude," "Assessment for Growth," and "Resource Availability." These four themes include discussions of the roles and responsibilities for employability, desired employee learning attitudes, recommended assessment activities, and conditions affecting development opportunities provided by organizations. Implications for organizations, their employees, and HRD professionals are described. This study contributes empirical research on today's employment contract based on an employability model from the organization's perspective. It also adds to the body of literature on employability rarely focused on, employability enhancement for employees.

Chapter One

Employability is a multifaceted notion and the subject of debate in terms of what it is, how it is measured, how it is developed, and who is responsible for it. Employability has been defined as an individual's long-term capacity to build a career and to prosper in a labor market. It involves "determining, attaining, and maintaining the skills needed to work, marketing oneself in order to obtain work, and working competently in order to retain work" (Romaniuk & Snart, 2000). While the notion of employability is not a novel idea, the focus and weight placed on it is changing. Emphasis is now being placed on how prepared individuals are for changes taking place in the economy and the world of work such as increased globalization and technological changes, decreased economic expansion and job creation, and increased job insecurity and job displacement all at the same time.

The criteria used to evaluate employability are also changing. In yesterday's workforce employability meant the extent to which a job-seeker held the skills necessary to be trainable by an organization after hire. To put it another way, potential workers had to be trainable to be employable. Today employability suggests that individuals must demonstrate their initiative and adaptability to continuously learn not only to attain employment, but to be promotable or retain their job as well. In other words, employees must be self-directed life-long learners to remain employable.

In addition, expectations concerning responsibility for employability are changing as well. In the past, employability was tied to an employer-reliant ideology. Employees received long-term job security in exchange for loyalty and dedication and the employer

was responsible for providing training to enhance the skill level of employees. Today's workplaces reflect a more self-reliant ideology. Employees are increasingly expected to be more responsible for the entire career management process including conducting job searches and strategically planning for advancement opportunities throughout the duration of the individual's career. This change is frequently captured in literature related to the psychological contract.

The psychological contract is defined as the subjective beliefs, expectations, perceptions, promises, or obligations held regarding an exchange agreement between an individual and an organization (Rousseau, 1998). Literature indicates that the terms of the psychological contract can change after events such as new job assignments or organizational restructuring (Stiles, Gratton, Truss, Hope-Hailey & McGovem, 2007; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). With this in mind, it is suggested that a modified psychological contract is emerging in which a paradigm once based on lifelong job-security is moving toward a model emphasizing lifelong employability as a basis for the employment relationship (Baker, 2009; Clarke, 2008; Clarke & Patrickson, 2008; Forrier & Sels, 2003; Martin, Staines, & Pate, 1998; O'Donoghue & Maguire, 2005; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007) and that greater value is being placed on training and development to adjust to a climate of increasing job insecurity (Garavan, Morley, Gunnigle, & McGuire, 2002; Martin et al., 1998). Under the old psychological contract, organizations and their employees operated under a paternalistic model in which seniority (or loyalty to the organization) generally ensured employment and promotion. Under the new or emerging psychological contract, however, organizations and employees are said to operate with the understanding that performance ensures employability through learning (Romaniuk & Snart, 2000). It is argued, therefore, that a strong commitment to invest in

human resources and enhance employability has replaced long-term expectations for employment (Garavan et al., 2002).

Problem Statement

The concept of employability has been viewed as the outcome of a new psychological contract based on providing developmental opportunities to increase the likelihood of current and future employment (Clarke & Patrickson, 2008). It has been described as "involving determining, attaining, and maintaining the skills needed to work, marketing oneself in order to obtain work, and working competently in order to retain work," (Romaniuk & Snart, 2000, p. 30). It has also been referred to as "the extent to which people possess the skills and other attributes to find and stay in work of the kind they want…and a key goal for individuals to aim for in managing their careers and for organizations to foster in workforces" (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007, p. 23).

While the concept of employability can apply to both current and future workforce employees, most information on the subject discusses the concept in reference to skill development for preparing new entrants to the workforce or developing competency skills in students during their pursuit of higher education degrees (Heimler, 2010; Orner, 2009; Stasz, 2001). A line of literature can even be found on curriculum development highlighting debates on whether employability skills development is better suited for the workplace or higher education institutions (Cassidy, 2006; Fallows & Steven, 2000; Harvey, 2000; Holt-Davis, 2009; Morley, 2001; Treleaven & Voola, 2008). Literature on how the concept of employability is operationalized in the workplace, however, is sparse. Additionally, little focus seems to be centered on exploring employer's perceived role for employability enhancement for employees. This lack of attention may be due to an increasing sentiment that responsibility for employability ultimately rests with the

employee, a residual effect of structural changes U.S. organizations have experienced over the past 20 years in response to globalization and shifts in economic stability.

In times of economic and competitive challenges, organizations become leaner, job opportunities become scarce, and often times support for employee learning and development is reduced as organizations strive to survive (Volpe, 1999). At the same time, job roles and responsibilities are expanded, workers are required to accomplish more with less, and employees are expected to increasingly self-mange their professional development to remain employable (Guglielmino & Guglielmino, 2008; Van Der Heijden, Boon, Van Der Klink, & Meijs, 2009). Research on perspectives concerning such changes including expectations and opportunities for development have been one-sided and require additional attention (Applebaum, Close, & Klasa, 1999; Carbery & Garavan, 2005; Reardon, 2004; Volpe, 1999). If, indeed, a paradigm of job employability is truly replacing the notion of job security or lifetime employment within the same organization (Forrier & Sels, 2003; Carbery & Garavan, 2005) new realities that may confront employees including expectations for learning and opportunities for development from the organization's perspective, need to be understood (Carbery & Garavan, 2005). One way to obtain this information is through the lens of Human Resource Executives who have experience and a background in planning and implementing workplace learning initiatives.

Human Resource Management (HRM) is the organizational function that includes all major activities related to the working life of an employee—from the point of entry into the organization until the individual leaves. The scope of HRM includes hiring, compensation, performance management, organization development, safety, wellness, benefits, employee motivation, communication, administration, and training. HRM is also responsible for helping the organization attract and retain competent capable

workers in the organization. This includes planning efforts to ensure recruitment of talent to meet short and long range business goals, identifying the best individuals for available positions and ensuring they are placed in appropriate positions, and providing performance appraisal and training opportunities so employees can develop skill, knowledge, abilities, and expertise while helping the organization achieve its goals (Shivarudrappa, Ramachandra, & Gopalakrishna, 2010, p. 12).

As strategic partners as well as employee advocates, it is important to gather the perspectives of HR executives, as they are individuals who make recommendations and provide input in organizational decisions related to employee recruitment and development. In addition, the perspectives of the HR executives are important because as key stakeholders they not only provide jobs, but champion initiatives for the development of employees for these jobs, and are actively responsible for establishing the criteria for continued employment of workers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine HR executives' perspectives on employability enhancement for employees and how it is operationalized in their workplace. The aim of this study was to gain insights regarding what role organizations are playing towards assisting employees with determining, attaining, and maintaining the skills needed to maintain current employment as well as market themselves for future advancement opportunities either within or outside of the organization. Research in this area provided meaningful insights from an organizational standpoint concerning the employment relationship as well as uncovered future directions for HRM and HRD (HRD is a function within HRM concerned with training and development of employees).

Exploratory Questions

The exploratory questions that guided the study were:

1. What are the perspectives of HR executives regarding employability enhancement for employees?

2. In what ways and under what conditions is organizational support of employability enhancement demonstrated through workplace learning initiatives?

Research Design

This study used a qualitative case study approach to explore and explain perspectives of HR executives on the organization's role in supporting employee employability. I chose this exploratory research design for multiple reasons. First, although employability is a common issue and phenomenon in the labor market, a gap exists in the employability literature concerning employers' responsibility for addressing this issue. Second, research to date on employability has been primarily theoretical in nature with the exception of a few empirical studies on the subject, none of which captures the words or actions of employers (or their representatives) or provides insights from their real-world environments. A primary goal of this study was to focus on qualitative findings in order to gain an in-depth understanding of how employability enhancement is viewed and supported by employers in their specific organizations. Thus, this study sought to provide clarity from an organizational standpoint on the issue of employability through the lens of HR executives.

Data collection in this study was guided by the exploratory questions and obtained through background questionnaires, individual interviews, document analysis, and researcher reflective journal notes. To obtain participants for the study, a method of network recruitment was conducted which consisted of contacting peers, advisors, and colleagues for assistance with identifying individuals who met the selection criteria and

had a willingness to participate in this study.   HR executives with experience and

responsibility for planning employee development/workplace learning initiatives from

various industries were invited to complete a pre-screening questionnaire. Based on

responses to the questionnaire, individuals who met selection criteria for the study were

asked to participate in semi-structured interviews with the goal of recruiting five

participants. The criteria for selecting each participant included the following:

1. Maintains an active membership in a professional organization with a mission

    related to workforce/employee development.

2. Currently holds HR related position focusing on strategic planning in areas of

    organizational development, training/learning & development, and/or career

    development of employees.

3. Possesses knowledge of the topic and issues central to the study, including a

    basic understanding of the construct employability (and its operationalization in

    the workplace).

4. Expresses a willingness and ability to participate in the interviews.

5. Understands what is expected of them if they choose to participate.

HR executives employed in a major metropolitan area of a southeastern state were

invited to participate in the study.

        Data were analyzed after each interview by coding and recoding (Merriam,

2002). Data were described according to emerging patterns and themes as

recommended in qualitative studies (Janesick, 2004; Creswell, 2007) and suggested for

multiple case studies (Stake, 2006). A comprehensive description of the methodology

and specific details regarding the participants, data collection, and analysis is discussed

in depth in chapter 3.

Conceptual Framework

      The conceptual framework for this study is based on Clarke and Patrickson's

(2008, p. 124) list of assumptions concerning employability as the premise for the new

model for the employment contract. Clarke and Patrickson discuss five assumptions

related to employability which center on the idea that employability is primarily the

individual's responsibility, individuals have the desire and capacity to manage their

employability, the organization's role is to provide opportunities to enhance

employability, and employability is a precursor to employment.
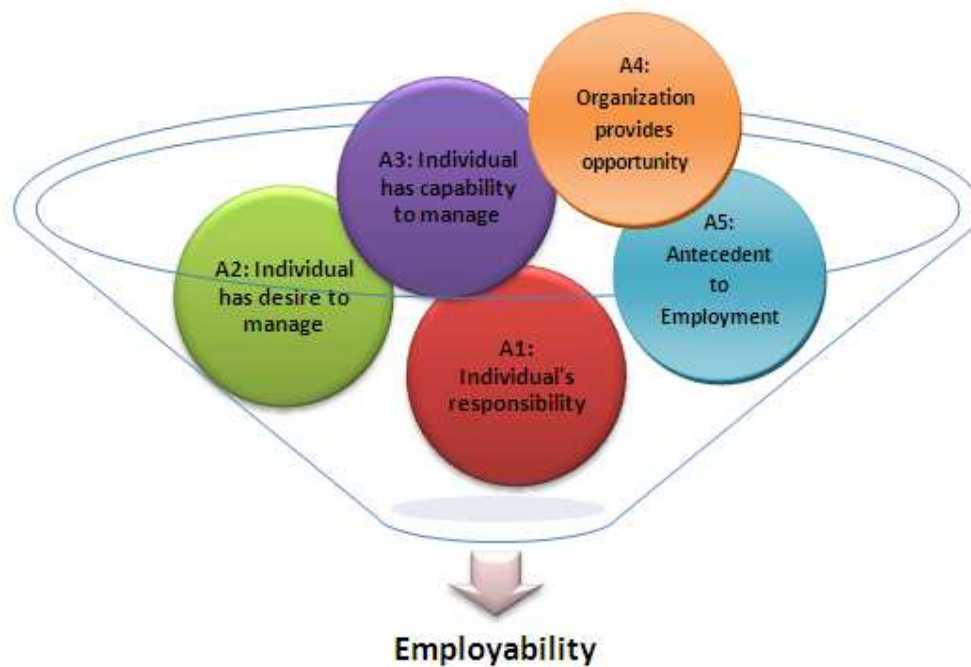
Employability

Figure 1. Conceptual model for Clarke and Patrickson's five assumptions for

    employability as the premise of the new psychological contract. A = Assumption.

      Based on these assumptions of employability I examined HR executives

perspectives concerning employability in today's workplace, as well as their institutions'

intentions for organizational support of employee development towards employability. Assumptions 1, 2, and 3 inform exploratory question 1. I expected results to identify the specific roles and responsibilities organizations are assuming for employability enhancement, as well as clarify those expected for employees to assume. Assumption 4 informs exploratory questions 1 and 2. I expected results to provide specific examples of the types of development opportunities and resources offered and recommended by organizations to assist employees with enhancing their employability, and reveal under what conditions or circumstances these opportunities are provided. Assumption 5 is presumed given the perspectives under study are based on employability for existing employees. Results were used to discuss implications for employees, employers, and HRD.

Significance of Study

Human resource executives are clearly a key stakeholder group in identifying the skills people need to obtain, hold, and develop in employment. Not only did this study provide insights regarding the views they hold concerning the notion of employability in today's workplace but also their perspectives concerning what role they believe the employer (as well as the employee) should play in supporting employee development towards employability. By documenting the views of HR executives, and placing those in the context of the employment relationship, this study can contribute towards building a common understanding of the shared responsibilities between the employer, the employee, and HRD units that strive to serve them both in organizational learning and development efforts.

The exploration of HR executives' perspectives enables the understanding of expectations for employee development and assists HRD practitioners in planning interventions to facilitate learning. Moreover, this study could provide meaningful

information to companies that lack information on how organizations are currently supporting employability enhancement while investing in efforts to provide workplace learning to achieve competitive advantages. Thus, findings from this study would be of interest to employers, employees, HRD practitioners, and researchers and educators in fields related to human resource management/development and adult education as it may have significant implications for education and training.

Definition of Terms

Downsizing (or restructuring): an organization's conscious use of permanent personnel reductions in an attempt to improve its efficiency and/or effectiveness. Downsizing is generally distinguished from other non-intentional forms of organizational size reductions. It is considered a deliberate strategy designed to reduce the size of the workforce. The most common strategy used is the laying off of workers but it may also involve hiring freezes and early retirement programs," (Carbery & Garavan, 2005, p. 480).

Psychological contract: the mutual beliefs, perceptions, and informal obligations between an employer and an employee which sets the dynamics for the employment relationship and defines the detailed practicality of the work to be done. It addresses factors that are not defined in a written contract of employment such as levels of commitment, productivity, quality of working life, job satisfaction, attitudes to working flexibly, and the provision and take-up of suitable training.

Employability: an individual's long-term capacity to build a career and to prosper in a labor market. Employability implies qualities of resourcefulness, adaptability and flexibility signal the qualities needed for success not only in paid employment but also in other domains of life.

Employability skills: Transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by the 21st century workplace. They are necessary for career success at all levels of employment and for all levels of education.

Employability enhancement: the process of expanding or increasing an individual's ability or capacity to gain employment, maintain employment, or obtain new employment if required through purposeful formal or informal learning activities.

Self-directed learning: (or self-managed learning, self-regulated learning): Individual learner's initiative and responsibility to (with or without assistance) identify, assess, and set priorities for learning needs; define goals; select and organize learning activities; and evaluate outcomes in terms of performance.

Self-regulated learner: (or self-directed learner, self-managed learner) learners who are cognizant of their learning strengths and weaknesses, and they have a repertoire of strategies they appropriately apply to tackle the day-to-day challenges of tasks. These learners attribute their successes or failures to factors (e.g. effort expended on a task, effective use of strategies) within their control. Finally, individuals who are self-regulated learners believe that opportunities to take on challenging tasks, practice their learning, develop a deep understanding of subject matter, and exert effort will give rise to academic success.

Life long learning: continuous, voluntary, and self-motivated building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual in pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. It can occur through formal (training, counseling, tutoring, mentorship, apprenticeship, higher education, etc.) or informal (experiences, situations, etc.) experiences encountered in the course of a lifetime.

Informal learning: process whereby an individual acquires attitudes, values, skills, and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment, such as the workplace.

Organization: an employing company, corporation, institution, business or other group with a specific purpose, following specific processes, and performing specific functions to satisfy human needs and wants by producing goods and services.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

This study was based on the following assumptions: (a) that participants are competent and knowledgeable of their organizations' needs and would respond accordingly to job-related questions and issues; and (b) that participants would be open, honest, and provide relevant information during the interviews and focus groups.

Limitations. A limitation of the study is that responses of what participants believe to be true might contain distorted memories, attitudes or opinions constructed at the time the interview is completed, biased recollections based upon recent events or current contexts, and a misrepresentation of the facts in order to please the interviewer. As the study focused on the perspectives of employers concerning their experiences, perceptions and beliefs, the data results are only e as reliable as the integrity and honesty of respondents in responding to the exploratory questions. Finally, as data collected may be subject to multiple interpretations, the integrity of the study results was dependent on the ethical judgments and sound decisions of the interviewer throughout the data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the findings.

Delimitations. This research study was conducted in a major metropolitan area in the southeastern state of Florida. The participants were HR executives who currently have responsibility for strategic planning efforts related to employee learning and development. The individual responses of these participants might be different from the

responses that might come from employers from other regions of the state. Industries represented in the study were determined by the demographic information obtained from the potential participant pool. Given the small purposeful sampling that was used, the industries reflected in the study may not be representative of all industry types. As such, the findings of this study cannot be directly applied to all employers or the industries they represent. It is the decision of the consumer of the results of this study to determine what transferable elements may apply in a given workplace.

Summary of Chapter

I described the context and purpose of the study: to examine HR executives' perspectives on employability enhancement for employees and how it is operationalized in their workplace. In chapter two I provide an in-depth review of literature that: (a) establishes a conceptual framework for this study, (b) provides an overview of the concept of employability and its relevance in today's workplace, and (c) discusses the connection between organizational support for learning and employability. The categories for review of related literature in chapter two include:

- Effects of organizational restructuring in the US

- Assessment of employability skills

- The employment/psychological contract

- Employee/workplace learning

In chapter three I present the research methods for the study and discuss the sample selection, researcher's role, data sources, and ethical considerations of the study. In chapter four I provide a presentation of data based on interviews, organizational documents, and my reflective journal. In chapter five I conduct a cross-case analysis and synthesis of the data collected, present emergent themes, and discuss implications of the study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to examine HR executives' perspectives on employability enhancement for employees and how it is operationalized in their workplace. The exploratory questions that guided my study were:

1. What are the perspectives of HR executives regarding employability enhancement for employees?

2. In what ways and under what conditions is organizational support of employability enhancement demonstrated through workplace learning initiatives?

This chapter provides a foundation for understanding the notion of employability in today's workplace. To begin, a brief overview of changing organizational structures in the U.S. is discussed. Next, a framework for the construct employability is established based on employability skills noted in the literature as being needed by employees and expected by employers. Subsequently, a synopsis of the evolving employment or psychological contract between the employee and employer is provided highlighting specific changes that have occurred over time related to employability. Finally, discussion of the connection between organizational support for learning and employability is offered.

Changing Organizational Structures

In an age of rapid technological development and increased global competiveness it is not always possible for organizations to plan for change in a proactive sense. Instead, organizations often must respond by adapting to change after

the fact. To do so, many organizations have modified structures and processes through downsizing and restructuring efforts to become less rigid and more flexible. Although originally implemented for problematic organizations, downsizing is increasingly used as a strategy to ensure a leaner, more responsive and competitive business (Carbery & Garavan, 2005, p. 480; De Vries & Balazs, 1997). Romaniuk and Snart (2000) posit that, in turn, these adjustments have ultimately transformed the purpose, essence, and nature of work as well as the requirements of the workforce (p. 29).

As organizations restructure their workforce to respond to changing market demands, employees that remain are often asked to assume expanded work roles and responsibilities beyond the scope of their job descriptions (Sullivan, 1999). Often times these new job roles and responsibilities come with huge learning curves and short time spans to develop competency. In addition, employees are increasingly expected to self-manage their development during and after this transitional period. This includes assessing what skills and information they need to learn, locating and acquiring necessary resources to learn the skills and information needed, and implementing a plan of action to learn the skills and information required to perform new job roles and responsibilities effectively. While some employers may provide organizationally initiated training opportunities to assist with employee development, emphasis on adaption to job role changes after organizational restructuring or development of advanced generic transferable skills is not always a primary focus. As such, literature suggests that not all employees believe they are adequately prepared for or supported by the organization to assume new job roles and responsibilities during these times.

Learning After Downsizing

While there can be many benefits experienced as a result of restructuring efforts, there can also be negative consequences associated with such change as well.

Applebaum, Close, & Klasa (1999) conducted a study examining the negative impact of downsizing on remaining employees. One of the major findings of the study centered on employees' reservations regarding their ability to perform their new job functions. The researchers found that not only were workers concerned that they did not possess the skills necessary to meet the job requirements of their new job descriptions but that they were insecure regarding what influence they would have over their future careers following an organizational restructuring.

Employee attitudes towards learning can also be affected after organizational changes such as restructuring. Carbery & Garavan (2005) found that employees perceived that their organization could not be relied upon to provide opportunities for self-development unless actively pursued by the individual. Employees also believed that while firm-specific skills might be provided by the organization to facilitate the transition after downsizing, advanced generic transferable skills had to be sourced by the individual. The study suggests while employees may recognize they have skills gaps and desire to broaden their knowledge base to be employable elsewhere if need be, they do not necessarily believe organizations will provide the necessary training or developmental opportunities to do so.

How learning takes place in an organization can also be adversely impacted after downsizing. Volpe (1999) found that prior to downsizing in the organization, employees learned by means of independent strategies. They learned informally by interacting with other employees. After downsizing had taken place, however, it was reported that there were fewer opportunities for learning informally. According to the study, after downsizing there was a loss of networking among colleagues in work groups and across affiliates. In addition, fewer opportunities for informal networking were available due to loss of informal mechanisms for learning (i.e. brown-bag lunches, informal training sessions

held after work), loss of mentors and coaches (individuals who had once served as coaches, role models, and mentors who had been great sources of informal learning, were no longer with the organization after downsizing), and increases in stress due to reduced staff (fewer people were doing more work, thus there was no time to train or be trained, no time to learn). Decreased trust within the organization also caused employee reluctance to share information with others, thus further reducing the opportunities to learn through informal networks (Volpe, 1999, p. 19). Each of these are counterproductive given that key aspects identified in literature as essential for promoting employability include employee attainment of skills and behaviors that contribute to effective performance (Van der Heijden, 2002) and possession of networks of contacts which provide information and support (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004).

Furthermore, Reardon (2004) found five limitations of learning after downsizing. Based on employee reports the study revealed specific limitations related to informal learning within the organization which included (a) the organization did not support learning to develop expertise because learning was informal and took place over time, (b) there was no learning vertically through the organization (employees did not go to their superiors to learn) because it might reveal a flaw in their abilities, (c) employees only learned what they needed to do their job, (d) the new structure made it difficult for young new employees to learn (workload made it difficult to mentor young/new employees), (e) and there was a lack of steps in place to enhance informal learning. This study supports the findings from Volpe (1999) which also suggest that changing context/structure not only disrupts existing workflows but mechanisms for learning as well.

The studies reviewed imply that significant changes take place within an organization after restructuring which in turn creates a different learning environment for

employees than had existed before. Employees must not only learn new and emerging organizational values and norms, but also determine what standards and strategies to follow to carry out their work while redefining their relationship with the organization. They have to "learn the new rules of the game, first to survive and later to maintain their status or even advance in the downsized environment" (Volpe, 1999, p. 19).

Framework for Employability

While there have been many studies conducted exploring the long-term impact of downsizing or restructuring, issues related to employability enhancement require further research with a focus on the new dynamics of the changed organization and the extent to which employees are expected to invest in skills and develop generic competencies in today's workplace (Carbery & Garavan, 2004, p. 503). To adequately explore this gap in research, it is important to review literature related to both employability skills and employability separately.

Employability Skills. The term employability skills has been referred to by many names including competency skills, workplace skills, and job skills. It has also been defined in many ways. Overtoom (2000) provides a synthesized definition of the term as "transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by the 21st century workplace" necessary for career success at all levels of employment and levels of education (p. 1). It has also been described as generic skills, capabilities or key competencies in research literature focused on examining future workforce development needs. Australia's Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations provides a more comprehensive definition of employability skills as "skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions" (Australian Government, 2002, p. 3).

A great deal of literature has been written with the intent to capture and categorize essential core employability skills. Two national studies in particular are frequently cited as foundational works related to identifying employability skills (Overtoom, 2000). The first study was conducted by the American Society for Training and Development (Carnevale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1990). Although specific to HRD professionals, results of the ASTD study emphasized 16 core skills described in six category groups: (a) Basic Competency Skills-reading, writing, computation; (b) Communication Skills-speaking, listening; (c) Adaptability Skills-problem solving, thinking creatively; (d) Developmental Skills-self-esteem, motivation and goal-setting, career planning; and (e) Group Effectiveness Skills-interpersonal skills, teamwork, negotiation; and (f) Influencing Skills-understanding organizational culture, sharing leadership.

The second study was conducted by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). The SCANS study cited 36 generic skills as necessary for everyone, in addition to highlighting the ability to use 5 competencies efficiently (resources, interpersonal skills, information, systems, and technology). Additionally, the Northwest Center for Emerging Technologies (NWCET) composed a list of "21st century skills considered essential for today's workplace. These skills were delineated into three categories: (a) Employability Skills: communication skills, organizational skills, team contribution and leadership, professionalism, critical thinking and decision making, customer relations, self-directed and continuous learning; (b) Cross-Sector Core Skill Areas: project management, task management, problem-solving/troubleshooting; and (c) Core Curriculum skills: analytical skills and problem solving, business and environment, coordination and communication skills, project and process flow skills, core computer software and hardware skills, core field of study skills (The Workforce Board, 2003).

While categorized in many different ways, overall, employability skills, are generally divided into three skill sets: (a) Basic Academic skills: reading, writing, science, math, oral communication, listening; (b) Higher-Order Thinking skills: learning, reasoning, thinking creatively, decision making, problem solving; and (c) Personal Qualities: responsible, self confidence, self control, social skills, honest, have integrity, adaptable and flexible, team spirit, punctual and efficient, self directed, good work attitude, well groomed, cooperative, self motivated, self management (Alabama Cooperative Extension System, 2000). Thus, despite varying definitions and categorizations, employability skills in essence encompass the skills, attributes, behaviors, and characteristics that are ultimately deemed necessary for an individual to effectively attain and maintain successful employment, as well as manage their current and future careers.

Employability. While the term employability skills refers to the specific skills, attributes, behaviors, and characteristics considered necessary for individuals to attain and maintain employment as well as manage their careers, the concept of employability encompasses the extent to which people possess those skills, attributes, behaviors, and characteristics to find and stay in the kind of work they want. Just as there are varying definitions and categorizations of employability skills, there are also different conceptualizations and operationalizations of the term employability (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007, Thijssen, Van der Heijden, & Rocco, 2008, p. 172, Van Der Heijden et al., 2009, p. 20). Employability has been described as "involving determining, attaining, and maintaining the skills needed to work, marketing oneself in order to obtain work, and working competently in order to retain work," (Romaniuk & Snart, 2000, p. 30). Thus, employability relates to an individual's long-term capacity to build a career and to prosper in a labor market.

Carbery & Garavan (2005, p. 493) cite three types of definitions, or perspectives of employability proposed in the literature. A core definition proposed refers to an employee's capabilities and possibilities to be successful in a wide range of jobs. An alternate definition of the term centers on the capacity and the willingness of the individual to be successful in a diversity of jobs, current and future. The third perspective, considers individual and contextual conditions that facilitate or hinder an employee's employability such as the amount of training opportunities provided by an organization. This third perspective suggests that employers may have a direct impact on an employee's ability or capability to attain and maintain the skills needed to thrive in a labor market.

Competency-based conceptualizations, or dimensions of employability have also been discussed in the literature. Morcos (2009, p. 38) delineates five in particular which include: (a) occupational expertise, (b) anticipation and optimization ("preparing for future work changes in a personal, creative manner, in order to strive for the best possible job and career outcomes"), (c) personal flexibility ("willingness to adapt to changes in terms of employment, job contents, conditions, or locations"), (d) corporate sense (participation as members of integrated teams, identification with corporate goals, acceptance of collective responsibility for decision-making process), and (e) balance (reaching compromises between opposing interest among employers and employees). This third competency (personal flexibility) highlights the relevance of both internal and external employability for employees. Internal employability is referred to as an employee's ability to remain employed with the current employer in the same or a different job. External employability is the ability and willingness of an employee to switch to a similar or different job in another organization and focuses on the employee's value in the external labor market (Carbery & Garavan, 2005, p. 493).

Morcos (2009) expounds that personal flexibility as it relates to employability emphasizes that employees must adapt to changes occurring in their work and the labor market environment, including making smooth transitions between jobs and organizations due to mergers and reorganization, adjusting to temporal and spatial structural changes of organizations, and variation in work colleagues or peer groups. He also surmises that employees with greater levels of personal flexibility derive greater benefit and further their career development than those with lower levels of personal flexibility because they understand how to take advantage of change, expose themselves more easily to change, and embrace change in an effort to learn from different experiences (p. 40). While not explicitly stated, this competency seems to suggest employability is not only connected to an employee's acquisition of skills and expertise but to their attitude and willingness to learn as well.

Willingness to learn is also captured in Fugate et al. (2004). The scholars proposed a psycho-social model of employability in which three dimensions are discussed: a) career identity which relates to an individual's ability to reflect on their past experiences in order to determine who they are and who they want to be; b) personal adaptability which refers to an individual's willingness and ability to transform in response to changes in their environment. This could include the propensity to learn new skills, to adapt one's job hunting strategy to prevailing job market conditions, or reconsider one's goals in the face of barriers; and c) social and human capital. Social capital emphasizes the impact of an individual's social background and access to supportive networks. It encompasses one's ability to successfully develop and utilize working relationships through informal job search networks (e.g., friend of a friend), in addition to more formal networks. Human capital refers to the various skills and

knowledge that an individual has obtained from their experience and education that increases the individual's ability to meet organizational performance expectations.

Thus, the essence of employability entails a person's capacity to develop and use acquired skills to maneuver effectively in labor markets to secure sustainable employment and is considered "a key goal for individuals to aim for in managing their careers, and for organizations to foster in workforces" (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007, p. 23). While authors have chosen to expound on varying aspects of employability, a common line of thought between the definitions and descriptions provided in the literature is the idea that employability encompasses qualities of resourcefulness, adaptability and flexibility (Curtis & McKenzie, 2000, p. 5) or a disposition for growth, in the sense of being able to respond effectively to changing circumstances and professional expertise in relationship to job-seeking skills and labor-market knowledge (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). A major variation, however, is the extent to which authors focus on contextual conditions that may affect an employee's employability, or ability to develop it (such as access to training opportunities or opportunities to learn from informal networks). This suggests that an employee's employability may not be solely dependent on an individual's ability, attitude or actions, but may also be reliant on support provided by the employing organization toward learning and development efforts.

Studies in Employability

The concept of employability can apply to both current and future workforce employees. Despite this, most information on the subject discusses it in reference to skill development preparing new entrants to the workforce (Stasz, 2001) or developing competency skills in college students during their pursuit of higher education degrees. Literature on this topic is also written about workplace skills and employability skills development for high school students. Orner (2009) conducted a quantitative study

comparing the acquisition of employability skills for students participating in an employability skills training program. The study examined factors that affected employability skill acquisition in high school students in career and technical preparation programs and employer and student perceptions of the acquisition of employability skills. Using a static-group pretest-posttest design, results indicated that students were more positive than employers about their employability skill acquisition prior to and directly following the completion of employability skills training.

Heimler (2010) also conducted a quantitative study to examine college graduates, needed, received, and areas for further training based on eight employability dimensions including: (a) literacy and numeracy, (b) critical thinking, (c) management, (d) leadership, (e) interpersonal, (f) information technology, (g) systems thinking skills, and (h) work ethic disposition. The study examined the attitudes of three distinct groups (graduates, faculty, and human resource managers) and their descriptions of skills needed by graduates to succeed in the modern economy. Survey results revealed that while participants from each of the three groups agreed that basic employability skills are important for job performance, the groups differed in their attitudes regarding graduates' need for additional training in basic employability skills and their level of competency. Faculty and human resource managers believed that graduates required additional training in basic employability skills while graduates felt additional training was not needed. Each study highlights an incongruity in opinion between the individual's perceived level of competency compared to that of potential employers. Given that employer's have the final say regarding who is hired, such an inconsistency in viewpoint regarding level of skill and competency deemed necessary for employees could have major impact on the current and future employability of graduates.

It is posited that "in a highly competitive global economy, there is little chance that unprepared graduates will be successful in obtaining employment and then in advancing their careers" (Heimler, 2010, p. 274). This same sentiment can be extended to current workforce employees as well. Just as it is important for students and recent graduates to develop skills needed to enter the workforce and to later advance in their careers, ongoing skill development for existing workers is equally important. Training and professional development not only can aid in addressing skills gaps in entrant workers, but also help existing workers prepare for emerging skills needed in the workplace and assist those taking on increased responsibilities or embarking on new career paths with transitioning skills sets (SHRM, 2008, p. 17). Thus, opportunities for continuous learning and development are crucial to sustaining workforce readiness among employees of all experience levels. Despite this, little focus seems to be centered on exploring employability enhancement for existing workforce employees and minimal research has been conducted on exploring employers' perceived role for this enhancement.

Employability and the Psychological Contract

While direct research on employability for existing employees is a rarer focal point in the literature, research related to this topic is more prominent in recent literature concerning the psychological contract. In fact, the concept 'employability' has been described as an outcome of a new psychological contract based on providing employees with developmental opportunities to increase the likelihood of current and future employment in exchange for work performance (Clarke & Patrickson, 2008).

Psychological contract defined. Different perspectives have emerged regarding what the psychological contract is and is intended to do, as well as which parties (employees and/or employers) should be included when examining the basis for

the employment contract. The concept has been referred to as "the unwritten (work) agreement (and the) sum of the mutual (work) expectations," (Maguire, 2001, p. 432). It has also been defined as the set of expectations held by an individual which specifies, what the employee and the employer expect to receive from one another, during the course of the employment relationship (Maguire, 2001). Cullinane and Dundon (2006, p. 115) cite the psychological contract as "the individual's beliefs (rather than expectations) about mutual obligations in the context of the relationship between the employer and employee". Thus, a psychological contract comprises subjective beliefs regarding an exchange agreement between an individual and an organization (Rousseau, 1998). Overall, it can be viewed as the expectations, perceptions, promises, and obligations held by the employer and employee.

In regard to who should be included when examining the psychological contract, some authors conceptualize a dual exchange between the employer and employee (Shore & Tetrick, 1994). Guest (1998) suggests that the psychological contract should include the 'employer perspective' in order to assess the idea of mutual reciprocal obligations. Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1998), on the other hand, refer to the psychological contract as an individual perception and distinguish between conceptualizations at the individual's and organizational level, focusing on an individual's belief rather than the organization's concerning mutual obligations between that person and the employer. Coincidentally, much empirical research on the psychological contract is based on the individual's perspective. In either case, the psychological contract is intended to represent the "give and take" aspect of the employment relationship. It is based on the premise of social exchange in which the employee contributes their work, talent, skills, and expertise to the organization in exchange for

certain benefits from the organization such as pay, training, and support (Tullar & Beitler, 2008).

One of the primary functions of the psychological contract is to reduce insecurity regarding various aspects of the employment relationship that cannot be addressed in a formal, written contract (Anderson & Schalk, 1998). Thus, it is a key to helping managers and employees understand the nature and direction of the employment relationship. "By understanding the distinct relationship between employee and employer, managers can eliminate false assumptions about job duties, extra-role behaviors and relational expectations" (Delcampo, 2007, p. 434). This is especially important given that the psychological contract is not static in nature.

The changing nature of psychological contract. Literature suggests that the terms of the psychological contract can change especially after events such as new job assignments or organizational restructuring (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994, p. 246; Stiles et al. 2007, p. 57). Emergent changes documented in the literature relate to characteristics such as focus, format, duration, scope, and employer/employee responsibilities and inputs (Anderson & Schalk, 1998; Hiltrop, 1995). The most prominent change noted, however, is a shift in focus from a paradigm of job security to one of job employability which has been emphasized by many researchers (Clarke, 2008; Clarke & Patrickson, 2008; O'Donoghue & Maguire, 2005; Rothwell & Arnold, 2005).

Under the old psychological contract, organizations and their employees operated within a paternalistic model in which seniority (or loyalty to the organization) generally ensured employment and promotion. The employee had job security and the employer in turn had a stable workforce. This version of the employment contract based mainly on an implicit and continuous exchange of mutual loyalty has been described as

relational in nature. It involved the exchange of both monetary and nonmonetary benefits (e.g. mutual loyalty, support, and career rewards). Additionally, a relational contract is not time-bound; instead, it establishes an ongoing relationship between the employee and the organization (Millward, & Hopkins, 1998, p. 1532).

Due to changes in the economy and increased competition due to globalization, U.S. organizations can no longer offer job security to their employees (Stiles et al. 2007, p. 57). This inability to offer such a provision is believed to be the basis or impetus for the new psychological contract. Rather than offering job security, it is theorized that many organizations are offering opportunities for skill development so that the employees can remain employable instead.

Altman and Post (1996) interviewed twenty-five Fortune 500 senior executives to examine their perspective on changing work relationships. They found that executives noted the demise of the old contract and recognized a new contract based on employability and employee responsibility, rather than job security and paternalistic company programs. Under this newer psychological contract, organizations and employees are expected to operate with the understanding that performance ensues opportunities for continuous learning and marketability (Sullivan, 1999, p. 467). This version of the employment contract is based on an explicit and distinct exchange of work for compensation and has been described as transactional. The employee is compensated for satisfactory performance and is employed for a specific time period based on the current need of the organization (Millward & Hopkins, 1998, p. 1532). A transactional contract is described as a monetary exchange and tasks.

Whereas the former model of the employment contract has been critiqued for fostering the dependence of workers on organizations for employment, the emergent contract aims to promote the independence of workers from organizations through

employability. Thus, this newer model is considered less paternalistic and more autonomous in nature, reflecting the contemporary need for flexible organizations and adaptable workers (Romaniuk & Snark, 2000). This newer model also suggests that both parties share responsibility for maintaining and enhancing employability. For instance, responsibilities for each party might include, employing organizations offering facilities that support and/or improve the individual worker's employability by providing "insight into internal job mobility conditions and opportunities, competency profiles, career perspectives instruments, and training and development for future jobs in the current or another company" (Thijssen et al, 2008, p. 171). Correspondingly, responsibilities for employees, might include being ready and capable of using these facilities and to take responsibility for career choices and efforts.

Clarke & Patrickson (2008, p. 124), discuss several assumptions related to such an employability based model that are used as the bases for the conceptual framework for my study. These include:

Assumption 1: Responsibility for career management and employability rests primarily with the individual.

Assumption 2: Individuals have the desire to manage their own career and employability.

Assumption 3: Individuals have the capacity to manage their own careers and employability.

Assumption 4: The organization's role is to support employees by providing them with opportunities to enhance their own employability.

Assumption 5: Employability is an antecedent to employment.

According to Clarke and Patrickson, these assumptions have emerged as recurrent themes within management literature. Yet, they are relatively unexplored and have not been examined for validity.

Assumption 1 (p. 124) suggests the notion that a transfer of responsibility for employability has occurred in the employment relationship, and correlates with descriptions by career theorists concerning "the gradual demise of the organizational career and the emergence of new career forms", such as boundaryless careers (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Briscoe, Hall, & Frautschy DeMuth, 2006; Currie, Tempest, & Starkey, 2006; Hall, 1996a; Van Buren, 2003) or protean careers (Briscoe, et al., 2006; Hall & Mirvis, 1995; Hall, 1996b). Clarke and Patrickson's (2008, p. 125) discussion of this assumption highlights assertions by theorist that individuals are increasingly expected to develop careers or relationships with organizations "built less on the expectations of a relational, long term commitment and more on transactional, short term, financial […] exchanges." Additionally, literature regarding this assumption suggests individuals are expected to develop strategies for managing their careers and employability across jobs and organizations rather than relying on internal organizational career ladders (Currie et al., 2006). Further, scholars posit that individuals must demonstrate flexibility and adaptability to adjust to changing circumstances (Fugate et al., 2004) or even reinvent or reshape themselves to meet organizational needs (Clarke & Patrickson, 2008, p. 124) to remain employable.

Assumption 2 is also in line with career models such as the protean or boundaryless career and suggests that individuals must have a desire to manage their careers and employability. Clarke and Patrickson (2008) acknowledge, however, that research related to this assumption is patchy or inconsistent at best and requires further investigation. For instance, literature related to this assumption suggested some

individuals may not have the desire for career self-management or even recognize the need to develop career management strategies. Bates and Bloch (1996) conducted a study in which they found few participants were aware of their strengths and weaknesses, had plans for self-development, or comprehended the notion of employability realistically.

Assumption 3 speaks to the self-directedness of the individual, that the individual has the capacity to manage his or her career and employability. While this notion is plausible in theory, Clarke and Patrickson (2008) pose the question of whether this assertion represents an ideal more so than reality. The scholars explain this assumption is based on the premise that individuals have the capacity to evaluate their "individual strengths and weaknesses in relation to market and employer expectations, the capacity to reflect on those skills and attributes, and the willingness to seek help as required (p. 128)". The scholars note, however, that some researchers challenge that individuals often fail to manage their own employability due to resource costs (time and money), perceiving development as a low priority (Mallon, 1999), and uncertainty concerning their ability to identify what skills employers will be looking for in the future (Tamkin, 1997).

Assumption 4 is based on literature which asserts that employers have a significant role to play in an employee's employability (O'Donoghue & Maguire, 2005; Romniuk & Snart, 2000). According to Clarke and Patrickson (2008, p. 129), some scholars claim that the organization's role is to ensure employees are developed in ways that will make them attractive to other employers so that, in the event of job loss, the individual can easily transition to alternative employment (Baruch, 2001; Van Buren, 2003). Clarke and Patrickson (2008) state, however, that how this is operationalized in practice is unclear. They surmise that a gap exists between theory and practice. For instance, Brauch (2001) documented accounts of organizational preference to focus on

"company- or sector-specific training that would benefit [the organization's] needs", and organizational reluctance to offer development opportunities "linked to strengthening individual employability". Thus, whether or not organizations actually view themselves as responsible for providing opportunities that lead to self-development, and whether there are differing viewpoints based on the costs and benefits associated with maintaining employees' employability, requires further investigation.

In regards to Assumption 5, Clarke and Patrickson (2008) suggest there is a commonly held view that employability increases the likelihood of employment success, regardless of whether it is managed at an individual or organizational level. They challenge, however, that research to date has "failed to show a clear or consistent relationship between employability and employment" and that there is limited evidence available to determine the extent to which this assumption "is a true reflection of the job market (p. 131)." The scholars assert that securing employment can be as much a function of the labor market as individual employability, and that employment success "is largely determined by the number of suitable job vacancies in comparison to the number of similarly qualified and experienced job seekers in the market (p. 131)." In other words, employment may be less about employability and more about the state of the labor market and an individual's relative value within that market.

Based on these five assumptions, in theory, the employability model provides opportunities for individuals to manage their own learning and development (Clarke & Patrickson, 2008). This transfer of responsibility could be viewed as empowering employees if employees recognize and accept the new arrangement of the psychological contract, and employers hold up their end of the agreement. However, critics of the model suggest this may not be the reality.

Criticism of the employability model. The premise of a psychological contract based on employability does not stand without challenge. As noted by Clarke & Patrickson (2008) some studies suggest that many of the assumptions identified may not hold true for all employees. As mentioned previously, there is indication that employees in some organizations do not have the desire for career self-management and have not yet recognized the need to develop career management strategies or have an active role in ensuring development in this area. Some employees, in fact, believe management is responsible for their careers and have indicated they have not received or accepted the message that career planning is now an individual responsibility (Atkinson, 2002, p. 18).

There is also a growing body of literature that indicates while many organizations have shifted to a philosophy of career self-management, the employability model is established in theory only. Mallon and Walton (2005) cite that "organizations struggle to find any actionable meaning in the notion of employability" and that "there is still evidence of lamentable failure to provide even skill based training" (p. 469). While testing the premise of the employability model Martin (et al., 1998) explored: 1) whether employers who were no longer able to offer job security were indeed offering employees opportunities to develop (specifically, whether organizations were providing a process of training and development to ensure employees became more employable internally and externally in place of offering job security), 2) whether the demand for training was employee-driven or employer-driven, and 3) what perceptions employees held regarding whether the organization was fulfilling these expectations (Martin et al., 1998, p. 24). Results of the study indicated that training and development was primarily driven by employees and that this was a key area in the psychological contract most violated by employers. Similarly, Atkinson (2002) found employees perceived their organization had

not made adequate provision in providing opportunities for development as professed under the new psychological contract as well.

At the management level, there is also critique of the feasibility of the employability model. While examining managers' perceptions of whether the organization has a responsibility to provide training and learning activities that contribute to individual employability outside of the company Carbery & Garvan (2005, p. 502) found that employee self-development was perceived to be a by-product rather than a targeted goal of the organization and that learning activities were specific to the job and the organization. Although organization-specific skills were provided to employees, it was believed that advanced generic transferable skills had to be sourced by the individual (Carbery & Garavan, 2005, p. 480). In addition, in this study respondents also revealed that learning activities predetermined by the organization were based on the role being occupied, tended to focus on the here and now, and provided learning opportunities that were specific and job-related. While this type of learning may assist the organization with meeting its business goals, it has been criticized as having limited value in enhancing the employability of the employee (Carbery & Garavan, 2005, p. 504).

Finally, there is critique charging that some organizations fail to provide any developmental opportunities at all. This is a significant critique given that it was leveled by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) a highly respected professional association of over 250,000 members from all over the world and all disciplines of human resources. In a recent report issued by the SHRM (2008, p. 6) it was reported that at least one out of 10 organizations did not provide or pay for skills training or professional development for their U.S. workforce and that small-staff-sized organizations were even less likely to do so. Thus, while the premise of the

employability model is established in theory, in actuality the onus for development in this

area seems to be positioned as the employee's responsibility more so than the

employer's or even a mutually shared objective. In practice it seems the individual must

be the driver of his/her employability, at times with minimal or no assistance from the

organization.

Expectations for Employee Learning

If indeed employees are expected to be primarily responsible for their

employability, the question arises as to what expectations employers have for workplace

learning. More specifically, what, learning attitudes/tendencies do employers expect

employees to demonstrate in order to remain employable? While not prominently or

explicitly stated in the literature, tendencies toward self-directed and continuous life-long

learning may be two desired traits.

Self-directed learning. Self-directed learning has been defined as "a process in

which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, to diagnose their

learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify resources for learning, select and

implement learning strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes" (Knowles, 1975, p. 18).

While the term may, in and of itself, may seem to imply learning is conducted in isolation,

it can take place with various levels of support depending on the needs of the learner.

Grow (1991) developed a four staged model that depicts multiple levels of self-

directedness an individual may possess related to learning: Stage 1-Dependent or Low

Self-Direction (the individual needs "an authority-figure to give them explicit directions on

what to do, how to do it, and when"- these individuals are believed to respond by being

made to learn; Stage 2–Interested or Moderate Self-Direction (the individual is available

to learn, if they can see the purpose for learning and direction and help is provided by an

instructor; Stage 3-Involved or Intermediate Self-Direction (the individual has skill and

knowledge and see themselves as participants in their own education. These individuals

are ready to learn with a guide or on their own; Stage 4-Self-Directed or High Self-

Direction (individuals set their own goals and standards--with or without help from

others. They use experts, institutions, and other resources to pursue their goals,

however, are able and willing to take responsibility for their learning, direction, and

productivity. Thus, according to Grow's model, the level of self-directedness depends on

who is in charge of the learning, or the extent the learner decides what should be

learned, what methods and resources should be used to learn, and how the success of

the learning effort should be measured.

Guglielmino and Guglielmino (2003) go further to state that "the successful self-

directed learner believes that the primary responsibility for learning belongs to the

learner, not the instructor, professor, or trainer"…and that such an individual recognizes

his/her own needs for learning and "takes responsibility for making it happen regardless

of the course design, other inviting activities, unforeseen occurrences" (p. 32). Such

sentiments suggest that self-directedness is related to the individual's attitude and

motivation to learn. Tullar & Beitler (2008) seem to come to a similar conclusion,

however, they propose that the psychological contract--or an individual's perceived

obligations to the organization-- contributes to an employee's motivation or attitude for

self-directed learning.

In their study it was argued that the psychological contract is a critical determiner

of employee self-directed learning and that the individual's perception of his/her

obligations to the organization is related to his/her perceptions of self directed learning.

Findings of the study indicated that the psychological contract and self-directed learning

were significantly related. Individuals whose psychological contract involved a "doing

what they were told" disposition had a more negative view of learning. Individuals

whose psychological contract involved enhancing their internal value or attempting to build positive outside visibility were positively disposed towards SDL and more inclined to manage their own learning agendas (Tullar & Beitler, 2008, p. 325).

A theorized risk/critique of making employees primarily responsible for their own learning, however, is that such an approach may polarize the workforce into learners and non-learners (Carbery & Garavan, 2005). Keep (2000) cautions that, as most employer-provided training is often job specific and aimed towards those in certain positions/occupations, this approach could leave those most in need of training and development with the least opportunities for broader, more general, transferable learning activities. For instance, this approach "encourages and often expects individuals—most often highly skilled and highly sought after white-collar professionals, such as managers and executives—to take greater personal responsibility for their careers" (Accentuate Research Report, 2008). Hence, such a learning approach could widen inequitable distribution of training opportunities and limit rather than develop employability for a segment of employees.

Learner readiness is also a factor that must be considered when emphasizing self-directed learning as a primary means for employee development. Employees must have an understanding of what they need to learn, when they need to learn it, and the resources available to them in order to meet learning objectives, as well as their role versus the organization's role in their development. Thus, a drawback of such an approach is that some employees may not be ready (due to lack of knowledge, understanding, or motivation) to take on such responsibilities on their own.

Mallon and Walton (2005) conducted a series of studies focused on examining how individuals make sense of career development in the context of challenges to traditional career patterns. Results indicated that although training was an important

part of career for participants, there was a "reliance on the organization to provide [them with] what they might need when they needed it; training remained job and organization specific, and participants in all three organizations were passive in their approach to formal training" (p. 474). Consequently, less learning activity in terms of education, training, and self-development activities was undertaken by employees than expected. The studies suggested that while participants believed that they should take charge of their own learning and career development, "they were less sure what actions to take [or] to do, thus leading to minimal learning and development activity" (p. 468). Such outcomes challenge the professed operationalization of the employability model. Rather than providing employees with learning opportunities to increase employability in exchange for work performance, employees were left directionless as to what they were expected to do.

Life-long learning. Although not always prominently stated in the literature, continuous life-long learning also seems to be a desired trait for today's employee and an implicit assumption of the employability model. Lifelong learning has been defined as a process of gaining knowledge and skills which continues throughout a person's life that can occur through formal or informal systems (such as training, counseling, tutoring, mentorship, apprenticeship, higher education, or experiences, situations, etc., within or outside of the workplace. It has also been described as a continuous, voluntary, and self-motivated building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual in pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. Continuous learning has been defined as a system of training which continues during an employee's career with a company. It is suggested that the notion of lifelong or continuous learning is rapidly replacing the notion of lifetime employment within the same organization (Forrier & Sels, 2003). It is also viewed as a key element and an important means in maintaining

a person's employability in a rapidly changing business environment and a necessary process for employees to acquire marketable skills in today's workforce.

Thijssen (et al, 2008, p. 175) identifies three types of personified strategies or approaches to lifelong learning that can impact employee employability. These include: Broadeners – individuals who are heavy users of education and training opportunities without focused attention on the possibility for exploitation of the acquired skills within the labor market; Sellers – individuals who possess some career skills and use them to navigate themselves easily within the labor market when looking for new job opportunities, without extra training; and Consumers – individuals who expect that they will get job offers without any investment. They do not focus on possibilities for broadening or exploiting their occupational skills, but instead, assume their current level of competence is enough to remain employed until retirement. While not confirmed in the literature, it is plausible that the strategy used by individuals may be a determining factor influencing an employers' perception of an employee's level of employability, as well as employer's level of involvement or provision of developmental opportunities for employees.

Businesses are under increased pressure to continuously change due to stiff competition, globalization, rapid changes in technology and the shortened life cycle of knowledge. As such, it is becoming more commonly assumed and expected that workers will engage in self-directed and lifelong learning to promote lifelong employability (Hall and Mirvis, 1996). While the term lifelong employability is relatively novel, it implies that employees must become "more accountable for investments in their own human capital, and hence for their job security, learning, and future career development" throughout the span of their life. Thus, learning becomes an important

endeavor for all workers throughout the duration of their careers and can be viewed as a cornerstone for the enhancement of employability (Romaniuk & Snark, 2000).

Questions continue to loom, however, regarding what type of learning should take place. According to the Critical Skill Needs and Resources for the Changing Workplace summary (2008) drafted by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) "employers have not clearly stated the skills and capabilities they desire" from employees (p. 8). Yet, there is a growing sense that employees are increasingly expected to plan for and draw from self-directed, informal, and continuous or lifelong learning experiences although not explicitly expressed by employers. If employees are to successfully meet new expectations for learning, or at minimum, gain information for informed conversations concerning the issue, it is important to understand the employer's perspectives on this matter, including their beliefs concerning their perceived role/responsibility for this learning and their willingness to provide support toward employee development.

Employability Enhancement and Organizational Support

Workplace learning is inevitably influenced by both individuals and organizations (Moon and Na, 2009). Whether the same can be said of employability is yet to be determined. Most research available on this topic thus far does not include empirical studies based on the organization's perspective which can be very different from that of an employee.

Employers and employees differ in their understanding as to what constitutes employability and how this relates to employment. Employees continue to see employability in terms of being able to find a suitable job and being able to move from organization to organization when necessary, or when desired. In other words, they are concerned with transitional employability. Employers, on the other hand, see

employability in terms of filling gaps within the organization by employing individuals who have the skills, knowledge and experience to meet current organizational needs and expectations. That is, employers want functional employability (Malik, 2007, p. 131). Such varying perspectives may influence the decisions organizations choose to make regarding workplace learning including their active role in employability enhancement.

Cascio (2002) argues that organizations can be divided into two groups with distinctively different approaches to their staff. One group views employees as costs to be cut with emphasis on the minimum number of employees needed to run the company and the irreducible core numbers of employees that the business requires. The other (much smaller) group views employees as assets to be developed with emphasis on changing the way business is done so that people can be used more effectively. If this is indeed the case, how an organization views its workers, as a resource or commodity, may correspondingly affect how it chooses to respond to issues related to workplace learning, including employability enhancement.

Thijssen (et al, 2008, p. 175) supports this argument in his discussion of three distinct strategic choices organizations make in relationship to employee employability enhancement. These include broadening, selling, and consuming strategies. The broadening strategy is the most learner-centered of the three strategies and encompasses the use of "specific and general training activities, facilities to stimulate participation (time and/or money), and training programs based on learning principles that fit the participants' characteristics. " In this scenario learning is not restricted to formal training and development opportunities but can involve stimulation of workplace support and learning, self-directed learning, and more informal opportunities. This strategy also includes services aimed at metacognition (learning how to learn), or the

acquirement of learning competencies, in particular, the capability and the willingness for more self-management in acquiring new qualifications.

The selling strategy uses the worker as a commodity. It encompasses selling and exploiting the talents of employees by "helping them to find other paid jobs inside or outside the organization without evident broadening of a workers employability. The organization might facilitate transition from a worker's current job to another one by providing an overview of vacancies in relevant external and internal labor markets, offering possibilities for assessment of the qualities of employees, supporting career choice, providing outplacement services, or offering training aimed at networking or developing techniques for applying newly learned knowledge and skills.

The consuming strategy is described as utilizing the current occupational competencies of employees as something that can be used and exploited without investments from the organization. In this case, management interprets the abilities of employees as consumer goods, thus, planning ahead or broadening the mobility opportunities of employees is not part of the human resource management philosophy. As reflected in these varying strategic choices, how employers conceptualize the notion of employability could have direct impact on the type of involvement or the extent to which they provide developmental opportunities for employees, thus, an employee's employability.

For instance, UPS recognized its new hire training program for drivers was outdated and ineffective in meeting the current needs of its employees or the organization. Under the old, traditional training program, new hires were not provided a realistic overview of the job they were hired to do, it was taking three times longer for them to achieve proficiency levels than expected by the organization, and the percentage of new drivers who resigned from their position within 30 to 45 days on the

job had increased to approximately sixty percent. As a result, the organization took actions to redesign the format of its training program to be more aligned with current job expectations, changing industry needs, and learner preferences. Training which was once primarily instructor-led and included approximately forty hours of lecture-based study, was replaced with hands-on, experiential activities using simulation technology and real-time feedback ("UPS Moves", 2009).

Simarly, Walmart realized the increased market demand to open new stores was outpacing its ability to produce qualified managers to manage them. To address this issue, the company made efforts to implement a process that collapsed the time frame required to discover and train talent more efficiently, without sacrificing quality. After three years of developing and perfecting its leadership development tool, "Walmart brought its Walmart Leadership Academy (WLA) in-house permanently as the retailer's center of excellence for developing accelerated leadership skills in its managers" ("Soapbox: Developing Leaders", 2013). Training now encompasses a variety of development activities and resources to enhancing learning including "on-the-job [training], master classes, virtual classroom environments, instructor-led events, self-paced study, student-led activities, experiential exercises, service projects, distance learning, and small group discussions" ("Soapbox: Developing Leaders", 2013).

Employers' Perspective on Employability Enhancement

It has been said that workplace learning is influenced by contextual situations as well as the experience and characteristics of the learners (Billett 2001 as cited by Moon & Na, 2009, p. 328). Given that employers provide the contextual situations employees work in, and therefore learn in, it seems reasonable to postulate that the strategic choices employer's make concerning workplace learning could significantly impact an employee's employability. But do employers feel a responsibility for this development

and, and if so, how do employer's respond to this perceived responsibility? How is employability enhancement operationalized in the workplace? These questions remain unanswered and possibly contribute to levels of anxiety experienced by employees concerning the employment relationship. "By understanding the distinct relationship between employee and employer, managers can eliminate false assumptions about job duties, extra-role behaviors and relational expectations" (Delcampo, 2007, p. 434).

Based on the literature reviewed, it is evident that the issue of employability is becoming a much more prominent topic of debate in today's workforce. In theory, organizations are offering to provide employees opportunities to accumulate skills and experiences to enhance employability in the labor market in exchange for performance rather than guaranteeing employment security. Detailed information regarding how this employment model is operationalized, however, is limited. The review also confirms that although theoretically based research on the evolving employment contract based on employability as well as empirical research on employability skills development for future employees abounds, minimal focus has centered on exploring employer's perceived role in the enhancement of existing workforce employees' employability. To fully understand the concept of employability in today's workplace these gaps in the literature will need to be addressed. If the employment contract has truly moved toward a model of employability, a study that explores the specific perspectives of employers concerning their operationalization of the model is needed. The study described herein is an attempt to respond to this need.

Summary of Chapter

I provided an in-depth review of literature that: (a) establishes a conceptual framework for this study, (b) provides an overview of the concept of employability and its relevance in today's workplace, and (c) discusses the connection between

organizational support for learning and employability. In chapter three I describe the

research design and methods for the study.

Chapter Three

Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine HR executives' perspectives on employability enhancement for employees and how it is operationalized in their workplace. The exploratory questions that guided my study were:

1. What are the perspectives of HR executives regarding employability enhancement for employees?

2. In what ways and under what conditions is organizational support of employability enhancement demonstrated through workplace learning initiatives?

In this chapter, I explain the research design and methods I used for collecting and analyzing data pertaining to HR executives' perspectives concerning their role in employability enhancement for employees. An overview of the sample, participants, data sources, data collection process, methods of analysis, and ethical considerations is included. In addition, I describe my role as a researcher as well as ethical issues related to the study.

Qualitative Approach: Case Study

The research utilized a multiple case study design. Case study research is "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information," (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Merriam (2002) explains the case study as an "intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community" (p. 8). The multiple

case study design or collective case study investigates several cases to gain insight into a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003).

As with other forms of qualitative research case studies search for meaning and understanding, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. It is an inductive investigative strategy and the end product is richly descriptive. The case study approach embodies many of the characteristics of qualitative research including: 1) the researcher is focused on understanding how participants make sense of a phenomenon or situation, 2) the researcher is the instrument of which the construction of meaning is mediated, 3) the strategy is inductive, and 4) the outcome is descriptive. In addition, this tradition inherently allows multiple sources (triangulation) and techniques in the data gathering process to validate the study and improve credibility.

One of the strengths of the case study approach is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence-documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations.

Purposeful Sample Rationale

Qualitative methodologists (Janesick, 2004; Merriam, 2009) note that it is important to select a sample from which the most can be learned. This method of data collection is purposeful in nature and positions the researcher to identify information rich cases to learn the most about issues central to the research under study. Likewise, Berg (2007) expresses when developing a purposive sample researchers should "use their special knowledge or expertise about a group to select subjects who represent this population" in an effort to "ensure that certain types of individuals or persons displaying certain attributes are included in the study" (p. 44). In line with this reasoning, purposeful sampling for this study targeted individuals who not only have experienced the phenomenon being explored but who can articulate their perspective on their experiences. This allowed selection of participants representing multiple perspectives

which may present similarities and dissimilarities in their experiences and provide the rich, thick narratives associated with qualitative research. The purposeful sample for this study consisted of five human resource executives who possessed the appropriate knowledge and experience related to the focus of this research.

Participant Selection

The population for this study was human resources executives from a variety of industries in Florida. Consideration was given to individuals who had an expressed viewpoint or perspective concerning the construct employability and who met the selection criteria for the study. Individuals were selected to participate based on the following criteria:

1. Maintains an active membership in a professional organization with a mission related to workforce/employee development.

2. Currently holds HR related position focusing on strategic planning in areas of organizational development, training/learning & development, and/or career development of employees.

3. Works for an organization employing 1000+ employees.

4. Possesses knowledge of the topic and issues central to the study, including a basic understanding of the construct employability (and its operationalization in the workplace).

5. Expresses a willingness and ability to participate in the interviews.

6. Understands what is expected of them if they choose to participate.

Recruitment

A range of strategies were used to recruit participants for the study. Initially, I contacted multiple professional associations related to workforce development via email and telephone calls to inquire about obtaining membership lists or assistance from the

organization to solicit participants for my study. Unfortunately, I was faced with the reality that while most professional associations maintain and provide members contact information for networking purposes, they make it a practice not to share membership information for research. While reviewing membership contact information on one particular professional association website I received the following notice:

>NOTICE: Information contained in this database is a trade secret, owned by the ---, and is provided to members for personal professional use only. This information may not be used to conduct any solicitation of sales of merchandise or services, or to gather names for use in research. Unauthorized use or reproduction of the material contained in this database is prohibited and can subject you to damages plus attorney's fees under the Uniform Trade Secrets Act (Researcher Journal, 3/8/12).

Although I was initially frustrated with this information, I proceeded to deploy a different strategy to recruit participants for my study. I solicited prospective participants by attending a professional association meeting whose membership is largely comprised of human resource development professionals (Researcher Journal, 3/8/12). I thought this would be an ideal method to solicit participants given that such associations provide environments for its members to network and exchange ideas related to the advancement of workplace learning and development. I emailed the association to inquire about attending their next meeting and to request time to share information about my study with the members who attended. I received a warm response back encouraging me to attend the meeting and confirming I would be added to the agenda to support my recruitment for the study.

>Hey Carmeda, Just wanted to confirm that the --- Steering Committee will be happy to allow you five minutes to speak to the group about your

research needs. Feel free to now register via the --- website, to register

and pay for this meeting. Would like to know by tomorrow if you will be

able to attend (Researcher Journal, 3/12/12).

I attended the meeting as planned and gave a brief overview of my study to the

group. I also distributed a one page summary of the study with my contact information.

Finally, I circulated a sign-up sheet for individuals who were interested in being

contacted to participate in the study. The sign-up sheet requested that the members

provide their name, email, and phone number.

Overall, the majority of the association members expressed an interest in the

subject matter of the study and also provided their contact information indicating interest

in participating in the study.

The group was very warm and inviting. I was given five minutes on the

agenda to share information about my study. After giving a brief overview

I distributed information sheets about the study with my contact

information at the bottom (for those that are more visual than auditory or

wanted time to consider if they would be interested in participating in the

study). I also sent a contact sign-up sheet around for those that might be

interested. I received contact info for 16 out of the 25 in attendance at the

meeting (Researcher Journal, 3/16/12).

I emailed each of the individuals listed on the contact form providing them with additional

information about the study and a link to the online background questionnaire designed

to assess if they met the selection criteria. I also sent two rounds of follow-up emails to

increase response rate. Additionally, I arranged to have recruitment information for the

study advertised on the associations' website.

Hi Carmeda, I hope this message finds you well. Thanks again for attending our --- meeting and for sharing your project with us. I am reaching out to you to find out if you'd like to write a short blurb for us to add to our website. We'd be happy to do so. Please let me know what you think (Researcher Journal, 4/4/12).

Despite these efforts, of the sixteen individuals who expressed interest in being contacted for the study, only two individuals completed the questionnaire. Of those two individuals, only one individual met the selection criteria for participation. No participants were recruited from the advertisement on the association's website.

I proceeded to construct a contact list based on LinkedIn memberships. LinkedIn is an online professional directory of individuals and companies that can be used for professional networking, connecting, and job searching. Using this directory, I was able to identify approximately thirty individuals whose background seemed to fit the selection criteria. I emailed those individuals about participation in my study, since most did not have a telephone number listed to call directly. This strategy was the equivalent of cold calling and did not yield any participants for the study.

I'm still working on contacting potential contacts for the study through LinkedIn. However, it's been difficult to find contact information such as emails and phone numbers to directly contact individuals (Researcher Journal 6/28/12).

At this point, I had hit many unexpected roadblocks. I had mistakenly assumed it would not be extremely challenging to secure a sample of individuals to participate in this study. After contacting several organizations and being informed membership lists could not be provided, attending a professional association meeting where most of the attendees did not met the selection criteria for the study, and being unsuccessful at

recruiting participants using LinkedIn, however, I realized I would need to modify my recruitment strategy once again.

My final method for recruitment consisted of a form of network recruitment, contacting peers, advisors, and colleagues for assistance with identifying individuals who might meet the selection criteria for the study and be willing to participate in this study. I asked these individuals to not only help identify potential participants but also assist with their recruitment by personally contacting them on my behalf prior to me making contact with them regarding participation in the study. This method of recruitment has been referred to as snowball, chain, or network sampling (Merriam, 2009; Penrod, Preston, Cain, & Starks, 2003). Contacts recommend potential participants who fit the criteria for selection and whom they know could provide rich information regarding the topic of study. This strategy seemed to work best and was the most efficient and results-oriented method for identifying potential participants. After searching for several months, with the help of my network, I was able to secure four additional prospective participants to potentially participate in my study.

Prospective participants were sent an email providing information regarding the purpose of the research study, the type of information that would be requested during the study and the approximate amount of time that would be needed to participate, to complete the background questionnaire (See Appendix A) and the interview process. The email also contained a link to an online informed consent form in which potential participants were asked to read the form and indicate whether or not they consented to participate in the study. Individuals who indicated consent to participate were automatically redirected to an online background questionnaire to complete. Questions on the background questionnaire were used to evaluate whether or not the potential participants met the selection criteria.

Following review of data obtained from the online background questionnaire, participants who met the selection criteria were asked to participate in two semi-structured interviews. Participants were contacted via email and telephone to let them know they had been selected to participate in the interview phase of the research and to reiterate the purpose of the research study, type of information that would be requested, and the approximate amount of time that is needed to complete the individual interviews.

Data Sources and Collection

A vast amount of information was collected over a three month period. This information was organized and stored into electronic files using Microsoft Office Word 2007. Excerpts from these files are included in the Appendices. As new data were collected, the information was added to the electronic files pertaining to the background questionnaire, interviews, organizational documents, and the researcher's journal.

The data sources for examining the exploratory questions included (a) background information collected via the online questionnaire, (b) face-to-face interviews with the participants, (c) organizational documents (e.g. organizational website, employee development philosophy statement, employee development program promotion materials and communications), and (d) researcher's journal and field notes.

Background questionnaire. Upon approval by IRB and after obtaining written consent, data collection occurred in two stages. Stage one participants completed the online background questionnaire (approximately 20 minutes). The background questionnaire questions were structured to elicit information from respondents to determine if they met the participant selection criteria. Questions pertained to the individual's job title, how long the individual had been in their current position, what duties/tasks they performed related to strategic HRD, the number of employees their organization employed, industry, and professional development activities in which they

were involved. The questionnaire asked participants to indicate what they considered as the most important attributes related to employability for their organizations by ranking ordering a list of attributes (See Appendix A).

Interviews. The five individuals that met the participant selection criteria were asked to participate in two semi-structured interviews, an initial and a follow-up meeting. Interviews were scheduled over the phone and confirmed via email with each participant. All interviews were face-to-face and took place at the participant's work site or an off-site location designated by the participant. A semi-structured interview guide was used for both interviews. Interview Protocol A consisted of thirteen primary questions (See Appendix B). Protocol B consisted of five questions (See Appendix B). Additional questions designed to further probe and ask clarification questions regarding information obtained from the first interview were also asked during the follow-up meeting. All interviews lasted less than one hour each.

> The follow-up meetings really help with clarifying information and asking
> additional questions I could not ask during the first interview due to time
> constraints (Researcher's Journal, 8/24/12).

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed immediately following each interview by the researcher. Upon completion, I reread transcripts to ensure accuracy of the data and then sent them to the individual participants for member checking to verify the transcripts accurately reflected participants' perspectives and to determine if any modifications, corrections, or clarification of comments were needed.

I transcribed each interview completed within a two week time frame. While this was a very laborious and time consuming task (it is estimated it takes four hours of transcription for every one hour of interview (Janesick), -- it took me approximately eight hours of transcription for every one hour of interview, and I transcribed each interview in

entirety), this activity afforded me an opportunity to begin initial analysis of interviews and was a confidence booster as I continued data collection. Reading transcripts provided immediate feedback about the effectiveness of questions, prompts, and probes used to elicit data to address the objectives of the research and my proficiency with facilitating the interview process.

I began transcribing my first interview today. I'm about half way done. Initially, I was concerned that my interview questions might not generate rich, meaningful data. However, listening to the audio reminds me of how well the interview actually went. The participant was very forthcoming and detailed in responding to my questions. I didn't have to ask a lot of probing or clarifying questions. I've already noticed some interesting findings. The participant described different attributes needed for employees in the organization that were different than those she has focused on for her own development. She expressed she did not initially want to respond to question #8 to rank attributes (background questionnaire). She felt the question was varying depending on the level or position of the employee (Researcher Journal, 7/7/12).

Organizational documents. Organizational documents related to employee development initiatives for each participant's respective workplace were collected and analyzed after transcriptions were completed. Documents are considered unobtrusive data that can provide insight into the phenomenon under study without direct involvement of the research participants. Additionally, they are powerful indicators of the value systems operating within institutions and can provide a history related to the contexts of what's being studied without being filtered through the perceptions, interpretations, and biases of the participants (Hatch, 2002, p. 116). Organizational

documents served as documentation for data triangulation. Reviewing organizational documents provided documentation of developmental practices and opportunities offered to employees as well as expectations for development communicated by the organization, advertisements of programs offered, and career pathing system available to employees.

Organizational documents were retrieved by reviewing each participant's organizational website for materials related to the organization's employee development philosophy. Once located, these documents were saved as PDFs for the review process. When probed about documentation, some participants expressed reservations about providing additional information themselves as it might be an issue with their legal or marketing departments. Some participants wanted to protect company strategies from competitors. Participants expressed comfort, however, with me using website materials accessible to the public regarding their organization's development plans and offerings.

The follow-up interview [with Andrea] lasted approximately 45 minutes. I only had two clarifying questions in addition to the second interview protocol questions. We progressed through all the questions with ease. In responding to one of my clarifying questions concerning the organization's philosophy statement on learning and development, I sensed a bit of hesitation from Andrea. [This may be due to the restructuring of the department that occurred in the organization.] Andrea shared that the company hasn't focused on communicating its philosophy on learning and that she is actually working on creating one. As such, she didn't feel comfortable sharing it [perhaps because it was unofficial, not completed, not open to the public]. Instead she directed me to the organization's career website.   She said there was information there

related to the organization's careerpaths, however, it didn't contain a lot
(Researcher's Journal, 8/28/12).

Some websites provided more information than others. Documents from Ann's
(Participant A) organization were the easiest to locate and the most comprehensive in
regards to variety (courses, programs, tools, resources, etc.) available. Documents from
Andrea (Participant B) and Cassie's (Participant E) organization were the most difficult to
find.

Researcher's journal. The last form of data collection was my researcher's
reflective journal. Because the researcher is the research instrument in qualitative
research, keeping a journal allows the researcher to reflect on, articulate, and explain
what was done during the course of a study (Janesick, 2004). The use of a reflective
journal also adds rigor to qualitative inquiry as the researcher is able to record his/her
feelings, attitudes, and subjectivities during data collection (Merriam, 2002). Thus, to
enhance the data collection process, I maintained a researcher's journal that includes
records of my reactions, assumptions, expectations, and biases about the research
process as well as documents experiences, ideas, breakthroughs, and/or problems that
arose during the course of the study. The researcher journal began immediately
following the proposal defense for the study. Samples of data sources included in the
study can be found in the Appendices section.

Microsoft Word files were created for all interviews and organizational documents
included in the study. An electronic document was maintained for journal entries. All
files were saved on a password protected portable flash drive for which only I have
access. Files will be kept for three year following completion of the study.

Data Analysis

I followed Braun and Clarke (2006) six step-by-step guidelines, or phases of thematic analysis. These guidelines include: (a) familiarizing yourself with your data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) reading throughout each transcript to become immersed in the data, (d) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (e) producing the report.

I originally intended to use Transana, a software program designed to facilitate the transcription and qualitative analysis of video and audio data. As noted by Yin (2003, p. 110) software can help the researcher code and categorize large amounts of narrative text and is a great benefit when attempting to derive meaning and insight from word usage and frequency patterns found in texts. Unfortunately, though I made several attempts to learn the nuances of how to use the software program effectively including working with peers more experienced with the program, my comfort level for using this software as the basis for data management and analysis wasn't very high. I felt, in fact, it might impede the data analysis process.

I purchased the Transana software. Now just need to learn how to use it. Hopefully the learning curve won't be too great and impede progress in analysis (Researcher's Journal, 8/22/12).

Met with Deb and BJ to review getting started with using Trasana software. I will have to plan some additional time next week for additional assistance. It looks like it might take a little time to learn the software. However, once I've mastered it, it should be useful (Researcher's Journal, 8/23/12).

Added transcriptions to Transana. I tested the timestamp feature using my first interview with Ann. This process may be time consuming to

get to point of analysis. Have to listen to audio recordings again to insert

timestamps for all recordings. Not too painstaking, however, working with

the key words and collections may be a little more challenging than I

anticipated. I couldn't find adequate documentation in Transana

explaining how to select keywords and collection and then use them for

analysis (e.g. frequency of word use) to find emergent themes. May need

to get additional assistance from BJ (Researcher's Journal, 10/7/12).

Met with BJ to get additional assistance with using Transana with

key codes and reports. However, I forgot my thumb drive. Urgggg! I'll

have to make another appointment. In the meantime my matrix is coming

along. I'm able to see a large range of data in a categorized way. Once

that's done, I'll focus on using Transana. If the learning curve is too time

consuming, however, I may just rely on Word 7 (Researcher's Journal,

11/20/12).

In the end, I elected to use Word 7 features to organize and code the data. Berg

reminds us that while data management software may offer some conveniences, it is

important to remember they are intended to reduce the amount of overall time a

researcher spends in the data organization and analysis phase of research. He

maintains "if you spend enormous amounts of time trying to locate, learn how to use,

and enter data into a computer program, this process may defeat the original time-

saving purpose" [of the software program] (Berg, 2007, p. 333).

Given that computer program/software ultimately requires the researcher to

"develop the analytic and theoretical relationships between original conceptualizations

and eventual empirical evidence" (p. 333), I chose to use a basic process that was more

comfortable, familiar, and effective given the time constraints for the research study rather than using the Transana software for data management.

Within-case analysis. The first phase of data analysis involved within-case analysis of each of the five cases. Transcripts were reviewed several times in order to identify key words and phrases to identify themes that emerged from the data. I used a process of open coding (Creswell, 2007) to categorize information in which I read transcripts line by line to determine the code and category labels that fit the data collected (Berg, 2007, p. 323). The highlight feature of Microsoft Office Word 2007 was used to emphasize key words and phrases in the transcripts related to the identified categories. Brackets were used to separate my opinions and thoughts from the information gathered from the participants. An excerpt from an interview in which these features were used is included in Appendix G.

After all interviews were coded, transcripts were again reviewed to ensure coding and categorization was complete. Codes and categories were compared, and revisions to code and category labels were made to refine and reduce categories where applicable. This same process was used for reviewing organizational documents. Excerpts representative of the final categories identified were compiled to ensure there were sufficient examples and the location of each excerpt was noted to simplify the retrieval process during the writing process (Hatch, 2002).

Cross-case analysis. Cross-case analysis was then used to identify emerging patterns and concepts across cases. The percentage of participants using relevant key words and phrases identified through open coding of the interview data and frequency of overall occurrences of key words and phrases across cases was noted . This form of analytic manipulation was useful in illuminating the consistency of patterns and concepts

across cases. Results from cross-case analysis are captured and depicted in Appendix J.

I also constructed a matrix to visually capture and organize segments of information related to categories and concepts that emerged from the data (Janesick, 2004). Such a display of the data helped me sort data in a preliminary order for examination as well as provided a visual means of locating and identifying information (Yin, 2003, p. 111, Creswell, 2007, p. 143). This form of analytic manipulation was useful in determining the relevancy of identified categories and concepts across cases. A snapshot of the data matrix is included in Appendix H.

Next, organizational document analysis was conducted across cases. Categories and concepts that emerged were compared to interview responses to examine congruency. This comparison allowed triangulation and refining of categories to develop emerging themes. The number of matching key words and phrases and was added to the Frequency of Codes Table (See Appendix J). A cross-case summary of the information collected through organizational document review is captured in Appendix I.

Finally, a set of themes were inductively derived consisting of themes salient across all cases.

Triangulation of Data

In this study triangulation was achieved by using multiple sources of data, or data collection methods, to confirm emerging findings. The various forms of data that were collected included background questionnaire, interviews, organizational documents (e. g. employee development philosophy statement, employee development program announcements, promotional materials and/or communications such as website information related to employee education), and researcher's reflective journal entries.

Each of these resources provided information for triangulation of the data in a within and cross-case analysis of each of the five cases.

Member checks were conducted as transcripts were presented to participants for verification of accuracy and meaning. Two peer reviewers were also enlisted to verify congruency of emerging findings with raw data and tentative interpretations. Both individuals were familiar with qualitative data analysis. In respect to the researcher's reflexivity, I have provided a section at the end of this chapter where I describe my assumptions, worldview, biases and relationship to the study that may affect the investigation.

Pilot Study

In preparation for the interviews in the main study, a pilot study was conducted to get a sense of the effectiveness of the pre-screening background questionnaire and initial interview protocol. The key advantage of pilot testing was that it provided advanced warning regarding potential problems that might arise in the main study by indicating whether questionnaire or interview questions are clearly articulated and appropriate for addressing the exploratory questions for the study.

During the pilot study, I interviewed one participant. The pilot participant was asked for feedback on the background questionnaire and interview questions to identify any potential problems or ambiguities. I noted the time taken to complete the interview to make sure all questions could be addressed within a one hour time frame. Based on the pilot participant's feedback, all unnecessary or ambiguous interview questions were discarded, reworded, shortened, or revised.

I met with my pilot participant Larry Leader for feedback on the background questionnaire. Larry shared the following critiques for improvement: 1) the questionnaire was difficult to complete with open

ended questions. Participants may have lots of information to share related to what they are doing, maybe too much to capture in the questionnaire format, 2) the questionnaire would require more than 30 minutes to complete as is. Consider using a checklist format. This would reduce the completion time to approximately 15 minutes, and 3) move questions regarding challenges from the questionnaire to the interview protocol.

I also conducted a run through of interview questions with Larry. At the start of the interview, however, I realized my recorder was full and could not record his comments. I couldn't believe it. I had made a point to check the batteries before the interview, brought an extra just in case they ran out, but I had not thought to check space availability on the recorder. I'm really disappointed with myself over this. I positioned myself to have to rely on my skills at comprehensive note-taking (which could use some upgrading). But I'm thankful that this mishap occurred during my pilot rather than during one of the interviews for the study. The interview took approximately 30 minutes to complete. Conversation was free flowing. At the end of it, however, I felt like something was missing or didn't get accomplished through the interview questions (Researcher's Journal, 1/27/12).

Pilot interviewing also provided me an opportunity to sharpen my skills at interviewing, writing field and journal notes, and served as a reminder concerning the nuts-and-bolts issues that are critical to conducting good qualitative research (Janesick, 2004)

After typing out notes from my pilot interview I decided I need to develop a scripted introduction transitioning into the discussion about

employability. I also need to add the question to the interview protocol "Tell me about your background, how did you end up in this career?" It might also be interesting to ask a general question about individuals own employability enhancement activities (Researcher's Journal, 1/29/12).

Ethical Protection of Participants

The nature of this study was not one in which participants were subjected to any appreciable risk or harm. Guidelines established by the IRB were followed completely to assure that all ethical implications are addressed. Although this study presented no appreciable risk to the people involved, the following measures were taken to reduce the occurrence of any unintended negative consequences:

1. The privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of all participants were closely guarded and used only in ethical ways.

2. In compliance with IRB, I obtained informed consent to assure that the individual's agreement to participate was voluntary and that the entire research process and risks were accurately communicated and understood.

3. The interview sessions were conducted in an informal, friendly manner so that all participants felt comfortable about expressing their thoughts freely and openly.

4. Only pseudonyms were used to identify the participants and the organizations in which they are employed. Alias identifiers were assigned from the onset of the interviews.

5. Participants were asked not to name third parties on recordings. If names of third parties were shared during interviews, these names were also assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities as well.

6. The original data, audio recordings of the interviews, transcriptions, and all analysis documents will be stored for three years in a secured locked file to which I alone have access.

Role and Background of the Researcher

Qualitative research assumes that the researcher is an integral part of the research process. Qualitative methodologists (Creswell, 2007, p. 38; Janesick, 2004) state while the qualitative researcher may collect data by means of "examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants," the researcher is the key instrument in the research process. Thus, as the research instrument I now turn to my beliefs about the study and my own training.

As a human resources professional with a background of over 10 years in the field, I have firsthand knowledge and experience with issues related to employee learning and development in the workplace. This includes dealing with the challenge of escalating concerns regarding skill development for employees in response to increasingly changing organizational structures and job roles. As an organization modifies its mission, goals, and objectives, the nature of the job employees are expected to perform changes. As a result, the need for skill development and new learning arises as well. As a human resource professional, one of my major job functions was to assess and respond to such needs. Therefore, it is no surprise that I have a strong interest in exploring the research topic described for this study.

I selected the topic of employability in the workplace because it directly affects me personally and professionally. As an individual, I have a vested interest in understanding the notion of employability in today's workplace and how it is operationalized by employers. From a personal standpoint, I have always had aspiration for, and an interest in, my own professional development for career mobility. I am a

lifelong learner who believes I have the ability and responsibility to develop marketable skills that are valued by employers.

As an employee, I am cognizant that in today's society organizations no longer guarantee job security and rarely offer long-term commitments of employment. Consequently, I believe I must aggressively seek and be exposed to a variety of educational opportunities, both inside and outside of the workplace to increase my marketability. In doing so, I believe the organization for which I am employed ultimately benefits from my accumulation of knowledge and expertise. As such, despite the decreased predictability and stability of our nation's economy, I believe there should be some level of responsibility on the employer's end for developing employee employability.

As a human resources professional, I've counseled individuals who felt limited in their career development and mobility. This sentiment was often expressed in situations in which responsibility for training and development toward career mobility was solely dependent on the employee's initiative or opportunities for development were not aggressively promoted by the organization. As a workplace educator, while it was my job to facilitate workplace learning, I believe employees have the primary responsibility for managing their development. In today's workplace employees cannot solely depend on organizations to provide development opportunities. Instead, they must have the forethought and self-motivation to develop skills and talents that allow flexibility in job role and function in today and tomorrow's workplace. How proficient employees are in doing so will ultimately affect their current and future career opportunities, thus their employability.

As a researcher, I have taken five research courses during my doctoral studies that have prepared me for conducting this study. These courses include: Research

Seminar, Design of Systematic Studies in Education, Focus Group Research Strategies,

Qualitative Case Methods, and Qualitative Research in Education II. Compounded,

these courses provide a strong foundation for understanding the tenets of multiple

qualitative methods for research. I have also had the opportunity to practice interviewing

and observation skills by completing mini studies in the Qualitative Case Methods in Fall

2007, and Qualitative Research in Education II in Spring 2008. In addition, I have

served as a research assistant over a period of four years for a faculty member whose

approach to research has been qualitative in nature. During my assignment with this

faculty member I gained hands on experience with completing forms for IRB approval,

developing surveys and questionnaires, recruiting participants, conducting focus group

interviews, transcribing and coding data, analyzing data for emergent themes,

synthesizing data for discussion, conducting an audit trail, and reporting findings in

published works.

Dissertation Timeline

One key to completion of a qualitative dissertation is committing to a timeline.

The timeline for the study is detailed in Table 1. The dissertation process is depicted in

Figure 2.

Summary of this Chapter

In this chapter, I described my method of data collection, including the selection

of participants, format of the interviews, steps for analysis, ethical considerations, and

role of the researcher. I included pragmatic considerations, including an estimated

timeline. In the next chapter, I present data from the interviews, researcher reflective

journal, and relevant documents.
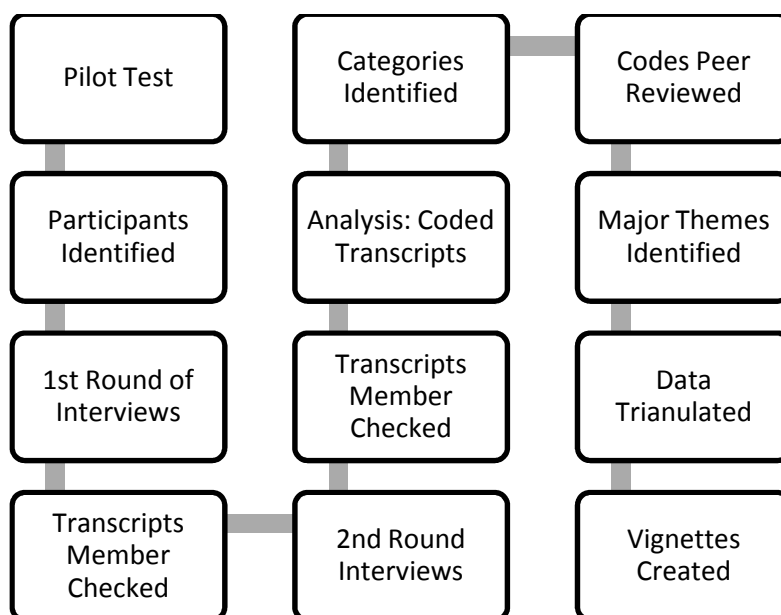
Figure 2. Dissertation Process

Table 1

Stokes' Dissertation Timeline

Process	Proposed Deadline
Concept Approval by Major Professors	September 2010
Chapters 1-3 Draft Revisions	November 2011
Proposal Defense and Approval	December 2011
IRB Approval	February 2012
Pilot	January 2012
Recruitment, Selection, and Initial Contact with Participants	March-June 2012
First Round of Interviews with Transcription and Analysis	July-September 2012
Second Round of Interviews with Transcription and Analysis	July 2012-January 2013
Chapter Four Completion	February 2013
Chapter Five Completion	April 2013

Final Draft of Dissertation	May 2013
Manuscript Draft Format Check Deadline	May 2013
Pre-Defense Committee Meeting	May 2012
Public Posting of Dissertation Defense	June 2013
Dissertation Defense	June 2013
Final Copy Completed	July 2013
UMI Registration	August 2013
Graduation	August 2013

Chapter Four

Presentation of Data

The purpose of this study was to examine HR executives' perspectives on employability enhancement for employees and how it is operationalized in their workplace. The exploratory questions that guided my study were:

1. What are the perspectives of HR executives regarding employability enhancement for employees?

2. In what ways and under what conditions is organizational support of employability enhancement demonstrated through workplace learning initiatives?

This chapter includes a description of the participants, the organizational demographics of their places of employment, and a description of each participant's perspective on employability enhancement in their respective workplaces. These descriptions contain information that is relevant to this study, but not enough to expose the identities of the participants. Each participant's perspective is told in a separate section within this chapter utilizing excerpts from the interviews and extracts from my reflective journal. I begin with an introduction of the participant, provide an overview of her perspectives, and end with a summary and visual representation of the participant's perspectives.

Context and Demographics

Five participants were included in the study. All participants were employed in organizations located in a major metropolitan area in Florida with responsibility for strategic planning efforts related to employee learning and development. Participants

were similar in job role and function and have at least ten years of human resources related experience. The organizations they represented varied in terms of industry and services provided but all employed approximately five thousand or more employees.

The Five Participants. The participants in this study were purposefully selected, and were asked to complete a background questionnaire to ensure required criteria for participation in the study were met:

1. Maintains an active membership in a professional organization with a mission related to workforce or employee development.

2. Currently holds HR related position focusing on strategic planning in areas of organizational development, learning & development, or career development of employees.

3. Works for an organization with 1000+ employees.

4. Possesses knowledge of the topic and issues central to the study, including a basic understanding of the construct employability (and its operationalization in the workplace).

5. Expresses a willingness and ability to participate in the interviews.

6. Understands what is expected of them if they choose to participate.

Based on the results of the questionnaire five individuals that met the research requirements were invited to participate in the study. Each participant was considered a case for the study.

Table 2 outlines the characteristics of the participants represented in the five cases for the study. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants and the organizations in which they are employed.

Table 2

Characteristics of the Participants

Participant	A- Ann Administrator	B-Andrea Advisor	C-Connie Champion	D-Cathy Change-Agent	E-Cassie Coach
Organization	Southern State University	Retail Industries	Fiduciary Banking	Global Utilities	Sunshine Insurance Co.
Industry	Education and Training	Retail Consumer Products	Banking and Financial Services	Utilities	Insurance
Length of Time current organization	1-5	1-5	1-5	6-10	1-5
Duties	Direct key functions for human resources, payroll and the strategic direction of organization development.	Develop and implement a strategy to grow the capabilities of employees (especially leaders) so they can do the work needed to grow business.	Direct the training design and development in four global locations, strategic planning, succession planning, organizational development, and audit	Developing and implementing training and development initiatives for the organization	Support key HR functions, including succession planning, project management, communications and strategic planning.
# of Employees	16,000	5,000+	350,000	5,000	8,000
Approximate Years HR Experience	20+	15+	20+	10+	15+
Professional Organizations & Associations	ACHE, ASHHRA, CUPA-HR, SHRM	ASTD, American Psychological Association, SIOP, International Coach Federation	ASTD-National, ASTD-Suncoast SRHRD, SHRM, SHRMA	Greater Orlando Organizational Network (GOOD), SHRM	ASTD, ISPI, SrHRD

The businesses associated with the participants in the study may be particular to the Florida area so information specific to the location of the organizations, specific

services provided, or positions of the executive (e.g. vice president or director) for each case is omitted in order to further protect the identity of the participants and the organization by which they are employed. Human resources executives Ann, Andrea, Connie, Cathy, and Cassie were selected to participate.

Ethnicity, race, age, nor gender was a factor in participant selection. However, four out of five participants were white. One participant was Afro Caribbean. All participants were women. The approximate age range for participants was between forty to sixty years.

All participation in this study was voluntary. Participants took time out of their daily schedule during work hours to participate. This indicated their commitment and interest for participating in initiatives related to learning and development as well as willingness and motivation to provide quality information to support the research study.

Interview Transcript Presentation Conventions

As the perspectives of the participants are most accurately expressed through their own voices, I have made every effort to preserve their voices by quoting them directly. Shorter quotes appear in quotation marks, while longer quotes appear in block format. Clarifying phrases, which are intended to aid the reader in understanding a quote, appear in brackets. For example, if "we" is used, brackets may contain to whom the "we" is referring. Words and phrases which are redundant or may distract the reader were deleted to enhance readability. Deletions included words such as like, uh, and hmm because words such as these may distract the reader from the main message of the quotation. Excessively repeated words and phrases and those that distract the reader from extracting the essential message of the quotation were removed and replaced with ellipses (three for the deletion of a word or phrase within a sentence and four for the deletion of phrases between sentences). Save for the aforementioned

exceptions, I have strived to preserve the voices of the women as they shared their perspectives.

Meet the Participants

Each case begins with a section called "Meet _____ [the participant]" in which I introduce each participant to the reader. Next, I expound on the components and variables that resulted from my data analysis, which merged into the following areas: 1) responsibilities for employability, 2) skills of highly employable employees, 3) learning attitudes to remain employable, 4) activities to remain employable, 5) organizational opportunities provided to support employability, 6) benefits of supporting employee employability, and 7) challenges of supporting employability. Each case ends with a summarization and visual display of each participant's perspectives.

Case One: Ann Administrator

Meet Ann Administrator. Ann is an executive at a University with responsibilities for managing people, practices and policies. One of her main duties is to ensure that the HR departments she manages operate with efficiency.

I initially reached out to Ann through email asking if she would be interested and willing to participate in my study. She indirectly agreed to do so by having her assistant contact me with a suggested day and time. Three days before the scheduled interview, I emailed Ann again to confirm our appointment and to remind her to complete the background questionnaire prior to our meeting. I also included a list of the interview questions that would be asked to help prepare her for our first meeting.

As I stepped into the outer reception area I was greeted with a smile by an HR staff member. I informed her I was there for an appointment with Ann. Five minutes later, Ann appeared from a back hallway to escort me to her office. I found Ann to be very professional and business-like in manner. While she had a pleasant and open

demeanor, I found myself overly conscientious of time during our meeting perhaps because it was my first interview. Our interview lasted approximately thirty minutes although we had planned for forty-five (Researcher Journal, 7/3/12).

Ann described herself a recovering accountant. Her educational background includes a bachelor's in business and an MBA in accounting. Her careerpath in human resources stems from the financial side. She began as a payroll manager, and progressed to director, executive directors and vice president roles in human resources since then. Like many individuals in the human resource field, she did not originally set out to be a human resource professional. In fact, she started late in the profession due to life choices. She married at twenty-three, and had to put her career aspirations on hold after having children. According to Ann while she was able to progress and be promoted within the organization in which she worked, she had to do so at a slower pace than she would have preferred.

Her career trajectory also changed during this process. She transitioned from a payroll manager to human resource director.

> I have a very different career path. I tell people I'm a recovering accountant. I actually have an accounting degree and MBA, and [I] fell into human resources from the payroll side. [I] became the HR director and realized very quickly that both myself and my supervisor had taken a huge leap of faith in realizing how broad this really was, compared to what I thought it was as the office next door's payroll manager. (Ann, L213-217-PA)

Ann now has over twenty years of human resources experience. She currently works in the education and training industry for an organization that employs over sixteen thousand employees. Her current job duties include responsibility for all human

resources, payroll, and organization development activities. Given Ann's background and extensive years of experience in human resources she was an ideal candidate to include in the study.

When reflecting on her viewpoint regarding employability in today's workplace, Ann commented that the employment relationship has changed dramatically over the past several decades. Whereas the organization once offered employees the opportunities to remain within an organization in a particular job for the duration for his or her career, in today's workplace employees have to transition through several jobs and careers.

> I think it's an interesting and changing dynamic. I think the employment relationship has changed dramatically over the last 20 or 30 years. It used to be that an employee went and worked for an organization and stayed there for 20, 30, 40 years and the employer, more or less, took care of them. Now employees will have not only 4, 5, 6 different jobs, full time career type jobs, […] not counting the high school waitress jobs, but they may actually even have several different careers in completely different directions. And there's not the loyalty to the employer that there used to be either. So there's not the loyalty on either side anymore.
> (Ann, L5-11-PA)

At one point in time, the employer offered a level of job security for its employees in exchange for loyalty to the organization. In today's workplace, however, Ann describes an employment relationship in which the provision for development is offered instead, and of which multiple parties play an active role.

Roles and Responsibility. During the interview, Ann discussed expected roles and responsibilities for the employer, the employee, and HR/D regarding developing employability. According to Ann, the employer's responsibility is primarily to provide the tools and resources needed for the employee's development. In comparison, she stated the employee's responsibility was primarily related to demonstrating the desire and willingness to use those tools and resources provided to develop skills to increase their employability. Additionally, she stressed the importance that employees give thought to what careerpath they would like to pursue as well as communicate those desires to their manager during the performance evaluation process feedback, or coaching sessions.

> But I think the employer has the responsibility to provide the tools. And if
> you're going to attract and retain great people, most of those people want
> to continue to grow and develop. So you need to provide them those
> opportunities. The employee really needs to want to develop those skills.
> (Ann, L11-14-PA)

Ann conveyed HRD's role or responsibility on the other hand, was primarily related to coordinating and facilitating developmental initiatives provided by the organization depending on the organizational chart and the expertise of the HR professionals. For instance, HR staff in her organization were more likely to facilitate programs related to leadership and management development, rather than technical courses related to computer software which would be decentralized to the units. Additionally, HR plays a significant role in creating a performance evaluation structure to support employee coaching and feedback (related to what are you doing right, what are your strengths, how do we grow those strengths) thus promoting employee employability.

Skills. Ann defined the concept employability as "possessing the skills, abilities and competencies for a specific job group" (Background Questionnaire). When asked to describe the key attributes or skills of employees perceived to be highly employable within her organization she tentatively responded they are broad depending on the job role of the employee. Ann chose not to respond to the question on the background questionnaire. When probed further to share the top three skills or attributes she would desire to be reflected in the organization, she shared that an attitude of service (how you interact with people) was critical, followed by integrity, and the desire to do the best at whatever job role you are positioned. She affirmed these attitudes and attributes were vital regardless of the job role in which an employee held. She went further to explain that, in terms of employability, possessing the technical skills for a particular position as well as interpersonal skills to work across units collaboratively were key would make an employee more successful.

> I think some of the characteristics are the technical skills that come with
> their particular position. I think the ability in higher education, well, even
> coming out of healthcare or others, it's much more of a team collegial
> environment. You need to be able to work well across departments and
> collaboratively. We don't stand alone as an HR department. We have
> HR partners in the community. We share and HRIS system. So you
> need to be able to develop those collaborative working relationships to be
> successful. (Ann, L84-89-PA)

Learning Attitude. When asked about the learning attitude employees need to possess to remain employable in her organization, Ann shared that willingness to continue learning to keep up with job requirements was key. Ability to change was also important. Since jobs are constantly changing, employees need to exhibit a level of

flexibility in learning as well as openness to new job duties to remain employable. This perspective concerning learning attitude was clearly reflected in Ann's own history of development to increase her employability. Ann pursued an advanced degree, became certified in her field, taught courses related to her field, and attended conferences for networking opportunities, sometimes even at her own expense if not financially supported by the organization.

> I immediately went out and became certified [....] The other thing that I did, which is not necessarily the path for most professional development but I think it's just such an awesome development tool-- is I taught. So I've been an adjunct faculty member for 7 years and when I was teaching I had non-traditional students that were in fortune 500 companies and you better be prepared when you are standing in front of that class with individuals that are in the work market. So it truly taught me HR, deeper than you generally would have had, because I taught everything from HR management, to employee law, and labor relations and what have you. So that's been part of it. Always attending conferences whether it has to be […] my own expense or the organization's. Because I think those opportunities, and the networking, is critical. (Ann, L217-226-PA)

These activities demonstrate a strong level of ownership and engagement in her development as well as drive and initiative to take advantage of available opportunities.

During the interview Ann made a contextual distinction regarding ownership for an employee's development. According to Ann, development pursued in an area related to an employee's current job should be driven by the employer. Development pursued for a job or future career, however, should be driven by the employee.

It may be, that the employee [is] going in a completely different direction from where they are. So I really see the ownership more becomes the supervisor's when it's development within their area and department. It really becomes more the employee's when they say, […] yes I'm the clerical person [in this department] but I want to be an accountant. Then that needs to be more of their ownership but we've provided the tools for them to do it. (Ann, L41-45-PB)

Whether directed by the organization or not, Ann lives by the philosophy that the onus for employability ultimately rests on the employee, and the employee must not only communicate their developmental goals but strategically plan how to attain them as well as to increase their employability (especially given budget constraints experienced by many organizations). To further illustrate this point, Ann shared an instance where she negotiated organizational support of annual development as part of her written employment contract with her current organization.

I would say, for the most part, I had complete support from the organization in terms of reimbursement for attending conferences, purchasing books, those sorts of things. I think it was probably challenged at one place of employment just based upon the cash limitations, to the point where […] when I left there and accepted the position [at another organization], I had it put in my offer letter that it included attendance at two conferences a year. […] I felt that was so important that I wanted to make sure I made that very clear that [it] was a priority for me. (Ann, L98-103-PB)

Conversely, Ann recounted how she did not seek financial support for development activities that were not directly related to her current position with her organization (PB-Ann, L61).

> I think being a healthcare executive is probably a little outside of [this organization's] realm. […] [Development towards this aim…] prepares me more for something different than [careers] within [this organization]. I think [support for…] the healthcare HR association does have enough connection to justify the cost. (Ann, L130-133-PB)

Ann was willing to financially invest in her development without the support of the organization because she felt it would increase her external employability. It would prepare her for opportunities different from her current position and outside of her current organization. Additionally, she felt because this development activity was not directly related to her current position (or a position) within her company, the organization had no responsibility for financially supporting it. Thus, Ann's perspective suggests the employer should be responsible for assuming a more active role in developing an employee's current employability (skills needed right now to maintain employment in this particular job), and less for developing an employee's future employability (skills needed tomorrow to attain employment for a future job vacancy).

Development Activities. In terms of the development activities in which employees are expected to participate, Ann described those related to leadership and management. She specifically identified a management certificate program for employees aspiring to one day become managers, a management orientation program for newly promoted managers, and a leadership development program for those in executive level positions. The only other developmental activity mentioned was a new hire orientation for employees recently joining the organization. I thought this list of

activities was in stark contrast to Ann's own development activities which were much more abundant and varied in context and nature

Development Opportunities. Based on our interview and a review of organizational documents, Ann's organization provides many developmental opportunities and resources for employees which have the potential to increase their employability within the organization. Development activities include classroom training, online learning modules, certificate programs, and customized learning initiatives. The organization also provides financial support in the form of tuition assistance and dues for professional associations (in some departments). She stresses, however, that while the organization may provide such support, ultimately the employee must have the initiative to take advantage of these opportunities.

> One of the things that we do here in HR is, anyone that's at the manager level, we pay their SHRM dues. So that they are getting the materials. They're getting the magazine. So that's where the yes came from. So as an employer I paid for the dues. Now as an employee you need to take advantage of this sort of thing. (Ann, L161-164-PA)

The organization recognizes that many employees are long-term, however, not all of them have the inclination or aspiration to pursue developmental opportunities beyond what they have currently learned. [while not learning anything new is not sustainable approach to promote employability]

Resources include an online learning management system which allows viewing of training opportunities recommended for specific job roles and training activities relevant to a given topic, skill set, or knowledge base (to build competencies). Additionally, the organization provides its employees with a website that provides a career pathing as well as career development tool and resources for employees seeking

to develop their career or see what other job opportunities are available given the experience and competencies they currently possess. 3-part: assessment of strengths competencies, positions could apply for, planning to get there. This tool helps the organization clarify what development may be required, training recommended for a job role and competency development.

> Also career pathing for those who are long-term employees, they don't intend to get their degree, or what have you, but they have been in the role for a very long time. Where else can they go? What else can they do? So we're presenting them that kind of information. (Ann, L40-43-PA)

This also helps address the issue of limited promotional opportunities in Ann's organization. As mentioned previously, the organization has a lot of long-term employees. Therefore opportunities for advancement to management positions are not often available for employees. Identifying comparable job lines to broaden the employee's job scope, however, is viewed as an alternative.

> Higher education more than other organizations tend to have longer termed employees. And one of the things that will continue happening, and not just in higher education but across the board, is people are going to retire later. So it's not going to give as many vertical opportunities. So we need to open up more horizontal opportunities. That's what the [career pathing system] was meant to do. It's a three part program that starts with a career assessment of what it is you are really looking for, what it is you want to be doing? What are your strengths and competencies? Then exploring what kind of positions apply to that and setting a plan to get there. Then exploring what kind of positions apply to that, and then setting some planning to get there. So [...] it has a lot of

resources for the assessment. Different programs and things like that. (Ann, L9-17-PB)

Ann shared that the organization was in the process beginning to collect information regarding why their employees are choosing to stay at the organization. Instead of focusing on conducting exit interviews, the organization is focused on "stay" interviews. While this process is newly implemented, the goal is to gather and assess information regarding what the organization is doing successful for its employees. This would include in the area of development. Ann's organization seemed to provide the most exhaustive variety of developmental opportunities of all the five cases-this coincides with her statement that the organization's responsibility is to provide the tools and resources for development.

> Another thing we are implementing is what is called "stay interviews". So you run a lot of organizations run out and say ok give us an exit survey on why are you leaving. Well, I'd rather know why you're staying. If you're telling me why you're leaving, then yes that information is important but it's too late to keep you here. So if we go out and we find out why people are staying, we see where our pockets of success are. And what is working for employees. (Ann, L51-56-PA)

Benefits. Ann shared that the provisions made by the organization was a way to attract and retain great employees. According to Ann, some of the benefits her organization receives from offering such developmental opportunities include a better educated workforce and a reduction in turnover because the employee is able to grow and develop and manage their career. For the employee, because of the large size of the organization, the benefit includes financial support for development opportunities, ownership of the learning that occurs, and the opportunity to direct their career path.

Challenges. As with many other organizations, cost was a major factor for Ann's organization. When budget challenges arise, learning and development efforts can be affected in many ways. For Ann's organization this was manifested in a reduction in the breadth of courses that could be offered to employees. For instance, some offerings were limited to the expertise the HR staff possessed. While the organization could manage courses related to management and leadership programs, their expertise in some areas such as technology did not always exist. For the employee, the biggest challenge mentioned was related to time, fitting the developmental opportunities into their work schedule. Ann stated this is especially problematic in terms of pursing a degreed program. Additionally, there are limited promotional opportunities. The organization has many long termed employees who are choosing to retire later. Consequently, there are fewer vertical or promotional opportunities available. In order to keep employees engaged, the organization focuses on creating horizontal or lateral opportunities with expanded job scope instead. The organization provides online career assessment tools to assist employees with identifying and developing necessary competencies to pursue this opportunities.

Ann suggested the organization needs to modify the method used for delivery of training, to provide more online rather than face-to-face opportunities. She acknowledged, however, if the organization decides to increase use of online learning as a method of delivery, new challenges may arise. Some employees may need to modify their way of learning to accommodate this format for delivery.

> As the budgets continue to shrink, […] we have to become more efficient
> and more effective in what we're doing. We have to change the learning
> to be more online and more to the needs of the changing environment.
> So individuals need to be willing to adapt and change. (Ann, L96-99-PA)

Ann's expressed interest in online learning is based on changes she is anticipating for higher education.

> So much more is done in distance learning. That's an entirely different skill set than standing in front of a classroom. So I think it's making sure that you continue to not just offer the programs you need now but look at what you're going to need 5 years from now or 10 years from now. (Ann, L204-207-PA)

Summary. Overall, Ann communicated that in her organization there are contributing roles for developing the employability of existing employees. Her perspective is that the employer provides opportunities based on development needs associated with the employee's position as well as offers resources to assist employees with attaining future positions within the organization. Ultimately, however, the responsibility for employability rests on the employee's shoulders. Development towards that end must be driven by the employee. Employees must demonstrate a willingness to learn and be flexible in that learning to keep up with job requirements. Additionally, employees are expected to pursue opportunities provided by the organization as well as those that may not to increase their employability.

Ann explained while the organization may strive to have a better educated workforce and retain the employees in which it has invested, it can only be expected to support development efforts which it has the resources to sustain (financial, HR expertise) and that will ultimately benefit the organization.

Employee 's Role/Responsibility

- Take advantage of opportunities, use tools and resources provided by organization
- Communicate development goals
- Extend effort to grow/develop
- Development for future career
- Fund own development for career outside organization

HRD 's Role/Responsibility

- Manage/coordinate, develop, facilate programs
- Provide performance evaluation system
- Provide careerpathing system
- Encourage feedback, coaching meetings
- Assess future development programs needed

Employer 's Role/Responsibility

- Provide tools and resources
  - financial support for internal learning and external learning
- Provide job specific development
- Broaden job scope
- Job specific development

Skills

- Desire to do best job
- Interpersonal
- Technical

Challenges

- Cost
- Breadth of courses can be offered
- Workplace balance (workload)
- Promotional opportunities in limited job market

Ann Administrator

Attitude

- Want to learn, develop
- Be engaged in development process
- Willing to keep up with knowledge requirements of position
- Willing to adapt to change

Benefits

- Retention
- Engaged employees

Opportunities

- Management development
- Leadership/supervisory
- Soft-skilled
- Tuition assistance
- Professional association dues

Activities

- Leadership, management courses
- Management courses
- Soft skilled courses

Figure 3. Ann Administrator - A Visual Display of Perspectives

Case Two: Andrea Advisor

Meet Andrea Advisor. Andrea is an HR executive who works in a department that was recently downsized. Following the restructuring, one of her primary roles has been to provide advice or counsel to leaders concerning learning and development related issues.

I contacted Andrea through email to ask if she would be interested and willing to participate in my study and she quickly agreed to do so. After scheduling a date and time I emailed her the interview questions and requested that she complete the online background questionnaire prior to our meeting. I arrived for our meeting approximately fifteen minutes early. The first thing I noticed was how the work environment was a complete contrast to the work environment of my interview with Ann.

I was surprised by the workplace environment. There was a guard gate at entrance. I had to give my name, identification, and reason for visiting the site to a booth attendant. I was given visitor's tag and directed where to park. I went into the office building and was greeted by the receptionist. After giving her my name, and indicating who I had an appointment with, she asked me to have a seat and informed me that Andrea would be right with me. Five minutes later Andrea came out of a side door to greet me and asked me to follow her to the back.

Behind glass double doors were a couple of twist and turns that opened up into a large room with many cubicles arranged to section off work spaces. We entered one of the few enclosed workspaces, also the size of a cubicle but with a glass door, allowing only a minor bit of privacy. The office had a sterile feel to it except for a personal family portrait displayed. The office was neat and spaced for efficiency, not for

aesthetic appearance. The furniture and equipment was compact and ergonomically placed for conserving space. Each office space was most likely identical (Researcher's Journal, 7/12/12).

Andrea had been a guest speaker for one of my graduate courses so we immediately were able to develop a comfortable rapport with one another. Andrea was very engaging and seemed genuinely pleased to help me with the study. After exchanging pleasantries she asked me about my background and what I wanted to do after completing my study. She even offered to contact a few colleagues who might be potential candidates for participation.

The interview lasted approximately fifty minutes. Throughout the entire interview Andrea was very talkative and seemed to have really thought about the comments and responses she wanted to make. Her comments were candid and informative and she seemed open to providing her personal as well as professional thoughts and experience on the subject. Given her enthusiasm and thoroughness the interview proceeded with ease. (Researcher Journal, 7/12/12).

Andrea's educational background is based in the field of psychology. She has a bachelor's degree in general psychology and a master's and PhD in industrial psychology. Andrea has a professional background encompassing over twenty-five years of consulting, corporate and academic experience. She has been an adjunct professor in industrial psychology and strategic human resource management at a major university in Florida, a vice president of human resources department for a large financial services firm, and has also spent twelve years as an executive talent consultant. Andrea is another example of a professional who stumbled into the field of human resources.

Initially, I didn't think of myself as a human resources person. I thought of

myself as an industrial psychologist who is in an organization [and] this is

where I tended to be housed. And, even now, I still think of my identity

that way. But over the years, I have been as knee deep into the minutia

of human resources as anybody else. And what I have had to do is learn

to make sure that I understand HR, the purpose of HR, and the functions

within HR, as well as any other HR professionals. (Andrea, L30-35-PA)

She currently works in the retail industry for an organization which employs

approximately five thousand employees. Her current job duties include responsibility for

developing and implementing strategies to grow the capabilities of employees

(especially leaders) so they can do the work needed to grow the business.

According to Andrea, there are two ideals related to the concept of employability,

one from a business context in which the employer is focused on capability or

competency, an employee's ability to accomplish a specific job or task to meet business

goals. The other is from a broader context of trainability, the employer is focused on the

potential of an employee to learn what's required to accomplish new jobs or tasks to

meet business goals. Andrea surmised that in today's workplace employers are more

focused on the former rather than latter, what an employee can do for the organization

rather than whether or not an employee is trainable.

In the business context [employability] tends to be more focused on a

specific job or a specific thing that needs to get accomplished.

[However], employability has a much broader connotation on the positive

side that sounds like this is a person who is sort of trainable, can do more

and all of that. But I think [organizations] just want to know can you do

this for me, and can you do this for me. And so talking about individuals,

and talking about the workforce now in this kind of an economic environment, [employers] are more focused on what can you do for me and can you do this as opposed to anything broader than that. (Andrea, L154-160-PB)

When reflecting on her views regarding the employment relationship, Andrea shared that there was a time when it was believed that the organization was responsible for ensuring an employee was employable.

There was a point where I would have told you that if an organization expects to get this output, and if they want this performance, and if they want to grow in all these other things, I would say the organization should just logically know that they need to ensure that each of the individuals in that organization is employable and with a future oriented perspective.

She expanded on this idea saying that at one point the organization was willing to take more ownership for an employee's growth and development because of how well the company was doing. This assumed responsibility was evidenced by volume of resources it was willing to provide to develop its employees. However, as economic changes occurred and financial challenges arose, that stance changed for her organization. The organization was no longer able to commit the same financial resources it once had to develop employee skills.

Before, when you used to have a lot more resources and all the companies were creating all these corporate universities and so on, I don't know if it was just to justify the expense, but […] they would say, well, if you want to do this then you have to do this, this, and this. And you have to do it by this time, and you have to do it in this way. And that's not sustainable. In fact, I don't know if you've noticed that there is

less emphasis on corporate universities for […] practical reasons like less money to do it, or realization that the thing you are teaching for is very dynamic, so you can't say just because they gave it to you now […] you've got it. (Andrea, L93-100-PA)

Roles and Responsibilities. Andrea shared how her organization's stance regarding its responsibility shifted from one of primary ownership for an employee's development towards a shared responsibility, and eventually to one with more of the onus gravitating toward the employee.

What I have evolved to today, is to say that […] it's sort of a shared responsibility. I think the organization clearly has a role because the organization defines what the future looks like. The organization [...] provides, [...] narrows, those paths because it's not a universe of all possibilities. It's a universe of these particular opportunities in this organization. So the organization does narrow that for the employee and I expect the organization would provide some basic clarity around what those options are. But what has changed, in my thinking, is that the employee has [a] responsibility because of the way that the world has changed, because of the way that the world is changing, and the speed of it. I don't think organizations can be expected to carry that burden 100 percent. I think that employees have, and I don't know what the magical percentage is, but let's even call it a 50/50 responsibility. (Andrea, L65-79-PA)

Due to the economic challenges the organization endured, Andrea recognized that the organization cannot be all for all. She maintained, however, the employer is responsible for assessing the current and future needs of the organization and its

employees, and providing development opportunities in response to those needs based on what is fiscally possible.

> The employer has a role in really trying to help the [employee], and help itself, figure out what it needs for the future, what it needs now for the future and providing some clarity about that. And perhaps providing the basic resources that it can afford to help an individual be prepared for that. (Andrea, L101-106-PA)

Leaders are encouraged to guide employees to those development resources, especially if a particular skill set is needed within the organization.

Employees, on the other hand, have the responsibility for recognizing changes in the workplace and being proactive in responding to those changes accordingly. This includes seeking as well as utilizing the resources provided by the organization. Andrea suggested that in today's job market the employee must be proactive in maintaining their employability or risk consideration for future job opportunities within the organization.

> But the other thing, I think, that's happening more and more is that companies, in the fast paced environment, are more likely to go outside the organization to find the talent they are looking for rather than to train for that. And that's because right now, talent is cheaper out there than to train it. So that's another reason why I think that the employee's responsibility for maintaining […] employability in the year 2012 […], I think it has shifted to, I was saying 50/50 but it's moving even beyond. It may be 60/40. It may be 70/30. I don't know when that will go back in the other direction. (Andrea, L104-109-PA)

Andrea shared that her company's philosophy statement even states the employee has to take the lead in their personal growth and development. Thus, the onus for employability primarily rests on the employee.

Andrea communicated it was difficult to differentiate HR's role for employability from that of the employer's. This may in large part be due to the extreme downsizing of their organizational development department from a staff of approximately twelve to a team of three. Andrea articulated that the best she could do as a human resources professional, given the reality of the organization's financial constraints, was to influence leaders. Her role is to help them see the cost and benefits associated with their philosophies and decisions regarding organizational development.

> When you think of it in the context of, ok here is the reality from a financial
>
> point of view for the company. And here's what the company has told us
>
> their stance is. The best that you can hope to do [...] is try to influence so
>
> that they can see the cost that they're paying with a particular philosophy
>
> that they have and influence that bit by bit. (Andrea, L36-41-PA)

Ideally, Andrea stated her area would be involved in assessing what the developmental needs are for the organization and providing training initiatives to meet that need.

Skills. Andrea described skills deemed necessary to be highly employable in her organization, the first being flexibility, being able to work in a fast paced changing environment. Additionally, strong communication skills such as the ability to articulate ideas and express opinions regarding decisions that should be made and why was proposed as key. Andrea described this skill in the context of influence. Influence is considered an essential skill for employees to possess, especially individuals who have responsibilities for making decisions for the organization and need to secure buy-in and support from others to successfully implement those decisions.

It is the kind of company where a lot of decisions are made, or people are

influenced, by who else likes something. Not just by the data, but who

else likes it, who else thinks this is great. If you can get the right person

to be the advocate you're going to be successful at whatever you do.

(Andrea, L128-131-PB)

Her organization has even built a leadership program around promoting the idea that an

individual cannot be successful without the ability to influence others. This includes

influencing colleagues and leaders within the organization to accept ideas, "So one of

the things we build in from an accountability perspective is learning how to do, influence

people across when you don't have direct control over them." (Andrea, L14-25-PB).

Additionally, understanding business context was viewed to be important as well.

Andrea stated whenever an individual joins an organization, one of the primary steps

that should be taken is to secure an understanding of what's going on in the company,

such as what are the business goals as well as challenges the organization is facing

now and in the future. She even related this to her own profession indicating that any

human resource professional [who] does not have this skill or knowledge is operating in

a silo and are out of touch with the changing realities facing the organization. Thus, they

won't be as effective in their role.

I think that when you go into any of these companies, what is really the

question you need to ask first [is] what is going on in the business? What

are […] the challenges that the business is facing, and that it sees around

the corner? Because that drives the whole conversation. And […] if you

talk to somebody in an HR role that doesn't drive the conversation to […]

learning and development […], it is a clue to you that this is a person who

is operating in a profession [where] they are sort of in […] a cocoon.

They are not really talking about the business issues. Andrea, L318-324-

PAC)

Andrea also shared that when the organization is hiring new employees,

individuals are hired based on possessing a particular skill set to do a particular job.

She also added, however, with all things being equal in terms of necessary skills, the

person who will get the job is the person who brings something extra to the table.

If we are hiring you for the sales and service center, once you get past

the point that […] you can speak the language, and you can […] do your

basic math, and [...]sort of the fundamentals, the person who will get the

job is also the one that brings […] additional stuff. That person will

always get the job over this other individual. (Andrea, L121-125-PA)

Learning Attitude. In line with this reasoning, Andrea maintained that

employees need to have a future-oriented outlook or focus when it comes to their

employability. Not only must the employee have an understanding of current conditions

for employment, but they need to recognize that change is inevitable within their job, the

organization, and the industry they specialize in and be willing to prepare for that change

through planned development.

I think for the individual, it has got to be [that] they have to be looking

forward. They have got to be recognizing that there is just more change

inevitable. So they have got to be thinking about what is down the road.

And then they have to have a plan for their growth and evolution, so that

they can still [be] employable. (Andrea, L132-135-PA)

This philosophy is reflected in Andrea's own history of development. When

asked about activities she had engaged in to increase her employability she mentioned

completing a Ph.D., teaching at a university, obtaining certification in her field, reading

academic journals, participating in professional associations, networking and marketing herself during professional meetings, all of which were for continued growth and to stay current in her field. She also shared that she made a point of staying aware of changes that may be occurring.

> I was keenly aware of the importance of sort of looking around the corner constantly. What's coming, what's coming? So […] that really is the thing because next year I don't know what I will be doing. But I suspect I will be doing something a little different. Learning something new. (Andrea, L311-314-PA)

> Flexibility, the willingness to adapt or change, also surfaced as a desired learning attitude. Andrea described two opposing types of employees in regards to flexibility or response to change. The first type of employee clings on to the past, to what the job or organization used to be, and she or he is resistant to change. The other employee adjusts to the change and takes action to respond and prepare for it. Given the changes experienced by the organization, the employee who is more receptive or flexible to change is more desirable, thus, employable in her organization.

> What we see is the reactions of two types of, you see two types of reactions. Clinging or holding on or resisting to change. You have the people who go, wait a minute this thing is coming. I have the option to adjust, adapt, learn as much as I can and, therefore, maybe have a chance to survive in this new environment [...]. It's the same answer. You have got to be thinking ahead and willing to learn new things, being flexible and showing others around you that you are willing to do that. (Andrea, L142-150-PA)

Flexibility is also expected and desired in relationship to learning beyond current job scope.

> If you wanted to figure out how to learn how to do this particular thing, even though it's not your job today, you probably can do it with our e-learning portal. But right now there is no spoken rule or spoken communication that says you should do that. But there are people doing it and those are the ones who are just thinking ahead and anticipating change and so on (Andrea, L168-171-PA).

Andrea surmised that there is a correlation within her organization between employees learning beyond their job scope and increased selection for employment opportunities.

> I have no data to support this statement, but there probably is a correlation between the ones who are doing that [learning beyond job scope] and the ones who are also being a bit more assertive in their job growth and job search efforts. […] We have a process where you can apply for a job. And you can tell there's certain people who tend to be in that pool. They are looking for the next opportunity. And in […] preparing to look for that opportunity they know there are some new things they have to learn. They want to be able to be in that interview and say to the hiring manager: I know that I may not have done this, but here is what I know, and here is what I have done to prepare myself. So some people do that and some people don't do that. And I think the ones who [do] are being noticed, or probably being noticed, in the sense that they're being selected for the next opportunities at a faster rate and maybe sooner too than others. (Andrea, L174-183-PA).

Thus, the underlying message being sent to employees is if you want to progress within the organization, you must prepare yourself for opportunities even before an opening exists.

Development Activities. Some of the ways Andrea recommended that employees prepare themselves for future job opportunities was to learn as much as possible about the industry. This could be through simple efforts such as reading materials related to the job, the organization, and the industry. The ultimate goal, however, is to learn to a level of proficiency in your field. According to Andrea, employees must be able to do the job. Additionally, she added employees need to be future focused regarding their development and expand in areas beyond their current job scope. She proposed e-learning resources provided by the organization may assist them in doing so. While such activities may help to increase an employee's employability, Andrea was careful to note there is no spoken communication or directive from the organization of this expectation.

> Well, I mean we can take it down to a literal level of […], I personally, as an employee, I am constantly reading to learn a little bit more about this [business]. And at my level, that's what I can do. […] I should be able to anticipate this change and […] I can do those kinds of things. But people at different levels obviously […] will have a different focus. But what they ought to be doing is learning as much about that industry. […] We offer classes where you could. And most of that is e-learning […]. But there is the opportunity to go out there and learn down to the level of […] becoming proficient in doing some kind of [skill…]. Let's even call it programming. But […] if you wanted to figure out how to learn how to do this particular thing, even though it is not your job today, you probably can

do it with our e-learning portal. But right now there […] is no spoken rule or spoken communication that says you should do that. But there are people doing it, and those are the ones who are just thinking ahead and anticipating change and so on. (Andrea, L161-171-PA).

Development Opportunities. When asked about the developmental opportunities that the organization provides Andrea did not provide a list of activities. Instead she focused on highlighting the massive number of online learning courses accessible to employees. This focus may have been related to the massive downsizing of the organization development department and the corresponding reduction of live face-to-face offerings provided. Andrea discussed how her organization transitioned from primarily offering live training workshops to mostly offering e-learning. Employees currently have access to over six thousand online business courses as well as twelve thousand on-demand videos, books (over two thousand), and simulation in comparison to only fifty instructor led development courses (all leadership related in nature) (Organizational Document). This shift in method of delivery was attributed to the financial challenges the organization experienced and the subsequent downsizing of the organizational development department. Representative of the shift in method of delivery, the learning environment (as well as the work environment) also significantly changed.

In our evolution, […] most of our training was focused on live classroom instruction. We were definitely there at one point. And interestingly, we even have a facility, a building. We have space in one of our buildings with fairly extensive classroom space. And […] the whole thing gives you the idea that it was set-up with the whole conference concept in mind. You know, people coming in and learning, and moving around and, […]

getting access to what they need to get access to. Well, our whole department, everybody was in that space. But it is also true that that space was created, or […] envisioned, right at the time that the company was having financial difficulties and making changes. So they got the space done and then the staff was significantly reduced. [….] Then I came onboard and […] I was in that space. From the very beginning, it was evident, it was obvious that they didn't want us to be in that space because that was communicating something that we were no longer. So we [were] moved into this space with more of an abstract space. We could be doing any kind of work. The space before was clearly talent and development oriented space. This is a space that is sort of more generic, and from our point of view, meaning the people in talent and development, the message was very clear. That's no longer your space. We don't need it. We'll use it for something else. So the evolution is from a lot of focus on live learning for our workshops on all kinds of in depth kinds of things to the point where we are today where I would say [...]the live learning is probably twenty-five percent. (Andrea, L187-205-PA).

Benefits. Andrea stated one of the benefits the organization receives from providing developmental opportunities is a workforce that is better skilled at performing their job roles and functions. She specifically mentioned this in reference to development courses for leaders designed to help them think more broadly and become more effective at leading across the organization. She also suggested having resources accessible to all employees provides them the opportunity to learn things that will make them more well-rounded employees. Andrea mentioned another benefit for the

employee is access to a large volume of online resources on a variety of subjects at anytime. They have learning on demand.

> They get that personal benefit, the learning and so on, and the excitement which then tends to translate into them doing sort of more learning. [...]They get more excited with the idea of learning. And then they start to explore all the various options. I think the benefit is simply the idea because ours is a 24-7 business it doesn't work well for us to offer formal in small chunks of time and say you must come to us. So I think one of the real benefits that our employees get is that there's opportunity for learning on demand when they want it, how they want it, within our learning options. You know, some people like videos and some people like audio and some people like visual. […] To explore in whatever modality that they prefer, I think people really get a kick out of that. And then of course […] everything is downloadable to a mobile device so they can have it both the learning and reference. (Andrea, L102-111-PB)

Employees have 24/7 access to all of the online training resources provided by the organization. Hence, employees have more control over the development process. They determine what they learn and when they learn it. This benefit further supports the idea that while the employer provides opportunities to develop, the employee is ultimately responsibility for their employability.

Challenges. From an organizational standpoint, some of the challenges Andrea identified included financial constraints, limited staff, ability to link training to business value, getting employees to use online resources, and allowing time for development. One of the most apparent challenges for Andrea's organization to provide developmental opportunities was financial in nature. Given the economic challenges the organization

endured, the range of methods in which development opportunities could be offered was significantly reduced. Most live face-to-face learning could no longer be supported due to cost factors.

> The first challenge, of course, is the financial challenge. So in a small department like this, you're talking about the classic live learning model, […] we have to offer some live learning but […] it will never be as it used to be in the old days when you used universities, corporate universities where a majority of this stuff was live learning. And that's because of the cost associated with the learning and development and then implementation at some point. So […] the cost is a big challenge. (Andrea, L114-119-PB)

These same economic challenges also resulted in the organizational development department being drastically reduced to the size of three individuals. Such extreme downsizing limited the HR staff's time and expertise available that could be allocated toward issues related to organizational development.

> And then […] 2008 came and the department was reduced down to approximately three people. So then […] the company said given our priorities and our realities today this is what we feel is the best that we can do. […] By the way, the person who was heading up that three person group after 2008 was let go at some point and that job stayed vacant for over a year. So then, when I came on board, not only did you have the initial reduction, you had a period of non-focus because there was nobody in the leadership role. So I guess the simple answer to that is that the dollars […] determine what can be done, and having a smaller number of people has meant that you can only do less than you could do

before. So it definitely has an impact. […] I spent a lot of time thinking

about should we do this or should we do that. You have to be much more

clear in making, defining, your priorities. (Andrea, L59-68-PA)

As the organization focused heavily on using online learning as the primary

delivery method for training, getting employees to use this format for learning had its

challenges. Andrea clarified while the organization could make online resources

available to employees, it could not make employees use them. Additionally, it is difficult

to determine whether or not what's learned is being transferred into the workplace.

You can provide all the e-learning in the world. You can't make people

utilize it. That's the first thing. And you can never be, it's very difficult to

be sure that the thing that they have learned is something that […] is

being utilized now and having an impact on the work and all that stuff. It's

even harder with e-learning. (Andrea, L119-123-PA)

Even if employees were inclined toward an online rather than face-to-face format,

allowing employees the time to invest in training given their workloads and competing

priorities was also an issue.

A big challenge in our organization is just allocating the time. In fact the

biggest challenge 24-7 business 364 days a year most people who are

here working in the operations part of our businesses, the people who

make things that you see they are in the kind of jobs where they're

constantly on the go. Allocating time for them to take out for training is a

challenge. (Andrea, L119-122-PB)

This challenge was further illuminated when Andrea discussed issues related to

employee job level, exempt versus non-exempt. Non-exempt employees have less

autonomy over their schedules. While they may choose to participate in developmental

activities after work hours, they must seek permission to engage in developmental activities during work hours.

> We have clear policy practice about that that relates primarily to your status. Because if you're nonexempt […] by law you must be paid overtime for hours worked in excess of 40 in a week. Those jobs are much more controlled. So there's a rule that says that if you want to do learning during those work hours, and you are in a nonexempt job, your boss has to approve it, and approve the way you spend your time, because it's still part of your work day. Now you can do stuff after hours and that's entirely up to you. And we always make it clear to nonexempt employees in particular that if they do something after hours in learning that it isn't paid time. […] We are very clear about those kinds of things. So we make the distinction. For exempt employees it's less of an issue because they are not paid overtime and if they wanted to spend […] all their afterhours work time doing it, […] that's entirely up to them. (Andrea, L235-244-PA)

Andrea stated, however, that this is the group that needs development the most.

> For employees who are in a non-exempt role who might be the ones who need this the most, we make the tool available but they would have to choose to use that. […] Exempt people have to choose to use it too but, because they are exempt, we don't have to concern [ourselves] on the compensation side. [On] the exempt side, what we say to employees is that the tool is available but you need to understand this is at your discretion.

Exempt employees who are in leadership roles, on the other hand, have more autonomy and control of their schedules. They can choose to schedule time for training during or after working hours, however, workloads may deter them from doing so.

Another challenge for the organization was demonstrating the business value for training and development. According to Andrea, more success stories are needed for continued support of development initiatives.

Another challenge is just from a cultural perspective making sure we make the link between training and development and sort of [...]the clarifying what is the business value because it's a lot easier to say oh don't bother than it is to show that value. But that's the important thing that will influence the way that people behave about training and learning. And for us that's a bit of a process because here it doesn't just mean show the value the return on investment or something like that. I think culturally speaking we have to have many more success stories so that because it's the kind of company where decisions a lot of decisions are made or people are influenced by a sort of who else likes something. Not just by the data but who else likes it who else thinks this great. If you can get the right person to be the advocate you're going to be successful at whatever you do. So one of the challenges is sort of influencing the culture [...]really utilize it what's available. (Andrea, L122-132-PB).

From an employee perspective, Andrea admitted a challenge may exist for some employees related to employee awareness of opportunities, time to engage in development, application of learning, and learning orientation. Andrea suggested there is the possibility that employees simply didn't realize development opportunities were available and therefore did not seek them until they needed them. She went further to

share that in the past her organization did not communicate development opportunities available during new hire orientations. She posited this oversight may be a contributor to an employee's lack of awareness of development opportunities offered by the organization.

> So one of the things that we did this year since I came here was we started marketing, and I didn't mention this but, marketing directly at our new employee [orientation]. And that hadn't been we hadn't been doing that. One of the reason that people don't always know is maybe they were never introduced to these things at all when they joined the company. They enter their jobs and they get busy and then all of a sudden they start thinking about training. Now they have to navigate the intranet to figure out where [...] the tool is. (Andrea, L182-187-PB)

As mentioned previously, employees may not feel they have the time to invest in their development do to their workloads and competing priorities. With fewer employees due to downsizing, workloads are increased for those that remain. Thus, it is probable that in order to manage increased workloads employees may be deferring engagement in developmental activities.

Correspondingly, Andrea speculated that in a busy environment with competing priorities and time constraints employees tend to look for learning when they need it not simply because they are interested in learning for the sake of learning.

> In a busy environment people tend to look for learning when they need it. If it's that, an environment situation where I need this to do that, is when people look for learning. They don't look for, again this is talking in general. It's only the people who we already would put in a category of learning for the sake of learning, which is not everybody, that will go

exploring [--] and all of a sudden they check out everything. That's a

certain kind of person. But if you're talking about the general population

it's give me the learning I want when I need it. And so before then I'm not

even thinking about it. (Andrea, L188-194-PB)

This observation relates to the learning orientation of the employee, and may indirectly

affect an employee's perceived employability. As suggested by Andrea previously,

employees who are willing to learn for learning sake (for growth) rather than only

because development is needed, are the ones who will be noticed by the employer and

considered more often for job opportunities within the organization. The impact of this

reality is magnified given that employees in the organization have had to remain in the

same position for long periods of time due to limited job openings with the organization.

For those employees that do choose to invest in their development, another

challenge that manifested in Andrea's organization was how to transfer or apply the

skills and expertise developed. According to Andrea employees have a difficulty with

strategically linking what they have learned from developmental activities to the job

opportunity they are striving for to attain. Additionally, the organization does not provide

supports in this area, therefore, the employee must wrestle with assessing the relevance

of acquired knowledge, skills, and competencies and determining how to transfer them

to new opportunities.

They have a challenge with that taking the thing that they're exposed to in

the learning environment and sort of understanding sort of figuring out

how to best use this [...]for what they're hoping is the next opportunity. I

think a lot of the employees approach learning from the view of this is

preparing me for something else for the next thing. So one of the things

that challenges them is okay what am I going to do with this and how is it

really going to be a springboard for something else. And maybe that's a challenge to the organization too is making that clear. And in fact we don't really think we have to make that very clear because sometimes it is learning for learning sake and there's no promise of anything on the other side. (Andrea, L141-148-PB).

Summary. Overall, Andrea communicated that in her organization the employee is primarily responsible for his or her employability. The organization offers a vast array of online resources of which employees have constant access, however, utilization of these resources rests on the employee's shoulders. Employees must deduce what their learning needs are, what resources would address those needs, and manage their workload to accommodate engagement in learning activities. Employees must demonstrate a willingness to respond to changes in their job, the organization, and the industry through development activities, and to learn beyond current job scope to increase their employability within the organization. Additionally, employees need to take steps towards developing an understanding of the business context (what's going on in the company, what are the business goals and challenges the organization is facing now and in the future) and how their job role contributes to the company's business to be an asset to the organization.

Andrea explained while the organization may desire to have a workforce that is better skilled at performing their job roles and functions, it can only be expected to support development efforts towards that end given what's fiscally possible.

Employer 's Role/Responsibility

- Identify organizational development needs
- Assist employee with identifying development needs
- Provide learning, development resources and opportunities to address organizational, employee needs
- Communicate development opportunities
- Clarify job opportunities in organization

Employee 's Role/Responsibility

- Recognize, identify how job [organization, industry] is changing, evolving
- Take lead on growth/development
- Seek, engage in development opportunities provided
- Plan for growth/ development (future focused)

HRD 's Role/Responsibility

- Manage, coordinate, develop, faciliate programs
- Assess current, future organizational and employee development needs
- Influence leaders, help see cost associated with decisions related to organizational development
- Provide careerpathing system (where else can go, do)
- Provide performance evaluation system (assess, reflect, strengths, how should grow)
- Encourage feedback, coaching meetings

Challenges

- Cost
- Limited HR staff
- Time, workload
- Employees use of online resources
- Linking development to business value , learning is used, has impact on work
- Employee goal orientation
- Awareness of opportunites

Skills

- Work in fast paced environment
- Flexible, comfortable with change
- Understand business context
- Communication, articulation of idea
- Recognize, anticipate change

Andrea Advisor

Benefits

- Workforce better skilled at performing jobs
- More well-rounded employees
- Learning on demand, access to a large volume of online resources
- Employee control over their development

Attitude

- Willing, want to learn
- Flexibility in learning, adaptable, can adjust
- Readiness to learn beyond job scope
- Willing to respond to changes in job, organization through development activities

Opportunities

- Access to over 6,000 online courses, 12,000 online tools on variety of general topics
- 50 instructor led leadership development courses

Activities

- Learn about industry
- Use (e-learning) tools to learn to proficiency level in a particular area
- Use (e-learning) tools to learn beyond current job scope, prepare for next opportunity
- Read materials related to field, indstry

Figure 4. Andrea Advisor - Visual Display of Perspectives

Case Three: Connie Champion

Meet Connie Champion. Connie is an HR executive who can be considered a champion for promoting organizational learning and development. She believes the organization should play a leading role in its employees' development and models this belief with the employees she manages.

Connie was referred to me by an associate. I reached out to Connie through email asking if she would be interested and willing to participate in my study. She happily agreed to do so. We scheduled a date and time to meet at a Starbucks location not far from where she worked. I emailed Connie a few days before our scheduled meeting to confirm our appointment and to remind her to complete the background questionnaire prior to our meeting. I also included a list of the interview questions that would be asked during the interview.

> The participant suggested we meet at Panera. We discussed day, time, and location but interestingly enough we did not discuss how to find one another. This would have been useful given we had never met each other before. Within a few minutes however, we were able to find one another. We purchased beverages, sat in a booth. Connie seemed very laid back and knowledgeable about her area of expertise. We chatted about faculty at the university, the upcoming HR conference to be held at the end of the month for a few minutes and then began the interview (Researcher Journal, 8/3/12).

Connie's educational background is based in the field of education. She received her bachelor's in education and master's in adult education. She has over twenty years experience related to learning and development in the banking and

financial services industry. Connie began her career in retail banking as a manager but soon found she had a passion for training and developing others.

> So I started out in retail banking as an operations manager. But I still wanted that training. So [...]I took on training new hires as they came in [to the organization] and after awhile somebody recommended [a banking school]. I taught for them for awhile. I taught junior college courses and all of that [....]. Then I had an opportunity at a nonprofit company that services only credit unions. [I] just started training for them on my own. [They] had no training department. No internal training whatsoever [...]. [I quickly] grabbed that [job] and I was there for eighteen years. (Connie, L7-20-PA)

She is currently responsible for directing training design and development, strategic planning, succession planning, organizational development within her organization.

Connie classified herself as being from the baby boomer generation. She recounts how when she started working "you did everything your boss said, you went home and you hoped you could work there for the rest of your life". Connie's perspective concerning the employment relationship is reflected in her personal experiences as an employee. During her professional career she worked for an organization for approximately eighteen years. She thought she would have the opportunity to work for that organization until retirement but was terminated during a period of organizational restructuring, "I got laid off after 18 years. That's a crutch. I thought I was going to work twenty-three years in an organization and then retire" (Connie, L308-309-PA).

Connie found other opportunities for employment, however, the experience opened her eyes to the reality of the changing employment relationship. One of the changes to she observed in her current place was the focus of employee expectations. According to Connie she has noticed a generational split in which older employees hope they can work for the organization forever, whereas, in contrast, younger employees expect to receive unlimited opportunities to learn and develop.

> I'm one of the older baby boomers. When we started working, when my parents started working you got in you did everything your boss said you went home and you hoped you could work there for the rest of your life. It's not like that anymore. What we get from the younger generations is they want to learn as much as they can and when they can't learn anymore from you they go someplace else to learn more. (Connie, L64-68-PA)

Roles and Responsibilities. When asked about the roles and responsibilities for employee employability, Connie initially expressed the sentiment that responsibility for development should fall solely on the employer. She maintained from the moment the employee joins the organization, and throughout their employment, the organization must make provisions for development if it wants to retain its employees.

> To me the organization is totally responsible for the employee development and employability of someone. So the day they start and they go through the orientation and learn their job and [continuing] throughout their career in an organization, the employer should be assisting them in achieving their career growth. Because if we don't that's when they leave. (Connie, L69-73-PA)

Some of the actions she felt the organization should undertake included assessing the developmental needs and career aspirations of its employees. She elaborated that part of an employer's role is to find out where an employee wants to be in the next few years and help them get there. According to, Connie the employee's supervisor must play an active role in the development process. She also emphasized that managers should take the initiative to meet with the employee, discuss career aspirations, and work with the employee to construct a development plan to achieve that goal.

> So the manager should be sitting with them saying alright where do you want to be in a year or 2 years etcetera. And then they look at our LMS [learning management system] and choose courses that they can take to get them to their goal. (Connie, L13-15-PA)

Additionally, Connie stated the employer should actively provide the support necessary to develop employee competencies related to new job roles after restructuring. She communicated this assertion as an obligation that the organization inherits following job restructuring.

> When you come across somebody, not necessarily my age but let's say they're in their 40's, and they're forced to go to a new challenge. I think the employer's job is to assist them to keep being employable and not wait for the first excuse to get rid of them. (Connie, L302-304-PA)

Interestingly, however, she qualified this claim based on the age of the employee. This may be due to her lived experience as an employee who did not survive the restructuring efforts of an organization.

As Connie continued to share her perspectives concerning responsibility for an employee's employability, she indicated the employee also has a responsibility as well. According to Connie, employees have the task of using the feedback and advice

provided to them by their managers regarding development areas as well as taking the initiative to act on this information. Employees must take advantage of the resources and opportunities provided by the organization to help them achieve their career goals.

> They are responsible for using the advice as best as they can, taking advantage of what's being offered, and they're accountable for progressing in their career plan. They can't sit back and say I'll do it tomorrow or I don't like what they said. They won't get ahead. They have to take accountability for progressing along that path. Now if they change their minds and say [...]what I looked into it I don't want to do this anymore, we change the plan. But they're responsible for acting on the plan. (Connie, L103-107-PA)

Connie stressed the employee is also responsible for progressing in their career plan. Thus, while Connie initially began the interview emphasizing the perspective that the employer was solely responsible for an employee's employability, in actuality her view is one in which there is a shared responsibility between the organization and the employee. This shared responsibility, however, suggests the employee must take ownership of the development plan and its execution. Ultimately, the employee must take ownership for his or her employability.

Connie also shared that HR/D's role in the development of an employee's employability is to provide a process or system for career development. She elaborated that HR/D has the responsibility for guiding managers on how to effectively utilize these systems as well.

> If I am going to make my managers comfortable with that policy I have to give them the structure of it. I have to give them the ideas on how to do it. Now of course the manager goes back and they customize it for their

employee. But I'm providing that foundation. And so I'm trying to make

them very comfortable with it. (Connie, L131-135-PA)

In essence, HR/D's role is to promote and explain development policies and provisions

that are in place so managers are well equipped to share tools, resources, and

opportunities with their employees.

Skills. Connie shares her concept of employability as possession of "the right

skills, at the right place, at the right time" (Background Questionnaire). Further, she

listed a few skills she deemed representative of highly employable employees in her

organization. In her industry, the skills most desired include being detail-oriented,

analytical, self-starting, and possessing the ability to work individually and learn quickly.

They have to be very detail oriented and that' the analytical side. They

also have to be able to take all of this information that they've found and

sum it up into a disposition decision [...]. So I mean to me it's the

analytical skill I'm looking for. I'm looking for people who are not only

self-starters but individual workers. [...]We look for people who can learn

quickly. There's a lot to learn, including all the regulations. People who

have old fashioned stick-to-itiveness. (Connie, L149-156-PA)

In addition to these skills, Connie stresses the extreme importance of employees having

an understanding of the business context. This would include being cognizant of the

goals, objectives, strengths, and challenges of the organization, even financially.

If you don't understand the business background, what the business is

going through, the financial, all of that, you lose a piece of it. You lose

credibility. So I've learned that over the years whenever I start a new job,

when I started at Fiduciary, the first thing that I did was meet with

leadership and ask them to tell me about the business. What pains are

you having today? Can I see some of the financials? Those kinds of

things. Because if you don't speak the same language, you're dismissed.

(Connie, L50-55-PA)

Learning Attitude. Learning attitude is also important in Connie's organization

for remaining employable. Connie shared it is almost a requirement that employees

have a propensity for continuous learning. More so, the employee has to be eager to

continuously learn about changes to the business and industry. According to Connie

information changes so rapidly in her industry that employees must have an eagerness

to learn.

I need to have employees anxious to learn more. The regulations change

and the situations change almost daily [...]. I need them to be

continuously learning about that industry. Now as an employer we

provide a website with different courses and we put out articles, websites

that help them, [….] that contains all of the regulations. (Connie, L160-

164-PA)

Interestingly, this expectation for employee learning is not always explicitly

communicated to employees. Connie's company values continuous learning so much

that it tracks employee usage of learning resources. However, the employee is not

always aware of such monitoring.

Now we don't just sit down with them and say did you see that article.

We say there's a new article out there that would interest you. Now it's

their responsibility to continuously learn. And then we, not to be sneaky,

but, we measure the hits. Ok. We want to see if a good percentage of

our employees are taking advantage of that knowledge. So [you] have to

be someone who believes in continuously bettering [yourself] in this

industry. If [you] want to continue [your] career growth, [you] need to

continue learning about it. (Connie, L164-169-PA)

Development Activities. Connie shared that the developmental activities

employees are recommended to engage in include networking, participating in a

professional associations or mentoring program, or even reading articles, books or blogs

related to your field.

Well other things that we recommend is first of all we have a mentoring

program. If they are interested in having a mentor we pair them up with

people who are interested in mentoring. Another activity is to give them a

research project. [...]There's the new regulation coming out shortly I want

you to find everything you can on it. Come back to your team and then

report to your team. You can also put them into special projects. Those

are the kinds of things that enhance your understanding of the business

not just what to look for but the business itself. And so to me that's also a

good learning activity. (Connie, L182-188-PA)

Aside from those things, a major activity Connie emphasized employees engage in was

taking on special projects to gain additional experience. This would include working on

projects beyond their current job scope, or completing a task they have never performed

before. Connie explained such informal on the job learning can often times provide the

best, most beneficial training experiences for employees.

And you might also find as you are sitting there, [you] might want to go

into technology. […] So to me, the two biggest things, outside of the

course and articles and things like that, [is] get them in there and working

on something that they have not done before to help them grow their

experience. (Connie, L187-191-PA)

Interestingly, the majority of the activities Connie chose to share regarding her own history of development as well as future career plans were external to the organization for which she works.

> [I] made a lot of good contacts in the industry. [I] joined ASTD [American Society for Training and Development]. [I] joined a local HR organization on the Pinellas side it's SHRMA [Suncoast Human Resource Management Association]. [I] was on the board of both organizations. I made a lot of good contacts for work. (Connie, L25-27-PA)

> I'm a big one on continuous learning [...]. Along the road I have gotten my HR certification. I'm a senior professional, so SPHR [Senior Professional in Human Resources]. I have gotten my training certification which is CPLP [Certified Professional in Learning and Performance]. And required by my old president my CBCP [Certified Business Continuity Professional] which is business continuity. I'm in the process of applying for ACAMS certification [...] ACAMS it's the American Center for Anti Money Laundering. And it's built like any other certification. You do self study. You take the exam. And if you pass the exam you're certified and you have to recertify every three years by taking continuous education courses. Certification allows you to continue learning. So for instance for SPHR in three years I have to get 60 credits. They can be classroom credits. I can go to a conference and sit in on the different presentations. I can use my career development program that I designed. I can use that for credit. CPLP is the same thing. You have to get continuous education credits. So in other words you're doing things that lend to learning more and doing more, growing your experience. So my next

goal is to get ACAMS certified. My goal is to get every letter of the

alphabet after my name. (Connie, L225-229-PA)

Development Opportunities. Connie's organization offers a variety of

development opportunities and resources for its employees. These include an online

career development tool that provides self-assessment resources to assist employees

with making career decisions, a competency framework that identifies competency

needs and actions to address those needs, a learning management system that allows

employees to view all courses available through the organization and register to attend

them, and a training curriculum comprised of courses such as performance management

(interviewing skills, performance appraisal, coaching), managing people (for new

managers), leadership courses, product knowledge, sales and customer service,

professionalism in the workplace, diversity, time management, computer applications,

project management. The organization also offers a course designed to promote

employee understanding the organization and its business. This course focuses on

providing a big picture of the work environment, company culture, vision, and current

business priorities and is delivered to every employee. Additionally, the organization

offers a mentoring program (Organizational Documents).

When asked about how many of the courses were offered online versus face-to-

face, Connie shared the delivery format for offerings was about equal.

We're about half and half. So […] a lot of the management courses are

instructor led face-to-face and a lot of the technology course are online….

We just did an inventory because we had some courses out there that

were outdated. The information wasn't up to date. And when we were

doing the inventory we were taking an inventory of how many were online

and how many were instructor led and it was like 53 to 47. I mean it was

so close. We were amazed because we really thought it would come up

to about 80 percent online. But it didn't. (Connie, L28-134-PB)

She expressed genuine excitement and amazement concerning the equal distribution

and acknowledged the organization had expected there to be a larger proportion of

online offerings. She speculated that the distribution percentage might be associated

with the difference in generational learning preferences.

People coming into [our organization] are younger folks fresh out of

college. They don't want to do anything with you. They prefer online.

People my age, I'm afraid to say it, and even some of the gen X, would

prefer the face-to-face intervention. (Connie, L42-45-PB)

Benefits. The major benefits experienced by Connie's organization included

retention, quality employees (up to date), and employees better able to perform. The

expectation is that employees will be more inclined to remain in the organization if the

organization provides developmental opportunities. In addition, the employees that

choose to remain will be current in their field, cognizant of changes to the industry and,

subsequently, better performers in the work they do.

On the company side, besides retention, is that they know they have

quality employees that are up to date on all the laws and stipulations etc.

So [for] the company, it's a benefit […] as well because [you've] got this

group of people that [you're] very proud of and […that] can perform so

much better. (Connie, L86-89-PB)

Connie also provided examples of perceived benefits for the employee which

included ownership of the development plan, ownership of learning, and increased

internal or external employability as a result of such ownership. In general, Connie

supposed that most employees want to ensure their job is secure. While few jobs are

guaranteed in today's workplace, Connie proposed that one way to increase the

likelihood of continued employment with an organization is to learn as much as possible

about the work you are expected to do today in your job, and might be expected to do

tomorrow in the same (or different) job.

> The majority of people want to keep learning. They also want to assure
>
> that their job is safe. So the more I learn about this work the better off I'm
>
> going to be. And they want to learn about the next step up. (Connie,
>
> L66-88-PB)

One of the outcomes of such a philosophy for the employee is ownership of the

development plan which could possibly lead to increased internal employability. Connie

illustrates this point by discussing her actions toward constructing her own development

plan.

> For instance, my career development plan, everybody has to do it. My
>
> career development is, I would like to get back into full-time learning and
>
> development.   See I'm an operationalist.   I focus on learning and
>
> development but I actually report to operations. I want to get back to full
>
> time specifically into leadership development and succession planning.
>
> My career development plan, there are some new courses out there I can
>
> take. But I've also found a list of contacts so to speak and I'm doing what
>
> you're doing. I'm setting up meetings, interviewing, finding out a little bit
>
> more about their area and what their competencies are and all of that.
>
> And so at the end of 6 months if a job does become available "A" I am
>
> now known "B" I've taken the course etc appropriate to that. I might stand
>
> a chance if there's an opening of getting the next step up. So that's the

benefit. [It] is in their career and in just in staying with the company. (Connie, L68-78-PA)

By assessing her development needs and taking proactive action to respond to these needs Connie positions herself to be a viable candidate for future job opportunities that may arise in her organization.

Another outcome of such a viewpoint is employee ownership of learning which could lead to increased external employability.

You put a lot of effort into training especially new hires [..]. When they walk out the door they take all that knowledge with them plus any experience they have gotten working in their job. All that, everything just walks out the door. So that to me is the biggest [employee] benefit. (Connie, L78-80-PB)

Connie illustrates this point by describing an ah-ha moment experienced by her employees as they listened to a guest speaker brought in from an outside agency.

I just met a couple of people from this agency. It's called [...]. It is international and they do deep dive investigations. They go undercover when you identify a ring of anti-money laundering. And he came spoke to the group, a guest, very awesome [about] some of the things they do. And our analysts, I was watching the analysts, not something I would want to do ok. But I am watching the analysts, you can see their eyes light up. Well, they probably never thought that there would be an opportunity for something like that. So I would have to say that the biggest benefit is the opportunity that [development] affords them. But, again, the responsibility is theirs to keep learning and move toward their desire. (Connie, L106-113-PA)

Employees realized developing their skill set in the industry had the potential to open

doors to careerpaths outside of their current organization they had never even

considered.

Challenges. One of the challenges in providing development opportunities to

employees was related to the breadth of courses that could be offered. Connie

acknowledged that while the organization attempts to provide a robust variety of training

opportunities, she recognizes there will still be a population of employees these offerings

may not accommodate.

> On the challenge side, if you do it on an individual basis, it's hard to
>
> accommodate everybody's needs and desires. So […] we have close to
>
> 700 courses in that LMS. I would be willing to bet [for] at least 10% of our
>
> population there is nothing out there for them. That is the biggest
>
> challenge, to make sure we are trying to meet everybody's needs. And
>
> everybody's an individual so that's going to be difficult. (Connie, L80-84-
>
> PB)

Additionally, there was the challenge of responding to identified needs in a timely

fashion. Connie shared that the reality of limited resources such as time and HR staff is

the difficulty to provide training as quickly as needed.

> I think another challenge is if we see a need, and it's a need that
>
> accommodates a group of people, to get [the training] out fast enough
>
> because we have a limited number of designers, a limited number of
>
> trainers and it's got to [be] a priority. So […] another challenge is to get
>
> [training] out when [employees] want it. (Connie, L89-92-PB)

In terms of the challenges identified for the employee, workload and time to

participate in development activities was primary. While employees may desire to invest

in their development, adjusting their schedules to accommodate learning activities can be difficult due to workload.

> To get through their workload, and still find the time to improve themselves, is a challenge for a lot of them. […] Some of our departments […] give them one day each month [for] professional development. Whether it's a course they're taking, or an article their looking at, or even if it's a seminar outside the organization, they give them that opportunity. They don't charge vacation time or anything for it. […] Some departments do that. I think that's great. (Connie, L122-126-PB)

Summary. Overall, Connie communicated that in her organization the employer has a large responsibility for an employee's employability. Rather than holding the stance that responsibility for employability solely rests on the employee's shoulder, Connie's comments suggests a partnership in which the employer seems to actively participate in some essential activities. As in the other two cases, her organization provides a variety of development opportunities including an equal proportion of online as well live face-to-face training programs in a variety of soft-skilled and technical subject areas, and informal learning through fostering mentoring relationships and assignment of special projects to increase understanding of the business. Additionally, however, her organization reflects the stance that the employer should also be actively involved in assessing employee development needs and career aspirations as well as collaborating with the employee to construct a development plan to achieve their development and career goals. This stance was not articulated or as clearly evident in the previous two cases. The organization was even willing to bring in outside guest

Employer 's Role/Responsibility

- Provide opportunities, resources
- Identify employee development goals, career aspirations
- work with employee to construct career development plan
- Make suggestions, recommendations for emloyee development
- Provide support to develop competenc y for employees forced into new job roles

Employee 's Role/Responsibility

- Take advantage, use resources provided by organization
- Use advice/feedback
- Progress, act on career plan
- Show initiative, take lead for development

HRD 's Role/Responsibility

- Create system for career development
- Inform leaders of develop opportunities available to offer employees
- Help leaders become familiar with career development structure/system

Atributes/Skills

- Self-starter, can work individually
- Understand business context
- Learn quickly
- Produce results, ability to do job
- Analytical, Detail-oriented
- Communication, Influencing others, getting buy-in

Challenges

- Breadth of offerings
- Limited HR staff, abiity to respond quickly
- Employee workload

Connie Champion

Attitude

- Propensity for continuous learning
- Eager to learn about changes to business/industry

Benefits

- Retention
- plan
- Quality employees
- Enhanced employee performance
- Pipeline of employees-succession planning
- EE Ownership of career development
- EE Ownership of learning

Opportunities

- Soft-skilled courses (professionalism, diversity, leadership, etc.)
- Technical courses
- Competency framework (identifies development activities to address competencies needed)
- Learning management system (provides information on development training available)
- Mentoring program

Activities

- Continuously learn about industry
- Networking
- Professional associations
- Read articles, blogs, websites on industry
- Mentoring
- Special projects (beyond job scope, haven't done before to enhance understanding of business)

Figure 5. Connie Coach A - Visual Display of Perspectives

speakers to show the connection between skill development within the organization and external employability.

Andrea communicated employees' responsibility for employability included using the feedback and advice provided by managers regarding development areas, and taking the initiative to act on this information by utilizing resources and opportunities provided by the organization to achieve career goals. Additionally, employees must demonstrate a desire to continuously learn about changes to the business and industry.

Case Four: Cathy Change-Agent

Meet Cathy Change-Agent. Cathy is one of the newest employees in her organization. Since joining her organization, she has taken great strides to facilitate change in the leadership practices of managers within her company.

Cathy was referred to me by Jane, a former student from my graduate program. I initially reached out to Jane through e-mails asking if she knew of any one in her organization who might be interested and willing to participate in my study. After checking with leaders in her organization with responsibilities related to learning and development, she referred Cathy as the best individual to assist me and forwarded me her contact information and a specific day and time to call to discuss the possibility of her participation in the study. At the appointed day and time I called the number I was provided, however, the call did not connect. I emailed Jane again about the issue and she immediately responded with an apology. She indicated she had just contacted Cathy and had a different number for me to use.

> Hi Jane, I was able to reach Cathy last Friday using the number you
> provided to schedule a 10AM phone conference for today, however, for
> some reason the extension number is not working today. I've called the
> number several times and I keep getting a "connection could not be

completed at this time, please contact your administrator" message. Could you send me an email address for Cathy? Thanks so much! (Researcher Journal, 8/15/12)

I called the number and was finally able to reach Cathy. She also apologized for the phone mix-up and attributed it to the conference call number I had originally been given not being set up properly.

After providing Cathy with information about the study over the phone she agreed to participate. She suggested a date, time, and a Starbuck's location for us to meet. As with my previous interviews, I emailed Cathy the day before our scheduled meeting to confirm our appointment and to remind her to complete the background questionnaire prior to our meeting. I also included a list of the interview questions that would be asked during the interview. Cathy responded that she had a lot of work on her plate at the moment and needed to postpone our meeting until the following week.

Hi Carmeda. I also left you a v-msg on your cellphone…I am going to have to reschedule our meeting to next Monday vs. tomorrow (Thursday). I am so sorry—I am in the throes of our succession planning process and need to focus on getting some databases updated. Could you please confirm you have this message so I know you won't be sitting at Starbucks all alone—and we can lock in a time next Monday…Sorry again, Cathy. (Researcher Journal, 8/15/12)

I responded that I was happy to oblige, and that I was grateful she was willing to take time out of her busy schedule to assist me with my study.

Conducting our first interview was as challenging as it was to schedule it. The Starbuck's location Cathy selected was filled with patrons and there was no place for us to sit inside. Cathy apologized for selecting the location and stated that she didn't think it

would be so busy. Since there was no indoor seating available we decided to go outside

to conduct the interview. We were immediately able to find a table outside at which to

sit, however, environmental factors soon became obstacles to the fluidity of the

interview.

I conducted my fourth interview today. The interview was postponed from

last week. I met Cathy at Starbuck's at 11AM. When I arrived there were

no parking spaces available so I had to park on the grass on side street.

Around the corner from Starbucks. In preparation for the meeting I had

viewed a picture of Cathy on LinkedIn so I was able to quickly identify her

in Starbucks. Cathy had a very nice disposition. She gave me a hug

when met. She seemed interested in the study and asked questions

about my background. After our greeting we looked for a place to sit.

Unfortunately, there were no tables available to sit at inside Starbuck's

and we had to sit outside instead. Fortunately, it was a sunny rather than

raining day and the heat was still bearable at 11AM. However, I had to

compete with outside noises such as traffic, patrons coming in and out of

the establishment, and music playing on overhead near our table. I hope

the audio file picks up Cathy's voice well. She was a little soft-spoken at

times. I also noticed the weather seemed to be affecting Cathy as well.

She was visibly perspiring by the end of the interview. Once the interview

ended and we were saying our good-byes she said she had to run back

into Starbuck's to go to the restroom. Consequently, our parting seemed

awkward and a bit abrupt in comparison to our initial greeting. Perhaps

she needed to cool down or collect herself before returning to work.

> Regardless, lesson learned. Outside interviews…mid August…in
>
> Florida...NOT GOOD! (Researcher Journal, 8/20/12).

Despite those challenges we were able to complete our interview.

Cathy is another participant who originally did not consider herself an HR professional. Her professional background evolved though her career in the military. She originally intended to be an air pilot. However, due to certification issues, her career trajectory changed and she began working in research and development in her field of study, human factors engineering. After working in research and development for ten years her careerpath shifted again and at the recommendation of mentors she began her career in human resources for military personnel. She eventually became a commander and had responsibility for almost all human resource functions for a military base.

> Actually, I never really considered myself an HR person. I was in the
>
> military. One thing lead to another and I ended up not being in my career
>
> field which is I wanted to fly. […] I lost my qualification. And so I went
>
> back [to] my degree which was in human factors engineering. I was
>
> studying cognition for the purposes of design, primarily cockpits and
>
> aircrafts, [which] was what I was interested in. So my senior year of
>
> college when I lost my qualifications I fell back on that. And in the Air
>
> Force […] we will go direct entry [are admitted] into research and
>
> development. Which was a hoot and a half and I did that for 10 years.
>
> The Air Force does not consider research and development an
>
> operational tour so the mentors I worked for […] said, we need to make
>
> you operational. Let's put you into personnel. Well, that began [my] HR
>
> experience. HR is considered operational. So I had a series of real quick

assignments in human resources for military personnel readiness which is how we prepare for war etc., deploy people. And then just a real quick succession. I became a commander and […] had [responsibility] over mostly all the HR functions for the base. (Cathy, L4-16-PA)

Eventually, Cathy decided she wanted to retire from the military. To facilitate her transition out of the military she decided to work at the base as a civilian for a period of time. After a few months of working in this capacity she joined the organization in which she is employed today. Cathy currently works for a utilities company that employs approximately five thousand employees. Her responsibilities include developing and implementing training and development initiatives for her organization.

Roles and Responsibilities. Because of Cathy's background in the military, her viewpoint concerning the roles and responsibilities of the organization to develop its employees is very strong. According to Cathy, one of the primary responsibilities of a leader is to develop his or her people so they can be the best asset to the organization.

As a leader in the military, if you weren't developing people you were failing at your job as a leader. So in the military, development is key. You live it. You eat it. You breathe it. A natural part of being a leader in the military is just to set your people up to be the best they can [be], to promote them, [to] get them moving for their own personal development so they can be the biggest asset back to the military. (Cathy, L4-16-PA)

She believes a similar level of commitment is represented in her current organization as well. According to Cathy developing employees is a mandatory task assigned to all leaders and managers, and a distinct part of the performance management process for the organization.

That is also true at [Global Utilities] but to a much lesser […] honed sense. Developing people is key. It's critical. It's, as a matter of fact, […] one of the dimensions that's mandatory for everybody that supervises. You have to have that as a rated area. (Cathy, L48-51-PA)

Philosophically, Cathy expressed that developing employees for their continued growth is fundamentally the right thing to do. However, as an employer the reality is that change is inevitable and if the organization does not respond to this change through the development of its employees, the organization will become stagnant. Additionally, Cathy surmises that while organizations can hire from the outside to fill needed skill sets, to bring new expertise to the company, solely hiring from the outside is not a sustainable plan for the long term success of the organization.

First of all, I think developing people for their own continued growth is just the right thing to do regardless of being an employer. So that's number one fundamentally. It's just the right thing to do. But number two, I think every organization knows change is it. You can never stay stagnant. It's always about moving and growing. So if you aren't moving or growing your people with the changes of what your mission is and your requirements and where you are heading then you have cut yourself short. There is no way you are going to just hire from the outside and get the same kind of results. You want some fresh expertise at times, but I think developing people is paramount and one of the key responsibilities of the organization if you want to be sustainable and successful. (Cathy, L53-60-PA)

Thus, Cathy holds the perspective that if there is a particular skill set that the organization needs it is responsible for developing that skill in its employees to address that need.

In regards to employee responsibility for enhancement, the employee is expected to be receptive of feedback that a particular skill set or level of expertise is required and act upon that feedback given the opportunities provided through the organization, "I would say that there is an expectation that you [the employee] would be receptive to feedback if you ever want to be better" (Cathy, L49-50-PA). Cathy goes further to say while the organization can make development opportunities available, employees must take the initiative to not only communicate their career aspirations and development goals but also seek the supports to achieve them. She believes ultimately that the onus is on the employee to coordinate his or her development.

> I think an employee has to show the initiative. It's ultimately their own career. And so if someone's not handing it to them, nor do I think they should be. [For instance] I think mentorship should happen naturally but if it doesn't then it's the individual's responsibility to say hey I'm interested in development and growth. Can you help me. Ask questions. Give me feedback. Can you help me come up with the development plan. So I think career development is truly on the shoulders of the individual. (Cathy, L63-67-PA)

In regards to HR's responsibility, Cathy expressed that training is one of the major areas for which HR is responsible. She believes, however, it should be a function of everyone in leadership role but acknowledges that the responsibility typically is delegated to HR for handling. This sentiment relates back to her military background.

> Where I'm at, and I think many corporations are the same way, is the training function is housed within hr. I think HR has got to take lead on it. I hate saying that. It's really a function of leadership, but then they [...] delegate to HR. Since you own the training function you need to make it happen. (Cathy, L69-72-PA)

Cathy expressed another major function of HR is related to assessment, such as determining the key competencies needed in the organization, and recommending, implementing the most effective ways to develop those competencies. Thus, as it relates to employability, HR is responsible for evaluating what competencies employees need to develop to make them individuals the organization wants to retain.

> [HR's role is] doing the deep dive [analysis] into what is our real need and competencies, because it's about growing the organization as well as the individual. And then [considering] what and how are the best ways to use limited resources to develop people, determine what are the competencies, what is it we need to develop, [and] what is it that people need to make them [employees] we want to retain and keep with us. So defining it, and then providing a way to actually provide what it is we have identified as the need. (Cathy, L74-78-PA)

Skills. Cathy stated that the number one skill for employees to be successful in her organization is agility or flexibility. This builds on her comments that an employee needs to be receptive of feedback and needs to act on that feedback, to direct their learning.

She went further, however, to discuss the necessity of employees possessing an understanding of the business context to be highly employable. According to Cathy, employees will be most successful within the organization, regardless of what position

they are in, if they have a clear understanding of what the organization's business is all about and how their role in the organization contributes to the business' success. According to Cathy understanding the business context positions employees to become strategic assets to the organization. She expressed this was especially true for leadership.

> You will be the most successful employee you can be, in no matter what position, if you have a big picture of, what's my company about? If I understand my business better [it] can't help but make me a better employee and team member. I think you can be effective in a certain niche but if you want to be strategic at all and do things more effectively in the long haul you need to understand the business and the bigger picture especially if you are in a leadership position with a company. (Cathy, L375-380-PA)

> Cathy also emphasized that an employee's interpersonal and

communication skills were important to their employability as well. This includes how effectively employees communicate and present their thoughts, ideas, and decisions to others. Cathy shared these skills are so essential that they are two of the central developmental areas focused on in her organization. The goal is to promote constructive interactions that support positive communication and collaboration rather than impeding it.

Related to interpersonal and communication skills, Cathy shared the importance of employees having the ability to influence others, rather than only skill at performing a task or job. According to Cathy employees have to be able to present information in a manner that influences others to participate or support an idea.

I think everyone has great ideas and thoughts. Every individual has got

something fantastic. But if you don't know how to present it in a way

that's heard it's almost like you don't have it. And so there is a lot to

being influential. There is also, once you have a great idea, how do you

then lay it out in a way that will make it stick and others will participate?

And so it is […] like selling the idea, being heard, selling it, and then

having follow though to make sure [...] how to implement it. (Cathy, L140-

144-PA)

Ultimately, however, Cathy stressed an employee has to have the ability to

produce results. The employee's work has to contribute to the company's bottom

line.

You've got to produce results. You've got to produce [...]. You have to

show that you can do it in a way that you're not steamrolling others, that

you're preserving relationships. But if you're not producing results you're

not contributing to the company's bottom line. (Cathy, L362-367-PA)

Learning Attitude. As mentioned previously, Cathy also stressed the

importance of an employee's receptiveness to feedback, to being open to receiving it as

well as having the inclination to act on it.

To me the biggest thing is seeking feedback and being able to use it. So

those are all about, can I continue to make something different of myself?

Am I open to that? Do I seek it? Do I use it? [….] I think to be able to

say, am I hitting the mark for you? If not, then what do I need to do and

I'm willing to do it? (Cathy, L87-89-PA)

Additionally, she stated the employee needs to have a positive attitude concerning their

role in the organization and learning in relationship to that role.

I think there's this pride and everyone wants to be successful. So [I] might not be at [a] job doing the thing that I love but I want to be successful for you for our organization. That since of belonging to something bigger than me and I want to be impactful in a positive way for that. But I have to be willing to learn [...]. And am I willing to do that, and do the best I can? (Cathy, L102-110-PA)

One of the most interesting learning attitudes Cathy believed was needed in her organization was related to humility. Cathy was emphatic that employees must not only be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, but must also have the humility to acknowledge them. They must be willing to provide transparency.

Being willing to say I don't have that but I know how to use it. I know how to reach out with relationships to other people. And I know how to improve myself. I think that's a sense of maturity that's [important] now. I think there's a humility there that needs to be owned. And if you can be humble about it and be willing to say I'm not all that then that opens the doors for you to becoming closer to being all of that. (Cathy, L118-122-PA)

Cathy indicated that this was an area in which many leaders in her organization had difficulty. She recounted the shock colleagues displayed at a team meeting over candid stories she shared about mistakes she had made in the past. Her philosophy was that anecdotes were a good way to grow the competencies of employees in an informal way.

We talk to our officers and directors about [why] it's so important to tell your story. Because when you come from a culture [where] you don't want to be seen […] having made a mistake, how do you ever teach

somebody it's okay? How do you teach people to be innovative if you
don't let them take risks? And you're going to take risks. You're going to
fail once in awhile and that's okay as long as you don't make the same
mistakes or it's not catastrophic. And so we actually did a couple of
sessions and we're doing it now with our managers, one of the models is
tell your stories. And then we encourage people to do that and we
encourage when you're in a meeting informally to tell your stories.
(Cathy, L123-129-PA)

According to Cathy many colleagues had conflicting opinions regarding her philosophy.
Some were concerned that because of their long-term status with the organization, if
they were to follow such a model they might be viewed as incompetent rather than
helping others learn from mistakes. Thus, they didn't feel comfortable publicizing such
information to others. Despite initial reservations, however, Cathy observed a shift from
hesitation to receptiveness to this informal learning method. According to Cathy,
through time and modeling efforts most leaders are now more comfortable sharing their
stories.

And so I think that's one of the informal ways. Talking [it] through. And
this is another thing that I just found amazing. It's really been shifting in
the last 5 or 6 years. I've come in and shared a lot of mistakes and
bumbling things I've done, and people just look at me in horror, like you
will never be promoted. But it was safe for me because those were all
from outside of the company. And they would still think of me like, whoa,
that's crazy. But over the last few years, not because of me but I think
just generally, we have started freeing up and being able to share a little
bit more. And yeah we made this mistake. Arghh! Let's talk about it as

opposed to let's just not talk about it. [....] So that informal learning I think

is great. (Cathy, L123-131-PA)

Development Activities. Cathy described fundamental development activities

employees in her organization should pursue. Supervisors and leaders are encouraged

to invest in supervisory and leadership development. She stated all employees,

however, need to pursue technical training specific to his or her field.

If you're a supervisor you have to get to the supervisory [training]. What

do we expect of you? How do we expect you to deliver supervision? So

obviously that's one. In your own technical field, you need to go pursue

that yourselves in your areas. We do have a model at our company

where technical training is decentralized out to the business units. We

centralize the core leadership things. Some people would call it soft

skills. I don't like that term. These are hard skills. (Cathy, L130-134-PA)

In addition, she stated all employees should focus on developing their interpersonal

skills.

The interpersonal relationships, how to communicate effectively, how do

you present yourself? How do you make it safe for other people to speak

up and criticize and provide you feedback? To me those are the things I

think everybody needs to take the onus and be developed on. (Cathy,

L135-138-PA)

In regards to her HR team, she shared she presses them to invest in their

development as they would any other employee. She encourages them to join

professional associations, attend professional conferences, and pursue certifications and

training to stay abreast of what's going on in field. She also challenges them to

participate in special projects that move them outside of their comfort zones and further develops and expands their skills and competencies.

> I continually press the envelope with my team to make them do things out of their comfort zone. So for example we go to refresh ourselves on those crucial conversations training. We go to a master facilitator. As a matter of fact we're going next week all of us as team to see the new materials for that. We go to professional conferences to make sure we're continuing to stay abreast of what's going on. (Cathy, L297-301-PA)
>
> I press my team just like we would any other employee in the organization to get them on committees and projects to make sure they are honing and learning what's going on in the company in that way. We bring in an in-house SPHR PHR course and then have my team or [those] who don't have those certificates or certifications go through [it]. (Cathy, L305-309-PA)

Cathy's own development consisted of similar developmental activities as well as informal learning activities such as reading articles or magazines related to her field and attending professional networking meetings.

> I do participate in the greater Orlando organizational development network and I do that for my own personal growth on the OD side. Learning what practices are out there, what's going on. For me, personally, I'll probably have to do a PHR or SPHR [training] that I'm bringing in-house to everybody else. So I'm not really thrilled with this option. I […] keep abreast [reading the] new chief officer learning magazine to see what's going on out there. I go to [professional meetings] just to keep fresh and to keep relationships [...]. I go to the

women executive luncheon, mostly, so I can learn but also because I'm

trying to get our women executives into their own development and I think

this is a good forum for that. So it's just a good opportunity for me to get

to learn along the way as well. (Cathy, L315-323-PA)

Additionally, Cathy emphasizes the importance of asking for feedback.

I do what I tell other people to do. I will ask my boss for feedback if I don't

get any, to make sure things are on target. He's one of those people who

has been with the company twenty plus years. And I certainly realize I'm

the neophyte. I've only been there six years. So I got like ten more years

of newbie mistake making I can do. But I do recognize that no matter

where I came from or what my experience level was, it wasn't with this

company and there's a lot to be said for the longevity and the who knows

what about who. So I talk to him and try to understand better how I come

across. So I do what I recommend other people do seek the feedback if

it's not coming, ask for it. (Cathy, L323-331-PA)

Finally, Cathy emphasized the importance of self-evaluation or reflection on

strengths and weakness in addition seeking feedback from others.

I am quite aware that I am viewed as a maverick coming in from outside

and that I don't understand some of the sluggishness or the inertia to

overcome […]. And I'm perfectly aware that I come in a little bit [like]

come on let's move! And people take that as we're not broken. Why are

you trying fix us? (Cathy, L3434-346-PA)

Development Opportunities. Cathy's organization provides a variety of training

opportunities in areas such as supervisory or management training, leadership training,

diversity-generational differences, communication, interpersonal (respecting others,

crucial conversations), performance management, HR processes, and understanding the business [org document]. Many of the leadership and management courses offered, however, require nomination by an HR generalist or performance coach, are based on seniority, or are designed for exempt employees.

One of the programs Cathy endorsed as beneficial for employees was related to understanding the organization's business context. The purpose of the course is to provide employees the context to understand how their contributions impact the company. More specifically, it is designed to give them a better understanding of the business, its services, and how to align performance goals to the objectives of the organization. This program, however, is restricted to exempt employees.

> Another one of our programs. We call it Global Utilites 101 although some people don't like the title. It's [about], what's our business? Why do we have [our services at an Global Utilities? Why do we have these different departments? What does each one do? What is we're shooting for? What are goals of the company? So there's a couple things. We have real goal alignment. We have got these three areas everybody knows this is number one, number two, number three. We have structured our performance reviews that anything you do better fall in line under one of those three things. If you are an exempt employee you better have something that aligns under all three and if it doesn't then you shouldn't be wasting your time on it. (Cathy, L383-390-PA)

Cathy also describes a supervisory preparation program designed to provide non-supervisory employees an opportunity to learn more about the company business. Employees are competitively selected by a steering committee, which selects employees from each of the business areas to attend.

We have what's called the Global Utilities basics. It was really taking the

top twelve people when you were [at a] supervisory level and introducing

them to different parts of the [organization] they otherwise wouldn't have

seen. (Cathy, L390-392-PA)

Additionally, Cathy emphasized the necessity of a communications course

designed to help employees with handling difficult or crucial conversations. The course

focuses on how to promote free flowing dialogue between employees no matter how

intimidating, risky, or sensitive the nature of the topic. Cathy mentions this is an area

that is needed across the board for all employees to make the organization better.

We have a couple of courses that we really think are very valuable. And

they are pricey but we think they are so important that we still offer them

on our limited training budget. How to speak up when you're feeling

awkward or like it is a confrontation? How do you still get your mind

spoken while not shutting down someone else, etc. And so I do think as

a company, because we do know across the board that that's one of the

areas that would make us better no matter what, it is our responsibility to

provide that kind of training for our employees. (Cathy, L149-157-PA)

Such offerings support Cathy's previous statement that feedback is critical to the

employee's success.

I see [this as] such a critical need because we have a wonderful company

of very polite people. And I think that often it is viewed as a bad choice. I

can't give them feedback because they will take it harshly. In this course

you are trying to say you are doing them a favor by being candid. It's not

being brutal, it's not. It is just, how do you help them be better if you're

not speaking up to them? (Cathy, L76-179-PA)

The organization also provides a director's cohort in which employees from other companies are invited to participate. One of the goals of the cohort is to provide employees an opportunity to build relationships with employees from other organizations, in an effort to learn from one another.

> And so this director's program which is in its infancy, we're just wrapping up the first year of the pilot. We're going to try to do it again next year with another cohort. We've actually asked other companies to come and join us so you can build a cohort. They stay with us through several modules and just like we do in-house we try to put the same managers together over many modules so they build relationships. Now they have a resource they can talk to [and] share ideas. And one of the key things we are finding is even though bringing these directors together for four meetings, after the first one or two, what they love most about it is there are people from other companies in the room and it is like, wow! You guys have the same problems. Or, wow! How did you go about [resolving the problem]? And they're building these relationships. (Cathy, L247-255-PA)

The organization also provides tuition support and a library comprised of learning resources including books (print and audio) and videos. Interestingly, use of the library is promoted for non-work hours. It is advertised that employees can engage in their personal development at their desk during lunch, before they start their work day or when they have a break in their schedule (Organizational Documents).

Benefits. According to Cathy, by providing opportunities for employees to develop, the organization increases the likelihood that employees will remain with the organization.

I think there was some trepidation for a company that hasn't done that

[invested in employee development]. It's, well, what if they get wooed

away by other companies. Well, now they won't if you are engaged in

their development and making things different. People aren't going to be

wooed away. They're going to be loving the fact that you made

development opportunities for them. (Cathy, L255-258-PA)

Additionally, employees have the opportunity to expand their competencies and skill

sets, thus, to increase their employability.

Challenges. Cathy listed time or workload as the primary challenge related to

offering development opportunities for the organization. According to Cathy, at one point

in time the HR department was able to provide more informal learning opportunities.

However, due to competing priorities, they have not been able to offer these

opportunities.

We have had short brief spans of on-going supervisory forums where we

bring all the supervisors together and just say here you go or even finding

a magazine on supervision. And we would launch some lunch n learns

over an article in that. But as things have happened over the last couple

of years we have had to just stop doing that because our plates were just

too full. (Cathy, L233-235-PA)

Cathy also elaborated that HR is tasked with working with leaders to prepare them to

take active roles in training their employees. This responsibility adds to the workload of

the limited HR staff as well.

We have a whole internal model of training our internal leaders identified

in the succession plan. They do the training of our leadership classes for

their own development, for the development of the organization. And we

have three times the workload because of that. We have to make sure
they are ready. We have to make sure it is on target. We have to make
sure everything is covered. We have to make sure we give them
feedback. (Cathy, L292-296-PA)

Another challenge identified by Cathy is related to the length of service of the
employees. While having long-term employees in the workplace can be a tremendous
asset to the organization, Cathy suggested it can also be an obstacle if no new, fresh
expertise or experience filters into the organization.

We do have such longevity in our company. I mean I am sure [...]we are
largely a company which has its own dynamic. But my first time
supervisor class [the participants] they've been here twenty, thirty years.
So people have [had] a long, long time with the company. And while that
has many great positive attributes, one of the things you miss from that is
fresh expertise, fresh experience, fresh ways of looking at [things].
(Cathy, L243-247-PA)

Additionally, with a significant amount of long-term employees in the organization, there
are also limited job openings, vacancies, and promotional opportunities for employees.
Thus, although employees may invest in their development, there may be limited or no
opportunities for them to utilize what they have learned with the organization.

Summary. Over all Cathy communicated a shared responsibility for
employability between the organization and the employee. She emphasized, however,
that leaders have a responsibility to help employees develop to become assets to the
organization. Additionally, the organization has a responsibility to develop employees in
order to promote from within rather than relying on hiring from the outside when possible

Employer 's Role/Responsibility

- Provide training for identified organizational development needs
- develop particular skill sets identified as needed by organization

Employee 's Role/Responsibility

- Show initiative, ownership for career development
- Communicate career aspirations, and interest, need for development
- Seek, use feedback with creating career development plan

HRD 's Role/Responsibility

- Assess organizational development needs (what skills needed to make organization want to retain employee)
- ProvideTraining management (coordinate, design, facilitate), on identified gaps/challenges across org
- Determine best ways to use limited resources to develop organization
- Succession planning (assess/identify critical positions)
- Provide performance management system

Challenges

- Cost, limited budget
- HR workload
- No fresh, new expertise or experience filtering into the organization (long-term employees, limited job vacancies)
- Limited opportunities for employee to use learning to advance (long-term employees, limited job vacancies, promotional opportunities)

Skills

- Understanding of business context
- Ability to influence others, to present information in a manner that influences others to participate or support an idea (interpersonal, communication)
- Ability to produce results

Cathy Change Agent

Benefits

- Retention
- Fosters employee engagement
- employees can expand competencies, skills

Opportunities

- Variety of training courses (understanding the business, crucial conversation, interpersonal skills, managing different generations, etc.)
- Director's cohort (w/ external participants)
- Tuition assistance
- Learning resource library

Activities

- Supervisory training
- Technical training, specific to field
- Leadership training
- Interpersonal skills enhancement
- Special projects (that expand skills and competencies)
- Professional associations, conference, certification
- Assess strengths, weaknesses, areas for developent
- Seek use feedback

Attitude

- Willing, want to learn
- Receptiveness to feedback
- Humility/transparency, acknowledge strengths, weaknesses, skills, and development areas
- positive attitude toward learning related to job

Figure 6. Cathy Change-Agent – A Visual Display of Perspectives

In turn, while the organization may provide development opportunities, there is an expectation that employees communicate their development needs, seek feedback regarding those areas, and engage in both internal and external learning to remain competitive in their field. In order to facilitate this process, Cathy acknowledges that HR must help to create an environment in which leaders and employees feel confident in such efforts.

Case Five: Cassie Coach

Meet Cassie Coach. Cassie is an HR executive who uses a coaching style of leadership to manage and develop her employees. She stresses the value of feedback and often serves as a teacher or trainer for employees within her department.

I initially reached out to Cassie through a professional association meeting in which I was given the opportunity to briefly talk about my study. I announced if anyone was interested in participating in the study to indicate so by providing their contact information on a form I was circulating. Cassie was one of the first individuals to indicate her interest. After obtaining her contact information at the meeting, I emailed her the link to the online background questionnaire. After the questionnaire was completed, I contacted her to schedule an appointment for the interview. I also sent her a reminder email with the date, time, and location a few days before the meeting along with the interview questions that would be asked.

> I contacted Cassie to schedule an appointment. Her response was very
> receptive. We agreed on a date, time and location. I sent her a follow-up
> email a couple days before the scheduled meeting with the interview
> questions (Researcher Journal, 9/10/12)

The interview was very free flowing and informative. Ann was very engaging and seemed excited to share her perspectives and experiences related to the study. Her

enthusiasm for sharing information related to the research topic was informative and energizing.

> We met at the Starbuck's location she chose. Cassie arrived approximately 15 minutes late. She had a very cheerful disposition and seemed extremely excited that I asked her to participate in the study. I apologized for not arranging for the interview to take place sooner. She indicated that this was a great time for us to meet because there had been lots of projects going on at work a little while ago. The interview lasted longer than I had expected it to, over an hour. She had much information to share about her perspective concerning the topic. Meeting with Ann actually re-energized me regarding my topic. There were multiple times where I wanted to speak during the interview as though we were in conversation, however, I had to refrain from doing so to stick to the interview protocol. After completing the interview we chatted for an additional fifteen minutes on thoughts about our HR experiences. I'm looking forward to transcribing the audio file and scheduling a follow-up meeting to collect additional information (Researcher's Journal, 9/19/12).

Cassie's educational background includes a bachelor's in organizational behavior and a master's in organization development. She has over fifteen years experience consulting and training in areas related to performance management, program development, and leadership development. Her HR career began as a consultant for performance management initiatives. Her current responsibilities include directing key HR functions such as succession planning, project management, communications and strategic planning in an insurance based organization employing approximately eight thousand employees.

Roles and Responsibilities. According to Cassie part of the organization's responsibility for employability is to communicate links between development of competencies and expectations for performance. One of the ways her organization aims to do so is through its performance management system. This is a focus of great importance for the organization as it is currently experiencing a period of expansion and growth. Cassie shared that due to restructuring efforts that will soon take place, there will be many skills that need to be developed and employees will need to play an active part in discussions concerning what those skills and competencies are and how they will be linked to performance goals.

> At the heart of it for us certainly is a performance management system and putting meaningful goals together. It's been our tradition to have a very collaborative process for that. But I think to know what the goals of the organization [are] and then to work with someone to help [develop] the skill sets that are going to be applied to them, can give you so much opportunity. (Cassie, L114-117-PA)

She went further to explain that the organization has a responsibility to assess organizational needs and based on those needs, work with employees to create a development plan to help them grow and develop in identified areas. She also communicated leaders need to clarify how recommended development areas are associated with organizational needs.

> I'm [...] in a situation right now where here are the competencies [...] and people don't always see that link. So as a leader you're making that connection to what you do, how you do it, where you need to develop [....]. Here [in this organization] I have to work hard to make that link. But I think it's my job as a leader to tie all that together working with the

employee. And also recognizing that, I've never seen this more than in this past year, we had to look at our folks [employees] and say build on the organization. We're bigger now and you have to grow new skills sets to fit the needs that we have. One person on my team, many said that he shouldn't be here and should just be doing frontline sales and service training. [He was] just given [transferred to the] leadership development [department]. He's a strong facilitator. Employability, it's here. I can develop him. It's about assessing where he is, what needs to get done, and how we grow that. And I think that's just such an important job. (Cassie, L123-134-PA)

Cassie commented that one of the responsibilities of the organization is also to fund training and development oriented departments since they are tasked to identify as well as facilitate the development of critical skills within the organization. Additionally, she shared her philosophy that she believes the employer has a responsibility to not only provide financial support for internal learning, but for external learning as well. She believes there should be budgeted dollars allocated specifically for employee participation in learning activities outside of the organization. Her rationale for this perspective is that if the organization only supports internal development it may become stagnant, or out of touch with what's going on in the industry.

I see the organization's responsibility to maintain a budget for learning opportunities that might be external. If you just keep doing stuff internally you're going to miss what's going on out in the world. But leaders should be empowered to make those decisions and then you have to get approval. I understand that. But there should be budget[ed] dollars for that outside perspective. I think that the organization has a responsibility

for supplying to a department like mine the funding for programs that help

with the most critical issues, be they technical or interpersonal, so that the

people are doing the best job they can. (Cassie, L138-144-PA)

Cassie went further to note that while she doesn't believe the organization should

be responsible for an employee's next career move, it should be supportive of

development activities that foster skill sets that are in alignment with supporting the

organization's business goals.

I think I don't think an organization can guarantee you, they shouldn't be

responsible for your next big career move. But if you're doing something

to improve your skill sets that aligns with what the organization is doing,

within all the other budget constraints, I think that's an important one. [In

turn], if you're putting resources into your people this is the life blood of

the organization. So in terms of paying for degrees and things like that,

that's an investment into the organization's future. (Cassie, L150-154-

PA)

Cassie also stated part of the employer's responsibility is to is to assess an

employee's strengths and weakness, provide them feedback on those areas, and offer

recommendations for development opportunities they can pursue. According to Cassie,

the underling intent is to encourage the employee to self-evaluate their strengths and

weaknesses to make informed decisions regarding career progression.

As a leader I think my responsibility is to help them recognize where their

strengths are through feedback about this is such a strength for you.

Here's a developmental opportunity. And in both of those areas they take

in that feedback and they start assessing themselves, boy not only am I

good at this I really like this. This is where I want to go. (Cassie, L179-183-PA)

Cassie added the caveat that for employees to feel confident to do so, leaders must foster a safe environment for open dialogue, especially concerning feedback discussions regarding development needs.

Something I learned right away at my first job [with a previous organization], we went to our first client meeting and as soon as we left and got into the car that boss said what could I [the boss] have done differently. Asking what I could differently that opened the door. Boom. Immediately, [I responded] well I guess this. And then I said well what could I do differently. That leader started that dialogue, that exchange. So I think that I believe the leader set's the precedent for that conversation [....]. I think you have got to set that tone for a trusting open environment for that exchange. I know they have to be confident in my abilities but I'm also not perfect and I have no problem admitting that. And I think you've got to show that vulnerability to begin to establish this learning from openness to feedback. (Cassie, L114-125-PA)

Cassie expressed that responsibility for enhancement also rests on the employee. As noted previously, the employee must be willing to assess his or her strengths and weakness as well as communicate what they want to do. According to Cassie this expectation requires the employee to exhibit a level of transparency. Cassie illustrated this point while recounting an experience with an employee who self-identified a skill deficiency, shared this information with a supervisor, and requested assistance with strengthening that area.

I have one employee who became a part of the customer complaint department because she had that people side and [was a] good decision maker. [She] found her way into training and development. She said wow I really think I like development and she came to me and one of my strong developers. I [teamed] them up. [The developer] taught her everything she knew because [the employee] just keeps growing. Then [the employee] says I want to know this and I want to learn this. She made it known. When we talked she said I know you think I'm competent but I'm not confident in those initial discussions with the client. She [stated] I don't think I'm asking deep enough questions and then I get back and I'm starting to write up a scope document and then I have to call them back. I want to be better at that. And I said, so what you're saying is anytime I or somebody else on the team goes into a scoping meeting, even though that might not be your project you'd like the opportunity to develop that. [Her response was] Yes. So she made it known. (Cassie, L186-197-PA)

In Cassie's organization HRD's responsibility includes providing career pathing information for its employees to clarify what jobs are available within the organization, the salary ranges associated with those jobs, and the competencies required to be successful in them. Cassie shared that while the organization currently provides employees with information related job salaries, they are still working towards developing a comprehensive career pathing system that identifies competency models for different job levels and aligns training programs to those models. Cassie expressed her belief that such a career pathing system would support internal employability. The

more job related information employees have access to the better prepared they can be to fill job openings as they become available.

> So a big part of what I see as my responsibility with that HRD hat especially in leadership development is we have to start establishing competency models for the different levels, at least for the leadership side of it. And have our training programs that match up and allow people to start working through those and aligning that with talent management so that we are ready when there are openings, that somebody is ready to fill that spot through fair and equal opportunities to throw your hat in. (Cassie, L251-256-PA)

With such a tool, the organization would be better positioned to promote job opportunities.

Skills. Cassie defined the concept of employability as having the knowledge and skill sets to meet the particular demands of the organization. She shared examples of such skills in her workplace as interpersonal, problem-solving, and possessing expertise in your field. Interpersonal skills (or emotional intelligence) was frequently and strongly emphasized by Cassie as a skill that is crucial to an employee's employability. She stated while an individual needs to be proficient in performing the technical aspects of their jobs, if they cannot build and maintain good working relationships their career trajectory won't go far within the organization.

> Without a doubt I believe emotional intelligence is absolutely critical to success and employability. You can teach people to take on certain tasks in an organization be it working on the computer, training facilitators in our world, selection. But if you can't build the relationship with someone and understand what's going on in their lives and meet them at this emotional

level, it's hopeless. They are not going to make it. They are not going to

be successful. (Cassie, L7-11-PB)

Cassie further admonished that this skill is so important that it can have a limiting affect

on an employee's employability if it is absent. She illustrated this point by describing

how employees in the organization perceived to be lacking in this area were limited in

their options for career mobility.

We have those people who have that [technical] part of it but they are

missing the emotional intelligence and the interpersonal side. And you

just see how it's limiting them. In fact [recently] I stepped out of the

instructional design leader role and now I'm now I'm focused on

leadership development. The person who is heading up that group needs

another layer of leadership. She is doing interviews right now and there

are several internal candidates [...] that are interested. In instructional

design you tend to get a lot of people who are very methodical and they

are so good at that online training develop. For many of them it's harder

for them to switch to a leadership development and interpersonal side.

[They want] to move into this leadership role [but] so many of them are

limited by their interaction skills and the struggles they have had to either

build relationships with their clients or with each other. So definitely,

when it comes to employability that technical knowledge is so critical but

it's got to be balanced with relationship building. (Cassie, L91-100-PA)

Cassie also commented that decision-making and problem-solving skills are

important as well. She explained employers are looking for examples of employees who

possess these skills and are taking note of those who do not.

I have seen so much in the last year, the two scenarios where the one internal client [says] boy this is really a challenge for us. We won't be able to come to classroom training. Oh alright. I'm like looking for [the employee] who wants to come in here [and say] we could do a webinar, we could a job aid, we could do this. But instead [employees are] just [...] sitting back and not jumping into decision making. (Cassie, L179-182-PA)

Finally, Cassie added being an expert in your field, including using the tools necessary in your field or job function, increases an employee's employability as well. She explains such a talent makes an employee stand out, thus, potentially increasing his or her internal employability.

There are some things, certain jobs, if you have a certain skill set that just sings. [For instance] in instructional design, we are probably going to go with [a new tool], even though there are different tools that we have today. If you can make that tool sing [...] we need ya. (Cassie, L293-296-PA)

Learning Attitude. Cassie explained that in her organization employees who show initiative, are future-focused, self-assessing, and display a desire to learn and grow are valued. Cassie stressed the importance for employees to show initiative in undertaking projects and tasks that may be beyond their current job scope. This perspective is discussed by comparing employees who do so versus those who do not and the message communicated to the employer as a result.

People who have never turned away from the simplest follow-up activity, to raising their hand for something extremely complex, those are the ones that shine [....] There is a client who needs something that needs to be

turned around by next week. [You have] the ones [employees] that raise

their hands and say I'll do it. I'll work the extra hour. I'll manage my time.

[Then you have] the ones that are clocking in and clocking out and walk

right out of the meeting. Everything communicates. (Cassie, L272-277-

PA)

Her point was emphasized as she described management's view of an employee who

demonstrated initiative in decision-making and problem solving. Not only was the

individual referred to as a "poster child" for the organization, but several leaders

encouraged the employee to apply for a management position.

Our learning management system is another area where I've see the

opposite story where [...] my poster child [or exceptional employee] goes,

[...] how you load stuff, and all that, and the reports you get, leads to all

these different decisions that need to be made. And sometimes we are

like, well you have to do it this way. This is the only way to do it. And

she'll be the one [who thinks] I wonder what if. And not only does she say

I think this could work, but then she gets in and tries it out. So problem-

solving and initiative just wound into one. As soon as this manager

position opened we said, are you going to look into it. (Cassie, L282-288-

PA)

Cassie added that employees must be future focused. They have to recognize

how their job is changing within the organization [and outside] and take necessary

measures to evolve accordingly.

I think for learning, their focus, they have got to be aware of how their job

is evolving within the organizations. [For instance] the people who are

the shining stars on our team realized that our IT was going to morph into

online. [They] went and got that degree [at a university] and majored in

online technology. [Afterwards they] then realized authoring tools was not

enough into all the video. So you've got to be in touch with how your

job's evolving [...]. You've got to be in touch with how your job is

changing. (Cassie, L301-306-PA)

According to Cassie employees cannot solely rely on the organization to lay out a

development plan for them. They must assess the needs of their organization, their field

or industry, and their current skill level and formulate a develop plan accordingly. Cassie

provided a model for this perspective in an account of her own career transitions. She

described how she sought development in area in which she identified she was lacking.

All of a sudden I realized I'd grown up in this consultant company and I

had my degree. I knew all of company's best practices but I was out

there with people who were like have you walked a mile in my shoes.

Have you been out here. This is the real world we're talking about. And I

thought I'm limited by what I don't know about being in this role of

managing training organizations or OD organizations. So I started

looking [for a different job that would provide that experience]. (Cassie,

L41-45-PA)

Development Activities. Cassie provided a list of activities employees are

encourage to engage in to increase their employability. These include participation in

professional associations, certification, and mentoring.

To go to association meetings, whatever it is that keeps you in touch.

Whether in our world today is ASTD or Senior HRD, I think that's critical.

Knowing what's going on in the outside world [....]. I think you definitely

have that responsibility to look outside, if you're committed to establishing

the relationships and looking at the learning. (Cassie, L306-317-PA)

I do expect people to find some professional association to be a

part of. I do. I can't make them do it. I try to make it enticing. I'm

blessed to be at a company that pays for those meetings. It's it gives

relationships that go beyond just the learning. It's benchmarking, it helps

you develop a talent pool. [...]When there's an opening and you have to

look at externally. (Cassie, L326—320-PA)

In addition Cassie believes mentoring relationships can increase an employee's

employability. She explained if an individual can build a relationship with somebody

who's a great sounding board, who isn't going to tell you want you want to hear but what

you need to hear, that relationship can be a valuable asset especially during

restructuring efforts. Cassie illustrated this point by sharing an account in which a

mentoring relationship was helpful in identifying developmental activities to increase a

high ranking leader's employability in her organization.

There's a woman in our marketing department who's pretty high up and

she has established a mentor because with two marketing departments,

is everybody going to have a job. She is not waiting around she is saying

I've got to look at our need and go what are my employability options if

something changes here soon. And so that relationship has led her to

recommendations for things she should read, groups she should join.

(Cassie, L311-315-PA)

Cassie's illustration suggested a necessity for employees to be future-focused, to direct

attention on responding to questions such as what are the organization's needs today

and what do I need to do if something changes tomorrow.

When reflecting on her own development activities Cassie shared has engaged in professional associations, job shadowing, internships, reading books related to field, and taking on special projects to keep her skills current.

> I have boss that just gives every opportunity to take on a project. And so even though I have got craziness going on he has given me a special project for our team to do so that I'm keeping my consulting skills up. So I'm very fortunate that way, this was made known to me you take it you run with it. (Cassie, L458-461-PA)

Thus, Cassie's philosophy is that at least once per year employees should engage in some kind of specific developmental activity that the organization funds.

Development Opportunities. Cassie's organization provides over five hundred online training courses to its employees on a variety of subject matters [I was unable to access specific course titles from organizational documents]. This includes training related to employees' current job such as new systems being implemented as well as soft-skilled courses related to interpersonal skills and customer service. In addition, the organization supports external development by providing financial assistance for tuition and professional association meeting fees.

Benefits. Cassie shared that the benefits experienced by the organization for providing such opportunities include a pipeline of employees, employee retention and engagement, and recognition as an employer of choice. By developing employees, if job openings become available there will be a pipeline of employees who have been trained to fill these roles. Additionally, she suspects employees feel the organization cares about them if it invests in them. Therefore they become more engaged in their jobs and the company's business.

I should have a strong pipeline of people ready to take over my job. So when I, as a leader, take the initiative and delegate I'm making sure, if I get hit by that mac truck, somebody could fill in, somebody could take over. And [so] I should always be developing my people. I think that's a definite benefit. I think just offering training programs in general, that are linked to a diagnosis of a need before we send them there, employees know that their company does care about them and their engagement goes up. People [feel] I'm allowed to step back [and] develop self. That's seen as value added, you're in the right organization. So their engagement. (Cassie, L217-224-PB)

According to Cassie, this in turn, increases retention of employees. Finally, an unexpected benefit of the organization is being recognized as an employer of choice. According to Cassie, because of their support of an employee's external development, their organization is increasingly being viewed as an employer that invests in its employees.

The other thing that's just huge is because of this development we're being recognized in the area as what's going on over there. [That organization] is sending twelve people to a professional association's training and development meeting. Wow. [We are] getting calls going hey [...]what we're trying to figure out a date for a meeting. We want to know [...]what date works for your organization because you guys are sure to send the most people. We have not done the initial study but, an employer of choice, what's going on over there. I want to be a part of that. (Cassie, L226-232-PB)

Cassie cited the benefits received by employees include ownership of learning, increased competency or skill at their job, and enhanced interpersonal skills related to their professional and personal life. According to Cassie, not only is the employee developing necessary skills and competencies needed to perform their job, but they have ownership of everything they learn. They can use this knowledge to go further in the organization or take their knowledge and experience outside of the organization if desired (thus increasing internal and external employability).

> Boy I think it really is that part of employability that I, no one can take away what you've learned. That is a gift that you have. I think that with the kind of programs we offer, they are getting better at their day to day jobs. So the technical parts of their jobs, that competence breeds confidence. (Cassie, L235-237-PB)

Interpersonal skills is highly valued in Cassie's organization as well. As such, it provides development opportunities in this area. One of the benefits of this opportunity is the ability to use these skills within and beyond the workplace, to support a more balanced lifestyle.

> I think that interpersonal skills that they need. We link everything to work and personal life. It's just like in general. [...] We get feedback all the time. Oh my gosh. I'm getting my kid now. I'm get my teenager. This has helped my relationship with my wife. Just getting them skills to make a work relationship better. It is bringing them health benefits. The stress and the strain. And you hear people go oh my gosh I hated coming to work because I couldn't deal with my leader or this employee or whatever. [Now] they're like I stepped into it. I had a conversation. I feel better. That person feels better. Oh my gosh. I'm getting more done.

And I'm a happier person so that I'm going home and I'm happier. We try to find that balance and I think we're really fortunate as an organization that we have the funding and the dedication to recognize it's what you do. And having that technical competence in how you do it. And that we need to provide skills in both of those areas. (Cassie, L237-247-PB)

Challenges. As with most organizations, these benefits do not come without challenges. For Cassie's organization these include assessing the greatest development needs for the organization and limited resources.

Right now our challenge definitely is I'm taking over leadership development. And we've got to figure out what is our model going forward. It we have a lot of leaders. I can't go out and do individual leadership assessments with each of these groups. I need something that is a little bit more global so that I can make good decisions about where I'm spending these dollars. My boss and I talked about trying to get an advisory panel…it could even be where we're using an engagement survey [....]. But I need a solid source of information about where the greatest needs are so I can make large scale purchases that blanket the organization's greatest needs. I only have a team of 5 so my scarce resources. I would love each of them to be able to A-promise the world to each of these leaders, like I am your soul consultant. I'm going to do everything for you. But I can't have them do that so I'm trying to figure out right now what is our, what's our consultant model. Those are probably the biggest challenges. (Cassie, L251-262-PB)

Lack of initiative on employee's part to take ownership or even an active role in their development was also noted as a challenge.

> Then I have got another one [employee] who wants to make more money, wants to be a manager, [but] never takes initiate to come to me with can I do this, or brings the problem to me without a solution. Now that person just happens to be throwing their hat in the ring for this open manager position. I'm like [...] you just want this given to you. I've been interested in his development more than he has been. (Cassie, L201-205-PA)

Cassie speculates, however, that this lack of initiative may be due in part to limited promotional opportunities within the organization. Employees were used to focusing solely on performing their current job rather than preparing for future jobs because there had been minimal advancement opportunities available.

> But [...]in defense of the person that I criticized earlier he's sitting there going I don't see any direct lines of development and there wasn't going to be any additional leadership [opportunities] so well I'll be the best I can at instructional design. And all of a sudden a whole new world opened up when we had this merger. Now there is an opportunity, (Cassie, L256-259-PA)

Employees have had to stay in the same job for long periods of time. As such, they may believe there is no need to invest in development. Interestingly, when asked to rank order eleven skills an employee needed to possess to remain employable in her organization on the background questionnaire, Cassie ranked continuous learning last. Her rationale for doing so was that at the time of completing the questionnaire there was less learning that needed to take place in the organization.

> Right now we haven't had a lot of change in our organization and people
> have been comfortable. I think this whole new organization is rocking
> people's world. I think this [the need for continuous learning] will go up
> [....] So technologies [have] been behind for us. It just hasn't been [a
> priority]. Getting information, numbers, being adaptive, it will be more
> important than ever in the coming years. But up until this point it hasn't.
> (Cassie, L378-379-PB)

Cassie further shared that due to the restructuring of the organization, an employee's
willingness to learn will not only be an essential attribute but the new norm for her
organization.

> We have a huge meeting to find out what's the first system to go live in
> getting us all on one peoplesoft system. And so [continuously learning]
> it's going to be more valuable than ever. If you can't change and adapt,
> up until now [that was okay]. This will be the new. This will be our new
> world. (Cassie, L383-386-PB)

Another challenge discussed by Cassie was related to performance management
According to Cassie there were three major weaknesses she had identified that could be
obstacles to an employee's employability. These included the absence of leaders
voicing their expectations regarding performance, coaching employees, and providing
feedback or having constructive conversations regarding performance.

> People's biggest issues, one leaders did not know how to diagnosis
> performance issues. They just could not figure out what was going on
> [....]. Oh my gosh. I keep sending that person to training and they're not
> performing. I didn't tell them it was an expectation that they use those
> skills [....]. The other coaching issue was they didn't get it, that they need

to be different things for different people [....]. The third piece was I just

am not putting it together to have a conversation with people. I can't start

that conversation. (Cassie, L179-203-PB)

Providing feedback or having difficult conversations with employees was an area

in which Cassie referred to as a derailer for herself as well.

I have a responsibility to help people grow and one of the most important

areas that I wish I could go back a few times and do differently was to be

more honest with what people needed to do differently, probably a

combination of sharing my expectations and feeling the confidence to

give that feedback But in all honesty the one person who I've worked with

the longest who came with me from the other organization I have shared

the feedback about her emotional intelligence needs. And I think some

people say why didn't you fire her. Maybe I wasn't tough enough. But I

do feel when I look at others, now I'm justifying my behavior, but I did

show her and I did tell her this can't continue. How did it get to this toxic

place that now you're mending this relationship. I don't think any of those

conversations have happened in some places [departments]. But I

struggled with that and I think that is such a so important… that's such an

important part of employability, that honest feedback everyday. (Cassie,

L483-498-PA)

Cassie points out that despite her background and experience as an HR professional

who has facilitated many training programs on feedback, this was a difficult task for her

to perform as a supervisor. She stressed, however, despite the discomfort this

challenge presents, it is extremely important to provide this feedback.

Sharing performance feedback about what people were doing wrong is always been this awful part for me. And getting the confidence and courage and just hello. You can't deny them this information about what they're doing wrong to help them get better. (Cassie, L471-474-PA)

Cassie shared some of the challenges for the employee which included time for their development, application of learning, and the manager not voicing expectations. She shared that the number one challenge for employees is dedicating time towards their development. She emphasized this point in reference to leaders. According to Cassie, oftentimes leaders become entrenched with workloads and competing priorities that prevent them from participating in developmental activities, "I think number one in leadership development is getting people to dedicate the time to come. Because they are feeling so caught up in the whirlwind of day to day "(Cassie, L250-251-PB). She expressed the dedication of time for development was an issue for non-supervisors in the organization as well. Cassie surmised some employees may feel time away for training not only equated to increased workload but also missed opportunities to service potential clients.

I do think many of them are afraid to be away from the job as well. That somehow taking time to go and be in training takes away from the day to day. That's especially true for the insurance agents and travel agents. I've got numbers to make. I know the day that I go to training the world cruise is going to walk in, the person who wants life, health, car, auto, home, whatever. That's the day they're going to walk in. (Cassie, L268-272-PB)

Cassie described application of learning as another significant challenge for employees. Employees may be willing to invest in their development, however, they may face the obstacle of applying what is learned if the work environment.

> The other big struggle for the employee is I've gone and I've come back
>
> and this is a huge responsibility. This is probably one of my top things is
>
> we're focused on developing as many things that we can do on my team
>
> to do before and after the training event so that it get's applied. I think
>
> employees are going back and going my boss never talked to me before I
>
> went to training. They're not talking to me after I went to training. The
>
> people around me aren't using the skills. Atrophy. (Cassie, L273-277-PB)

Additionally, while the organization may be willing to support employee development, as mentioned previously, expectations for learning are not always communicated to the employee.

> It's like oh my gosh someone sent them to that $300 dollar global class.
>
> Oh when they came back to me and I didn't reinforce it, and I didn't have
>
> a consequence for not using it. I didn't make my expectations clear.
>
> (Cassie, L278-280-PB)

Cassie further explained, leaders not voicing expectations can have a negative impact on the organization and its employees. She illustrated this point by recounting how some employees are overworked because other employees are underprepared or uninformed concerning new job roles.

> There's a whole team of sales service trainers. They primarily do the new
>
> hire training. Well they're not expected to do the more interpersonal sales
>
> skills training and the customer service training. One person [in that area]
>
> is doing all of that training. He's getting burnt out. He says to his boss,

bring some of my coworkers in. They can observe me and then they can go get their certification. And the answer from that leader is they are not interpersonal trainers. They can only teach the technical parts of being an insurance agent and a travel agent. I'm getting burned out here. Why isn't that person setting the expectation. Your job has changed. You must train this and this. And make the expectations known [....]. If he goes down no one is able to fill the gap. (Cassie, L339-344-PB)

According to Cassie, leaders must foster an environment for open, honest dialogue concerning performance.

I have some [employees] that are like I want to go to that. I want to do that. I know this is all about current and future performance and whatever may come along. But then, I have others that don't believe they have that responsibility to ask. […] [That's] something I learned right away at my first job [...] We went to our first client meeting, and as soon as we left, and got into the car, [my] boss [asked me] what could [she] have done differently. Asking [me] what [she] could do differently, that opened the door. Boom. Immediately. [I responded] well, I guess this. And then I [asked] well, what could I do differently. That leader started that dialogue, that exchange. So I believe the leader sets the precedent for that conversation [....]. You have got to set that tone for a trusting open environment for that exchange. I know they have to be confident in my abilities but I'm also not perfect, and I have no problem admitting that. And I think you have got to show that vulnerability to begin to establish this learning from openness to feedback. (Cassie, L512-515-PA)

Employer 's Role/Responsibility
- Provide, clarify development opportunities
- Assess, identify organizational development needs
- Provide budget for training department, and external learning activities
- Assist employee with assessing development needs and creating a development plan linked to organizational
- Communicate link between development of competencies and expectations for performance
- Provide feekback and recomendations on development
- Succession planning (developing replacements)

Employee 's Role/Responsibility
- Self-assess strengths, weaknesses
- Communicate goals, interests
- Demonstrate desire to learn
- Transparency regarding development areas, needs
- Seek, engage in development (special projects , netoworking, mentoring, professional association, opportunities)
- Recognize, identify how job [organization, industry] is changing, evolving

HRD 's Role/Responsibility
- Provide careerpathing system/structure
- Assessment of organizational development needs

Skills
- Interpersonal
- Decision-making
- Problem-solving
- Expertise in field

Attitude
- Want , desire to learn
- Self-assessing
- Transparency regarding development areas, needs

Cassie Coach

Challenges
- Assessing greatest development needs for organization
- Development opportunities not linked to organizational needs
- Employees not prepared for promotional opportunities, no connection between development opportunities and positions w/I the organization
- Lack of perceived need for development by employee, employee focus on current job rather than preparation for future job (limited internal job opportunities)
- Limited HR staff (multiple priorities)
- Employer expectations not voiced
- Transfer/application of learning
- Employee attendance, workload

Benefits
- Retention
- Employee engagement
- Pipeline of employees-succession planning
- Recognition as employer that develops
- Employee ownership of learning
- Increased employee competency, skill at job
- Enhanced interpersonal skills

Activities
- Seek, engage in development
- Professional associations
- mentoring
- Annual development (something at least once a year: technical, conference, facilitation, certification, etc.)

Opportunities
- Over 500 online trainig courses on a variety of topics (new systems, interpersonal skills, customer service, leadership, etc.)
- Financial assisstance for professional conference fees, tuition assistance
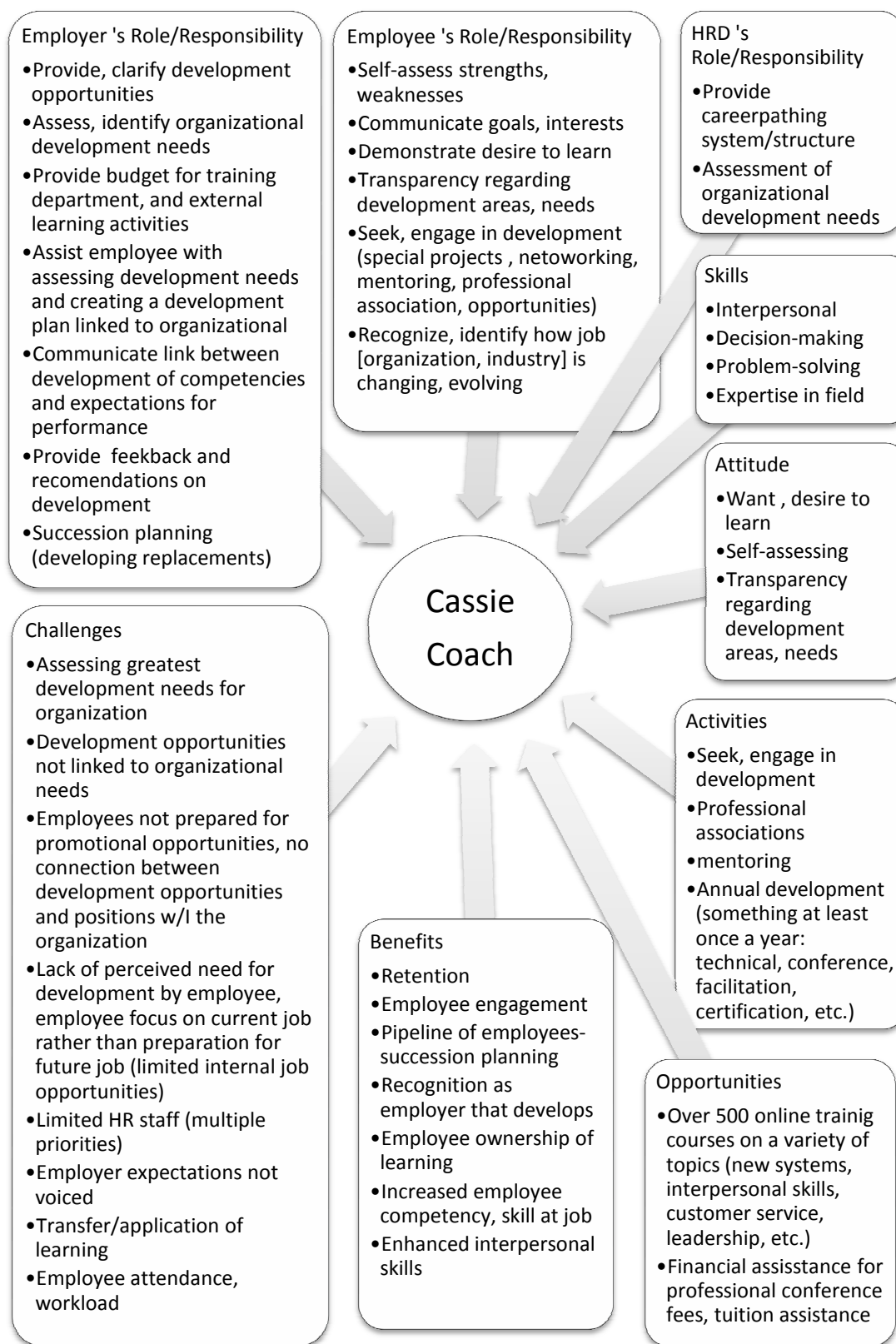
Figure 7. Cassie Coach – A Visual Display of Perspectives

Summary. Overall, Cassie communicated that her organization is working towards providing tools and resources to support employability. This includes developing a comprehensive career pathing system that identifies competency models for different job levels and aligning training programs to those models. Additionally, leaders in the organization are working towards doing a better job of assessing and communicating organizational needs and employee development areas.

As communicated in previous cases in this study, however, there is a sentiment that employees must take the lead in their development, thus their employability. They cannot wait for the organization to lay out a plan of action for them if they want to be competitive. Employees need to self-assess current development needs as well as be future focused, identifying how their job, the organization, and industry may be changing and plan development activities accordingly.

In the next chapter, I will present a cross-case analysis and synthesis of the participants' data, which will include common themes across the data, themes that were common to most, but not all, and notable exceptions. I will also provide a link to the current literature, consider the implications this study has for employers, employees, and HR professionals who have similar perspectives as the ones described in this study. Then, I present my own perspectives concerning employability and how they relate to the major themes. Lastly, I will consider the implications this study has for researchers investigating workplace learning.

Chapter Five

Analysis, Conclusion, Recommendations

In this chapter I present the results of my cross-case analysis and synthesis of perspectives of human resources executives highlighting the similarities of their perspectives and noting the differences therein. Further, I discuss how the results of this study can inform employers who provide job opportunities, employees who seek to increase their employability, and human resource professionals who play strategic roles in organizational development efforts such as those identified in this study. Next, I offer recommendations for future research. Finally, my own perspectives and their relationship to the themes are provided.

The purpose of this study was to examine HR executives' perspectives on employability enhancement for employees and how it is operationalized in their workplace. The exploratory questions that guided my study were:

1. What are the perspectives of HR executives regarding employability enhancement for employees?

2. In what ways and under what conditions is organizational support for employability enhancement demonstrated through workplace learning initiatives?

Before presenting a cross-case analysis and synthesis of the findings, I present a brief review of the gaps in the literature on employability in today's workplace, the analysis conducted in preparation for this chapter, and a discussion of the assumptions that underlie the concept of employability and how they relate to the study findings.

The skills and expertise required for an employee to remain employable may change depending on the current and future needs of the organization. Based on my review of the literature, however, there is limited discussion of the roles and responsibilities the organization assumes in order to provide its employees with opportunities to accumulate the necessary skills and expertise to remain employable during and after these changes (or their expectations for employee responsibilities towards this aim). The majority of the literature on employability suggests organizations have an active role to play in employability, but research has been primarily theoretical in nature, none of which captures the perspective (words and actions) of the organization. I conducted this study in order to address this gap in literature through the lens of human resource executives.

After data were collected to address this gap, I adhered to recommendations for coding (Berg, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Stake, 2006) and the guidelines for thematic analysis as identified by Braun and Clarke (2006). I analyzed the data within and across cases, to compare and determine which participants' perspectives were prevalent and which were isolated. From this analysis and the synthesis that followed, four major themes emerged entitled: 'Shared Responsibility,' 'The Power of Learning Attitude,' 'Assessment for Growth,' and 'Resource Availability.' These four themes include discussions of the roles and responsibilities for employability, desired employee learning attitudes, recommended assessment activities, and conditions affecting development opportunities provided by organizations.

These themes were examined in reference to the framework of the study. As mentioned, the conceptual framework for this study is based on Clarke and Patrickson's (2008, p. 124) list of assumptions concerning employability. Clarke and Patrickson posit five assumptions related to employability that represent today's psychological contract

(or informal unwritten employment contract) which include employability is primarily the individual's responsibility, individuals have the desire and capacity to manage their employability, the organization's role is to provide opportunities to enhance employability, and employability is an antecedent to employment. Assumptions 1, 2, and 3 inform exploratory question 1. Assumption 4 informs exploratory questions 1 and 2. Assumption 5 (employability is an antecedent to employment) is presumed given the perspectives under study are based on employability for existing employees.

Each of the four subsequent sections includes a discussion of the themes and relevant literature, as well as implications for organizations, their employees, and HRD professionals. Figure 8 is a visual representation of the four major themes and supporting ideas generated as a result of data analysis and synthesis.
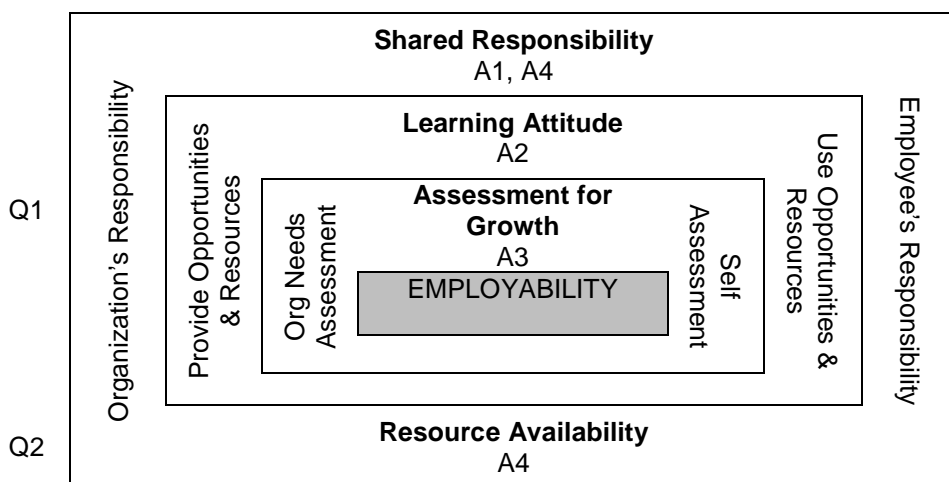
Conditions: Limited resources (HR staff, time, budget), Long-term employees, Labor market, Limited job vacancies, Restructuring (mergers, downsizing)

Figure 8. Analysis and Synthesis of the Study – A Visual Representation. A = Assumption, Q = Exploratory Question.

The figure illustrates the relationship between the themes, Clarke & Patrickson's (2008) model of assumptions, and the exploratory questions for this study. Themes and the associated assumptions are displayed horizontally. Exploratory questions and sub-themes related to the organization are depicted vertically on the left-hand side. Sub-themes related to the employee are depicted on the right-hand side. Conditions that relate to exploratory question 2 are displayed below the figure.

Cross-Case Analysis

Shared responsibility: There's no "I" in team. There's no I in team is a commonly used sports phrase that implies teamwork requires collaboration to reach a common goal. This expression has also been used in the workplace to rally together employees with different skills, ideas and work styles to accomplish business goals. Based on the findings of the study, the phrase symbolizes the theme shared responsibility between the organization and its employees for employability enhancement. The cross-case analysis showed some commonalities and differences related to the theme shared responsibility. Tables 3 and 4 summarize these commonalities and differences across cases.

Overall, shared responsibility for enhancing employees' employability was a common perspective expressed by all participants. Findings suggest there are specific roles or responsibilities that both the organization and its employees generally assume. These findings support Clarke and Patrickson's (2008) model of assumptions 1 and 4. Assumption 1 indicates employability is primarily the employee's responsibility and Assumption 4 states the organization has a responsibility to provide opportunities for the employee to develop.

Table 3.

Perspectives Concerning Shared Responsibility Across Cases-Organization

	# of Participants	Shared Responsibility Perspectives-Organization

Common	All (5)	Organization provides opportunities:
		• General soft-skilled, technical courses
		    ○ Leadership development focused courses, activities (exceptions: Connie and Cassie)
		    ○ Understanding business course (exceptions: Ann and Cassie)
		• Online learning resources (exception: Cathy)
		• Special projects (exceptions: Ann and Andrea)
		• Financial assistance for tuition, conferences, professional association meetings (exceptions: Andrea and Connie)
		• Mentoring program: Connie
		
		Organization provides structures, systems, tools and resources (e.g. career pathing , career development, learning management, learning library, etc.)

	Most (3-4)	Organization assesses organizational development needs (exception Connie) Organization identifies, assesses employee development needs (exception: Ann and Cathy)
Different	Few (1-2)	Organization assists employee with career development: Connie and Cassie

A variety of examples were cited by participants as primary opportunities provided by their organizations. These included general soft-skilled training courses, online learning resources, special projects, financial assistance for tuition, conferences, professional association meetings, and mentoring programs. General soft-skilled training courses were noted by all participants. The courses most frequently noted by participants centered on the areas of leadership and management development (e.g.

emergent leaders, leadership essentials, becoming a supervisor, performance management, and coaching for success). Additional courses mentioned ranged in topic areas such as customer service, time management, diversity (generational differences, respecting others), communication (conducting crucial conversations), and understanding the company business. The majority of the participants also indicated technical training courses were provided related to employees' specific job functions. These course offerings were more procedural in nature.

The majority of participants indicated the organization is also tasked with assuming responsibility for providing systems, tools and resources to promote development, assessing organizational and individual development needs, and assisting employees with career planning. Systems cited included career pathing (to define and clarify organizational career paths available and the competency requirements associated with them), performance evaluation (to encourage coaching and feedback exchange regarding employee strengths and weaknesses), and career development (to recommend activities and resources to support employee career mobility). Examples of online tools and resources provided were related to career exploration, personal development planning, and self-assessment.

The majority of participants indicated the organization is responsible for assessing the current and future development needs of the organization, and its employees, to identify areas for growth and appropriate measures to address those areas. Participants suggested if there is a skill set the organization needs or will need, it is responsible for developing its employees to meet this need. For instance, Cassie emphasized the importance of individuals in leadership and management roles to develop replacements for their positions.

I should have a strong pipeline of people ready to take over my job. So when I as a leader take the initiative [to delegate], I'm making sure if I get hit by that mac truck somebody could fill in, somebody could take over. I should always be developing my people. (Cassie, L217-220-PB)

Cathy mirrored this sentiment when describing her organization's efforts to identify critical positions in the organization and key skill sets needed, to prepare employees to fill those positions should they become vacant in the future.

We have a process where we identify critical positions either technically or because they're strategic in leadership. And then we look across the organization. Our directors actually run this and the officers tweak and approve the final product. We look at making sure that our organization isn't vulnerable if one of those [critical positions] should go vacant. Then we look at what are we doing to develop people should an opportunity become available, to get them ready to take that position. We [...] look across, if these people aren't immediately ready what is it that's holding them back? Ok that's me [that is my job, to] go find some training and start putting that out for the managers who we are going to be looking at to make directors. [...] So we grow the organization. Whether or not they actually become directors, all we can do is make the best ready and it grows the organization regardless. Truth be told, we have some very low turnover in our leaders. (Cathy, L206-216-PA)

Perspectives concerning the organization's responsibility for providing future career-oriented versus job-specific development varied. Ann conveyed it was the organization's responsibility to provide support for job-specific development, but not necessarily for career changes unrelated to an employee's current position with the

organization. According to Ann, if an employee wants to develop skills for a future job or career unrelated to their current job, the employee should take responsibility for development towards that end. This stance was reflected in Ann's own history of development. She is personally financing development activities that are unrelated to her current position with her organization.

Connie, on the other hand, contended that both job-specific and future career-oriented development is a major part of the organization's responsibility. She expressed it is the organization's task to not only provide development opportunities to assist employees with succeeding in their current job roles, but to provide opportunities for employees to attain their future career aspirations as well. It was her stance that the organization should work with employees on career planning activities to assist them with reaching career aspirations even if they were unrelated to their current position. She reasoned if the organization does not do so, employees (more specifically, younger employees) may leave the organization to pursue opportunities for development in other organizations taking the knowledge, skills, and expertise they have accumulated with them.

As noted in Figure 8 the theme shared responsibility includes responsibilities for employees as well as the organization. Study participants included the following as they described the employee's responsibility: utilizing opportunities provided by the organization, engaging in development activities, developing general transferable skills and technical skills specific to one's field, and communicating development goals.

According to the participants, employees have the responsibility to seek out and take advantage of the opportunities and resources provided by the organization. Although varied in type, participants indicated there were internal and external activities employees should engage in to maintain or enhance their employability. These included

developing general, transferable skills, networking, participating in professional

associations, taking on special projects, and investing in mentoring relationships.

Table 4.

Perspectives Concerning Shared Responsibility Across Cases-Employee

	# of Participants	Shared Responsibilities Perspectives-Employees
Common	All (5)	Use opportunities, resources provided by organization Engage in development activities: • Networking (exception: Cassie) • Professional associations (exception: Ann and Andrea-however, both discussed in own development to stay current in field) • Special project to increase skills, competencies (exceptions: Ann and Andrea) • Mentoring (exceptions: Ann and Andrea) • Read materials related to field and industry: Andrea and Connie
Common	Most (3-4)	Develop general, transferable skills: • Interpersonal skills (exception: Andrea and Connie) • Influence: Andrea and Cathy • Understanding business context (exceptions: Ann and Cassie) • Leadership, management: Ann and Cathy Communicate development goals (exception: Andrea)
Different	Few (1-2)	Develop technical skills specific to field: Cathy

The majority of participants stressed to maintain or enhance employability

employees need to invest in developing general, transferable skills such as

interpersonal, leadership, and management skills as well as technical expertise specific

to one's field. Cassie shared that if an employee has a specific skill set, and is an expert

in things related to that skill set (e.g. tools, software, etc.), they are highly desirable as

employees. She cautioned, however, that possessing technical skills or field expertise alone is not enough in most jobs to remain highly employable. In fact, the majority of the participants communicated that employees at all levels need to have effective interpersonal skills and be able to work collaboratively with others to be successful. Ann described interpersonal skills as being critical to an employee's employability regardless of job function or specialty.

Further, the majority of the participants suggested the ability to influence or persuade those one does not have direct control over was also a competency for employment success. Andrea and Cathy expressed this skill is important because it demonstrates an employee's ability to effectively induce buy-in and support for ideas without coercion. Both participants indicated it was important for employees to have a communication style that encouraged and convinced others to discuss and reach agreement concerning decisions.

Finally, the majority of participants stated understanding the business or the business context as a desirable skill for employees to possess. This entailed having knowledge of the organization's goals, mission, strengths, challenges, customers, competitors, and services and products. According to Cathy this knowledge can help employees be successful no matter what position they hold.

> You will be the most successful employee you can be, no matter what position, if you have a big picture of what my company is about. If I understand my business better [it] can't help but make me a better employee and team member. I think you can be effective in a certain niche but if you want to be strategic at all and do things more effectively in the long haul you need to understand the business and the bigger picture

especially if you are in a leadership position with a company. (Cathy-L375-380-PB)

The majority of participants emphasized the importance of employees networking with individuals in the same or different industries to share and exchange ideas, market themselves, and learn in an informal way. Further, participants commented on the value of employee participation in professional associations to stay abreast of changes to the field, sharpen competencies, or even scout external job opportunities. For instance, Ann and Andrea described their participation in professional associations as integral parts of their development to stay current in their field. Connie shared that participation in professional associations was a tremendous help to her when she was transitioning from a layoff from an organization where she had worked for over eighteen years.

Mentoring was cited by most participants as an activity employees should engage in to develop relationships that may enhance their employability. Connie, Cathy, and Cassie, in particular, expressed the value of mentoring relationships which assist employees with identifying areas of study to build competencies, preparing for job transitions, and evaluating career choices for upward mobility.

There's a woman in our marketing department who's pretty high up and she has established a mentor because [with] two marketing departments, is everybody going to have a job. She is not waiting around. She is saying I've got to look at our [the organization's] need and go [consider] what are my employability options if something changes here soon. And so that relationship has led her to recommendations for things she should read, groups she should join. (Cassie, L311-315-PA)

Cathy emphasized how the guidance and assistance received from mentors helped her develop the background and expertise to strategically pursue the career she is in today.

The Air Force does not consider research and development an

operational tour. So the mentors I worked for [...] said, we need to make

you operational. Let's put you into personnel. Well that began [my] HR

experience. (Cathy, L8-12-PA)

Engagement in special projects was recommended by the majority of participants

in the study as an activity to help employees maintain or increase their employability

(exceptions: Ann and Andrea). According to participants, employee engagement in

challenging projects is an effective learning method for development. Connie, Cathy,

and Cassie suggested that involvement in special projects can help employees keep

current skills up to date, develop new skills and competencies through involvement in

things not done before, and provide employees opportunities to enhance their

understanding of the business or industry.

You can also put them into special projects. Those are the kinds of things

that enhance your understanding of the business not just what to look for

but the business itself. And so to me that's also a good learning activity.

(Connie-L185-188-PA)

The majority of the participants noted the employee's responsibility also includes

communicating their career and development goals so leaders or supervisors can assist

with identifying or recommending appropriate opportunities to achieve those goals.

Andrea was the only participant who did not express this perspective. This may be

reflective of the limited support her area can provide due to restructuring that reduced

the organizational development department from a size of twelve to a team of three.

Overall, participant discussion gravitated toward a shared responsibility to

maintain or enhance an employee's employability. Clearly both the organization and its

employees perform specific roles or responsibilities which may contribute to an

employee's employability. In general, the organization provides opportunities, resources, and tools for employee development. In response, employees are expected to take the lead in their development by utilizing these opportunities, resources, and tools provided by the organization.

> The employee's responsibility for maintaining employability […] in the year 2012 […], I think it has shifted to, I was saying 50/50 but it is moving even beyond. It may be 60/40. It may be 70/30. I don't know when that will go back in the other direction. (Andrea, L107-110-PA)

The theme, shared responsibility, parallels assertions by Thijssen (et al, 2008, p. 171) that both the employer and employee, share responsibility for maintaining and enhancing employee employability. Scholars suggest the employing organization is expected to offer opportunities, as well as tools and resources to support or improve an employee's employability and employees are expected to be ready and capable of using these opportunities in order to take responsibility for career choices.

Perspectives shared by the participants concerning the type of opportunities provided by the organization were not completely consistent with the literature. Carbery and Garavan (2005) and Mallon and Watson (2005, p. 474) studies indicated that while organization-specific skills were provided to employees, generic transferable skills had to be sourced by the individual. In addition, Carbery and Garavan (2005) indicated that learning activities predetermined by the organization were based on the role being occupied, tended to focus on the here and now, and provided learning opportunities that were specific and job-related. The opposite, however, was reflected in Andrea's organization. Learning activities were more generic in nature rather than organization-specific and employees were expected to learn beyond their current job roles using

online resources to expand their skill base. Most of the other cases in the study

provided both organization-specific as well as generic development opportunities.

The perspectives shared by participants concerning skills of highly employable

individuals coincide with literature on employability skills. Studies suggest employees

are expected to possess many of the skills mentioned by the participants such as

interpersonal skills, influencing skills, and understanding organizational culture or

business (Carnevale et al., 1990, The Workforce Board, 2003).

thematic Implications. As organizations provide developmental opportunities to

enhance an employee's employability, as well as provide systems and structures to

clarify job roles and competencies for development, my study suggests employees

cannot necessarily rely on the organization to direct their development or career

progression. Employees have to take ownership for their development. This includes

communicating development goals and seeking and using the opportunities provided by

the organization to accomplish them. Findings also suggest employees need to have

the right learning attitude regarding their development. Although not described in terms

of a responsibility, learning attitude was cited as a factor contributing to employee

employability. This finding is discussed in the next section: the Power of Learning

Attitude.

The power of learning attitude. It is said that attitude comes in two forms,

positive or negative and that we display a positive or negative attitude regarding almost

every situation we encounter during our day to day lives and activities. This sentiment

extends to our approaches to learning. Attitude is illustrated by our actions, reactions, or

inactions towards learning. Participants shared their perspectives concerning various

aspects of learning attitude they perceive to be reflective of highly employable

employees. The cross-case analysis showed some commonalities and differences

related to these aspects. Table 5 summarizes the commonalities and differences across cases.

Table 5.

Perspectives Concerning Learning Attitude Across Cases

	# of Participants	Learning Attitude Perspectives
Common	All (5)	Willingness, desire to learn and grow continuously
		Flexibility in learning, format
		Self-directedness, taking lead in learning, development process
	Most (3-4)	Flexibility, adaptable to change (exception: Cathy)
Different	Few (1-2)	Anticipation and acknowledgment of change: Andrea and Cassie
		Motivation to learn beyond job scope: Andrea and Connie

According to all of the participants, the learning attitude of today's employees must include the desire and willingness to continuously learn, flexibility to learn in formal and informal ways, and a high level of self-directedness. This perspective corresponds to Clarke and Patrickson's (2008) model Assumption 2, that individuals have the desire to manage their employability. Additionally, employees are expected to anticipate change, demonstrate flexibility to adapt to change, and learn beyond job scope.

Connie explained regulations change often in the banking and financial services industry and that employees must have a propensity for learning in order to keep up with these changes and be effective at their jobs. Cassie shared that due to recent organizational restructuring there were many changes expected to take place in the

organization that would affect all employees. Therefore employees' openness and receptiveness to continuous learning would be much more important than it had previously.

Regarding flexibility in learning, Cathy shared in her organization employees have to be open to learning informally as well as formally, and at times, in ways which they are not accustomed or comfortable. She elaborated that employees' willingness to ask questions and share stories about their experiences with employees was an effective method for learning in her organization as well as learning by doing. Connie indicated often times the best job training for employees in her organization is working on tasks they have never done before to expand their skills. Andrea, on the other hand, suggested employees having full access to a vast amount of online resources at any time, on a variety of general topics, can make them more well-rounded employees. This range of examples suggests in order for employees to benefit from opportunities provided by the organization they must be flexible enough to accommodate the learning format the organization provides.

In terms of self-directedness, as mentioned previously, employees have the responsibility to seek out and engage in development activities. Andrea, Connie, and Cassie stressed it is important for employees to initiate or request special projects and tasks rather than to passively wait for them to be assigned. According to participants, such initiative not only indicates motivation and enthusiasm for responding to organizational needs, but also an employee's drive to expand their knowledge base and expertise. This in turn makes the employee more attractive to the organization, thus may increase their employability.

In contrast, Andrea and Cassie stressed an employee's disregard or neglect to initiate or seek out development activities to expand skill sets can have the opposite

effect on an employee's attractiveness, thus employability. Employees may be viewed as less desirable candidates for future promotional opportunities. Cassie mentioned there have been several instances in which she felt she was more invested in an employee's development than the employee. While she expressed a willingness to encourage as well as recommend development activities for employees, she stated she expects employees to recognize development areas for themselves and request opportunities to address those areas.

> But [...] in defense of the person that I criticized earlier, he's sitting there going, "I don't see any direct lines of development and plans and there wasn't going to be any additional leadership so well I'll be the best I can at instructional design." And all of a sudden a whole new world opened up when we had this [restructuring]. Now there is an opportunity, now I'm going to watch [him]. And I did start giving him more [responsibility]. Hey you know what, here is a junior employee. He's got a project. Instead of me reviewing his work [I said] you do that. So I give him some of those things. But [...] I wish he would have said 'hey is there anything I can do to start establishing my leadership skills because someday if there's ever some crazy thing like [...] an affiliation, I might want to be ready. (Cassie, L256-263-PA)

Most of the participants expressed that employees also have to demonstrate flexibility or ability to adjust to change. Andrea in particular stressed that given the fast paced nature of her organization, employees have to be able to adjust and respond to changes related to the organization's focus. This might be reflected through adapting to changes in job roles or functions, showing willingness to use new methods, procedures, or techniques to accomplish work, or even resilience from unexpected challenges or

setbacks. A minority of participants further suggested employees must not only be flexible in responding to change but also recognize and anticipate it. Both Andrea and Cassie shared that employees must be focused and aware of how their job is evolving within the organization. Cassie illustrated this point when she labeled employees who did so as shining stars of the organization. Not only were these individuals viewed as being proactive in assessing organizational needs but responding to them as well. These individuals demonstrated a willingness to adjust the focus of their development to meet the changing needs of their jobs and the organization.

Finally, a minority of participants suggested employees should invest in learning beyond their current job scope to increase their employability. This would entail expanding skill sets and competencies outside of current job roles to prepare for future job roles. Andrea stressed employees should invest in learning how to do a particular thing well even though it may not be a part of their job today. She identified a correlation between an employee's investment in learning beyond their current job scope, their job search efforts, and ultimately their job growth or selection for employment opportunities that became available within her organization. Andrea contended, when all required competencies exist, the employee who will get the job in her organization is the one who brings something extra to the table. Connie echoed this perspective and further noted learning beyond job scope assisted the employee with developing essential skill sets to help them advance in their careers externally as well as internally.

Although participants emphasized the importance of learning attitude, they also acknowledged there may be factors that affect employees' learning attitude. Examples most frequently cited included complacency due to long-term employment, limited job mobility, and lack of perceived need for development. All participants (with the exception of Connie) commented that in their organizations there are many long term

employees and few vertical positions available for advancement. According to the participants, many of their employees have had to remain in the same job for long periods of time due to employees choosing to retire later and there being a small number of new job openings.   Andrea and Cassie speculated that, as a result, some employees had become complacent. Because there were limited promotional opportunities and their current jobs had not changed much, employees perceived no reason to be concerned about whether or not they were qualified for a job or foresaw a need to seek or engage in development opportunities. Andrea posited that employees tended to invest in learning when they thought it was needed, not because they were interested in learning for learning's sake.

Participant perspectives suggest for employees to be competitive in today's job market, they must be willing to learn, be flexible and show initiative in their learning, as well as focus their learning beyond their current job scope. These perspectives correspond with literature related to workplace learning. Carbery and Garavan (2005) asserted that individuals have to take responsibility for their own learning, including being initiators for their development. The researchers suggested individuals who pursue development opportunities recognize they have skill gaps and want to broaden their knowledge base to increase their employability. These characteristics are reflective of self-directed learners. Self-directed individuals are described as proactive, self-initiating, resourceful, and take responsibility for their learning (Guglielmino and Guglielmino, 2008). Further, scholars suggested the successful learner recognizes his or her own needs for learning and takes responsibility for ensuring the necessary learning takes place regardless of the learning resources or format (Guglielmino and Guglielmino, 2003).

Regarding adaptability to change, Fugate et al. (2004) proposed that an individual's willingness and ability to transform in response to changes in their work environment was an important aspect of employability. Likewise, Morcos (2009) surmised that employees with greater levels of personal flexibility derive greater benefit and further their career development than those with lower levels of personal flexibility because they understand how to take advantage of change, expose themselves more easily to change, and embrace change in an effort to learn from different experiences (p. 40).

Thijssen (et al, 2008, p. 175) suggested whether or not employees choose to invest in their development may be a determining factor influencing employers' perception of an employees' level of employability, as well as the type of developmental opportunities that will be provided by the organization. Scholars suggested that organizations tend to support development for employees who demonstrate a desire to develop themselves (Carbery & Garavan, 2005; Clarke and Patrickson, 2008).

thematic implications. Learning attitude encompasses many factors and may significantly contribute to an employee's perceived employability. Employees will need to not only be flexible with learning in different formats and in informal ways but also expect that this may be an ongoing expectation given the changing needs of the organization. Additionally, it seems employees will need to play a more active role in initiating their involvement in development activities. For some employees this may require taking active steps to increase their level of self-directedness. This may prove a challenge for employees who are accustomed to, or have a preference for, the organization assuming more control over their development. Therefore, HRD professionals may need to aid employees with developing more self-directed attitudes and abilities towards learning.

They may also need to assist the organization with creating a work environment which communicates and supports this expectation for learning.

Literature indicates there are multiple barriers to learning. One in particular relates to a lack of self-awareness concerning learning needs (Hicks, Bagg, Doyle, & Young, 2007; Sambrook, 2006). Findings from this present study suggests that the extent to which employees have the capacity to identify skill areas for growth or expansion, and recognize the skills employers want or will be looking for in the future, may contribute to their employability. These findings are discussed in the next section: Assessment for Growth.

Assessment for growth. Scholars suggest employees can maintain their employability by ensuring that they have the skills necessary to compete for jobs in their organization and perform at an accepted level (Tansky & Cohen, 2001, p. 297). One method to strive towards this aim is to engage in assessment activities. Assessment is a process that can be used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth for an individual. It may be performed by an organization or the individual to evaluate an employee's talents and ability to meet business objectives. The cross-case analysis showed some commonalities and differences for the theme assessment for growth. Table 6 summarizes the commonalities and differences across cases.

Overall, the majority of participants indicated that employees should engage in assessment behaviors to enhance or maintain their employability. This included self-assessing growth areas, being transparent concerning development areas identified, and seeking feedback from others. This coincides with Clarke and Patrickson's (2008) model Assumption 3, that the individual has the capacity to manage their employability. According to Clarke and Patrickson, this encompasses the capacity to evaluate individual strengths and weaknesses in relation to market and employer expectations,

the capacity to reflect on those skills and attributes, and the willingness to seek help as required (p. 128).

Table 6.

Perspectives Concerning Assessment for Growth Across Cases

	# of Participants	Assessment for Growth Perspectives
Common	All (5)	None
Common	Most (3-4)	Seek feedback regarding development (exceptions: Ann [HR, Ann mentions feedback or coaching meetings] and Andrea)
Different	All	Self-assess strengths, weaknesses: Cathy and Cassie Convey transparency regarding development needs: Cathy and Cassie

A minority of participants suggested that employees should engage in self-assessment, to become more cognizant of their development areas on their own. This might entail evaluating how well their skills and talents match the current and future needs of their organization rather than waiting for, or relying solely on, the organization to provide such information. Cathy and Cassie suggested that employees need to have a realistic evaluation of the areas in which they excel and those that need development. Similarly, they suggested assessment should be expanded to include how their job, their organization, and the industry in which they work are changing. Such efforts would most likely help them gain insights to better prepare and position themselves to respond to those changes, thus, potentially increase their employability.

Cathy and Cassie also emphasized that employees should, not only, identify areas for improvement but also be candid in acknowledging to others what those areas may be. According to Cathy and Cassie employees must be willing to acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses and make them known to their leaders or supervisors to elicit assistance with addressing these development areas. Such candidness would require employees to be transparent about their deficiencies. Cathy acknowledged, however, that this approach may prove challenging for employees who believe transparency could be viewed as incompetence or inability to perform, thus negatively impact their employability.

The majority of the participants indicated it was important for employees to seek feedback from supervisors and leaders to determine potential growth areas. Cathy and Cassie noted, however, that the organization must foster an environment that is conducive to open, honest feedback for employees to feel comfortable with this exchange of information. Cassie explained that some leaders are not as forthcoming as others with constructive feedback concerning performance or skill development areas. She further elaborated that oftentimes leaders neglect to voice their expectations for performance or withhold developmental recommendations from employees due to discomfort with communicating this information. Cathy echoed this sentiment and stated, for this reason, it is advantageous for employees to regularly solicit feedback regarding their strengths, weakness, and areas for growth.

Research indicates employability is linked to a range of activities such as regular self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, updating of skills as required to match market demands (Clarke, 2008). Clarke & Patrickson (2008, p. 128) cite, however, that most individuals do not have the capacity to evaluate their knowledge, abilities and

competencies, and if they do have the tools for self-evaluation they may not have the skills to communicate or market their competencies to employers.

For those that may have the ability to self-evaluate, the issue of transparency may still be an issue. Researchers suggest employees are wary of exposing their development needs to others. For instance, Roodney and Boud (2003, p. 330) found that even though learning may occur in the workplace, employees did not want to be labeled as learners because it suggested that they were novices, did not know what they were doing, or did not have the capacity to do their jobs. Likewise, Reardon (2004) found that following restructuring efforts employees chose not go to their superiors regarding development needs because they perceived it might be interpreted as an inability to do their jobs.

thematic implications. Employees may need to focus purposeful attention on regularly self-assessing strengths and weakness and actively look for development opportunities and resources. Given that some employees may be more self-directed than others, HR/D may need to assist employees with this process. This might include offering programs and resources to support assessing development needs and identifying opportunities and resources to address them.

While it may be beneficial for employees to disclose growth areas, such information could result in both positive and negative perceptions of employees' employability. Employees will need to evaluate whether the risk is worth the potential benefits of sharing such information. Employers will have to assess whether the environment supports or impedes workplace learning. HRD will have to assess how to help foster an environment to support transparency to promote development, thus, employability enhancement.

The next section focuses attention on the conditions under which organizations provide employees opportunities to enhance employability.

Resource availability. All of the participants in the study commented that the organization benefited from providing employees development opportunities to enhance employability. These benefits included better skilled and prepared employees, employee retention and engagement, and employee ownership for their own learning. Participants also noted there were conditions which affected the organization's ability to provide opportunities, many of which were related to resource availability. These included: limited HR Staff, limited time versus workload, and budget constraints. The labor market (limited job vacancies) and organizational restructuring (mergers, downsizing) were also cited as conditions that affected the opportunities provided by an organization. The cross-case analysis showed some commonalities and differences related to the theme resource availability. Table 7 summarizes the commonalities and differences across cases.

Table 7.

Perspectives Concerning Resource Availability Across Cases

	# of Participants	Resource Availability Perspectives
Common	All (5)	Limited HR staff, expertise
	Most (3-4)	Limited time (exception Cathy)
		Financial cost (exception: Connie and Cathy)
Different	Few (1-2)	Organizational restructuring: Andrea and Cassie Labor market (few job vacancies): Andrea and Cassie

Findings from the study indicated that opportunities for development provided by organizations were in large part based on the resources available. The majority of participants shared that their organizations are challenged with offering development opportunities due to ever shrinking resources. Resources were described in terms of time, money, and HR staff available to develop, implement, and facilitate development initiatives.

The majority of participants indicated that limited funds was a condition that constrained the breadth of opportunities their organizations could provide. Cathy and Cassie both shared that many of the informal development opportunities once offered by their organization had been eliminated due to limited budgets.

> We have had, for short brief spans, on-going supervisory forums where we bring all the supervisors together [...] or even find a magazine on supervision and we would launch lunch-n-learns over an article in that [magazine]. But as things have happened over the last couple of years we have had to just stop doing that because our plates were just too full. (Cathy, L334-336-PA)

Cost also affected the format in which development opportunities could be offered. Andrea commented there was a time when most professional development programs provided by her organization were offered in live classrooms. Now, almost all training courses are offered in an online format. She suggested this trend is, in part, due to advances in technology, the ease of accessibility for learners, and cost. Ann shared online learning may become a more common approach used in her organization as well due to budget constraints.

> In higher education as the budgets continue to shrink and we have to become more efficient and more effective in what we're doing. We have

to change the learning to be more online and more to the needs of the changing environment. (Ann, L96-99-PA)

All participants in the study indicated that the size of the HR/D department affected the ability of the organization to provide a large range of development opportunities as well. Andrea noted that the range of expertise available to create or facilitate training programs was limited by the size of the HR/D staff.

We as professionals in our line of work can do a million things, but questions always come down to: is it feasible to do it, and then should we do it, are we clear about the impact, and can [we] measure and show that value? (Andrea-L44-46-PA)

Additionally, she added the amount of time HR/D staff could commit to identifying development needs as well as responding to them (e.g. instructional design, development, and implementation) was often times limited due to workloads and competing priorities. As a result, Andrea and Cassie suggested the relevancy of the development opportunities provided by their organization was affected. Both participants stated many of the development opportunities provided by their organization were not well linked to the organization's competency needs partly because HR/D staff's attention had to be focused in other areas. Thus, while the organization may have provided employees opportunities to develop, these opportunities were not necessarily preparing employees to assume key roles or critical positions within the organization.

For instance, in two of the cases participants expressed that their employees were not qualified for promotional opportunities despite development opportunities provided by the organization. Cassie shared an "ah ha" moment which she experienced recently while interviewing internal candidates for an open management position. According to Cassie, there were many internal

candidates who were long termed employees that applied for the job. Unfortunately, these employees did not have the administrative experience necessary to qualify for the job.

Cassie speculated this competency gap was in large part due to the types of development opportunities offered to employees. More specifically, employees in her organization had limited opportunities to gain leadership or managerial experience. According to Cassie, functional job roles that had once allowed employees to serve as supervisors or team leaders had been eliminated with restructuring efforts to become a leaner, flatter organization. As a result, the organization is now faced with the decision to delay filling the open position until a qualified internal candidate can be developed or to refocus efforts on external recruitment. Cassie illustrated an employment dilemma. How can employees truly come up through the ranks if development opportunities to gain experience, such as serving in supervisory or leadership roles, are no longer provided by the organization?

Andrea shared, in cases where internal candidates are considered unqualified for open positions, her organization almost always elects to hire externally. She surmised that due to labor market conditions there has been an increase in companies with fast paced environments to go outside the organization to find the talent they need rather than to train internally for it. She added that such a hiring approach is increasingly used because at the moment it is cheaper to buy talent outside the organization than to develop it from within. She further explained that in terms of employability, the organization is focused on capability or the employee's ability to perform a specific job or task to meet business goals, not trainability or the employee's potential to learn what is required to accomplish a job or task to meet business goals. Andrea hypothesized,

however, that as a long-term practice this strategy is unsustainable and that eventually

the cost of hiring externally will exceed the cost of developing from within the

organization. She surmised only at that point will organizations be forced to be more

strategic with investments in employee development efforts.

> In 2007, 2008, […] the financial situation was so poor […] we cut back
>
> [on] everything. In fact, the talent and development department used to
>
> be called organizational development and learning. It [had] about 10 to
>
> 12 people in it and today we only have 3. It is illustrative of [...] that
>
> reality. So you go to a certain point and, what you realize is, you create a
>
> hole. So I don't know how long that can continue. I don't think it can
>
> continue indefinitely because, at some point, what is going to happen is
>
> the market is going to improve. The economic market, the labor market
>
> will change and [...] a lot people from within the organization will find it
>
> easier to leave and go where they choose to go. And the cost of bringing
>
> new people into your organization will get very high. So then all of a
>
> sudden the company will say, well maybe we need to start training for
>
> this, and maybe we need to start training for that. That's not where we
>
> are today but I don't think that where we are today [...] can continue
>
> forever. (Andrea, L19-23-PA).

Participant perspectives are consistent with previous research related to barriers

to workplace learning. The most prominent barrier noted by scholars was related to

resource constraints such as financial constraints (Crouse, Dole, & Young, 2011;

Lohman, 2005) or money in the form of investment in the central HRD function and

departmental budgets (Sambrook and Stewart, 2000); lack of time due to workload

(Crouse et al., 2011; Ellinger, 2005; Ellinger & Cesh, 2007; Hicks et al., 2007; Lohman,

2005; Sambrook, 2006; Sambrook & Stewart, 2000) to develop initiatives or update

learning materials; and lack of an adequate number of HRD staff (Sambrook, 2005

Sambrook & Stewart, 2000) or available expertise (Hicks et al., 2007).

Previous research also indicated that downsizing can adversely impact how

workplace learning takes place (Volpe, 1999). Volpe suggested prior to downsizing,

employees learned informally by interacting with other employees in the organization.

After restructuring, however, fewer opportunities for informal learning (e.g. brown-bag

lunches) were available.

Although I did not locate research that confirmed or challenged the notion that

labor market conditions directly affected the development opportunities provided by the

organization, scholars have suggested organizations are increasingly expecting to be

able to hire individuals with the skills, abilities and experience needed rather than

contribute to on-going skill maintenance and upgrading (Clarke, 2008). This supports

the speculated mismatch or gap identified by participants in my study concerning the

opportunities provided by their organization and the competencies needed for

employees to advance.

thematic implications. While the organization may see the need or value of

providing developmental opportunities to enhance an employees' employability, limited

resources associated with such efforts may prevent them from doing so. Limited budget,

time and HR staff may affect the breadth of opportunities that can be offered and, in

some cases, the format used to provide development opportunities. If the organization

has a strategic goal and commitment to grow its employees, additional resources may

need to be allocated towards identifying critical jobs that may become vacant and

preparing employees for those jobs before they do. Otherwise the organization will run

the risk of having to hire externally for vacant positions. While this is a business option

for the organization, as a long-term strategy it does not contribute towards growing the skill set of existing employees or enhancing their employability.

Scholars have posited that employability is dependent on the number of jobs available in the labor market and the capacity of the employees to meet the immediate skill and experience requirements of employers (Clarke, 2008, p. 269). Thus, possessing the right skills and experience and attitude toward learning may only enhance employability if there is a match in demand from employers. If employees want to be competitive in today's job market, they will have to consider the requirements for jobs available in their organization, the labor market, and their capacity to meet the immediate skill and experience requirements of employers.

Conclusion

Implications for practice. Scholars suggest the employment contract has moved from the concept of lifetime job security, which was largely the responsibility of the organization, to lifetime employability, which is mainly the responsibility of the individual (Forrier & Sels, 2003; Hall & Mirvis, 1996; Thijssen et al, 2008). Within this new model, employees are expected to be primarily responsible for their employability and the organization is expected to provide opportunities that promote employability. In theory, this concept is straight forward and clear, however, in practice maintaining and enhancing one's employability is a continuous endeavor (Romaniuk & Snark, 2000; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006) and therefore may be a challenge for some individuals (Carbery & Garavan, 2005). At the same time, from the organization's perspective, providing ongoing opportunities to employees that support such pursuits can be challenging as well. For this reason, it was important to explore organizational perspectives concerning roles and responsibilities for enhancing employees'

employability and the ways and conditions in which organizations are providing support in this area.

Results of the study support the assertion that organizations do, in fact, expect employees to be in charge of managing their careers and employability rather than relying on the organization to fulfill this role. Findings suggest there is a greater emphasis being placed on the employees' responsibility and involvement in identifying and addressing personal development needs and assuming a more significant role in the learning process (Ellinger, 2005; Sambrook & Stewart, 2000). Findings also suggest employee adherence to these expectations may influence organizational perceptions concerning an employee's qualifications for future jobs or promotional opportunities, thus an employee's employability. HRD's role may need to be expanded to include helping employees understand the organization's stance on what it means to be employable, why employability enhancement is so important, and how, to a large extent, it is their responsibility to manage. For instance, a greater focus could be placed on assisting employees with developing competencies in self-evaluation and self-promotion.

This study also suggests that organizations are still grappling with the operationalization of their responsibility for employability enhancement, often due to resource limitations and external factors such as the economy and labor market. These factors may contribute to organizational tentativeness in clarifying, or making explicit, what it sees as employer versus employee obligations for employability. As such, HRD may need to assist the organization with acknowledging its role in the employability equation, communicating what employees are expected to contribute to the employment contract and what they can expect to receive in return, and developing strategies for fulfilling its responsibility to provide opportunities that may enhance employee employability.

Theoretical implication for Clarke & Patrickson's model of assumptions for employability. While Clarke and Patrickson's (2008) model indicates the organization has a responsibility to provide opportunities to employees to enhance their employability, it does not provide examples of the types of opportunities organizations may be providing. Nor does it describe the ways in which employees demonstrate primary responsibility for enhancing their employability. Therefore, findings from my study amplify Clarke and Patrickson's model by detailing this information.

Additionally, my study suggests there is an interrelatedness that exists between the model's assumptions which was not asserted by Clarke and Patrickson. This interrelatedness is depicted in Figure 8. The themes identified in my study represent the expectations organizations may hold concerning the employment relationship.

Future research. While there seems to be an indication that organizations are providing opportunities for employees to develop, how these opportunities correlate to enhanced employability needs further investigation. Additionally, it may be important to explore whether certain development activities, more so than others, contribute to maintaining or enhancing employees' employability.

Learning attitude was communicated as an impactful factor related to employability. Examples noted in this study, however, were anecdotal in nature. Research concerning the impact of learning attitude on employer's perceptions of employee employability may prove insightful to the growing body of literature on employability, since employers determine who remains employed. Do employers perceive employees who seek learning for learning's sake differently than those who learn when there is an identified need to so? Is there a correlation between employer perceptions of employees' learning attitude and job growth or selection for promotional opportunities?

Another area for possible study involves determining if there is a relationship between employee self-assessment (evaluating strengths, weakness, skills, areas for growth) and employability. Scholars have suggested that assessment is a necessary part of employability enhancement, and that employees should constantly assess their growth needs given increasing changes in job expectations. If there is an expectation that employees self-assess their strengths and weaknesses (Clarke, 2008) how does the organization view employees who disclose their development needs? Does transparency positively or negatively influence an employee's perceived employability?

Based on the study, there are two aspects related to employability that should be considered. The first is focused on capability or competency, an employee's ability to accomplish a specific job or task to meet business goals. The second is focused on trainability, an employee's potential to learn what's required to accomplish new jobs or tasks. It is surmised that in today's workplace employers are more focused on the former rather than latter, what an employee can do for the organization rather than whether or not an employee is trainable. Research concerning the extent to which this may hold true would be insightful for employees who, based on the employability model, are expected to be primarily responsible for their employability. Additionally, if organizations are choosing to hire externally for needed talent rather than investing in developing from within the organization due to labor market conditions, research identifying successful strategies employees are using to remain competitive in such environments would be a contribution to literature on employability enhancement.

Researcher's Relationship to the Study Findings

I was not surprised by the findings of my study. However, as I meditated on the meaning and implications of the results my attention naturally gravitated towards how

does this information relate to me. How do the findings of this study provide me with insight into my own employability?

My responsibility. From the start of my journey toward completing this study I have reflected on the following question: What is my responsibility for managing my employability? While it is a wonderful benefit to work for an organization that is willing to provide growth opportunities, tools and resources, and financial assistance to support my training and development activities, I recognize I have the responsibility to seek out and use those opportunities as well as those that may not be provided by the organization. My goal is to develop competencies in multiple areas to gain mastery in my field but not necessarily be limited to it. I believe ultimately I must have ownership for my personal development, growth, and continuing education and my employability. I must decide in which areas to invest my time, energy, and efforts for development as well as by what methods. I have to evaluate which learning opportunities will be most beneficial for helping me increase my knowledge base, experience, marketability, and ultimately my employability.

My learning attitude. It was interesting to explore the learning attitude other human resource professionals deem are important for employability. It was like holding a mirror up to my own thoughts and perspectives. I consider myself a lifelong learner. I enjoy learning as a social function, for the sake of learning, and to develop competencies to develop proficiency. Learning and development has been an essential part of my life since childhood and throughout my adult career. I even elected to postpone my professional career in human resources to pursue a doctorate in education.

During my experience pursuing my doctorate I have focused on being a flexible learning, to expand my skill set. Since the beginning of my program I actively pursued learning experiences in which I sharpened my research skills by conducting research

with faculty in my department, improved my presentation skills by presenting at national conferences, increased my writing skills by published articles and book chapters, taught undergraduate classes.

For the most part, I have been self-directed in my development. I sought opportunities rather than waiting for opportunities to be given to me. I also elicited advice from advisors concerning what activities would be most advantageous to engage in for careers in academia. Since my priority was completion of the doctoral program, there were some development opportunities provided by the organization that in hindsight I would have liked to have pursued. However, as a full-time student, I have learned you have to be cognizant of managing your time during this process and keeping your focus on the end goal.

What do I target next? One of the comments shared by a participant in the study succinctly expresses a concern I have regarding my own employability, and that is my capability versus my trainability. While I truly am a lifelong learning, and have a willingness and passion for learning and development, in regards to employability, I recognize capability is more desired than trainability in today's workplace. Just as some organizations have chosen to restructure due to financial challenges, in some cases, they have also chosen to hire externally rather than invest in developing and promoting from within. I have heard comments such as "we need someone with experience who can hit the ground running". This leads me to self-reflect, what are my areas of strength? What are my areas of weaknesses? How do I build on the skills I currently have? How do I develop those I do not? Which skills do I need to focus on developing next? And most importantly, how do I compete in an environment that may provide general learning opportunities to employees but hires based on demonstrated experience with specific skills?

Additionally, as suggested in the study, I must be future-oriented and focus my attention on surveying changes in my field of industry and those related. Thus, I have set a goal to attend professional associations related to career aspirations I may have. This would also provide me an opportunity to see what opportunities and challenges are occurring in the industry, network with other professionals with similar backgrounds and interest, and market myself as a potential job candidate. I have signed-up to receive newsletters to help me stay current with issues in the field. As suggested by Connie, reading blogs can be helpful towards increasing awareness and understanding regarding my field of interest and focus. Additionally, I plan to continue seeking input from advisors and professionals I admire in the field regarding areas to target for future development.

My navigation of resources. As I mentioned previously, as a student in the program I made a concerted effort to utilize as many resources provided by the university as possible while keeping up with the requirements of my program. This included utilizing faculty as resources for information and guidance, honing research skills by serving as a research assistant for my department, securing grant funding to annually attend and present at national conferences, serving as a teaching assistant and instructor for undergraduate course both online and face-to-face, serving on department and university committees. While I was not able to attend a lot of the general development courses offered by the university's organizational development office, I did complete three certificate programs while fulfilling the requirements for my doctorate, one focused on leadership in developing human resources, another on successful college teaching practices, and an additional one in teaching for excellence using distance learning methods.

Impact of Study on Researcher

Continuous learning for employability is a reality. To maintain employability in today's workplace requires the lifelong pursuit of learning and development for personal growth and mastery. If I want to be employable, I not only must I take ownership for my development, but I must be strategic and purposeful in the activities in which I invest my time, energy, and efforts for development. I have to have the forethought to recognize changes that may be occurring in the job market. Additionally, I must be proactive rather than reactive in responding to those changes and not necessarily wait for an organization to identify or recommend a course of action. While the organization may support an employee's development, it may be limited or predicated on what the organization deems relevant to its goals. I must focus on developing the competencies, experiences, and foster the relationships that will assist me with the next step in my career pursuits.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Background Questionnaire

This section contains a list of open-ended questions that were asked during the online pre-screening background questionnaire. Responses were used to identify potential members to participate in semi-structured interviews with the goal of recruiting five participants for the study.

Background Questionnaire

1.	What type of industry do you work in and how long have you worked in your current organization?
2.	Approximately how many individuals does your organization employ?
3.	What is your current job title and major duties?
4.	Describe your most recent task related to strategic planning in areas of organizational development, training/learning & development, and/or career development of employees.
5.	List your active memberships in professional organizations with a mission related to workforce or employee learning/development (i.e. SHRM, ASTD, IPSI).
6.	How do you define employee employability?
7.	What development opportunities (e.g. programs, practices, resources, etc.) does your organization offers to help employees remain employable? Please describe.
8.	Please rank the following skills in terms of the most necessary skill an employee must possess to remain employable in your organization.

Communicate: read, understand, and present information in a variety of forms (e.g., words, graphs, charts, diagrams)	**Demonstrate Positive Attitudes & Behaviors:** deal with people, problems and situations with honesty, integrity and personal ethics	**Work Safely:** be aware of and act in accordance with personal and group health and safety practices and procedures
Manage Information: locate, gather and organize information using appropriate technology	**Be Responsible:** plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals; assess,	**Work with Others:** be open & supportive of the thoughts, opinions and contributions of others;

and information systems	weigh and manage risk; be accountable for own actions and the actions of your group	accept and provide feedback in a constructive and considerate manner; share information and expertise
Use Numbers: decide what needs to be measured or calculated; observe and record data using appropriate methods, tools and technology	**Be Adaptable:** carry out multiple tasks or projects; identify alternative ways to achieve goals; be open and respond constructively to change; accept feedback and learn from your mistakes; cope with uncertainty	**Participate in Projects & T asks:** plan, design or carry out a project or task from start to finish; adapt to changing requirements and information; monitor success
Think and Solve Problems: assess situations, identify problems, be creative and innovative in exploring possible solutions	**Learn Continuously:** be willing to continuously learn and grow, assess personal strengths and areas for development, set own learning goals; identify and access learning sources and opportunities	**Other**

9. Additional comments you would like to share related to enhancement in the workplace?

Appendix B

Interview Questions

This section contains a list of open-ended questions that were asked during the in-depth interviews. Responses were used to uncover what perspectives employers have regarding the employee employability in today's workplace and their role in developing it.

Interview Questions-Protocol A

1. Please give me a brief description of your HR background, why you chose your profession, and how your career path led you to the organization in which you are currently employed.

2. What is your perspective of the employer's role/responsibility in developing employee employability?

3. What is the employee's role/responsibility for developing job employability?

4. What is HRD's role/responsibility for developing employee's job employability?

5. Describe the key attributes/skills of employees that you perceive to be highly employable within your organization.

6. Describe the learning attitudes you believe your employees need to possess to remain employable in your organization. And outside of your organization?

7. What are examples of developmental activities you expect your employees to engage in to remain employable?

8. Describe examples of developmental opportunities your organization currently offers employees to remain employable.

9. What additional developmental opportunities is your organization planning to offer that it does not currently provide?

10. Are there any questions that I didn't ask related to employee employability that you think I should have?

11. What developmental activities have you engaged in to further develop your employability?

12. Are there any questions that I didn't ask related to employee employability that you think I should have?

13. Is there anything else you would like to share that you haven't already shared?

Interview Questions-Protocol B

1. What are some of the benefits that your organization receives from offering developmental opportunities?

2. What are some of the benefits that your employees receive from offering developmental opportunities?

3. What are some of the challenges the organization faces to offer development opportunities?

4. What are the challenges for the employee?

5. Is there anything else that you'd like to share that you have not had an opportunity to share?

Appendix C

Explanatory Letter to Interviewees

Dear _____,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Adult, Career and Higher Education at the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida. I am pursuing my dissertation topic on the perspectives of HR executives concerning enhancement for existing employees and how it is operationalized in their workplace. Your participation is requested because of your background and experiences in planning and implementation of workplace learning initiatives.

I am requesting that you permit me to visit and conduct this study at your organization. Participation in the study will require approximately two one-hour in-depth interviews. The interviews will, with your permission, be audio recorded and transcribed. To maintain confidentiality, participants will not be named in the study and no information that could identify you or your organization will be used.
I will transcribe all audio files of interviews. Each participant will be offered a copy of the audio files as well as a copy of the transcription. The participants and I will be the only ones with access to the audio files. The master audio file will remain in my possession and will be destroyed three years after the publication of the dissertation.

Interviews will be arranged at your convenience sometime during the spring of 2012. The tentative schedule calls for one interview in January 2012 and one interview in March 2012. In addition, you may be asked to share relevant artifacts and documents. Your name, the name of your organization, and any other information gathered in this study will remain confidential and will only be used for educational purposes.

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of my request. I look forward to your participation in the study.

Respectfully,

Carmeda L. Stokes
From: Janesick, 2004

Appendix D

Consent Form for Interviewees

This study involves interviewing Human Resources Leaders about enhancement

for existing employees in their workplace, and is therefore research.

1. The purpose of this study is to examine HR executives' perspectives on enhancement for existing employees and how it is operationalized in their workplace.

2. The study is expected to last from November 2011 until November 2012.

3. The number of people to be interviewed is expected to be five persons.

4. The procedure of the research involves asking participants about their views on enhancement for existing employees.

5. Questionnaires will take approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

6. The interviews will be one hour each in length and each participant will be interviewed twice. The audio recordings will be protected in my home and will be kept for three years.

7. There are no foreseeable risks to the participants and they may leave the study at any time.

8. Possible benefits are educational, that is to contribute to the body of knowledge about workplace learning.

9. Members may choose to be completely anonymous and all names will be changed for reasons of confidentiality. This information will only be known to me and the chair of my dissertation committee.

10. For questions about the research you may contact me, Carmeda Stokes, at 313-673-7367 or at clstokes@usf.edu

11. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate will not result in penalty or loss of benefits.

12. There is no cost for you to participate in the study.

13. The University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) may be contacted at _____. This IRB may request to see my research records of the study.

   I _____ agree to participate in this study with Carmeda Stokes. I realize this information will be used for educational purposes. I understand I may withdraw at any time. I understand the intent of this study.

Signed_____Date_____

Appendix E

Peer Reviewer Form

I, _____, a doctoral candidate at the University of South Florida, have served as

a peer reviewer for "Case Study of Study Human Resource Executives' Perspectives on

Employability" by Carmeda L. Stokes. In this role, I have worked with the researcher

throughout his study in capacities such as reviewing the analysis of transcripts and

assisting in emerging issues.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

From: Janesick, 2004

Appendix F

Member Check Form for Interviewees

January xx, 2012

Dear _____,

Thank you for an enjoyable and insightful interview. Attached please find a draft copy of the verbatim transcripts of the interview. Please review the transcription for accuracy and completeness of responses. Please feel free to contact me at (XXX-XXX-XXXX) or via email at (carmedaXXX@XXX.com) should you have any questions. If I do not hear from you by _____, ____2012, I will assume that you agree with the attached draft of the transcription.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Carmeda L. Stokes

From: Janesick, 2004

Appendix G

Open Coding Excerpt

R: Okay I've given you a little bit of information about the study. And just from your own experiences your own thoughts feelings things that you've encountered as an HR professional. What is your perspective on the employer's role, their responsibility, in terms of the development of employee employability.

Response	Open Coding
P: well I think it's an interesting and changing dynamic. I think the **employment relationship has changed** dramatically over the last 20 or 30 years. Uh, it used to be that an employee went and worked for an organization and stayed there for 20, 30, 40 years and the employer more or less took care of them. Now employees will have not only 4, 5, 6 **different jobs**, full time career type jobs before not counting the high school waitress jobs, but they may actually even have several different careers in completely different directions. And there's **not the loyalty** to the employer that there used to be either. So there's not the loyalty on either side anymore. But I think the employer has the responsibility to **provide the tools**. And if you're going to attract and retaining great people most of those people want to continue to grow and develop. So you need to **provide them those opportunities**. The employee really needs to **want to develop** those skills. And I think as an employer we also have to realize that there are some people who want to continue doing the same job that they are doing. And be accepting of that. It's a good thing that not everyone wants to be a manager. Because there's only one of those for every 10 or 15 people. So then you're looking at opportunities to maybe on their same level but to broaden the job scope to keep them engaged in the organization. So I think that the short answer is that it's a **shared responsibility** between both the employee and the employer.	*[employability-changing dynamic supported by literature]* Change in employment relationship Different jobs/careers Lack of employee loyalty *[Loyalty-interesting didn't mention anything about lack of employer loyalty]* Provide tools Retention Provide Opportunities *[Provide tools/ Opportunities- EEs need to want to develop employability skills-relates to assumptions in conceptual framework]* Recognize EEs who don't want job change Broaden job scope *[broaden job scope since limited promotional opportunities, to keep EE s engaged-retention strategy?]* Shared responsibility *[Shared responsibility- relates to conceptual framework]*

Appendix H

Data Matrix Screen Shot

File   Edit   View   Insert   Format   Data   Tools   Help   Last edit was seconds ago

Q2. What is your perspective of the employer's role/responsibility in enhancing employee employability

Protocol A Questions	ParticipantA Ann Administrator/Southern State University	ParticipantB Andrea Advisor/Retail Industries
Q2. What is your perspective of the employer's role/responsibility in enhancing employee employability	PA-ER: PROVIDE RESOURCES/TOOLS: provide the tools (lines 11-12), ER ROLE: OPPORTUNITES INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT: provide opportunities (line 13), realize that there are some people who want to continue doing the same job that they are doing and be accepting, ER ROLE: PROVIDE JOB GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES: broaden the job scope to keep them engaged in the organization (line 14-15); shared responsibility (lines 18-19); P3: ER ROLE: SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR CURRENT POSITION: the employee may be going in a completely different direction from where they are. So I really see the ownership more becomes the supervisor's when it's development within their area and department (lines 41-43) [PERCEIVED DIFFERENCE IN RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEVELOPMENT BASED ON CURRENT VERSUS FUTURE JOB]	PA-ER ROLE: CREATE/COMMUNICATE CAREER PATH OPPORTUNITIES: organization defines future, provides [CAREER]paths/opportunities with organization, clarifies what those options/opportunities are (lines 70-74); COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT: help EE figure out /provide clarity on needs for future, needs now, RESOURCES: providing basic resources to prepare for that (lines 101-103) PAC-philosophy... partnership but... we're not leading you to the water and making you drink. CLARIFYING OPPORTUNITIES: We're telling you where the water is and you have to carry your own bucket and get the water (lines 100-103);

Sheet1

Appendix I

Organizational Document Review Checklist

Participants:		Ann	Andrea	Connie	Cathy	Cassie
Learning/Development Philosophy	Website			●	●	●
Communication of Development Opportunities	Website	●	●		●	●
	Email	●				
	Advertisements (e.g. news articles, flyers, etc)	●		●	●	
	Calendar of Development Events	●				
Learning/Career Development Management Tools Provided	Learning Management System	●			●	
	Career pathing /Management System	●		●		●
	Career Development Program	●		●		●
Types of Opportunities Offered	New Employee Orientation	●			●	
	Leadership courses	●			●	
	Management courses	●		●	●	
	Soft-Skilled (e.g. communication, interpersonal, diversity, etc.) courses	●	●	●	●	
	Technical courses	●	●			
	Financials courses	●				
	HR Processes courses	●	●		●	
	Understanding Business courses		●	●	●	
	Tuition Support	●			●	●
	Library		●		●	
	Mentoring program			●		
	Training Network	●				

Appendix J

Frequency of Codes

Protocol A	Freq	Open Codes	Ann	Andrea	Connie	Cathy	Cassie	%
Employer's role/ responsibility in enhancing employability	10	Assess development needs	X	X	X		X	80
	10	Career (development) planning			X		X	40
	34	Provide/support learning development opportunities	X		X	X	X	80
	9	Succession planning	X	X	X		X	80
	16	Provide resources/tools	X	X	X		X	80
	7	Define/Clarify development opportunities		X	X		X	60
	3	Change in employment relationship	X	X	X			60
	3	Broaden job scope	X					20
	4	Shared responsibility	X	X	X			60
	7	Budget for learning	X			X	X	60
	28	Feedback (suggestions/ recommendations)			X		X	28
Employee's role/ responsibility in enhancing employability	3	Communicate development/career goals	X			X	X	60
	7	Demonstrate/possess desire/willingness/initiative to develop	X			X		40
	3	Actualize/implement development plan/career goals	X	X	X	X	X	100
	2	Utilize Resources		X	X			40
	1	Future-oriented outlook/focus growth		X				20
	28	Use advice/feedback			X	X	X	60
	1	Self-assessment					X	20
HRD's role/ responsibility in enhancing employability	7	Provide program management (develop, coordinate, facilitate, evaluate)	X			X		40
	22	Provide performance management/ evaluation structure	X			X	X	60

Category		Item						%
	7	Career pathing system/management	X		X		X	60
	5	Provide structure/Promote development opportunities		X	X		X	60
	10	Needs assessments	X	X		X	X	80
	3	Inform /make recommendations to leaders regarding development initiatives		X	X	X		60
	6	Retention/turnover	X		X		X	60
	3	Recruitment			X			20
Key attributes/ skills of highly employable employees	21	Interpersonal/emotional intelligence	X			X	X	60
	9	Technical skills	X		X			40
	4	Communication Skills (influence)		X	X	X		60
	10	Analytical/problem solving			X		X	40
	1	Work individually			X			20
	2	Learn quickly			X			20
	3	Positive Attitude	X		X			40
	8	Flexibility, adapt to change	X	X	X		X	80
	4	Ability to do job/produce results		X	X	X		60
	1	Integrity	X					20
	6	Understanding business context		X	X	X		60
	2	Influence		X		X		40
	3	Knowledge/skill beyond current job scope		X	X		X	60
	2	Recognize change		X			X	40
Learning attitudes needed to remain employable	28	Seek/use feedback			X	X	X	60
	10	Willingness to learn/grow	X	X	X	X	X	100
	4	Desire to do best	X			X		40
	2	Positive attitude	X		X			40
	8	Flexibility in learning	X	X	X	X	X	100
	4	Future-oriented outlook/focus (development needs, job, organization, industry		X			X	40

		changes)						
	7	Transparency/Willingness to Understand/Acknowledge strengths/weaknesses				X	X	40
	6	Learning about business/industry			X		X	40
	7	Initiative (seek/participate in development activities/opportunities)	X	X	X	X	X	100
	20	Online learning	X					20
Activities employees should engage in to remain employable	7	New Employee/Hire Orientation	X	X				40
	26	Leadership Development	X	X		X		60
	15	Management development	X		X			40
	6	Learn about business/industry (e.g. reading)		X	X			4
	3	Learn beyond job scope		X	X		X	60
	2	Special Projects			X	X	X	60
	7	Networking		X	X	X	X	80
	11	Mentoring			X	X	X	60
	1	Annual development					X	20
	7	Professional associations			X	X	X	60
	8	Soft-skilled courses	X		X			40
	9	Technical courses			X	X		40
Opportunities provided by the organization to support employees employability	6	Financial support (e.g. tuition, conference fees)	X			X	X	60
	20	online courses/learning	X	X	X		X	80
	8	soft skills courses	X	X	X	X	X	100
	26	leadership development	X	X		X		60
	16	management development	X		X	OD		60
	1	time away from job for development			X			20
	1	understanding business course				X		20
	11	technical skills courses	X	OD	X		BQ	80
	14	Online learning	X	X	X	BQ	X	100

			A	B	C	D	E	
	2	Mentoring Program			OD	BQ		40
	1	On-site degree program				BQ		20
	3	Career development resources, tools	X		X		X	60
	3	Career pathing /management system	X		X		X	60
	4	Learning Management System	OD		X	OD	X	80
	3	Learning Library		X		X	X	60
Protocol B		**Key Codes/Themes**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	
Benefits the organization receives from development opportunities it provides	7	Better Educated Prepared Workforce/Skills Current	X	X	X	X	X	100
	6	Retention/Reduction In Turnover	X		X	X	X	80
	1	Enhanced Leadership Skills		X				20
	1	Enhanced interpersonal Skills					X	20
	1	Enhanced Employee Performance			X			20
	1	Pipeline Of Employees/ Succession Development					X	20
	1	External Recognition As Employer That Develops Employees					X	20
	3	Employee Engagement (feels employer cares)	X			X	X	60
Benefits the employee receives from development opportunities provided	2	Access to Resources available For Development	X	X				40
	3	Internal Employability			X			20
	1	External Employability			X			20
	4	Ownership Of Learning/careerpath	X	X	X		X	80
	1	Increased Competency/Skill At Job					X	20
	1	Enhanced Interpersonal Skills For Professional And Personal Life					X	20
Challenges the organization experiences from development opportunities provided	39	Limited HR resources (staff, time, expertise, etc.)	X	X	X	X	X	100
	6	Cost, budget	X	X		X		60
	3	Breath of opportunities can offer	X		X		-	40
	1	Return on Investment		X			-	20
	1	Champion for Development		X				20

	10	Workload/Time to Attend (ER allocating, EEs taking)	X	X	X		X	80
	1	Assessing greatest needs					X	20
	2	Clarifying for how learning can be used for future career opportunities		X			X	40
	5	Verifying Transfer/application of learning		X				20
	1	Learning impact on performance-ROI		X				20
	2	Generational differences in workplace			X			20
	5	Employee learning orientation-getting them to use resources		X				20
	4	Leaders not diagnosing development needs, providing feedback				X	X	20
Challenges the employee experiences to utilize development opportunities provided	13	Time/workload	X	X	X		X	80
	27	Limited job/promotional opportunities	X	X		X		60
	3	Awareness of opportunities available	?	X			-	20
	5	Transfer/Application of learning		X		X	X	40
	3	Learning Orientation/Lack of perceived need		X			X	40
	4	Leaders not voicing expectations, diagnosing development needs, providing feedback				X	X	40

Appendix K

Contextualization of Organizations

Southern State University is a member institution of the State University System of Florida. Total student enrollment is over 30,000. The University employs approximately 16,000 employees. Restructuring efforts consisted of department consolidation and periods of hiring freezes to address budget constraints experienced due to cuts in state funding.

Retail industries is a national retailer which delivers an assortment of exclusive products and top brand names to its customers. The organization employs approximately 5,000 employees. Restructuring efforts include downsizing of the HRD department to a team of less than five.

Fiduciary Banking is one of the largest global financial services companies. It conducts business in more than 150 countries and serves hundreds of millions of customers. Restructuring efforts included selling noncore businesses due to financial crisis to focus on traditional banking efforts.

Global Utilities is a Fortune 500 company comprised of multiple businesses offering many support services. It serves over 500,000 customers and employs over 5,000 employees.

Sunshine Insurance serves more than 4 million customers in multiple southern and mid-western states. The company employs over 8,000 employees. Restructuring efforts included consolidation of branches.

Appendix L

IRB Approval Letter

February 13, 2012

Carmeda Stokes
Adult, Career and Higher Education

RE: **Expedited Approval** for Initial Review
    IRB#: Pro00005709
    Title: A Case Study Understanding Employability through the Lens of Human Resource Executives

Dear Carmeda Stokes:

On 2/13/2012 the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above referenced protocol. Please note that your approval for this study will expire on 2/13/2013.

Approved Items:
Protocol Document(s):

A Case Study: Understanding Employability through the Lens of Human Resource Executives	11/13/2011 10:57 PM	0.01

Consent/Assent Documents:

Name	Modified	Version
Waiver of Informed Consent Documentation granted on the Adult ICF		

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review

category:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your study qualifies for a waiver of the requirements for the documentation of informed consent as outlined in the federal regulations at 45CFR46.117 (c) which states an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it finds either: (1) That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or (2) That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context..

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

John Schinka, PhD, Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board

Cc: Various Menzel, CCRP
    USF IRB Professional Staff

Appendix M

Certificate of Completion

Certificate of Completion

Carmeda Stokes

Has Successfully Completed the Course in

Foundations in Human Research Protections at USF

On

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Saturday, September 25, 2010

USF
UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA

10/3/2011 5:42:30 AM